

A Gifted Church

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon delves into the gifted leadership and ministries within the church at Antioch, highlighting the roles of prophets, teachers, and elders. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and embracing diverse ministries within the church, not conforming to traditional structures but allowing God to grant and reveal ministries for the edification of the body of Christ.

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Description

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Transcript

Here tonight, I want you to turn in your Bible to Acts chapter 11, Acts chapter 11 going to the second part of this series. I'm very excited about this series. I'm a bit disturbed.

I have to stop. We do the school of Christ and come back to it, but we'll bear with that. I believe for us as a church, this series, which I've called the Antioch Church, a vision for LCC, and I'm not establishing a vision for this church.

Don't think that. I'm not doing that. Don't think this is a peculiar vision that I'm laying out for this church.

I'm not. I'm just saying there's principles within this actual church, Antioch, which are vital for us and all churches to learn. If it's a vision for us, it's a vision for every church.

Be assured of that. We started last week, the last message, part one was an evangelistic church. The church at Antioch was an evangelistic church.

You will remember they got scattered from Jerusalem. They lost everything. They were under persecution, under threat of their life.

They had lost possessions, and they're traveling 300 miles with their possessions, their family, their children, not knowing where they're going, but as they travel, they evangelize. Once they get to Antioch, they start to preach the Lord Jesus to the Grecians or to the Gentiles. They'd only done it to the Jews before.

Just to remind you about that, and we as a church, LCC, I believe that from our very beginnings we're an evangelistic church. At an early stage of this church, Candice and I had traveled to the north, and I spoke to someone very close to me who was in a good church. Every Sunday morning, there was about 300 people minimum in that church faithfully every single morning.

At prayer meeting, there were a maximum of 10 people. In evangelism, every week there was about three people. That was their church.

At the very same time, as that person is telling me about their church, 300 members with only 10 in the prayer meeting, I began to share our irregular experience here in Limerick as we just tried to establish our feet and our foundations. I began to tell them that actually we have more sinners in our prayer meeting than we have saints. In fact, we had so many sinners coming into the prayer meeting, we had to stand up halfway through and begin to preach the gospel because we couldn't miss the opportunity.

We stopped our praying and began to testify. Candice would stand up and testify, and then that would give me time to stand up and preach the gospel that you must be born again. It got so bad trying to hide from the sinners that I said, we're going to have to organize another fellowship time and another prayer time so that us believers actually get to sit and talk together and we can just pray together because there's so many, all these sinners coming in around us.

I won't name names tonight, but let me just remind you of a few things. I'm not sure if I'm meant to or allowed to mention these things, but there was one young man turned up for the first time on a Sunday morning, Monday morning, I wake up at home and there's a phone call, Candice saying, it's the Limerick guards are on the phone for you. I pick up the phone going, I wonder what this is about.

It's an inspector saying, do you know who you just had in your service yesterday? Is there anything missing? Have you lost money? Is there any possessions gone? They'd actually found a Bible in his possession and knew he can't be a Bible reader. So they got very, very suspect when they find our address and they're deeply disturbed about this man. Well, I told the inspector and I'm not looking, I'm making sure I look at no one in here.

And the inspector, I just started to preach to him and said, don't you realize that's what we want in LCC? That's exactly the sort of person we want in this church. We used to tell people, don't bring your handbags or your wallet or your purse or any money or anything, anything you want stolen, don't bring it to the service. And so that's how we began.

That's how, and amidst evangelism, you know, there was one Wednesday night as I preached against the Catholic Mary, here come two older men in and pulled their seats, never seen them before, pulled their seats into the middle aisle, sat up and began. And then it suddenly clicked who they came in with. And I go, that's their grandfather who's involved with paramilitaries, who was very busy in the North in 1972.

And if you don't know what that means, then nevermind about that. And I told Brother Souf at the end, well, you'd be looking for another preacher next week. We just had constant experiences, young men who

had had reputations in this city would leave and they've got a bag and the guards pull up in the car, pull them over and say, what's in the bag? Bibles.

Yeah, yeah, I've heard that one before. That's a new one. They open up the bag, it's filled with Bibles.

We had times, meetings where the travelers were coming in with their kids and their kids are different than most kids, I want to tell you. I don't mean that disrespectfully, I love them with all my heart. I would throw myself in the middle.

And so Candice started doing a kid's work next door with all of these traveler kids. We would go to bed at night, she had cuts, she had bruises. This is true.

Up and down her legs, she had bruises on her arms. She had had to grab them, hold them as she preached the gospel to them. Paul and Suf took turns and taken one of the younger, wilder ones, brought them through and they would even spit on Paul and Suf, threaten, if you don't let me go, I'll spit on you.

Well, they just held them. I said, you shout away in the meeting, I'll just preach louder than you, but we'll preach until you get tired. This is how we conducted our meetings on a normal, basic week to week process.

And saints of God, we are called to be an evangelistic church. There's one lady here, she'd come in, she wasn't saved, wasn't born again. And she would say, can I take these pack of tracts away? She was giving them to everyone.

She was ringing a family member saying, you need to be born again and get rid of those statues. I went, I'm not telling anyone up north that we've got unsaved people evangelizing, witnessing, handing out gospel tracts. I'll lose my reputation.

So I said, don't tell them that I'm not going to hand out tracts or witness or evangelize. Do you know what? This church in an unsafe state was more evangelistic than most mature, experienced, large churches that I have met. You can hardly move those old crystallized things.

It's impossible. And yet we had this rather unusual, rough, vulgar looking sort of thing. But I loved it.

