

Grace Fellowship Church

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Series: Acts

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The Antioch Revolution

Acts 13

If you're here this morning and you don't have a Bible with you, slip up your hand. We want to put a Bible in your hand. It may take them a moment or so to get back to you, but we're going to be in Acts 13, and it's really about the church at Antioch.

I don't know if this ever happens to you, but do you ever try something and you really took on more than you could do? Like maybe at the buffet. My dad had a phrase for it that your eyes were bigger than your stomach. Well last week I think I attempted a bridge too far. Do you understand what I mean by that? I really wanted to teach about this missionary movement and how it started, and I went through chapter 13 and chapter 14, talking about this was usually referred to as Paul's first missionary trip, and it really wasn't Paul's, and it wasn't his first one, and I kind of chunked it down, and we looked at it a little bit, and we talked about there was a second one and a third one.

I had a couple of people...actually more than a couple of people...who said to me...they were all guys though; it was interesting..."What was your point?" So the nice thing about being a pastor

is that you get to try it again, so I'm just going to act like last week was a mulligan, and I'm going to circle the plane, and we're going to come back in because what happened at Antioch changed the world. It changed the world, and it's worth taking some time, even if we miss it.

Have you ever been on a plane where they miss the runway? I have, actually in Kabul.

Remember that, Jody? They went through there; twice he missed the runway, and then they finally got it, but then some mines went off, but anyway, that's a different story, but this is really worth digging into and asking.

In Acts 11:26, it says that it's at Antioch that's the very first place they were called Christians. Now just think about how many places and events and hospitals and colleges and orphanages and just all that thing that comes under that thing we call Christian. Every bit of that started right there in Antioch.

Now when they called them Christians, they weren't describing what we think of as a club. When we talk about joining the church, that we become a Christian, we normally think of that as becoming part of an insider kind of group. The word that is used there, *Christians*, Christ is Messiah, and they were basically saying these were messianic crazies. They were just crazy about the Messiah. They were Messiah followers. They were consumed with the King and the kingdom, and they couldn't seem to have a conversation without going to the kingdom stuff.

One said, "You know what these people are? They're *messianiacs*. Is that a real word? Nope, but we'll call them that." That's really what was going on there. The Antioch idea was revolutionary. The world changed. Walls broke down.

I put up on the top of your handout sheet *what, why, and how*. Now look at chapter 13:1. "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets..." (Acts 13:1) and I'm actually going to come back in here and talk about what it means to have prophets in the church and teachers.

You have Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius of Cyrene, and you have this group of five people here who really are at the time pretty much unknown people, and there are five things they do there. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said..." (Acts 13:2) Does the Holy Spirit still say? I think so.

"Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:2-3) Notice again verse 4. "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 13:4) There were five ingredients there. We're going to focus on the first. Ministering to the Lord for the work, they laid hands on them, and there's a whole biblical basis and meaning for that. It's Timothy who Paul reminds him, "You've received this gift by prophecy by the laying on of hands." They were sent out by the Holy Spirit for all God had done with them.

Now when you're looking at this, the first two are *to the Lord* and *for the work*, and so you have this pendulum, and we've used this here before, but I want to throw back into it. This side over here is where they begin. They begin ministering to, which often is referred to in the Scripture as rest or worship, and God is more interested in your worship than He is in your work.

When God created mankind, He did not create a machine. He did not say, "I have a lot of stuff I need to do so I'm going to make a man." What He did is He actually created the entire cosmos, and then the very first day of their existence was a day off. That's amazing, isn't it? They had actually a job to do on that day, and it was to enjoy God...enjoy what God was doing.

Here's what the church is doing: The first thing, the first priority, they're ministering to the Lord. Why is the church at Antioch so different than the other churches? One of the reasons is the church at Antioch redefines what it means to be a church. The church at Antioch ceased to see the church as a place. The church at Antioch ceased to define church as something you go and do but people who become the church wherever they are.

The church was not measured in their mind by their buildings and their budgets and their programs; the church at Antioch really was a *movement*. The church began to see themselves as just the work of God that God was doing through them together.

