
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study

by Warren Doud

Lesson 211: **Acts 11:22-30**

ACTS, Lesson 211, Acts 11:22-30

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Acts 11:22-30**Acts 11:22**

11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

came into the ears of the church at Jerusalem

That is, “was heard in the ears...” aor. pass. ind. of **ajkouw**.

Barnabas

The choice of Barnabas was wise. He already had a position of trust and responsibility in Jerusalem, as was shown by his championship of Saul after his conversion (Acts 9:27). As we have seen, he was originally from Cyprus, so he probably had personal friends among those evangelists who had come to Antioch from Cyprus. He is being sent now to find out what is happening in Antioch; presumably he will send a report back to Jerusalem.

TOPIC: BARNABAS

Acts 11:23

11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

Barnabas was overjoyed to see what was happening in Antioch. Many people were being saved and were beginning to experience the “grace life.”

exhorted them all

Barnabas did not raise any questions about circumcision or about associating with Gentiles. If he hadn’t understood before that God intended the Gospel to be preached to Gentiles, he certainly was convinced of it now, having just heard the report of Peter in Jerusalem.

Barnabas is teaching basic doctrine! These are brand new believers who need to get into a crash program of teaching.

“exhorted” here is the imperf. active of **parakalew**, “to encourage; to exhort”. The imperfect tense tells us that Barnabas was continually teaching the Word of God.

cleave unto the Lord**prosmenein tw/kuriw**

The word “cleave” is pres. act. infinitive of **prosmenw**, “to abide; to wait for; to remain attached to”; with the dative of person (**tw/kuriw**), “to remain loyal to”. [Note iota subscript on **tw/kuriw** indicating dative.]

This concept is one of the key ideas in the doctrine of Occupation with Christ.

Sophocles, *Electra*: “Then, infuriated, she comes up to me and cries;—“Have you not brought this upon me? Is this not your doing, since you stole Orestes from my hands and secretly sent him away? Yes—but rest assured that you will be justly punished.” Like this she barks, and in agreement her glorious bridegroom by her side urges her on—that total impotent, that utter plague who fights his battles with the help of women.

But my heart is broken by my suffering as I constantly wait (**prosmenw**) for Orestes to come and end these troubles.”

In the Bible:

“to remain with someone,”

Matt. 15:32, “Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue (**prosmenw**) with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”

Psalms 118:9. “It is better to take refuge in the Lord that to trust in princes.” If you take refuge in the Lord, you stop expecting things from people. Your fellowship with God solves the problems that you have with people, and makes your relationships with people far better.

TOPIC: OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST

Acts 11:24

11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and many people were added unto the Lord.

he was a good man (ajhr agaqo~)

The “**agao~**” man is more than just strictly upright or righteous (**dikaio~**). The righteous man may be moral, but he may also be self-righteous or over strict. About the good man, Gloag says: “His benevolence effectually prevented him from censuring anything that might be new or strange in these preachers to the Gentiles, and caused him to rejoice in their success.”¹ The ability to rejoice in the work and success of others is a mark of “mastery of the details of life.”

Barnabas did not come to exert authority, but to help believers grow in faith. He is the right man to promote the development of the church in Antioch.²

full of the Holy Spirit and faith

TOPIC: HOLY SPIRIT, FILLING

TOPIC: FAITH

many people were added to the Lord

Ultimately, over several decades, tens of thousands of people became Christians. Church historians say that at one time there may have been as many as 100,000 believers in Antioch.

The events described in this chapter are the beginning of a massive shift of emphasis in Christianity, from nearly 100% Jewish influence, to a predominantly Gentile focus that is seen at the beginning of the 2nd century.

“Thus doth the building of the Church go forward, when one doth help another with

¹ Gloag, Acts 11.

² Baker, Acts 11

mutual consent, and one doth gently allow that which another hath begun.”³

Acts 11:25

11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, to seek Saul:

Tarsus

Tarsus (Greek Ταρσός) is a city and a large district in Mersin Province, Turkey, 25 km from the city of Mersin and near (40 km) to the city of Adana.

With a history going back 5,000 years Tarsus has long been an important stop for traders to the Orient, a focal point of many civilizations including the Ancient Romans when Tarsus was capital of the province of Cilicia, scene of the romance between Mark Anthony and Cleopatra and birthplace of Saint Paul.

In historical times, the city was first ruled by the Hittites, Assyria and then the Persian Empire. Tarsus was the seat of a Persian satrapy from 400 BC onward. Indeed Xenophon records that in 401 BC, when Cyrus the Younger marched against Babylon, the city was governed by King Syennesis in the name of the Persian monarch. (See Xenophon, *The Anabasis*)

Alexander the Great came through with his armies in 333 BC and came near meeting his death here after a bath in the Cydnus. By this time Tarsus was already Greek, and as part of the Seleucid Empire became more and more Hellenized; Strabo praises the cultural level of Tarsus in this period with its philosophers, poets and linguists. The schools of Tarsus rivaled Athens and Alexandria. 2 Maccabees (4:30) records its revolt in about 171 BC against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had renamed the town Antiochia on the Cydnus. In his time the library of Tarsus held 200,000 books, a huge collection of scientific works.