I absolutely loved it. And you know what? Saints of God, we organized these stag parties. A young man in this church, I know we missed it a bit recently, but we're going to get back on track because of lockdowns.

You can't get married in this church as a young man unless you're willing to go street preaching. And we got a bit delayed on it, lost our way a bit, but we'll get back on track again. We've got two weddings coming up.

We're going to get right back there. But that's what we do with all the young guys. You get married, we're all going away to Galway or somewhere else for a few days, and we're just going to preach on the streets.

That's what you're going to... That's our stag party. No getting drunk, no parties. We're going to go evangelize sinners on the streets.

Saints of God, I'm just telling you, we're called the first thing we dealt with last time. We are an evangelistic church. But let me take you to part two here.

This is part two, and this is my message. A gifted church. Not just an evangelistic church, but a gifted church.

Read with me in Acts chapter 11 from verse 19. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phineas and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, speak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. 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.

Who when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them that with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. And much people was added unto the Lord.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people.

And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. And in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signaled by the Spirit that there should be a great earth throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren, which dwell in Judea, which also they did, and sent it through the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the word of God.

We thank you for your hand revealed, even in our own midst, what you've done in days past. And oh God, we pray for a mighty revival. What you've done in a small way, we pray that you do in a great way right across this city that men and women who knew not Christ would again begin to seek after him.

Lord God, that we would see such a stirring by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And Lord God, tonight I pray, Lord God, as we move on from looking at the church as an evangelistic church and move to it being a gifted church. Father, open our eyes, teach us, show us how you want the church of God to function.

And Lord God, we rely on your grace tonight, not only to make us an evangelistic church, but to make us a gifted church that you're going to grant your gifts unto this church that are supernatural, that are Christ-given, that are sovereign, that are real, that are solid, that are genuine, and that are biblical. And we pray that the name of Jesus would be glorified tonight. In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

An evangelistic church, a gifted church, this is what the Antioch church was. And I'm taking you through stage by stage, step by step, through the second most important church in the book of Acts after Jerusalem. And I've got four pen portraits that I want to depict for you here tonight in the passage that we've just read and elsewhere concerning Antioch.

I want to deal with Antioch being a gifted church. And by gifted, I don't mean the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, I mean the five ministry gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to deal with men being gifted, ministry men, preachers, leaders within the church.

You see, so far we've seen a church, a move of God come to Antioch, but there's no structure, there's no leadership, there's no function in ministry, but there is a move of God. Nobody could have created that. Ministry couldn't have created that.

It was a sovereign act of God. But here I want to give you four pen portraits. I want to paint a picture for you because we're going to deal with other messages on other subjects.

But I want this to be clear before we move on to other things. So you're going to begin to understand Antioch, how the church functions, how it operates, not according to your tradition, not according to the church out there, not according to what is normal. But I want to go back to Scripture.

You see, I am a Bible man. I'm someone who holds to the written Scripture and believes in the authority of Scripture. I do not like tradition hindering biblical teaching.

I do not like men and women just saying, this is normal, this is what we do, whenever it isn't taught in Scripture. I do not conform to that. We as a church are not going to conform to that, but we are going to follow Scripture.

And so let me paint you, see, I'm an artist. It's the only A I ever got at school was for art. Everything else was a straight F. But you know, tonight I want to paint four word pictures for you of giftedness within the church at Antioch.

Number one, and this is my first point from Acts 11, 22, Barnabas, the encouraging prophet, Barnabas, the encouraging prophet. It says in verse 22, then tidings of these things, what things? Of this move of God, the hand of God, many turning to the Lord in Antioch. Remember, they began to evangelize normal Christians, persecuted Christians, nameless Christians are evangelizing and God begins to move in a mighty way.

And so it says these tidings of these things came onto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem and they sent forth Barnabas. And so there's our first picture is this man called Barnabas who gets sent forth to Antioch. And I want you to see this here tonight.

The church of Jerusalem hears about this. The apostles didn't pioneer the church at Antioch. They did not evangelize.

They did not plan it. They did not organize it. They begin to hear the news.

Do you realize vast multitudes, hundreds, if not thousands are getting born again? Well, who done this? Well, no one. It was normal Christians simply evangelizing and sharing the gospel. It is utterly, utterly remarkable.

And so what did the apostles of Jerusalem do? The apostles don't go to look. They choose a man and that man is called Barnabas. They say we're choosing Barnabas.

He is the man for this. We're hearing about Gentiles, not Jews getting born again. In other words, this is the first move of God amongst pagans, Gentiles, foreigners, outside the nation of Israel.

This is the first Gentile foreign move of God. And so they choose a specific man. The 12 apostles choose one man and his name is Barnabas and they send him to Antioch to investigate.

He's not going there to take over. He's not going there to lead. He's not going there to organize it.

He's going to investigate to see what has actually happened. You know this man, Barnabas is an amazing man. You can read about him in Acts chapter four, verse 36.

Listen to what it says. And Joseph, that's his name. Barnabas is not his name.

It never was his name. Barnabas is a nickname. It's not a real name.

But his real name is called Joseph and Joseph who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas. That statement surname doesn't mean like we mean surname. It means to give him a nickname, to give him a name that he depicts by his character and personality.

So who gave it to him? It was the apostles back in chapter four gave him a nickname. When they looked at him, they said, he is Barnabas. It's not even a real name.

It's this nickname. And then it goes on to explain further in chapter four, 36, which is being interpreted the son of consolation, a Levite of the country of Cyprus. Now let me explain this name.

The name Barnabas, this nickname that they give to him, listen carefully. It is Bar Nabas. The word Bar means son of, Bar, Nabas is the old Testament word for Hebrew prophet.

