

Prayerwalking



Taking Your Faith Into The Real World



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The Hand Of The Lord

After the death of Stephen in Acts 7, a wave of persecution swept through Jerusalem. Many believers fled from Jerusalem to Antioch, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only” (Acts 11:19). Antioch was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire with a population estimated in the region of a half million. It had a large Jewish population.

These scattered believers shared the gospel in their new home. At first, they only shared with Jewish people. Yet, among them, there were Jewish people from Cyprus and Cyrene which began sharing the gospel with Gentiles, “But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). With Greek as their dominant language, they took a bold step and began declaring the gospel to Gentiles.

When they proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles of Antioch, many turned to Jesus Christ in true faith, “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). Why did this happen? Luke, the author of Acts, gives us the inspired interpretation of why this took place. It was because of the “hand of the Lord.”

The expression “hand of the Lord” is a rare one on the pages of the New Testament. It’s common enough in the Old Testament. However, Luke is the only New Testament writer who uses this phrase. This phrase “hand of the Lord” means that the invisible God is making His grace and power visible and known. What does this passage teach us about “the hand of the Lord?”

The hand of the Lord brings people to saving faith in Christ.

When these people declared the good news of Christ, the hand of the Lord moved. When the hand of the Lord

moved, the Bible says, “a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (**Acts 11:21**). Do you see the connection? As God manifested His power, people came to trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior. The power of God brought people to saving faith in Christ.

Salvation is of the Lord (**Jonah 2:9**). It is His work in the lives of people. Apart from the power of God, no one can turn from sin and self to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. It is God alone who can save a person from sin and self (**Ephesians 2:8**). Salvation is the work of God in which He does for people what they cannot do for themselves.

When we ignore this truth or fail to grasp it fully, we forget the enormity of God’s power in saving us. The power of God alone can bring people to saving faith. It is not in our ability to save ourselves or to save anyone. It is only when the mighty hand of the Lord moves that people will believe and turn to the Lord.

This truth should also drive us to pray for lost people. Since it is the power of God alone that brings people to Christ, we must plead for that power to work in their lives. Why do people believe and turn to the Lord? It is because of the hand of the Lord. We must plead with God to move and work powerfully in the lives of those outside of Jesus Christ. Without the power of God, there is no hope.

The hand of the Lord blesses our evangelistic efforts.

It’s significant to notice that the hand of the Lord was “with them” (**Acts 11:21**). This is what made their sharing of the gospel so effective. The power of God attended their witness and brought about change in the lives of people. The hand of the Lord working through their sharing of the gospel brought people to faith in Christ.

The power of God flowed through their ministry so that a great number believed and turned to the Lord. This reminds us that God has chosen means to save people. He works through the proclamation of the gospel to save and bring people to Christ. God’s power attends the faithful proclamation of the gospel to bring people to Christ in faith and repentance. God’s power flows through the gospel.

Again, this truth should drive us to prayer. Our evangelistic efforts will bear fruit only by the power of God. How do we receive that power? It is by prayer. We call on and plead with God to work mightily through our witness, our preaching, our teaching, our conversations, and our ministering. We ask that His power would flow through our efforts to bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

In this text, Luke is showing us what happens when people engage in evangelism in a prayerful manner. We are to cry out to God to fill our evangelistic efforts with His power and bring many to Christ. Unless the work is committed to the Lord in prayer, seeking His blessing, all our works will be in vain. The task of reaching people with the gospel is as

urgent and necessary as in the days of the apostle. People are headed to an eternal hell at a breakneck speed. We must prayerfully saturate our efforts, asking and looking for the power of God through those efforts.

The hand of the Lord continues to change peoples' lives.

This good news traveled fast. It quickly reached the church in Jerusalem, "Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch" (Acts 11:22). It's evident that these churches had a concern and connection to one another. The church should have a concern to ensure that faith and practice be kept pure. For this reason, they sent Barnabas to investigate.

The church at Jerusalem couldn't have made a better choice, "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24). He was well known for his encouragement. When he came to Antioch, he saw how God had worked and rejoiced in it, "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encourage them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord" (Acts 11:23). It was evident to him that a work of God had taken place. In response to this, he taught and encouraged them to continue with the Lord.

It's interesting that Barnabas saw the grace of God (Acts 11:23). He could see that God had brought about a change in the lives of these people. It was evident that God had worked. This reminds us

that God's hand continues to change lives. It not only enables people to believe and turn to the Lord, it also enables them to continue with Him. The people believed in, turned to the Lord, and were added to the Lord, i.e., added to the church. They came to Christ and began participating and fellowshiping with other believers in the church. The evidence was clear - the hand of the Lord had moved!

These verses remind us of two great truths. The hand of the Lord - His grace and power - continue to change people after coming to Christ. Coming to Christ is only a beginning. It is a beginning of lifelong growth and change. The work of God continues in those who believe and turn to the Lord.

At the same time, God uses means to this change. God's grace and power flows through means. Barnabas helped mentor and disciple these believers. This continued growth and change takes place through believers mentoring and discipling other believers. Barnabas taught and encouraged these believers. Everyone who comes to Christ must be taught and encouraged. Believers need good models and practical instruction on how to follow Christ.

How Can I Use This Passage In My Prayer Life?

I would ask you to consider the following suggestions on how to use this text in your praying. You can adapt and adjust them to fit your church and your area.

- *Pray that believers in your area will clearly convey the gospel to unbelievers (11:20). Ask that your church and you will clearly and powerfully present the gospel;*
- *Pray that the power of God will flow through the preaching of and witnessing to the gospel in your area (11:21).*
- *Ask that the hand of God would lead many to believe the gospel and turn to the Lord (11:21).*
- *Plead for a powerful work of God in your area that brings many to Christ (11:21, 24). We are told two times in this text that great numbers of people turned to Jesus Christ. God is able to draw many to Christ at one time. This gives us insight on how to pray. God is able to save great numbers of people. We are to plead for genuine spiritual awakening that brings many to Christ.*
- *Plead for authentic life transformation that gives outward evidence to God's invisible work of grace (11:23). The text says that Barnabas saw the grace of God. He was able to see the outward effects of the inward work of grace by the Holy Spirit. Call on God to work powerfully in peoples' lives, giving evidence that the grace and power of God has wrought a change.*
- *Pray that your church and all who come to Jesus Christ will remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (11:23).*
- *Pray that mature believers will exemplify the life of faith and a life filled with the Spirit of God (11:24). We need to pray that God will raise up Barnabas' in our churches – people who will provide a*

good model of following Christ and practical instruction on how to follow Him. Barnabas' example calls for imitation. God is calling you to become a mature believer who encourages other believers. He's calling you to be a Barnabas. Won't you pray that you will be:

- A person of moral character – “good’
- Full of the Holy Spirit
- Full of faith
- Glad at the conversion and growth of other believers
- Proactive in encouraging the faith and walk of other believers.

**Dr. Kevin Meador, President
The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc.
P. O. Box 278,
Hickory, MS 39332**

**(601) 635-2180
(601) 646-2295**

**EMAIL:
prayer@prayerclosetministries.org**

**WEB PAGES:
www.prayerclosetministries.org
www.kingdompraying.com**