I put on your sheet a *reservoir*, a *river*, a *resourcing center* because that's what happens at Antioch. The very first word of the chapter is *now*, and it's important you understand there's a context in which this happens. It's a context of persecution. It's a context of trouble. It's a context

where people have lost their fortunes, they've lost their lands, and they've lost their family.

People have been executed. All kinds of problems, and mixed in with that problem you find also issues of massive miracles that happen.

I don't know if you've ever...I'm sure you have...found yourself in a situation where you felt completely trapped. Maybe you weren't in a prison, but you were in a place, and you just really didn't like it, or you didn't like the people you were with. Okay, I'm going to ask a question. This is rhetorical, so don't respond because if you do, you could get yourself in trouble. Some of you right now in this room if you were honest and could be honest you're married to somebody you feel trapped with. You feel like, *I don't really like this, but I made these commitments.*

Some of you are in jobs you did not choose to be there, and you really don't know how you ended up there. You'd rather not be there, and you don't know how to get out of them because how do you get out of it. Some of you have created identities of who you are, and now people impose that identity on you, and you don't have any clue how to break out of that identity.

Some of you are in situations where you just really feel like you're trapped. If you're a young mother and you have children, do you ever feel like you're trapped, like you can't get out? I don't know why they would ever use water boarding when they could just put somebody in a room full of crying babies. I promise you; you put me in a room full of crying babies that all of them needed to be changed, I'd confess to anything. "Whatever it is, I am guilty. I'll sign the paper. Just let me away from here."

Now see, we have hundreds of kids out of here this weekend; we can just say it. We can just act like, *No, I know he said that Sunday, but I disagreed with him. Having a teenager is amazing.* Actually, it is, particularly when they get a job.

Antioch is a redefinition of the church. Up until this point, the work of God was Jewish in a place among a culture with a certain language, and what happens in Antioch changes everything. I don't like to use that term *paradigm shift* because it's used so much. It's like gone flat and all the shock has moved out of it. Sometimes we use the term *game changer*, like "When Michael Jordan played the game and he was on his game, he was a game changer."

That's not a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift is if you gave all the basketball players bats. See, that's a game changer. That completely changed the game. A hundred years ago in football nobody had ever thought about the idea of passing the football. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine a quarterback today being drafted or a football team that the quarterback did not even have the ability to pass? If you live in Atlanta you can imagine what that's like, but if you live anywhere else you might not be able to do that, but a hundred years ago nobody had ever *thought* about just kind of throwing the football.

There was a team in St. Louis that was so bad at running the football, they said, "What would happen if we throw it?" So this coach got really desperate, and they held these secret plays, and they decided, *If we can't move the ball this week, we're going to try to throw it.* Now at that time, the rule was that if you threw the ball and they dropped it, it just was an automatic turnover. So the first time they got out there, they decided, *Okay, we're going to give this thing a big heave*

ho. They threw it, the guy dropped it, and it was a turnover. So they decided, *Well let's try running it again*. They couldn't run it! So they said, "Okay, we can't do any worse. Let's just throw it again." They threw it for like 20 yards, and of course it changed the game.

Here is what happens in Antioch: Antioch changes what it means to be a church. They moved from being really a reservoir of spiritual giftedness. Paul is there and Barnabas is there, and they have this amazing density of spiritual depth there. They're being disciplined and evangelism is happening and discipleship is happening. There is explosive growth that's happening around the city, but the leadership wants more.

The leadership goes, "It's not enough we're just spiritually rich and dense." So there's a process, and they start the first piece, the first step to a break out where God is going to do something revolutionary is a break in. They don't start by saying, "How do we break out?" They start by, "God, will You break in to what is going on here?"

They have this reservoir, and what God says to them is, "Here there are some people I'm already working in their heart, and I'm going to show you who they are." It's in the midst of this prayer and fasting that God shows by the Holy Spirit these guys. "You're going to go out, and you're going to be a river that really becomes a spiritual resourcing center." Out of Antioch these mission movements happen. They move up into Europe, and they move down into Turkey and Ephesus. Really the whole church as we really understand it in the first 300 or 400 years happens not because they decide they're going to do a work for God but because they're going to worship.