So what does the name actually mean? Barnabas means son of prophecy or son of a prophetic ministry or a prophet. So they nickname, when the apostles, they look at Barnabas closely or at Joses and they say he is Barnabas. He is a son of a prophet.

That's what he embodies. But listen, we've got another clue in this verse. It then gives you the interpretation written being interpreted the son of consolation.

So the son of prophecy, Barnabas is the son of consolation. The word consolation there is paraklesis. It means to come alongside someone and begin to speak to them.

It means to implore them, exhort them, to comfort them, to entreat them or to encourage them. You know what it's saying about this man Barnabas? He has the spirit of prophecy on him, the spirit of exhortation, encouragement. This isn't just a natural encourager.

The spirit of God is so upon him to exhort the saints, I mean in real genuine ministry, that the apostles say we need to call him Barnabas. We need to actually change his name. This name is a better name.

He has a ministry in the midst of the church of Jerusalem that is dynamic, that is unusual, that is very peculiar. And so they named him that. Listen to the next verse, what it says, or sorry, the verses surrounding his name change.

Says in Acts 4.34, Neither was there any among them that lacked anything. Talking about the people of Jerusalem, it's a move of God. This is the early days of revival in Jerusalem.

None of them lacked anything. Why was that? For as many as had possessions of lands, our houses sold them, and they bought for the price the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, who distributed them to every man as he had need. Now why is it saying that just before it talks about Barnabas? Listen to the next verse, verse 37.

Having land, speaking about Barnabas, having land, he sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. I want you to see now, his name wasn't changed because of this act. This was not a prophetic act, and it wasn't the reason he got his name.

He got his name changed before this, but this is one of the things he does. So look at this man. He is originally from Cyprus.

He's a blue one to Jerusalem. He's got caught up in revival. He now has a prophetic ministry of encouragement in the body of Christ, and here he is.

He has money, but he sells land in order to give it to the poor in the church to cater for a move of God. Do you know who tried to copy him? Ananas and Sapphira. They didn't think that up themselves.

Why do you think Ananas and Sapphira sold a bit of land, lied about it, and tried to make a pretense to the church? You know why? Because of Barnabas. They're looking at the reputation of Barnabas. People are noticing Barnabas.

Barnabas is rising up in reputation. He's becoming popular. Will Ananas and Sapphira try to jump on the boat, try to get a lift along with this? We'll do the same.

We'll be a part of this. So they sold their land, they lied to the Holy Ghost, and they got two graves in Jerusalem. The Spirit of God killed both of them for lying in the midst of revival.

So they're the counterfeit. You see, this is the man who has sent the first gifted ministry sent to Antioch. Here you have these Gentiles, non-Jews getting born again, masses of them, and there's no order, there's no structure, and no one's investigated.

What do the apostles do? We're going to send Barnabas. He is a gifted prophet. He has a ministry of encouragement.

Isn't he the very person to send there? You know, in Acts chapter 13 verse 1, and I just want to prove this further, that Barnabas is a prophet, because he's one of five men mentioned in Acts 13.1, one of five men listed. And do you know what it calls those five men? It calls them prophets and teachers. Now, he wasn't a teacher, he wasn't a Bible teacher, he was a prophet.

So there's proof here in the book of Acts, Barnabas was a gifted man. He was a ministry man. It's not that he just prophesied, there was a ministry of prophet.

Do you know prophecy isn't the same as being a prophet? So Philip's daughters who prophesied, they are not prophetesses. Lots of people call them prophetesses, they were not prophetesses. They prophesied in the gift of prophecy.

And you know what, the ministry of a prophet is very different from one of the nine gifts, which is prophecy. Why did the apostles choose this man, Barnabas? And I want you to see this, he was not an apostle, he is a gifted prophet, and they send him to the church at Antioch. Let me give you a bit of his history.

He was not only from Cyprus, and he was not only a Levite by background, but let me show you something very special about Barnabas before this time. You see in Acts chapter 9, somebody gets born again. His name is Saul of Tarsus, the worst persecutor of the church in that generation.

Remember, he's the one that started all of this process. He so persecuted them in Jerusalem, they got scattered. It was Saul behind all of this.

Now let me fill in a little gap, Acts 9.26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, that's after he'd been in Damascus. Then he comes to Jerusalem. Remember, he's got chased out of Damascus.

They're going to kill him. They're going to arrest him. Then he comes to Jerusalem.

Listen to what happens when he comes to the church at Jerusalem, the 12 apostles at Jerusalem. What do you think happens? What do you think the church will do with this new convert, this dynamic new convert? What's going to happen? And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed or he attempted to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. Do you see what's just happened? Saul comes to Jerusalem and he's still got, I'm saved.

I want to join the church. I want to be a part of the body of Christ. They didn't believe him.

I, wouldn't you do the same? I do not believe this man's real. It's a trick. It's a trap.

He's going to have us killed. This is a man who dragged husband away from wife, parents away from children, had people thrown in prison. This is the man who stood there as Stephen is stoned to death, holding all the garments.

That's the man. Now he wants to join your church at Jerusalem. Apostles are there and believers are there.

But do you know what it says? They didn't believe him. They didn't. No way are you joining this church? I want to come to your prayer meeting.

I don't think so. I want to come evangelize them with you. Not a chance in a million.

I can't wait for a Bible study. The preacher will run away. I'm sure he'll hide.

And that was the scenario. But listen to what happens in Acts 9 27. But Barnabas took him.

The only man in the entire church at Jerusalem to take Saul. He was ostracized. He was shut out.