Pompey subjected Tarsus to Rome, and Tarsus became capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, the metropolis where the governor resided. To

³ Calvin, Acts 11:24

flatter Julius Caesar, it took the name Juliopolis. It was here that Cleopatra and Mark Antony met, the scene of the celebrated feasts they gave during the construction of their fleet. In AD 66, the inhabitants received Roman citizenship.

When the province of Cilicia was divided, Tarsus remained the civil and religious metropolis of Cilicia Prima, a grand city with palaces, marketplaces, roads and bridges, baths, fountains and waterworks, a gymnasium on the banks of the Cydnus, a stadium and the church of St Paul. Tarsus was later eclipsed by nearby Adana, but remained important as a port and shipyard. Several Roman emperors were buried here; Marcus Claudius Tacitus, Maximinus, and Julian the Apostate.

Acts 11:26

11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Tarsus was not very far from Antioch, perhaps two days' journey. Barnabas knew Saul well, and he knew of Saul's preaching in Damascus and to the Grecian Jews in Jerusalem. "He had none of the littleness which cannot bear the presence of a possible rival."⁴

The Lord had definitely called Saul to work among the Gentiles; and it is possible that while he was in Cilicia and Syria he preached to both Hellenes and Hellenists. By whatever means, it is obvious that he had come in his own way to the same place that Peter had reached in Caesarea, because he is now settles down with Barnabas to a year of intensive teaching, to Gentiles. Christ has called Saul; Barnabas simply put that call into focus.

⁴ Furneaux.

TOPIC: IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

A Christian was called **Cristiano**. This word was coined by someone in Antioch, who used the same pattern that had already been used to refer to followers of other famous people. The **Jwdiano** was a follower of Herod; a **Kaesariano** was a follower of Caesar. This word was made up like a Latin adjective, although it is a Greek word, and it refers to the Hebrew belief in a Messiah. The name itself is not pejorative; it was used only to identify the people who believed in Christ.

Now, the person who came up with this name for believers was not a Jew!. The Jews would not call themselves Christians, because they used the word **cristo** to refer to the Messiah. The Jews words for the believers was "Galileans" or "Nazarenes". Also, the followers of Christ called themselves disciples, believers, brethren, saints, those of the Way. So it was evidently a Gentile who gave believers the name **Cristiano**, to distinguish them from the Jews, since they were Greeks, not Grecian Jews.⁵

It's not strange that this term came into use first here in Antioch; the large Gentile church gave occasion for it.

Acts 11:27

11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

There prophets were Christian believers who had the spiritual gift of prophecy (Acts 4:11). The word is sometimes used in the New Testament to refer to "religious leaders, instructors sent from God, without particular reference to [their predicting] future events."⁶

⁵ Robertson, Acts 11:26

⁶ Barnes, Acts 11:27

Acts 13:1, “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

Judas and Silas are also called prophets.

Acts 15:32, “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.”

A prophet was a teacher, but in apostolic times the spiritual gift of prophecy also meant that the prophet was sometimes inspired by God, so that he received direct revelation from God.

Rom. 12:5-8, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

“Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

“Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

It seems that Barnabas had at least two spiritual gifts, that of exhortation (from Romans 12 above), and that of prophet, Acts 13:1 below.

Acts 13:1, “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul”

Acts 11:28

11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there would be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Agabus

Very little is known about Agabus. There are two references to him in the NT, here, and in Acts 21. Most probably both passages in Acts refer to the same person, who appears to have been a resident of Jerusalem.

Tradition makes Agabus one of the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1), and one of the martyrs who suffered at Antioch. The Roman Martyrology mentions his name on 13 February, while the Greek Church commemorates him on 8 March. According to Acts 11:27-30, Agabus predicted the famine which apparently must be identified with that happening in the fourth year of Claudius, A.D. 45. In the year 58 the prophet predicted to St. Paul his coming captivity, though he could not convince Paul to stay away from Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10,11, “And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

“And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle (ζωνή “belt” in NAS and NIV), and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

dearth = λιμο~, “hunger; famine”.

The meaning of the prophecy is that there would be a general famine over a large region.

Claudius

Claudius was the Roman Emperor for 13 years, from 41 to 54 AD. He succeeded Caligula; and Nero succeeded him. He was poisoned by his wife Agrippina, who wanted her son Nero to be the emperor.

The best source on the twelve emperors known as the Caesars is the work of Seutonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. [I have an Acrobat Reader version (PDF) of this book, and you can obtain a copy by request to wdoud@gracenotes.info.]

During Claudius' reign, the ancient writers say that there were four different famines. The first

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famine was in Rome in about 42 AD; the second in Greece, said by Eusebius to have occurred in the 9th year of Claudius reign; the third was a sever famine, again in Rome, mentioned by Seutonius and Tacitus; and the fourth in Judea.

The Judean famine is described by Josephus (*Antiquities* 20:2:5). "A famine did oppress them at the time and many people died for the lack of what was necessary to procure food withal. Queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of grain, and others of them to Cyprus to bring a cargo of dried figs."

There was a famine during this period, during the reign of Claudius, and several Roman historians talk about it (e.g. Tacitus, Seutonius, Dio Cassius), and some suggest (the references are vague) that there was a widespread earthquake during Claudius' reign, which could have caused the famine.

