

# CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

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## CHAPTER THREE

### PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN

“**And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch**” (Acts 11:26).

The intensified persecution subsequent to Stephen’s martyrdom forced the disciples to move out in various directions, witnessing to the Truth of God as they journeyed, and tabulating amazing results. Perhaps the greatest number of converts recorded in any one place following the Pentecostal ingathering was at Antioch in Syria, a city on the banks of the Orontes, three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. There, “**a great number believed and turned unto the Lord, and the hand of the Lord was with them.**” It was most evident that the gospel was beginning to send forth its rays of hope in an ever-broadening radius, ultimately to encircle the globe. The Church of Christ was growing.

Growth is an incomparable and unrivalled phenomenon. There is a certain grandeur about it, whether it be of organism or of organization. The opening of a petal, the formation of a cell, the increase of size, the evidence of maturity, the development of power, the extension of influence—all elicit deep wonderment. Yet, nowhere is growth so surrounded by mystery as in the spiritual realm.

There is a building which, “**fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.**” It was designed in the blueprints of Omniscience before the world began, was destined to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is composed of living stones. Christ in His efficacious and sufficient accomplishment at Calvary became the only and everlasting foundation. Then, the Holy Spirit, in His divine function, began to quicken believing hearts and to integrate these living stones into the “**holy temple**” of which Paul spoke. Willing workers dedicated themselves to the proposition of holding forth the Word of Life, and this they did with commendable steadfastness, counting not their lives dear unto themselves.

*Barnabas was sent to Antioch.*

The gladdening news of the Spirit’s operations began to flash through the darkness of a decadent Judaism, and the corona of the *aurora borealis* centered in Antioch in the province of Seleucia. There the Word found a ready reception and the city was set aglow with a pervasive joy hitherto unknown.

When these illuminating facts began filtering into Jerusalem, the disciples concluded it wise to dispatch a special envoy to consolidate these phenomenal gains. How very reasonable that they should appoint Barnabas, the son of consolation.

Surely, we, too, would have unhesitatingly cast our vote for him. He was eminently qualified to be a spiritual nurse for the newborn babes in Christ reported there; and, as later developments were irrefutably to prove, this was but one important link in the chain of events ordered by the Spirit for this fine man of God whose scriptural characterization is so strikingly significant. It tells us that **“he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”**

The word **“goodness”** speaks of moral excellence and is never used unadvisedly in the Bible. Many times human judgment pronounces a man good when the true standard has never been attained, but not so with this listing. The secret of his noble life inheres in the revelation, **“full of the Holy Ghost.”** This was not qualification. It was occupation. The Lord of the Harvest was enthroned in his life, making his disposition sweet and wholesome and his endeavors proper and productive.

Barnabas was one who reposed implicit confidence in the virility of the Truth and in the integrity of God. He was sustained by an undergirding assurance in the great possibilities of the gospel and was animated by the inexorableness of the Divine will. He had a deep conviction for the things of promise which, as yet, he could not see. By such faith, the saints of old won God’s approval. Faith so bolstered his mind and heart that there was an appreciable stability to him which made for an ideal personality to encourage a group of novices in the faith.

*Barnabas sought for Paul.*

How overwhelming the developments must have been at Antioch during those glorious days! It was a sweeping victory for the cause of Christ, for **“much people was added unto the Lord.”** In the midst of all this holy, happy experience, Barnabas acquired a desire to have Paul with him, not so much for fellowship as for assistance in dealing with the many converts whose establishment in the faith was eminently essential lest Satan should take advantage of their immaturity.

Paul’s spiritual discernment, his abounding zeal, his steadfastness, to say nothing of his pedagogical aptitude, would prove invaluable at this particular time. The Antiochan believers required such leadership, and who else among the saints of God would more thoroughly enjoy, with exuberant satisfaction, this wonderful time of refreshing from out of the presence of the Lord?

The combined urge was too self-asserting for Barnabas to suppress. Paul must be brought; and to make certain of his whereabouts and to assure his delivery, Barnabas set out personally to seek him.

Paul was at Tarsus, but what led Barnabas to believe that he might locate him there is not explained. It must be remembered that Barnabas was a man highly favoured of the Holy Spirit

Who administers the things of God in every part of the Church age, and guides those who yield to His patient care.

In due course, Barnabas reached Tarsus, a city which Paul later declared to be of no mean rating. It was a flourishing city of some considerable consequence. It was renowned as a place of education, and some historians compare it favorably in this respect with Athens. Barnabas, though less intensive and less demonstrative than either Peter or Paul, was, nevertheless, successful in his various pursuits and finally located him whom he sought. Without excessive persuasion, Paul quickly gave his assent; and, perceiving it to be of the Lord's direction, accompanied his earnest solicitor. Together, they journeyed toward Antioch, discussing en route the many pleasing details of the mighty movements of the Spirit in progress there.

*Antioch was a place of applied Christianity.*

An interesting commentary is recorded relative to the first arrival of Barnabas at Antioch, **“who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”** (Acts 11:23).

What a wonderful report! Here is the practical side of the gospel; here is faith in operation: here is Christianity applied. A more striking illustration of evidential salvation is nowhere to be found.

*Applied Christianity makes the work of the Spirit apparent.*

Barnabas saw the grace of God. That is, he witnessed the unmistakable results of an inwrought salvation. The good seed of the gospel had not only germinated and sprung up into attractive foliage but had already blossomed into fruitage. The converts conducted themselves as though something had transpired, as, indeed, something really had. Their attitudes and actions were commending the gospel to their fellowmen and their conviviality permeated the atmosphere with an exhilarating encouragement for others to **“taste and see that the Lord is good.”** Parched as we are in a desert of spiritual drought, we cannot but thirst for such refreshment, all of which, and more, is just as possible today if the productive principles of Christianity were accorded a faithful application.