They were scared of him. The only man who believed him was Barnabas. The only man who had taken by the hand was Barnabas.

And Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. See the apostles weren't drawn close to him. Peter wasn't.

It took Barnabas to do this. And declared unto him how he, that is Saul, had seen the Lord in a way. And he had spoken to him.

And how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of the Lord. And he was with them going in and coming out. Do you realize if it wasn't for Barnabas, Saul could have ended up a casualty.

He wouldn't have even been allowed in the church going in, coming out, meeting with Peter, meeting with John, meeting with others that are there in the real church. He wouldn't have even been allowed. Barnabas was such a man.

That's why I've called him Barnabas, the encouraging prophet. Can you understand why he was chosen to go to Antioch now? What does it say about him? Here in Acts 11, 22. And so they sent him, the apostles sent him to Antioch.

Wasn't he a good choice? Isn't he the right man for this? In this situation where the apostles are unsure, let's send Barnabas into it. He's going to be able to recognize what God is doing. He's the man with the right heart, the right spirit and the right ministry to go right into one of the most wicked cities in the entire empire.

And so it says there in chapter 11 and verse 22. And they sent Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came and he had seen the grace of God. Do you know you can see God's grace on people getting born again? If God is at work changing lives, you can see the grace of God.

The grace of God is in people saying, I'm under grace and I can live any way I want to. The grace of God is seen because of changed lives and they're getting on fire for God. And so Barnabas, when he gets to Antioch, he is looking at what is happening amongst these new converts and he can see the grace of God.

And it said he was glad. Isn't it good when you get a Christian brother who is happy about a work that he didn't do? He is rejoicing in what others are doing. These no-name nobodies who are evangelizing and seeing fruit.

He's not jealous. He's not critical. He's not judging.

He's not tearing down their work. He's not trying to control it or take over. You know what he's doing? He is very glad.

He's very happy. And it says, and he exhorted them that with purpose of heart, that they would cleave onto the Lord, to be glued onto the Lord. This was his message.

Do you see the message of a prophet? Now I'm talking about ministry, gifted ministry at Antioch. This is the first gifted ministry in the church at Antioch. He is a prophet called Barnabas.

And you know what he's doing? He is calling them. Join yourself to the Lord. Be glued to the Lord.

Stay with the Lord. He sees the grace of God. He is happy over them and he's exhorting them.

He's encouraging them. He is urging them. Be glued to the Lord.

Be joined to the Lord. Stay with the Lord. Do not depart from the Lord.

Would you say that's a prophet's message? You see, you can think a prophet is someone who just gives personal prophecies to everyone. Who told you that? Study this man, Barnabas, and you begin to understand what a true prophet looks like in a local church. Now that isn't all I've got to say in this, but I want you to understand that.

And so he begins to exhort them, to come alongside them and to urge them. Do you see what it says in verse 24 about this man? For he was a good man. We need leadership, gifted ministry that are good men.

Barnabas was a gifted man, but he was more than that. He was a sent man by the apostles, but he's more than that. He is a good man.

There's something about a man when he's a good man. I've seen bad men in ministry. They're very gifted, very powerful in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In preaching, in teaching, but they're bad men. You can't turn your back on them. You can't trust them.

You can't believe them, but they're very powerful and dynamic. You know, Barnabas, he was a good man. He was an encourager.

Look what else it says. A man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. This is what he was filled with.

He was full of the Holy Spirit of God and of faith. You know, men in the New Testament, when they're filled with the Holy Spirit, sometimes they're filled with faith. Sometimes they're filled with love.

Sometimes they're filled with some other attribute. You know, when the Holy Spirit gets in your life and gets a hold of your life, you will be marked by something. Barnabas was marked by faith, a man of faith.

The Holy Spirit on him made him a man of real, genuine, believing faith. He could believe for things that others could not believe. What a man to have here at the very foundation of this work.

And listen to the fruit of this. So Barnabas goes and he begins to minister as a gifted prophet, cleave to the Lord, join to the Lord. He's full of the Holy Spirit.

What is the fruit of this? And much people was added unto the Lord. They didn't need him. People were already getting saved.

But when his ministry comes in, even more people are added to the Lord. Did you know the ministry of a prophet will add people to the Lord? Oh, I thought that was an evangelist. No, that's a prophet.

See, he's a gifted prophet and men and women are being added, being joined. Why? Because he's preaching to those who are gathered. Be joined to the Lord, cleave to the Lord.

Have a very, very close relationship to the Lord. He's exhorting them. What's the fruit? Many other people get added to the church.

Doesn't say he evangelized them, but the believers there are just continuing to evangelize. And so that's the first pen picture I give you. Barnabas, the encouraging prophet.

Number two, Saul, the sought after teacher. Saul, who later is called Paul, the sought after teacher. Look what it says in chapter 11, verse 25.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul. So here's Barnabas. He's began to minister into the church at Antioch.

Why didn't he just stay there and say, man, I'm the only gifted leader here. Man, I'm going to have such a reputation. Do you know his first thought? As he sees this, and then he sees the fruit of his own ministry, more are being added.

He has a thought immediately. I've got to find Saul of Tarsus. Do you know he hasn't seen him for five years.

This man, Saul, he hasn't even talked to him in five years or exchanged letters with him. He doesn't even know exactly where he is. But he saw him five years ago.

And as soon as he sees this whole scenario, he says, I've got to go find Saul. And so there's my second picture. Saul, the sought after teacher.

That's why I've called him the sought after teacher. Imagine having to seek after someone in ministry. You can hardly find them.

And when he had found him, now look at that very carefully. This is about the year 43 AD. And there's a reason why I can tell you that.

