

THE LOWER LIGHTS

Alan Jones, Editor
(734) 942-7956



"Brightly beams our Father's mercy
from the lighthouse evermore;
But to us He gives the keeping
of the lights along the shore."

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MAKING "CHRISTIANS" IN ANTIOCH

Several years ago I was starting a Bible study group in a prison. The Bible study group met at a time when the inmates were counted so it was called a "count-letter". The prison asked us to name our "count-letter". I suggested that we call the "count-letter" the "Christian count-letter", as those of us coming in for the study were simply "Christians" and we were encouraging the inmates to be the same. But the prison rejected the name "Christian count-letter" saying the name "Christian" was too "generic". How unfortunate it is that the name "Christian" has come to mean so many things that it means nothing.

What does it mean to be a "Christian"? How can I become a "Christian"? How can I live as a "Christian"? The New Testament still contains the answers to these important questions. Let us go beyond the confusion caused by denominationalism and see the simple answers to these questions given to us in the account of how the gospel of Christ came to the city of Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:19-26).

PREACHING THE LORD

When the disciples scattered from Jerusalem after Stephen was stoned to death for his preaching, they took the good news of Jesus with them wherever they went. Some of those who fled came to Antioch of Syria. When they arrived in Antioch they preached "*the Lord Jesus*" (11:20). They did not use any gimmicks or worldly attractions to get folks to "join their church". They did not preach a creed handed down from "church headquarters" that

their listeners must learn and accept in order to join their group.

The disciples told the people of Antioch that Jesus died on a cross for their sins and for the sins of the world and then was raised from the dead and ascended to God's right hand where He reigns as "Lord". By His obedient sacrifice He became the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him (Heb 5:8-9).

TURNING TO THE LORD

A large number of those in Antioch who heard the message about Jesus being Lord believed it. Since they believed that He is Lord they "*turned to the Lord*" (11:21). What did this involve? Other N.T. passages explain.

When those in Antioch "*turned to the Lord*" they determined that they would not live their lives the way they wanted to any more, but they would live the rest of their lives according to the will of God (1 Pet 4:2). They were crucified with Christ- it was no longer they who lived, but Christ lived in them (Gal 2:20).

When those in Antioch "*turned to the Lord*", they were buried like Jesus was buried. They buried the old man of sin in baptism. Like Jesus rose from the dead, they also arose from the water of baptism, free of sin, raised to walk in newness of life- to serve the Lord and righteousness, rather than self and sin (Rom 6:1-6, 13, 17-18).

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MAKING “CHRISTIANS” IN ANTIOCH (CONTINUED)

REMAINING TRUE TO THE LORD

When those in Antioch “turned to the Lord” by repentance and baptism they began a relationship with the Lord that was to last more than a lifetime- it was to last forever. But, if it was to last, these new disciples needed help. The church at Jerusalem heard of their conversion to the Lord and they sent Barnabas to help them (Acts 11:22).

Barnabas encouraged the new converts “with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.” (11:23). Barnabas called for commitment. Their service to the Lord was not to be “on again, off again”, something decided by the day or even by the moment, but it was to be purposeful. “*To remain true to the Lord*” was to be the guiding purpose that was to affect and to control their every thought, word, and action.

Not only did the new converts at Antioch need encouragement to remain true to the Lord, they needed teaching so that they knew how to remain true to Him. Jesus indicated that the process of spreading His gospel included making disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching them further (Mt 28:18-20). When those at Antioch became Jesus’ disciples, they made a lifetime commitment to learn His will and to strive to obey it. The need for additional teaching at Antioch was so great that Barnabas temporarily left to find Saul in Tarsus. After locating Saul, Barnabas

brought him back to Antioch and the two of them “for an entire year met with the church and taught considerable numbers.” (11:25)

THEY WERE CALLED CHRISTIANS

Is it any wonder that those in Antioch who had heard the “*Lord Jesus*” preached, who had “*turned to the Lord*”, and who had been exhorted to “*remain true to the Lord*” were called “*Christians*”? (11:26). They belonged to and were obedient to Christ, the Lord. Only by doing the same can we rightly call ourselves “Christians.”

Our goal at the Palmer Road church of Christ is to be “Christians” in the true sense of the word. We preach the Lord Jesus. We encourage others to believe in the Lord Jesus and to turn to Him and then to be true to Him from that time on. We offer no gimmicks to entice you to be a “church member”. We have no denominational doctrine we want to persuade you to embrace.

If we could help you to be a truly a “Christian” as defined by the New Testament, give us a call at (734) 942-7956 or email us at our website www.prchurchofchrist.org . Let us preach to you “the Lord Jesus” that you may become and remain a “Christian” to your soul’s eternal salvation.