Acts 11:29

11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

The warning from Agabus caused the disciples in Antioch to gather together a large collection to send to the Christians who were in need. It seems, then, that the believers in Judea were under much greater stress than those in Antioch. They weren't rich, but they set aside donations according to their abilities.

This kind of grace giving is mentioned in several places in the New Testament: Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 9:1,2; Gal. 2:10.

Eph. 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Acts 11:30

11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The "elders" referred to here were not the *presbuteroi* of the Jewish synagogues, although they did have that office. This offering was intended for the "brethren" (Acts 11:29), so it wouldn't have been entrusted to Jewish elders. The offering may have been delivered to the deacons; but we can't be more certain than to say that the contributions, of whatever kind they were, were handed over to the responsible leadership of the church at Jerusalem, who would have seen to its distribution to all the hard-pressed Christians in Judea.

Over the last decades of the first century, the church at Jerusalem became very impoverished. During his missionary journeys, Paul asked the Gentile churches for donations to help the poor in Jerusalem. The Gentile Christians gave generously to the church that was the original (human) source of their spiritual blessings.

Occupation with Christ

Introduction

The Lord has made available many provisions for living according to His plan and growing in Christ. These provisions are known variously as "divine operating assets", "techniques for Christian living", "problem solving devices", and so forth.

These provisions are part of the great store of blessings which God has already made available to us in Christ.

Eph. 1:3, "And has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

These provisions include:

- Confession of Sin
- The Filling of the Holy Spirit
- Faith-Rest - the ability to trust God and to enjoy His peace
- Orientation to Grace
- Personal Love for God
- Impersonal Love for Mankind
- Joy - the happiness of God which does not depend on people, circumstances, or things

- A personal destiny shared with all in God's royal family
- OCCUPATION WITH JESUS CHRIST

This article deals with the subject of Occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ, under the following headings:

- What is Occupation with Christ
- Why a Christian Needs to be Occupied with Christ
- The Bible Commands Regarding Occupation with Christ
- Mechanics - How to be Occupied with Christ
- The Results of Occupation with Christ

What is Occupation with Christ

Occupation with Christ is a mental attitude by which a Christian believer views all things in life with the Lord Jesus Christ in mind.

Occupation with Christ is love for the Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity, therefore it is the expression of love for God. The Bible commands us to love God, with all our heart, soul and mind. Being occupied with Christ is a great part of our love for God. Therefore, this concept is one of the most important spiritual functions in the Christian life.

Love for God, and Occupation with Christ, results from learning, digesting, and applying Bible truth. The Bible describes the lifestyle of wisdom and the path to spiritual maturity through the filling of the Holy Spirit and growth in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is invisible to us because He is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. He will not become visible to us until we see Him when He returns. So, loving Christ requires a system of communications which is based on thought. The system is the Word of God, God's thoughts and God's words, guarded in the Scripture. There is no other accurate record of the mind of Christ, divine viewpoint, apart from what is contained in the Bible.

Therefore, we can only come to love Jesus Christ, to be occupied with Christ, through

learning the Word of God and making His thoughts our thoughts.

1 Cor. 2:16, For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

This love for Jesus Christ can only come about through applied Bible truth.

Eph. 3:19, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

1 Pet. 1:8, and though you have not seen Him, you love Him [occupation with Christ], and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

Joy and occupation with Christ always go together, you can't have one without the other. The glory with which you are filled is Bible truth, and this emphasizes the fact that you have come to know Christ through perception and application of the Word of God.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDWELLING OF CHRIST AND OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST

The Indwelling of Christ is not an experience. Every Christian, whether a novice or advanced believer, is indwelt by Christ, has been since the point of salvation, and always will be. You find this teaching in John 14:20; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; and 1 John 2:24.

Christ indwells believers for a number of reasons: (1) as a sign that a Christian is a member of God's royal family, (2) as a guarantee of the blessings which we have for time and eternity, (3) as a guarantee of eternal life and a life after death in the presence of God, (4) as a motivation for us to stay in the plan of God, especially when we experience suffering.

Occupation with Christ, though, is one of the processes leading to Christian maturity, and not all believers experience this. Occupation with Christ is the focus of all worship. When you worship God "in spirit and in truth" you are occupied with Christ.

Occupation with Christ is the main motivation in a Christian's life. And it is the prime solution to all the problems of life. Only positive believers who choose to follow the plan of God are occupied with Christ.

The following are expressions of the process of being occupied with Christ. Notice in each case how the Christian is involved in a thought and decision process leading to occupation with Christ.

"Christ being formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19)

"Christ at home in your hearts..." (Eph. 3:17)

"Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

Occupation with Christ makes an issue out of knowledge of the Word of God, setting right priorities, being involved and active in the plan of God, and glorifying God during a Christian's lifetime.