43 AD in the first century. And here's Barnabas. He travels.

And it either would be an 80 mile journey by road, going up and over into Turkey. Tarsus is in Turkey. And it says there that he found him and he brought him onto Antioch.

He goes to Tarsus. That's the last known address for Saul of Tarsus, who was originally from Tarsus. That's where he was sent to.

It's been about five years. And you know, Saul, he's lived in obscurity. Hold on, I thought he was in Jerusalem.

He was. But a riot began and trouble stirred up. And all the Christians says, we need to get you out of the city.

And it says they sent him to Tarsus. You know, that's about 380 miles away. We need to send you right the way, as far as we can, way further than Antioch away.

And they send them all that distance. And nobody knows about him. The apostles don't know where he is.

Barnabas goes, that's the last place he was at. Nobody's heard from him in five long years. You know, for five years, Saul is in obscurity.

He is a hot potato. He is forgotten. Nobody is looking for his preaching tour.

No one is asking, come give your testimony in Jerusalem or Judea, or let's do a teaching tour of the churches. Nobody cares less about Saul. He's utterly forgotten.

And you know what? Here is a man called of God with a great calling. And Barnabas, he either traveled 12 hours by boat to get there to Tarsus, or he traveled 80 miles by road to get there. But somehow he went there.

And this word searching for Saul and then finding Saul, it means he had a search hard. He didn't know where he was. He had a look and look and search and search and track him down.

Have you heard of a Christian called Saul who does nothing but talk about Jesus? Yeah, I bumped into him all right. He preaches down in the city center. Oh, I know him.

He can't shut up about Jesus. That's the one. Where is he? I need to find that man.

And so this forgotten man, forgotten by the church, forgotten by the apostles. But there's one man called Barnabas who remembers him. He remembers him.

Now, why did he remember him? You see, when Barnabas saw that the Lord had suddenly now visited the Gentiles in great power, he remembered the call on Saul who was a radical Jew. Remember when he got saved, Jesus had called him to reach the Gentiles, to reach those non-Jews. And he remembered that.

See, they talked about this. Saul, I believe, as a new convert said, I know God is going to visit the Gentile world. He's going to visit the nations.

He's going to visit the great cities. And when Barnabas saw it five years later, he was so dumbfounded. All he could think about was Saul.

This is what Saul said. This is the call upon Saul's life. See, these things are happening in Antioch.

But Barnabas was a gifted man. I mean, things are really happening. Why do you need Saul when things are happening? People are getting saved.

People are joining to the Lord. Things are growing. This is a massive work of God.

And here's Barnabas in there. Why would you leave this to go look for a Saul? But you know what? This is how ministry operates. This is how it works.

You see, Barnabas wanted the right man by his side. He wanted other people to minister with. He wanted gifted men.

He wanted men with the right call. And that's what a large-hearted Barnabas does. He's not trying to hog all the ministry.

He isn't jealous of ministry. He's trying to find the right people for the right calls, for the right ministries. And he knows the will of God.

And you know what? Most people will never wait five years for the call of God. They'll either go too soon, create something, or manipulate something. And it always backfires on them.

Absolutely always. You know what Saul done? He went off into obscurity. He went into nowhere where nothing had ever happened.

And he was there in secrecy, ministering faithfully. He was in the place they sent him to. The apostles said, go to Tarsus.

Well, here he is five years later. He's still in Tarsus. There he is.

That's where Barnabas actually finds him. And so it says that when both of them came back together to Antioch, and this is so, so important what I'm just about to say there, say here. And it came to pass that a whole year that they assembled themselves with the church, first time calling Antioch a church, with the church and taught much people.

And so you have it called assembling themselves together. What is the church? They assemble themselves together. It's the Christians gathered in the same place at the same time to do the same things.

And it said for an entire year, Barnabas and Saul, both of them are now in the church. It's not just evangelism. It's not just every man doing this.

Now you've got ministry coming in. Do you know what ministry Paul was? He's not, sorry, Saul was. He's not an apostle.

He's not gifted as an apostle. Neither is Barnabas. You know what Paul is or Saul is? He is a Bible teacher.

He's a man of the Bible. He is a gifted teacher, expounder, explainer, and teacher of the written scriptures. He has a different ministry than Barnabas.

It's not the same. You don't try to make them the same. They want to work together.

They choose one another. They desire to work together. And for one year, they are teaching the entire church.

Both men are teaching the church for one entire year. And they begin to gather all these young believers. Remember, they know nothing.

They've just met Christ. They're on fire for God. Everything is on fire.

But for one entire year, you have Saul of Tarsus now. Week in, week out, every night ministering the word of God. He must have been in his element.

He must have thought, I've been dreaming of this for five years. I've been praying about this. I've been preparing for this.

So you need to prepare for ministry. If you don't prepare for ministry, you're not ready for ministry. When nothing's happening, if you don't prepare, you will not be ready when everything happens.

That's why men prepare when it's quiet, when no doors are opening, when nothing is happening, when no one is calling your name, when no one is asking you to preach. That's when you prepare. Because if and when it happens, it'll be too late for you to prepare at that point.

So that's the second pen picture. Saul, the sought-after teacher. Number three.

This might surprise you. Agabus, the traveling predictive prophet. Acts 11, verse 27.

And in these days, what days? After they had taught the church for a year. After one year, they'd been teaching, teaching, teaching, teaching. You know what? You want a certain amount of teaching in that church before you let other ministries in from the outside.

Because the people have to know how to handle outside ministry. And it says in those days, after that year of constant teaching by Saul and by Barnabas, and then these days came prophets from Jerusalem onto Antioch. A group of prophets.

