

Week of May 20-26

BADGE OF HONOR

Scripture Reading: Read Acts chapter 11

The Medal of Honor, sometimes referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor, is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. Members of all branches of the armed forces are eligible to receive the medal. It is bestowed by the President of the United States upon those members of the United States Armed Forces who distinguish themselves through "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States."

The highest civilian awards are the Congressional Gold Medal (bestowed by the US Congress) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (bestowed by the President of the United States). The Gold Medal is awarded to an individual who performs an outstanding deed or act of service to the security, prosperity, and national interest of the United States whereas the Medal of Freedom is awarded to those individuals who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors".

As important as these awards are, there is an even greater badge of honor available. This greater award was first given in the city of Antioch sometime in the early 40's A.D (over 1,800 years before the Congressional Medal of Honor was authorized during the Civil War). Perhaps you have heard about it. It's described in today's chapter reading. *"...men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."*

Did you see it? There, in the last sentence: *"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."* The badge of honor is to be called a Christian. The term means a "follower of Christ" or "one belonging to Christ". So Christ-centered and Christ-focused were the believers that the people of Antioch started making fun of them by calling them Christians. They meant it as a term of insult and derision. Believers, however, came to see it as a badge of honor. Notice what Peter says in his epistle (I Peter 4:16): *"However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."*

If you are a believer today, you have a greater honor bestowed upon you than a Medal of Honor, a Gold Medal or a Medal of Freedom. You have His name...Christian!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read I Peter 4:12-16 and spend some time reflecting in prayer on what Peter has to tell us about what it means to bear his name with honor.

Take-a-way: *To be called a Christian is to receive the greatest badge of honor.*