I can't overemphasize this. It's part of the DNA of the church. Look at Acts 5. The early church when they first started preaching the gospel, in verse 40, they're called before the council, "And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them..." (Acts 5:40) Have you ever been beaten? I'm talking about beaten with a cane, with rods. Here's Peter; here's John. They come in, and they take rods out, and they beat them.

These guys are bloody, they're battered, and now "...they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus..." (Acts 5:40) Do you get this? Here's some sadistic guy: *Boom!* "Are you going to talk in that name anymore?" *Boom!* "We're tired of hearing that. Do you agree you will not talk in that name again?" *Boom!* Blood is running down your back. *Boom!* Your skin is being ripped from your back. "Do you agree you will not talk about this name anymore?" They beat them.

"...and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council..." complaining. Is that what it says? "...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Acts 5:40-41) "Lord, who are we that we should have the privilege of suffering for Your name? Who are we? Why would You choose us to let us be ones who would be beaten for Your name?"

That's a little different attitude, isn't it? Most of the time our natural, carnal reality is, "Lord, why would You? Why am I going through all that?" Have you ever seen somebody in the parking lot not get the parking place they want? It's like somebody *electrocuted* them! "Lord, what a day I've had. I didn't get my parking place."

Look over to chapter 16. This is the kind of thing. In that second movement of the missions movement, what happens there, they go. Paul has this dream, and this man from Macedonia, this Greek guy in his dream is trying to go a particular way, and he has this dream. I know this pushes some of us into places we're not comfortable with, the idea that God could speak to us in a dream. I'm not big on dreams. I think most of the time my dreams have to do with eating. I wish it wasn't true, but I really do think most of my dreams have something to do with food.

Paul sees this vision of this man from Macedonia, and he goes back, and he talks to his team, and his team resonate with it and say, "Yes, that's what God's doing," and they go into the town, and the first thing they do is they get cross haired with this woman who's a demonic person. They cast the demon out of her, and then it causes some marketplace issues. They bring them in.

Again, look at verse 22. "Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes..." Can you imagine just being taken to a city and your clothes are ripped off? You're just naked. "...and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." (Acts 16:22-24)

Look at this. "But at midnight Paul and Silas were..." (Acts 16:25) griping and complaining. Is that what it says? They were talking about how, "Father, why have You abandoned us? What's wrong? I saw that dream. I thought this was what You wanted." No! "But at midnight Paul and

Silas were praying and singing hymns..." (Acts 16:25) That word actually comes out of that word *hallelujah*. They're worshipping.

When you see the word *hymns* in the Bible, let me just say to you very clearly, it has nothing at all to do with a hymnbook. A lot of you think that! You have this idea that they pulled out this green hymnal. That is not what that means. It doesn't mean, "And they sang my favorite old hymn. I don't much like the choruses. I like the hymns."

Now let me tell you something; the hymns that people like to latch onto used to be called choruses, and when the Wesley's started writing these hymns of the day, they used the choruses out of the beer halls to do it. If you are singing an old hymn, chances are really good it came out of a British beer hall. Now you may say, *I don't really like that. I don't want to know that*. Here's what I want you to know: The reaction they have to this is *worship*.

Look at this though. "...and the prisoners were listening..." (Acts 16:25) Why were they listening? Because they couldn't leave. They were stuck there. They couldn't leave. It was not like, *I'm out of here. I don't like this at all*. Let me tell you something; how you respond to situations you find yourself in that you would rather not be in, somebody is listening. It may be your kids at the kitchen table. It may be your wife on the other end of the line where you just need somebody to vent with.

Listen, the first reaction is worship! Worship. Turning that heart to the Lord. Now you know what's amazing is "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison

were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."
(Acts 16:26) Do you see this? Break out was preceded by a break in. It happened here before it happened there. You cannot export something you haven't experienced. If we have this hunger to see God break out in our neighborhoods, we're going to have to say, "Lord, I need You to do this work inside my own heart."