Not other ministries, one ministry, prophet. A group of prophets, plural. Not just one man.

Not a prophet with a bunch of pastors. They're all prophets. And they're coming from Jerusalem up to Antioch, 300 miles.

And while they're there in the church at Antioch, and there stood up one of them named Agabus. And I want you to notice this, man. This is our third picture of a prophet.

You see, Agabus looks a bit different than Barnabas. And if you start looking at people with ministries and saying, all pastors look the same and sound the same and operate the same. And all teachers look the same and teach the same and act the same and function to the same degree.

You do not have a clue about ministry. You might say, well, he doesn't teach like him. Therefore, there's something wrong with him.

See, I love diversity of ministry. And even when you get a Barnabas, a Barnabas is not like an Agabus. I've already told you that Barnabas ministry, teaching, adding people to the Lord, exhorting them.

That's a gifted prophet in the church. Now I'm going to show you another prophet who looks very different. He is not fixed in one church.

He is traveling, traveling between churches in a team, in a group of men who are ministering. And you know what this man, it says, an Agabus signified by the spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world which came to pass in the days of glorious Caesar. So this Agabus stands up in the middle of a gathering and it says he signals by the spirit.

Do you know what that actually means? When it talks about him signalling, he is indicating. He is communicating that a dearth is coming. He's not just prophesying, his body is involved with this.

Actions are involved with this. Agabus is a genuine prophet. He's not a lone ranger, he's with other prophets.

He's sent from Jerusalem, being sent into Antioch. He respects the leadership in Antioch. This is a man who's part of the body of Christ.

He's not strange, he's not unusual, but he is a prophet. And he stands up. He wasn't planning to do this.

This is not a prepared message. You know what he does? He signifies or indicates or gives information that a great dearth, a great famine is coming to all the world. And it actually says it actually came to pass.

Now I want to point out to you another time Agabus is mentioned in the Bible. In Acts 21, verse 10, some years later. And he has an incident with Paul, when Paul is much older in the Lord.

Listen to it again. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. He's travelling again, many years later.

Agabus is still travelling from place to place, from community to community. And it says, and when he was come down onto us, he took Paul's girdle and he bound his own hands. Not Paul's hands.

He bound his own hands with his own girdle. He ties his hands. What is this some sort of act? No, this is a genuine prophet of God.

Just because you haven't seen it. And we have so many crackpots in the church who make a laughing stock of this. Don't despise if you should see the real.

See, Agabus literally binds his own hands and says the man who owns this garment is going to have his hands bound like this. And when he gets to Jerusalem, he's going to become a prisoner. And he's going to be carried into captivity.

You know what all the Christians in Caesarea, they begin to beg him, weep. Say, don't go to Jerusalem. Paul says, do not break my heart.

You see, this man Agabus revealed what was going to happen. Isn't this a true prophet? He's given prophecies. God's going to bless you.

I don't think so. God's going to bring a lovely man along for you to marry. God's got a beautiful plan and he's going to bless everything you do.

God's got a beautiful ministry for you. Isn't that the prophets we look for? To give us those words? No, he says, you know what? The man who owns this garment, he's going to be taken and made a prisoner and put in captivity as soon as he gets to Jerusalem. You know what? It actually happened.

But remember here in the church at Antioch, he prophesies of a great famine coming or of a dearth, a time of great tragedy. It is a prediction of future events. And we're told in the verse, it actually came to pass in the days of Claudius.

Notice he doesn't give instruction. He doesn't tell the church at Antioch what to do. Something is revealed from God and he tells them.

He's a prophet in the church. He's revealing something he couldn't know, that he didn't know, that the church didn't know. But he reveals the information.

He gives no instruction. He doesn't tell them what to do. He doesn't make suggestions of what's to happen.

It's now the church's responsibility and the leadership. The church responded. They acted.

They decided. And they gathered money to send to Judea for the Christians who are going to be affected by that hard time. Notice as well, he doesn't say a dearth.

He says a great dearth. A great dearth in the days of Claudius Caesar. Claudius Caesar reigned from 41 to 54.

There were four famines during his reign. But only one famine affected Jerusalem and Judea. And that was in 44 AD.

So we have a date for this. Do you know this comes right at the end of a year of Barnabas and Saul teaching the church at Antioch that this great famine, this disaster comes. And you know what? It lasts for four years, four years.

And here's a church being warned of a worldwide national disaster. Here's Agabus preparing them. And it's very practical.

He is a prophet in the church at the right time. He's a traveling prophet. He has a credibility.

He's got a history. He's a bit unusual, okay? He's not like Barnabas in his ministry. He's not a local prophet.

He's a real man of God. But you know what? It equips the entire church at Antioch on what to do. And we'll deal with that more further in another week.

But here's another one just to give you another point on prophets at the church at Antioch. We read in chapter 15 of the book of Acts in verse 22 concerning two other men who get sent from Jerusalem onto the church at Antioch. It's in chapter 15, 22.

Then it pleased the apostles and elders, that is at Jerusalem, with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, surnamed Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. Now I want you to notice this as we close this. The church at Jerusalem chooses two men to go with Barnabas and Saul back to the church at Antioch.

They're chief men, leaders who suffered for the faith. They've got a history of suffering. Aren't those the sort of men you'd want to be sent to as a church? This man's got scars on his back.

He's been in prison for 17 years for serving Christ. He's gonna come speak at your next meeting. I'll be there to listen to him.

That's a history. That's a record. That's a man with great respect, but it says these two men, they're chief men and they're sent.