Characteristics of Occupation with Christ

1. Jesus Christ is God; so, occupation with Christ is the greatest expression of love toward God, the objective of all Christians. Deut. 6:5, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."
2. Occupation with Christ becomes the means for making great decisions with an impact on history. Heb. 11:27, "Moses gave up the crown of Egypt. He became strong under pressure, for he saw the invisible One."
3. Occupation with Christ begins as the believer moves toward spiritual maturity, Col. 3:15-17.
4. Occupation with Christ glorifies Him, Eph. 3:17-21
5. Occupation with Christ means that human beings are not raised on pedestals, Phil. 3:7,8.
6. The means of continuing to be occupied with Christ is the daily learning and

application of Bible teaching while under the control of the Holy Spirit, Jer. 9:23,24.

7. Occupation with Christ is a pastor's prime motivation to teach the Bible so that believers grow in Christ, Heb. 6:10.
8. Occupation with Christ is related to victory in spiritual warfare with Satan and his angels. With your mind in the right place, you are confident of victory, Col. 3:1,2.

The Need for Occupation with Christ

Psalm 118:9 tells us, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord that to trust in princes." If you take refuge in the Lord, you stop expecting things from people. Your fellowship with God solves the problems that you have with people, and makes your relationships with people far better.

A person is seldom treated the way he wants to be treated, or loved the way he wants to be loved. Outside of God's plan, this can cause frustration and instability.

This frustration becomes a major motivation in life and leads people on a frantic search for fellowship with people, instead of fellowship with God. Until a person becomes stabilized in his thinking, by occupying himself with Christ, he will be very unstable. People select their companions, their spouses, even their churches, based on the desire to be loved and treated properly.

Most of the time, people don't find what they are looking for, so they become bitter, and indulge themselves in jealousy, envy, vindictiveness, hatred, and revenge, and are very disappointed in all categories of life.

Occupation with Christ brings about a change in priorities in a Christian's life. Proper focus on Christ takes care of the problems of friendships, romance, marriage, business, or social life, and the problems that are caused by constant friction with people in all situations. Love for God and for Christ takes the place of frustration and bitterness with people.

Impersonal love, which is the professional attitude of a mature believer toward all people,

provides a capacity for wonderful relationships with people in Christian fellowship, friendship, and marriage.

The Problems of Focusing on Self, People, Things

Jer. 17:5,6 Thus says the Lord, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert, and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.

Three great problems develop through failure to be occupied with Christ. The first problem is to have a focus on self. This is arrogance, or an overestimation of one's self. When you are indignant, or offended, or angered by the way you are treated, your eyes are on yourself. You are frustrated and bitter, and you become vengeful. You make bad decisions from a position of weakness.

The second problem of wrong focus is to have one's eyes on people. We tend to put our trust in people in many different relationships. We think people are causing our problems, and we look to other people to solve our problems. We try to find people who are compatible, but are always be disappointed in them.

There is nothing wrong with having relationships with people. In fact, they are unavoidable. But we will always be disappointed by people until we have a personal love for God, occupation with Christ, and an impersonal love for all people. This spiritual outlook is the source of pure joy and the enjoyment of a personal sense of eternal accomplishment.

You can't change other people, even your spouse. When you try, it only intensifies the problem. What you are doing is making an issue out of yourself instead of Christ's teaching. The only person you can change is yourself; and you cannot do that by executing some sort of psychological program for your life. Personal change comes only through growth in Christ

and using the assets that God has provided for solving the problems of life.

The third problem caused by failure to be occupied with Christ is a focus on things. Sometimes when you're not being treated properly, you decide to sublimate in some way by buying something, going somewhere, seeking out recreation. If you can't get away, or you can't afford your dream package, you spend your life filled with fantasy or wanderlust.

Occupation with Christ provides a new focus on life, away from self, people, and things. When you have spiritual self-esteem, it doesn't matter how you are treated, whether you are loved or not loved, or whether you get what you want. It is your fellowship with Christ that counts!

God is perfect and can only treat you within the scope of His perfection. Within God's plan, you will be treated in a manner that is most beneficial to you, with the proper combination of pleasure and suffering, joy and sorrow, social life and solitude, a combination of blessing and testing to bring you to maturity.

So, how you are treated by people, or by life itself, is no longer an issue. You are living a life of love for Christ as your motivational solution. You have impersonal love for people as part of your functional integrity. The Lord gives you victory over hurt, anger, hatred, frustration, or antagonism toward people, even in the midst of some of the greatest expressions of frustration.

You have yourself been changed through the Word of God. You can pass all forms of testing without being destroyed. You are well positioned to conduct a powerful personal ministry for Christ, being free from the self-generated problems to which most people are subject.

The Bible Commands Us to be Occupied with Christ

Occupation with Christ is commanded by God; it is not an option. If you are going to live the Christian life according to God's plan, you must come to the place where you are occupied with Christ.

Deut. 6:5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

This verse shows that it is God's will that we be absorbed with Him in our whole being: heart, soul, and might. This means the Word of God must be our top priority. To love God - to love the Lord Jesus Christ - we must know Him. We learn about Christ, the Living Word, through the Bible, the written Word. The written Word and the Living Word eventually become our main focus in life. A Christian cannot enter spiritual adulthood (maturity) without this dual priority in life.

Christians who are not occupied with Christ will always be novices, spiritual immature, and dabblers in the faith.

