

Living Up to the Name “Christian”
Acts 11:19-30

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Introduction to Text: The Book of Acts tells us the story of the beginning of the Church. In our text today we encounter a group of people first called Christians. If our desire is to be authentic followers of Jesus Christ, we do well to study this first group and compare our lives to their lives.

Text: ¹⁹ Those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the message to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, Cypriot and Cyrenian men, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Hellenists, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² Then the report about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to travel as far as Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with a firm resolve of the heart — ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith—and large numbers of people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ Then he went to Tarsus to search for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught large numbers, and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

²⁷ In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the time of Claudius. ²⁹ So each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers who lived in Judea. ³⁰ This they did, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul.

Introduction:

Yesterday, our state re-elected Bobby Jindal as our governor. So far as governor elections go in the State of Louisiana, this election was hardly noticeable. I think all will agree that our state has had some pretty interesting elections. One of my favorite stories of a governor's election happened in the fall of 1999. Our governor at the time was Murphy J. “Mike” Foster Jr. He was running as the incumbent for re-election. During that qualifying period a 33 year old brick layer from Pitkin, LA, walked into Secretary of State's office and qualified to run for governor. He was also named “Mike Foster.” This second Mike Foster said at the time that he was not running to confuse voters. In fact, he said, “If there wasn't another Mike Foster in the race, I'd probably still be running.”

What does all of this have to do with our text this morning? Simply this—names are important. Names identify. How many people claim to be Christians? In most cases in America, people claim to be Christians if they do not identify with another religion or specifically say they have no religion. How many of these are authentic Christians? How many fit the definition of the Bible? How many fit the description of the believers in Acts 11? Do I live up to the name Christian or am I a “Christian” in name only? Acts 11 can help us to see.

3 Characteristics of a Person who Lives up to the Name “Christian”

1. **Public Evidence of the Commitment to Christ.**

Evidence of the Christians in Antioch:

1. The news about them reached Jerusalem. They sent Barnabas to check things out.
2. Barnabas witnessed the grace of God. He observed something specific. He did not ask for a statement of faith. He didn't ask questions of theology. He just watched and saw the "grace of God."
3. Barnabas wanted Paul to see what was happening in Antioch. The idea of "search" in verse 25 carries the way of "look intently" similar to the way that Joseph and Mary "looked" for Jesus in the Temple. "Brought" carries the weight of begging for him to come. The idea of this verse is that Barnabas had to have Paul see what was taking place in Antioch.
4. The believers were first called Christians in Antioch. This verse screams out the public commitment to Christ. Others were noticing the commitment to Christ.

Evidence in Your Life?

This passage demands that we answer the question, "What is the evidence in my life?"

2. **Positive Effects of the Commitment to Christ.**

1. Non- Partiality among believers. Jews and Gentiles were being saved and worshipping together.
2. Priority on Teaching the Word of God.
3. Practiced the ways of Christ.

3. **Passion for Evangelism**

In Antioch: Acts 11:21, 24, 26

Outside Antioch: Acts 13:1-3

Despite the brick laying Mike Foster's statement that he was not trying to confuse voters, evidence came out days later that cast a great shadow on that transparency. As it turned out, just weeks before the brick laying Mike Foster qualified to run for governor, he had changed his name from his given name of Brian Keith Doyle.

What's your real name?