Let me point something out to you that you have missed. Judas is the name of one of them. His name is Barsabbas.

Barsabbas is the same Greek word as Barnabas, son of prophecy. And look again, it says Judas surnamed Barsabbas. He's from Jerusalem.

Here's the second man. Not only Judas was nicknamed son of prophecy, now Judas has been nicknamed the very same. Two men from Jerusalem, and the apostles have given them a new name saying he's a son of encouragement.

Well, we lost Barnabas. We got another Barnabas in the church. Judas arose to replace him.

So we called him the very, very same. Then in chapter 15, 32, and Judas and Silas being prophets, that proves it. Do you see what I'm saying here? There are real prophets in the church at Antioch.

And we're actually told that Judas or this new Barnabas, he returns back to Jerusalem. But Silas, who is a prophet, remains in the church at Antioch. And it says he exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them.

Silas had the ministry of a prophet with Judas, and he remained in the church. Saints of God, why have we lost certain ministries? Can I ask you something here? And we as a church here in Limerick need to understand something tonight. I do not follow a pattern of one pastor over one congregation.

You find it nowhere in the entire Bible. In fact, you'll struggle to find one place in your Bible where you find one man with the title of pastor over a church. You won't even find it in your Bible.

You'll find many things, but you won't find that. Because you know what? Pastor is not a title. It's not a position.

It's a gifted ministry. And the word pastor means shepherd. He is gifted in a ministry as a shepherd.

I believe in gifted ministry, but I'm tired of the church structure that appoints a man to a position and says, there, your title is pastor. You run everything. You do all the preaching.

You do all the ministry. You have to serve, and the people just receive. If you do good, they praise you.

If you do bad and you're under the strain of ministry, they'll criticize you. But the church is going to sit there as critics. No, that isn't the way ministry works.

And you know what? You never see one man claiming to be the pastor. Why is it we've lost four ministries in the church and now we're left with only pastors? Why is it we've got thousands and thousands and thousands of pastors? Where's the true prophets? Where's the gifted Bible teacher? Where's the real evangelists in the church of this hour? Saints of God, I'm asking you to think biblically here. As we look at Antioch, we're seeing a New Testament church with real ministry.

And let me say something. I'm against NAR, N-A-R, New Apostolic Reformation. I'm against it.

I'm against almost most of the new charismatic ministries and movements and trends. I'm against all that. But do you know what? I'm a Bible man.

I believe this before any of them come along. You know, before any has even heard the word NAR. And I believe it's a wrong term, ill-defined.

It's not well-defined. Almost nobody understands the term who uses it. And do you know what? I was speaking against these ministries in the early 90s before any has even knew what was going on.

And I assure you, I'm against NAR, apostles and prophets and all the different things. But I do believe in biblical ministry. And you know what? I believe in the function of these because Jesus gave them to the church.

He never removed them. You won't find a verse to say he removed them. But fourth and last, let me finish quickly before I get myself in too much trouble here tonight.

I've done enough for the night. Acts chapter 13 and verse one. And I'm going to finish here with this here tonight.

Acts chapter 13, verse one. And this is my fourth pen picture. And I've called this gifted eldership.

Gifted eldership. I'm just giving you a little glimpse into the church at Antioch. We saw Barnabas, the gifted prophet who encouraged them.

We've seen Saul, the gifted Bible teacher who's in training, who came out of obscurity. Someone had to go and find him. Imagine the greatest Bible teacher of the entire generation and the world history.

And he was forgotten about by the church of that hour. Don't think the first century church was all imperfection. It wasn't.

It absolutely wasn't. And then Agabus. But here we want to finish with gifted eldership in the church.

Chapter 13 and verse one. Now they were in the church that was at Antioch. You'll never read the name Antioch again quite the same, I hope.

Don't just skim over it. It's talking about a real church. Now there was in the church which was at Antioch.

Notice this carefully. Certain prophets and teachers. As Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger.

And Lucius of Cyrene. And Manian which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. And Saul.

Saul is mentioned last of the five gifted ministries in this church. What you're seeing here, I believe, is an inside unique view of eldership in the church at Antioch. You see, this church has leadership.

It now has structure. It now has gifted ministries. It has preachers.

It has men at the helm. Five in number. All of them are gifted with ministries.

I believe we're getting an inside view of eldership. Elsewhere in the Bible, it talks about elders being raised up over a church. That's what you get all through the Bible in Acts and other verses.

Elders. Not elder. You never read that.

You get elders getting raised up to care for an entire church. Who watch over it. Who supervise.

Their authority is that church. Their authority. Their responsibility is that church.

You know what I got told yesterday by a cousin, a friend who, a family member has real medical concerns. See, you can't get a doctor these days, can you? In Ireland or Northern Ireland or in England or wherever it is. Everything's changed.

You can't even call them, speak to them or go to them. And if you do, you're an unusual person. So my cousin had gone into the doctor.

You can't get to see the doctor. Oh, send us a picture. Send us a photograph.

This is the doctors who are meant to be serving you. So she decided to go private to pay the money. And to go there.

And you know when the person walked in, guess who was sitting there serving in the private clinic? Was their doctor. Who they couldn't see in their small town. Who won't see them.

Won't minister to them. Won't meet their needs. But if they pay enough, they'll walk into another clinic where this person is getting paid well.

Now why am I saying that? I'm thinking about ministry here. I'm talking about when, if you're called to be an elder of a church, you don't have a thousand responsibilities. The gift and calling ministry of an elder.

You can't be an elder in another town or city. An elder is for a specific city and a specific church. You can't be an elder outside of that.