Heb. 12:2, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith (our doctrine). Furthermore, the Bible is the "mind of Christ", the actual thinking of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)

The word "joy" in Heb. 12:2 refers to the happiness of the Lord Jesus as he endured the suffering of the Cross, when He was being judged for our sins. We don't usually think of happiness associated with Christ's suffering, but this was the pure joy, in Christ's case, of his being 100% occupied with the Father and with His plan.

1 Pet. 3:15, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

This verse is a command to be occupied with Christ. The "heart" is the place in the soul where wisdom and applied Bible knowledge reside. We "sanctify" Christ in our hearts by having maximum understanding and application of Bible truth. By consistent learning of the Word, under conditions of

spiritual fellowship (control of the Holy Spirit), a believer sanctifies Christ as Lord in the heart.

MECHANICS - HOW TO BE OCCUPIED WITH CHRIST

You have probably already seen that occupation with Christ is accomplished through having regular interaction with the Word of God. The #1 priority is concentration on Bible truth, and organizing one's life around that #1 priority. When you do that, you are concentrating on Christ, you are occupied with Christ.

To concentrate on the Word, you must receive consistent accurate teaching from a pastor-teacher. In Eph. 4:11-16, we see that the method God the Father has chosen to bring us to maturity as individuals, and to have a mature, productive church, is Bible teaching from men who are prepared to minister (preach) the Word of God.

You must listen and learn many things from the Bible. Some of them will seem to have no immediate application, but all Bible knowledge is important in God's plan for your life. If you stay with it, the pieces will begin to fit together and it will all make sense.

If your top priority is Bible truth, your life will begin to change almost without your knowing it. You will learn doctrine every day, and you will begin to use the problem solving techniques that the Bible offers. Your mental attitude will be determined by the divine thinking that is coming into your soul.

When the Word of God is the main focus of your life, you come to the point of personal love for God the Father. You will have spiritual self-esteem. Once you begin to have love for God, and to be occupied with Christ, you will no longer feel threatened by things in life that once disturbed you. You have a relaxed mental attitude and spiritual joy, which is happiness supplied by God that you have regardless of circumstances, things, or the people in your life. This process is demonstrated in

1 Peter 1:6-8.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

that the proof (genuineness) of your faith (doctrine), being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

and though you have not seen Him (Jesus Christ), you love Him (occupation with Christ), and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

In other words, you begin to function by using the Word of God during times of testing, at the same time as you are occupied with Christ. You are actually sharing the happiness of God as you go through life.

THE RESULTS OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST

Occupation with Christ is the principal solution to all problems that occur in life.

God the Father has provided us with everything necessary for us to have a capacity for joy and a prosperity that is independent of people or circumstances. These provisions are known as "all blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Note that the place of blessing is in Christ. All blessings, and all problem solutions begin with Occupation with Christ.

Occupation with Christ glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 3:19-21)

Occupation with Christ is required in order to have complete fellowship with God the Father. I John 1:6. Walking "in darkness" is the opposite of occupation with Christ.

In 2 Cor. 13:14, the "practice of truth" is fellowship with God the Father; and fellowship with God always leads to love for God.

I Cor. 1:9 indicates that fellowship with Christ is concurrent with, and necessary for, fellowship with God. Since you were "called into fellowship with His Son," this should be your main priority in life. But this means that you

have to make the Word of God your main interest in life.

Fellowship with God the Holy Spirit is also closely tied in with occupation with Christ. Phil. 2:1,2 "Therefore, if there be any encouragement in Christ, if there is any comfort of love, if there is any fellowship with the Spirit, if there is any affection mercies, complete my happiness by thinking the same things."

God's happiness is completed as we have fellowship with Him, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Then we can have true fellowship with people, without putting people before God. 2 Cor. 13:14 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love for God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." But without occupation with Christ, interaction with other people is often bad.

Occupation with Christ, therefore, eliminates the superficiality of human hero worship.

Phil. 3:7,8 "...I count all things but loss except for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..."

As you become occupied with Christ, you have a stronger motivation to have a relationship with the Lord, and you change gradually from dependence on people to dependence on the Lord. You cannot change people; it is God who causes people to change, to grow up. And no one is fully grown up who is not making use of occupation with Christ. The key to God's plan is that we no longer live for ourselves but for Christ.

2 Cor. 5:14-17 For the love of Christ continues to motivate us, in that One died for all; therefore, all have died. And He died as a substitute for all, in order that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was resurrected...

Occupation with Christ brings spiritual self-esteem and self-confidence. You have self-esteem when you stop competing with people and undermining them. You stop slandering,

gossiping, maligning, and judging other people. You have impersonal (professional) love for other people, because you are occupied with Christ. You live in grace, and you are a conduit of grace to other people, because Christ has become formed in your thinking and you love Him above everything else. The result is 2 Cor. 5:14 "The Lord for Christ motivates..."

Occupation with Christ is the Basis for Production and Blessing

It is the means by which mature believers contribute to national blessing (blessing by association). Deut. 30:15-20.

It produces courage and victory in battle, Jer. 23:10,11.

It is the basis for strength during testing, Psalm 31:23,24.

It results in great blessings, Psalm 37:4,5.

It provides strength under pressure, Heb. 11:27.