*Applied Christianity makes the joy of the servant evident.*

Barnabas was glad. He who arrived full of the Holy Ghost is now filled with joy. He had never witnessed anything quite like this before, and he entered into the enjoyment to the fullest extent of his capacity. Salvation inoculates the believer with a pleasure in his soul that cannot be duplicated, imitated, or approximated by anything in the bill-of-fare of the world system. Joy is the desire of the Saviour.

**“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”** (John 15:11). Joy is the design of the Spirit.

**“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the**

**Holy Ghost**" (Romans 14:17).

Joy is the delight of the saint.

**"Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"** (I Peter 1:8).

*Applied Christianity makes the purpose of the saint definite.*

They had a fixed resolve to remain faithful to the Lord, for purpose is primary in matters of spiritual profession. Such purpose, to prove profitable, must be of the heart. Barnabas **"exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord."**

It is the heart and not the head which governs devotion to the Lord. We believe with the heart. **"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"** (Romans 10:9).

We give from the heart. **"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give"** (II Corinthians 9:7).

We react with the heart. **"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek"** (Psalm 27:8).

Ordinarily, we think of the heart as palpitating, not articulating, as pulsating and not enunciating, but this is the method of the Spirit to impress upon us the fact that dealing with the Lord is an heart matter. The love which registers with Him, Who is love, is that which comes from a pure heart (I Timothy 1:5). The way to reverence God is in singleness of heart (Colossians 3:22). It is pointed out that errors which so sadly affect one's spiritual status originate in the heart (Hebrews 3:10). And, further, the only way to assure Divine response to an appeal is to cry with the heart (Hosea 7:14).

These new believers at Antioch were dead in earnest. Their heart was behind this new life into which they had so recently entered. Acts 11:23 could be covered by three words: namely, exhibition, exultation and exhortation.

*The college of truth at Antioch.*

It is indeed likely that Paul's introduction to this joyful situation, produced by the transforming message of grace, caused him to exclaim in the words of the Queen of Sheba: **"Howbeit, I believed not (fully) the report until I came and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me."**

This was much to the liking of this new champion of the faith and he was ready to lend any assistance possible. It was very evident that a revelation of the Scriptures was the next important requirement if these babes in Christ were to grow in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord.

Thus, Paul joined Barnabas in a teaching ministry which extended over a period of one year. This was actually the beginning of Paul's great ministry which, literally, has never ended.

*The training at Antioch was orthodox.*

An institution is, in reality, just what its leaders are, so far as character is concerned. If the instructors are sound, then the teaching will be sound. Paul's orthodoxy was never questioned. He was superbly a "straight thinker," teaching the Divine authorship of the Scriptures and their authority and utility in fully furnishing the Christian in every good work. Through the protracted presence of Paul and his faithful instruction, the Antioch Church apparently exceeded the Jerusalem assembly in importance. Its impact upon sacred history far excelled all other early churches.

*The training at Antioch was thorough.*

The curriculum may be suggested by a verse which Paul later wrote for the edification of believers: "**But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.**"

Before entering the deeper truths, they had to become established in the fact of their new position. Now, by faith, they were "**in Christ.**" This was the groundwork of Paul's teaching.

What it means to be in Christ both positionally and practically is the starting point: then comes the wisdom of the Word, a revelation of God's will and way. This is followed by the doctrine of imputation, or how we become righteous. "**He Who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.**"

No one could teach about sanctification like Paul. He did not confuse terms or garble facts. Clearly he showed how a yielding, submissive believer is progressively set apart for the Lord, being filled with the Spirit and used proportionately. Then, the redemption, which was Paul's senior subject, carried the student, in thought, to the day when the "reserved inheritance" would be realized and the fulness of Calvary's purchase would enable all believers to stand in the likeness of the Lord.

The teaching was decidedly doctrinal. To Timothy, Paul once wrote, "**Thou hast fully known my doctrine.**"

*The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

True conversion and proper training always result in Christlikeness. This is the desire of the Lord, the aim of Scripture and the need of the church. The students at Antioch soon became living epistles which were readily read and known of all men. Their speech was seasoned with grace, their conduct was exemplary and their joy in the Lord was abounding.

While it may not have been intended as a compliment, these followers of Christ were dubbed "**Christian,**" a name which has attached itself to believers to this very day.

How appropriate that Paul should have been among those who first were honoured with this expressive appellative.

Our vocabulary would be impoverished indeed without the word “**Christian.**”

While its usage has suffered from altogether too wide an application, it nevertheless retains the basic thought of an imitator of Christ. As a noun, it speaks of confession; as an adjective, it suggests conduct.

In any event, it identifies one with the Saviour.

Paul could not have sought a greater honour. He wore the name well and ever strove to give it the dignity it deserved and to guard against any reproach that might tarnish its luster. It was his badge of identification as he trekked the land in preaching tours and travelled the seas on mission voyages.

Though given by men, it has been approved of God as is indicated by its two subsequent usages in the sacred page; and we, today, accept it as indicative of our relation to Him Whom we follow in lowly paths of service. But its truest bearer, its worthiest beneficiary, and its most noteworthy exemplar was the one who taught the Antiochans the lessons which brightened the town with a reflection of Christ. Paul was a Christian!

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