If you're going to minister outside of that, it is in another capacity, but not as an elder. An elder is for a specific place at a specific time. So here in the church in Acts 13, you get an inside view of leadership in the church.

And it's utterly remarkable. It's amazing. At Antioch, we get given an inside view of local leadership.

We read the number, the names, the ministry gifts. And you begin to understand something about leadership. They are five in number.

You're given their names and even their countries. You know their backgrounds. But do you know what I want you to notice here is the ministries they have.

Where is the pastor in this list? If what we have in the church today is normal, and if you just call every leader a pastor, where is the pastor at Antioch? Where is the gifted ministry? Now I'm not against pastors. And I actually believe we need gifted pastors in the church. I'm tired of men with titles and in positions.

I want men with ministries of a shepherd. That's what I want, who care for the flock. Do you know what it says here? There were certain prophets and teachers and they're named five.

You have their ministries. Two ministries among these five men. Either they're prophets or teachers.

I'll tell you who one of the prophets is, Barnabas. And I'll tell you who one of the teachers is, Saul. And Saul is the fifth mentioned in this list.

He is listed as the least important of all of the five ministries. You see, we need ministries with a balance. What a balance to have a teacher working with a prophet.

A man expounding, opening up, teaching the word of God. But also to have a prophet who either exhorts you to cleave to the Lord, who encourages you to walk with God, or who prophesies what is about to come. What a beautiful balance.

Do you know there's no contradiction here? Where have you ever heard someone say, it would be right to have a prophet over a church, leading a church, ministering in a church, teaching in a church? You don't see it. They say, oh, you can't have a pastor. Sorry, you can't have a prophet pastor you.

Do you know what? You're thinking is really messed up with 21st century traditional Christianity, either Baptist or charismatic or Pentecostal or whatever. I'm just telling you what Bible ministry is. You see, there's no contradiction between a teacher and a prophet.

They mix together. There was at least two prophets in this church, at least two Bible teachers. And the number together was five.

And you know what? The church was massive. It was growing, but they didn't need more than five functioning, gifted men in leadership. This is a big church.

Do you think they'd done all the ministry? Absolutely not. The church done the ministry. They were edifying, teaching, preparing, equipping the church.

The church ministered. And since I want you to hear this, the key of this local church isn't that I do all the ministry. Our brother Souf, I was going to call him Soul, brother Souf does all of the ministry.

It isn't that. It's that we as a church function, operate. Remember, that's what Antioch was.

They're all evangelizing before Soul came, before Barnabas came, before five leaders came. So you'd start with two gifted leaders. Three others got raised up out of this church to join them in leadership.

And now you've got these five men functioning together, gifted by the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the church was pioneered by the people, it was not going to be led by the people. See, true ministry is a gift from God.

And only the Lord can grant it. We, the church, recognize those that are gifted, that are called. You see, I do have the right to appoint men into eldership.

I can look at 22 qualifications. I can discern their character. And I want you to hear this very carefully, just as I close now.

When you go to scripture, all elders are not necessarily gifted in one of these five ministries. I want you to understand that. And just because a man is gifted as a prophet or a teacher, does not mean he's in eldership or leadership.

You've got to understand that. And I can give you verses to prove that. We don't have time tonight, or I'll keep you here till the early hours of the morning.

But what you're seeing is an inside view into the church of Jesus Christ, where God is gifted. I can say a man is fit to be an elder. He's got the qualities.

He's got the ability. He has a basic ability to teach. He may not have one of the five ministries, he may have one of the five ministries, maybe it'll come later, maybe never noted by one of those five ministries, but he is a functioning, faithful elder in the church.

And saints of God, if we as a church are going to become fruitful and strong and go further, we need to understand ministry. We don't choose the ministries. We recognize them.

We test them. We prove them. We accept them.

We position them. We do all of that. But it is Christ who grants ministries.

And what a gifted church. The church at Antioch was granted ministry that dwelt within it, become its leadership, but also ministered in from other churches. And saints, I want that as a church.

I want the ministries of God to minister into this church. I want you to experience the ministries that you have never yet sat under, preaching the gifts of the spirit, operation of ministries that I have experienced in my lifetime that you haven't as a church. I want to see that.

But also I'm aware God can raise it up from our midst within this church and all of it is to reveal Christ. Don't think I'm going on some crazy charismatic trend or some new 21st century gadget or strategy. I'm not.

I'm going right back to Antioch and telling you how the church has always functioned and how beautiful different ministries are, that they don't all need to do everything. And I don't need to fit a pattern and I don't need to fill your view of what a preacher or a pastor is or a teacher or anything else. I just need to be what

God has called me to, gifted me for and be faithful in it.

And I believe there's going to be fruit and blessing in this church. Will you pray with me? Hallelujah. We love you, Lord Jesus.

All good things come from you. All ministries, all gifts, all operations. And Lord God, we thank you that you had such a man as Barnabas in the early church, an encourager, an exhorter, a man with the spirit of prophecy, a man with the gifted ministry of profit.

We thank you for a man like Saul, O God. He was isolated, ostracized, forgotten about. And yet a Barnabas went seeking him and brought forth that Bible teacher.

It was going to become one of the greatest Bible teachers of any generation. My God, we're asking of you in this church, would you reveal yourself? Would you work mightily? Lord God, we're asking that we would be a gifted church, that we wouldn't restrict your ministries. We wouldn't restrict your gifts.

And Lord God, you would send men to us with the right ministry at the right time, even from outside that have character, that have a history, that can minister to this church. Lord God, we bless you. We love you.

And we ask that you lead us and guide us in the days ahead. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

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