It helps the Christian avoid fatigue in the soul, Heb. 12:3.

SUMMARY REMARKS

Occupation with Christ is the ultimate function and outlook of the Christian way of life. It is the only answer to unrealistic expectations in life, which include not being treated the way you think you should be treated, and not being loved the way you think you should be loved.

Occupation with Christ is the main problem solving feature of Christian living, and it is the key to all other solutions which God's plan provides.

Occupation with Christ proceeds through three phases as the Christian grows in Christ. First, "Christ is formed in you", Gal. 4:19. As a result, "the love for Christ motivates us." 2 Cor. 5:14

Second, occupation with Christ is characterized as "Christ at home in your hearts", Eph. 3:17, resulting in "setting apart the Lord Christ in your hearts", 1 Pet. 3:15.

Third, in spiritual maturity, "Christ is exalted in my body, whether by life or by death," Phil.

1:20. The result "for me, living is Christ and dying is profit," Phil. 1:21.

Phil. 3:7-10, "Whatever things were gain to me, I have concluded them loss for the sake of Christ, I conclude all things to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, because I have suffered the loss of all things, and I now consider then dung in order that I may gain Christ. And that I may be demonstrated in Him, not having my own righteousness from the law, but that righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God by faith in Christ. That I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Christ in the fellowship of His death."

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION.

Spirituality, or the filling of the Holy Spirit, links salvation to Christian maturity. To move from salvation to maturity requires the filling of the Holy Spirit and the consistent intake of Bible truth.

At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit permanently **indwells** the body of the believer. At the same time the new believer receives the **filling** of the Holy Spirit, but this is not permanent! Because the body contains a sin nature, the Holy Spirit indwells the body to be in place to help the believer in conflicts within the soul. The spiritual battlefield is the soul, and victory over the power of sin begins with the filling (control) of the Holy Spirit.

We are **always indwelt** by the Holy Spirit. We are **not always filled** with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit means God the Holy Spirit controls the soul; and He does not control when we sin (grieve Him) or perform human good or evil (quench Him). When we confess our sins (1 John 1:9), God forgives the sins and "cleanses" us; and the Holy Spirit is in control again and able to carryout His work..

The following passages of Scripture describe various synonyms for the filling of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. Note that the Christian must be positive to this teaching and decide to follow the Lord's direction if there is to be any benefit derived from the Spirit's control

- Walking in the Spirit, Gal. 5:16.
- Walking in the light, 1 John 1:7
- Imitating Christ, Eph. 5:1.
- Epistles of Christ ministered by the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:3.
- Partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4.
- Being filled with the Spirit, Eph. 5:18.

The believer starts the Christian way of life with the Holy Spirit controlling the soul. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit simultaneously at the point of salvation. As soon as we sin, we take over control of our own soul. When we confess sin, the Holy Spirit again controls the soul.

Prov. 1:22, 23; "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

Carnality is loss of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Carnality is aggravated, and sins multiply, when a believer continually neglects confess sin. Confession of sin provides recovery and a renewal of the control of the Holy spirit.

Since the filling of the Holy Spirit is functional, it is the means of executing the objectives of the Christian way of life. Anything you do in the energy of the flesh is not the Christian way of life.

MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Rightly dividing the word of truth demands cognizance of the distinction between the pre-salvation, salvation, and post-salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit.

The pre-salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit are common and efficacious grace.

The salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit are regeneration, baptism of the Holy Spirit, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, sealing, and the bestowment of a spiritual gift.

Additional Topics to Study

- The Indwelling Holy Spirit
- The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
- Spiritual Gifts
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit's Salvation Ministry
- The Holy Spirit's Sustaining Ministry

An additional post-salvation ministry for the church age believer is the filling of the Holy Spirit, a special ministry which gives experiential support. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He teaches us doctrine, provides guidance, provides divine power to execute the plan of God, and is the means of the application of Bible doctrine to your current circumstances.

COMMANDS RELATED TO SPIRITUALITY.

Positive side

Eph. 5:18, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit."

This is the present passive imperative of PLEROO, which means "to be filled". The iterative present is for an action that recurs at successive intervals.

Gal. 5:16, "Walk by means of the Spirit."

This is a present tense for an action which is purposed but not taking place.

The positive side clarifies the difference between the means and result in spirituality. In spirituality, the Holy Spirit is the grace provision, Acts 1:8

The means is confession of sin. The result is the filling of the Spirit and the function of the Christian way of life.

Negative side.

Eph. 4:30, "Stop grieving the Holy Spirit, the God by whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption."

"Stop grieving" is the present active imperative of the Greek verb LUREO. Grieving the Spirit is carnality.

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This is a command to stop sinning and to stop living without confessing sin. This command emphasizes the fact that spirituality and carnality are mutually exclusive; 1 John 1:6-7; 1 John 2:10-11.

The command to not participate in human good or evil is found in 1 Thess. 5:19, "Do not quench the Spirit."

APPLICATIONS

The positive and negative commands emphasize imitation as the issue in the spiritual life. We either imitate God or people, Eph. 5:1.

- Believers filled with the Holy Spirit imitate God, Gal. 5:22-23.
- Carnal believers imitate unbelievers, 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 1:6.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is related to spirituality, growth, and victory over the sovereignty of the old sin nature, 2 Peter 1:2-5.