Job 1, which is a fascinating chapter in the Bible... If you read through Job, you find he had like trial after trial. His children were killed. His jobs were just destroyed. His homes were destroyed. Every time I read Job, the only thing that makes me wonder if God is merciful is that God left his wife there, and his wife comes up to him and said, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" I am not Job. I think I would have said, "Why didn't *you* die?" His health is all gone. Everything is messed up, although I do think there's some justice in it it seems because she has like 10 more children, so she has to go through some trials of her own.

Listen, you know what he does? He rips his clothes, he falls on his face, and he worships. That's what he does, and you know what he says? "Blessed is the name of the Lord." Blessed is the name of the Lord? You want me to tell you in Job who was listening? You know who was listening in Job? The devil. The powers of darkness.

The powers of darkness, Satan comes to God and says, "You're not so much." God says, "Have you looked at Job?" Satan says, "Job? You have a hedge of protection about him, and if You were to remove that hedge of protection, he would curse You to Your face. That's what he'll do.

If You take his houses and You take his health and You take his prosperity, he will curse You to Your face." God says, "You don't know Job."

You know what Satan thought? Satan thought Job was like him. That's what he thought. When all was gone, you know what Job says? "I came into this world with nothing. I'm going to exit this world with nothing. Blessed be the name of the Lord." When you do that, the powers of darkness shudder. They don't know what to do. They look at you and they go, "They are not like us." We're not.

I need to move through this. The two big points there are *they gave something* and *they gave up something*. Acts 4:36-37 is the story of how actually Barnabas comes on the stage, and Barnabas is described in Acts 4:36. He is a Levite of the island of Cyprus, and he's a landowner, and he goes and sells some of that land, and he gives the proceeds. It describes the fact that he comes and he lays that offering at the feet of the apostles.

Now let me tell you something; Barnabas had no way of knowing when he took his homeland in Cyprus and sold this landholding he had and brought it to Jerusalem, the proceeds, and laid it at the apostles' feet as worship... He's a Levite. Worship is his whole background and the Levitical priesthood. He had no way of knowing that when he laid that at the apostles' feet, this gift of land he sold in Cyprus, that the very first mission movement he was going to lead was going right back to Cyprus. Isn't that interesting?

He goes right back into Cyprus. That's where he goes with Paul. At this point, when he gives this gift, Paul is working for the other team. Paul is trying to destroy them, but he turned loose of this, and God gave it back to him in a way that is absolutely unimaginable. I'm just going to say this to you. We are not going to see a work of God with people who have not generous spirits.

If you think God is going to do something magnificent through you and you have this tight-handed spirit, there is no way that is going to happen. I put a couple of other references down on your sheet...Deuteronomy 26:2, Exodus 22:29. In all those passages, he talks about when we give to the Lord, we give of the first fruits.

Numbers 18:12: He says, "Give of your best products." Don't give God the leftovers of your life, and I'm not just talking about money here. I'm talking about whatever it is, if you're going to see a breakthrough, you're going to have to give something. The other word here is they *fasted*. You're going to have to give up something. You're going to have to give something up. You're going to have to turn something loose.

I don't know what that is, but my bet is you do know what it is. God is just saying, "Are you willing to really just turn loose of this thing?" I can promise you this: There is nothing you hand into the Lord's hands that He doesn't give back to you in multiples.

Friday night, we had a meeting over at the house, and a bunch of the people who had gone of the Epic Tour was over there, and one of the young men who was there was a good kid. He grew up at Grace. He's deeply embedded in Midtown. His name is Jimmy and went to Parkview.

I said, "Jimmy, how are you doing?" He goes, "One of the things God did on this trip for me is the realization that God wanted my best, my first." I said, "What does that look like for you, Jimmy?" Jimmy is a CPA. He has a lot of career stuff, a lot of stuff going on. He says, "I realized I needed to get up an hour early every morning and spend time in prayer and the Word. I'm not like blazing a trail. I'm only doing a chapter a week, but I get up an hour early, I open that chapter and I say every week, 'God, I want this chapter in my life.' All week long I just read it, and I just pray over it, and I spend that first hour with God. I've heard you guys talk about all this before, but it's the first time I've experienced it."

