

The University Heights Messenger

January 31, 2010

The Church At Antioch of Syria--2 Caring, Generous, Giving

Imagine a terrible disaster striking us here in Lexington. It shouldn't be difficult in our recent world of 9/11, Katrina, and Haiti's earthquakes. Imagine our homes being destroyed, our government in turmoil, and ourselves suddenly in desperate need of the things we take for granted daily, such as food and clean water for ourselves and our children and even a safe place to lay our heads at night.

To whom would we turn if our neighbors were in the same position as us, humane and social institutions were stretched beyond their breaking point, and our government was in shambles and perhaps killed in the tragedy? There is one place we could and should turn with absolute certainty of receiving whatever aid they could give--our brothers and sisters in Christ from other parts of the world.

During the first year of its existence, the church at Antioch of Syria received word that disaster was going to strike their brethren throughout the inhabited world, though perhaps greatest in Judea. Acts 11:27-30 says, "**Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.**"

There are no less than four recorded famines that took place during the reign of Claudius (41-54 A.D.). Many scholars believe the one referred to in this place is the one that struck Judea particularly hard in 45 A.D. Regardless, the brand new Christians in Antioch of Syria suddenly found themselves able to practically show their support for their brethren elsewhere and they certainly did not disappoint.

Verse 29 said, "**So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.** Christians are to be good stewards of their possessions and here we see it in action. Once they had learned of the need of their brethren in Judea (specifically Jerusalem, 12:25), any who could take part in aiding them did. The verse seems to indicate that **all** of them aided to some extent. This shows us that what they offered in aid was a proportionate offering. Some would not have been able to send as much as others but all could send some.

Jerusalem had sent teachers and prophets to Antioch. Now the Christians at Antioch had the opportunity to help their fellow believers in Jerusalem. The obligation to materially aid those from whom we have received spiritual blessings is not only obvious here, but is enforced elsewhere in Scripture (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14; 2 Corinthians 9:1-2; Galatians 2:10, etc.). Christians receive spiritual blessing from their brethren the world over as those brethren pray for them, whether they've ever met or not. Thus, Christians are obligated to materially aid their brethren whenever the need arises. More than an obligation, it should become a desire for us.

There are several lessons to learn from our brethren in Antioch of Syria, though for the sake of space we will mention just two.

First, they did not have to know their brethren in Jerusalem personally to understand the need to aid them. Not long ago, our brethren in the Philippines suffered great loss due to flooding. Their need was announced from pulpits from one end of this country to another. The Philippine brethren received aid, but not nearly as much as they should have expected. Could that be because the vast majority of Christians in this country do not personally know a single Philippine Christian? Our brethren from Antioch in Syria showed us that shouldn't matter, didn't they?

Secondly, the obligation to give exists even if we can't give much. Remember the disciples in Antioch of Syria determined individually what they could give and that's what they gave. I cannot always give much, but I have *always* been able to give *some*. Whatever I am able to give my brethren suffering from a disaster was more than they had before I gave.

Let the knowledge that whatever we can give helps and our love for our brethren near and far move us to be a caring, generous, and giving church just like the church at Antioch of Syria.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Jim Edwards and **Esmeralda Agustin** are struggling' spiritually. Let's encourage them and let them know that we are concerned.

Remember sister **Glenn Kimberlin** as the weather and her health concerns keep her shut in.

Taylor Osterling has been hospitalized several times recently due to respiratory distress.

Shannon Gilbert, the wife of a coworker of Troy Antle, has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She is receiving treatments.

Rachel Knollman will have had her gall bladder removed Friday after the bulletin was printed. An update will be forthcoming today.

Rachel Crawford's aunt, **Gail Stein**, has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She is going to do chemo and radiation before surgery.

Robert Brundige, Richard's brother, is in Parkside Manor in Cynthiana dealing with some issues. **Sarah Brundige**, Richard's mother, is in Cambridge Place Nursing Home and in need of our prayer.

Let's also remember **David Day and his wife, Michelle Oxendine, Ron Catchen, Chuck McDavitt, and David Blakeman.**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The Men's meeting will be February 7. Please make your plans to attend.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE:

Sunday: Gen 1-2, Ps 1, Matt 1-2

Monday: Gen 3-4, Ps 2, Matt 3-4

Tuesday: Gen 5-6, Ps 3, Matt 5

Wednesday: Gen 7-8, Ps 4, Matt 6

Thursday: Gen 9-10, Ps 5, Matt 7

Friday: Gen 11-12, Ps 6, Matt 8

Saturday: Gen 13-15, Ps 7, Matt 9

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. "Therefore encourage one another..."

Sunday PM. Hebrews "Let Us" Statements--2

CLASS INFORMATION:

We will begin this morning in lesson 6 at IV, C, 7 (Christian growth--1 Peter 2:1-2). From lesson 6 we will move directly to lesson 10 (Evangelism). I appreciate the comments thus far. It makes the class more interesting and effective!