The application of doctrine, after the filling of the Holy Spirit, supplies your integrity; and your integrity supplies knowledge for growth and passing tests.

Since spirituality is the way of life for the believer as a priest, it is not subject to the Mosaic Law, Rom. 8:2-4.

Rom. 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

The Law demands perfect righteousness; believing in Christ satisfies the requirement of the Mosaic Law.

Gal. 5:18, "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the Law."

THE RESULTS OF THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. Christ is magnified in the inner life of the believer, 2 Cor. 3:3; Eph. 3:16-17; Phil. 1:20-21.
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the basis for understanding, believing, and applying Bible truth, John 14:26; 16:12-14; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; 1 John 2:27.

3. The believer is guided by God only while filled with the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:14-16.
4. The filling of the Holy spirit is the true function of worship for Christians, John 4:24; Phil. 3:3.
5. The filling of the Holy Spirit provides effectiveness in the believer's production; e.g., in witnessing, Acts 1:8; in prayer, Eph. 6:18.
6. The filling of the Spirit is the glorification of Christ in the human body, John 7:39 cf John 16:14; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.
7. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to imitate God: Eph. 5:1; Gal. 4:19 cf Gal. 5:22.
8. The Importance of the Power of the Spirit, 1 Kings 19:1-18.

Zech. 4:6, "'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord."

COMMENTS

In the church age, a believer represents the absent Christ, who is now at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, the purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit during the church age is related to the fact that Christ is absent.

So, the purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit during the church age is different than the purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit during the Millennium when Christ is on the earth.

The function of the filling of the Holy Spirit during the church age is to provide the ability to learn doctrine and to apply doctrine as the fulfillment of the Christian way of life. In this way, the church age believer fulfills his ambassadorship, representing Christ who is now at the right hand of the Father. We need special power to do this, and the divine power of the Holy Spirit is the basis on which we operate.

Emotion is not our energy. We all have emotion as part of our capacity for life, but emotion is not the filling of the Holy Spirit or the fuel for the Christian way of life. The filling of the Holy Spirit is never emotional in the church age.

Believers in the Millennium are said to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, Ezek. 36:27, 37:14; Jer. 31:33. Believers in the Millennium are also filled with the Holy Spirit, Isa. 29:19 – does not appear to apply to the Millennium period, 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10.

OIL AS AN ANALOGY FOR THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Oil is used as an analogy to the filling of the Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:20, 21.

By way of this analogy, the filling of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to assemble with other believers in a local church, where no two are in the same stage of spiritual growth. (**Oil reduces friction!**)

Certain people will be obnoxious to you; but the filling of the Holy Spirit protects you from getting your eyes on people, and He gives you understanding and toleration of others.

Oil in the ancient world was used for healing as a medicine. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces an understanding of others and a tenderness toward others as you realize they have problems also. Consequently, a breach is healed before there is any further difficulty. The filling of the Holy Spirit also heals your bitterness, anxieties, and fear as you grow with doctrine.

Oil is used for light. This refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Word of God.

Barnabas

INTRODUCTION

Barnabas was born in Cyprus and died in Salamis in the 1st century. His Jewish parents called him Joseph, but when he sold all his goods and gave the money to the apostles in Jerusalem, the Christians gave him a new name: Barnabas, which means 'son of consolation' or 'man of encouragement.' Although Barnabas was not among the original Twelve, he is traditionally thought to have been among the 72 commissioned by Jesus to preach; thus, he is given the honorary title of Apostle.

Barnabas the Levite lived with the earliest Christians in Jerusalem. He was one of the first

to welcome Saint Paul, the former persecutor of the early Church, and his former schoolmate. He persuaded the Christians of Jerusalem to accept Paul's claim that he was now a believer in Jesus (Acts 9:26-30). Barnabas was sent to Antioch, Syria, to investigate the community of non-Jewish believers there (Acts 11:22ff), and brought Paul there from Tarsus. It was in Antioch that the followers of The Way were first called Christians. With Paul he took the donation from Antioch to Jerusalem community during a famine.

After this Barnabas, his cousin John Mark, and Paul returned to Antioch before setting out together on the first missionary journey of the Christian church (Acts 13:2ff). They went first to Cyprus, Barnabas's native land, and for this reason Barnabas is honored as the founder of the Cypriot church. Then they continued on to Perga (whence John Mark returned to Jerusalem), Antioch in Pisidia (where they were so violently opposed by the Jews that they decided to preach to the pagans), and Iconium (where they were stoned).

At Lystra in Lycaonia, they were thought to be gods because of the miracles they worked and the physical beauty of Barnabas. After being taken as pagan gods, they were stoned out of the city, and fled back to Antioch in Syria. When a dispute arose regarding the observance of the Jewish laws and customs, Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem for the council that decided that non-Jews would not have to be circumcised to be baptized.