Now listen, you can't export what you haven't experienced. See, we have this cognitive idea about spiritual growth, that if I know enough and I get some information, that's really what I need, and we measure people in their cognitive maturity, but really I think what God is looking for is a *cardiac* maturity. What God is saying, "Where really is your heart? What really is going on there?" The church was deep into this thing of worship.

Hebrews 13:15: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips..." (Hebrews 13:15) First Peter 2:5: "...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices..." (1 Peter 2:5)

Judges 1:2 and Judges 20:18: There's a very interesting formula there. They're about to go into war. They have this got work they have to do, and they say, "We have to go to war. God, what would You have us do? How do we fight this war?"

God makes a very, very simple command. It's very simple. It's just two words. He says, "How are we going to go to war? How are we going to have this break out?" Here's what God says: "Judah first." Now do you understand what that means? That word *Judah* is the word we get our word *Jew* from, but it goes back to Genesis 29 and 35, and literally what it means is *worship*. "Worship first."

Literally what He's saying is, "Before you decide you're going to go to war, the first thing you need to do is make sure you move into worship. *Yehuwdah*." That comes first. The root word of that *Yehuwdah* is *yadah*, and it means to cast and to throw and to heave. Here's what He says: "Before you decide you're going to do this work, just have worship, cast, and confess worship unto the Lord."

I talk to people a lot, and it's mostly guys who'll say things like, "I'm just not really an emotional guy. I'm not really into worship." You know what I always want to say? "Let's go to the football game because I want to watch." Some of these guys dress up for the game. Have you ever seen those Packers? Man, they're crazy. They have cheese heads. "I have my suit, have my food, have my stuff ready."

In the book of Joshua, they're going up to fight Jericho, and Jericho was a place where they just couldn't break into, and they prayed, and they said, "God, why can't we break in here?" God gave them the weirdest war strategy imaginable. He said, "Here's what We want you to do: We want you to put the priests and Levites up front, and We want you to take the trumpet bearers, and We

want you to march around the city every day worshiping, and on the seventh day We want you to march around and do it seven times, and then everybody just shout out worship."

Can you imagine if that was your war strategy? I cannot imagine trying to sell this. "This is your best plan? Haven't you like heard of Trojan horse things? Can't we like go over the wall? Can't we like dig under the wall? Can't we like make some alliances in the community?"

"No, here's what you're going to do: You're going to lead with worship!" They did this and the walls came down, and it's really interesting because in chapter 7, right after that, they get so confident in their abilities. Jericho was the biggest, strongest city, and there was another little city. It'd be like you're going to take on New York, and then you have another war you have to fight, and that's like Snellville...although we might be better off.

Then they just go off in their confidence because one of their guys takes some of the stuff from Jericho that is *haram* and holds it in, and they hold onto what God has said, "This is just Mine." They experienced terrible failure. Let me just say this again. You cannot, you will not, we will not, if we hunger to be a... God has blessed us with deep reservoir of giftedness, but if we want that to be a river that is a resourcing movement, we cannot pretend to want out there what doesn't happen in here.

They gave something, and they gave up something. That means they fasted. I'm just going to say this to you. I'm not big on guilt, I don't react well to guilt, but here's what I do know: Several times in my life when I needed a breakthrough, it happened because of fasting. I don't think it

was because God did something more because I was hungry; I think it's just some things got out of my way. If you fast, it's shocking how much more time you have in the day. If you're not cleaning up food and fixing food and putting away food and buying food, it is absolutely unbelievable how much time you have.

If you take that same time to focus, I'm going to tell you something; you will see. This is what they said to the disciples when they were up against it. They said, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?" He says, "This kind does not come but by prayer and fasting." There are some levels you can rock along at and you will be okay, but when you really come upon that where you are entrapped and you can't break in, it's time we move back into this section here because the deeper we go here, the wider we'll go here.

Let's pray: Lord, thank You for You. Lord, thank You that You are such an amazing God, that You are worthy of our worship. Your Word says You are enthroned in the praises of Your people.