When they returned to Antioch, Barnabas wanted Paul and John Mark to continue their travels with him, but Paul fell out with John Mark, perhaps because John Mark had abandoned them at Perga. In spite of Paul's extremely forceful character, Barnabas took Mark's side, demonstrating that he was a man of considerable determination and courage. The Acts of the Apostles says, "There arose a sharp contention between them. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus" (Acts 15:39). Paul chose a new ally, Silas, and went elsewhere to strengthen the churches. Little

more is heard of Barnabas though it is believed that the rift with Paul was healed because we read about Barnabas later in 1 Corinthians 9:6. Paul also discusses his relationship to Barnabas in his letter to the Galatians.

THE MISSION OF BARNABAS

When intelligence came to Jerusalem that Peter had broken through the restraints of the Jewish Law and had even eaten at the table of the Gentiles (Acts 11:3), there was general surprise and displeasure among "those of the circumcision." But when he explained to them all the transaction, they approved his conduct, and praised God for His mercy to the heathen (Acts 11:18). And soon news came from a greater distance which showed that the same unexpected change was operating more widely.

The persecution in which Stephen was killed resulted in a general dispersion of the Christians. Wherever they went they spoke to their Jewish brethren of their faith that the promises had been fulfilled in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This dispersion and preaching of the Gospel extended even to the island of Cyprus, and along the Phoenician coast as far as Antioch. For some time the glad tidings were made known only to the scattered children of Israel. But at length some of the Hellenistic Jews, natives of Cyprus and Cyrene, spoke to the Greeks themselves at Antioch, and the divine Spirit gave such power to the Word that a vast number "believed and turned to the Lord." The news was not long in traveling to Jerusalem. Perhaps some message was sent in haste to the Apostles of the Church. The Jewish Christians in Antioch might be perplexed how to deal with the new Gentile converts, and it is not unnatural to suppose that the presence of Barnabas might be anxiously desired by the fellow missionaries of his native island.

We ought to observe the honorable place which the island of Cyprus was permitted to occupy in the first work of Christianity. We shall soon trace the footsteps of the Apostle to the Heathen in the beginning of his travels over the length of this island and see here the first

earthly potentate converted and linking his name forever with that of St. Paul (Acts 13:6-9). Now, while Saul is yet at Tarsus, men of Cyprus are made the instruments of awakening the Gentiles, one of them might be that "Mnason of Cyprus" who afterwards was his host at Jerusalem (Acts 21:16), and Joses the Levite of Cyprus, whom the apostles had long ago called "the Son of Consolation" and who had removed all the prejudice which looked suspiciously on Saul's conversion (Acts 9:27), is the first teacher sent by the mother church to the new disciples at Antioch. "He was a good man and full of the Holy spirit and of faith." He rejoiced when he saw what God's grace was doing, he exhorted all to cling fast to the Savior whom they had found, and he labored himself with abundant success. But feeling the greatness of the work and remembering the zeal and strong character of his friend, whose vocation to this particular task of instructing the heathen was doubtless well known to him, "he departed to Tarsus to seek Saul."

Whatever length of time had elapsed since Saul came from Jerusalem to Tarsus, and however that time had been employed by him, whether he had already founded any of those churches in his native Cilicia, which we read of soon after (Acts 15:41), whether he had there undergone any of those manifold labors and sufferings recorded by himself (2 Cor. 11) but omitted by St. Luke, whether by active intercourse with the Gentiles, by study of their literature, by traveling, by discoursing with the philosophers, he had been making himself acquainted with their opinions and their prejudices, and so preparing his mind for the work that was before him, or whether he had been waiting in silence for the call of God's providence, praying for guidance from above, reflecting on the condition of the Gentiles, and gazing more and more closely on the plan of the world's redemption, however this may be, it must have been an eventful day when Barnabas, having come across the sea from Seleucia, or round by the defiles of Mount Amanus, suddenly appeared in the streets of Tarsus. The last time

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the two friends had met was in Jerusalem. All that they then hoped, and probably more than they then thought possible, had occurred. "God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life". (Acts. 9:18) Barnabas had "seen the grace of God" (9:23) with his own eyes at Antioch, and under his own teaching "a great multitude" (9:24) had been added to the Lord. But he needed assistance. He needed the presence of one whose wisdom was higher than his own, whose zeal was an example to all, and whose peculiar mission had been miraculously declared. Saul recognized the voice of God in the words of Barnabas, and the two friends traveled in all haste to the Syrian metropolis.

TRADITIONS OF BARNABAS

Tradition says that Barnabas preached in Alexandria and Rome, and was stoned to death at Salamis about 61 AD. He is considered the founder of the Cypriot Church. The Order of Barnabites, founded by Saint Antony Zaccaria in Milan in 1530, took their name from their principal church named for Barnabas, who was once believed to have been the first bishop of Milan.

The apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas was long attributed to him, but modern scholarship now attributes it to an Alexandrian Christian between 70 and 100 AD.

The Gospel of Barnabas was probably authored by an Italian Christian who became an Islamic. The Acts of Barnabas, once attributed to John Mark, are now known to have been written in the 5th century.

Barnabas is especially venerated in Florence, Italy, and Cyprus. He is invoked against hailstorms and as a peacemaker.

Bible references to Barnabas: Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22, 25,30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7, 43, 46, 50; 14: 12, 14, 20; 15:2, 12, 22, 25, 35, 36, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13; Col. 4:10.