

Discipleship with a Purpose Pt 5

Acts 11:26

- One of the biggest misconceptions about Christianity in this society is where should we practice our faith, most if there being honest believe that faith should only be practiced in a building > ie **church, temple** or **Synagogue**, and maybe occasionally in your deeds or words, but mostly faith is something you do either on the inside or behind closed doors. But when you read the book of Acts what really jumps out and is unmistakable is faith was never meant to be just a part of our lives, it is to be our lives, so to try and confine it to a solitary place defies its true purpose.
- Which is to trust in **Someone greater than ourselves**, and in order for that to happen we must see the benefit of that in other people's lives outside of the confines of a building > **Acts 17:24** this doesn't mean He doesn't visit or won't enter in, it simply means just because it's there doesn't mean He will be, that distinction belongs to only one vessel this side of eternity > **Us 1Cor 6:19**- our bodies are the temple in which God dwells not a church, temple or home.
- The reason this is so important is it magnifies our importance, if you were to ask someone has they shared their faith this week, this month many will say yes I invited some coworkers, or neighbors to church believing that's the extent of sharing their faith.
- As if going to a building automatically means they'll have an encounter with the Lord, initially the early church thought the same thing. **Acts 1:8**- after the resurrection Jesus showed Himself to the disciples and told them that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ultimately the entire world, but **1st** they had to wait to be empowered.
- That happened in the next chapter but the disciples stayed in Jerusalem performing miracles and telling people to trust in Jesus as their Messiah, but that's not all Jesus told them to do. He told them to be witnesses (**martyrs**) for Him not just in Jerusalem, but Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world, instead they were hanging around Jerusalem going to the temple and inviting others hoping they'll find what they had in Jesus.
- God still moved but He envisioned more > **Acts 8:1**- God used a despised thing in Christian circles to get His agenda moving (**persecution**) sadly that's the one thing most Christians greatly despise but usually respond to. Persecution caused the disciples to scatter throughout Judea, Samaria, and soon to the different parts of the world just as He had said for them to do in **Ch 1** before His ascension.

- It's during that time that we see the church as God intended > (a church on the go) **its moving, it's alive, it's flexible, it's teachable, it's exciting**, as the focus is no longer on the Law or the Jews but on Jesus and the gospel. Its during this time when they become accepting to the gentiles as brothers and sisters in Christ, and the Grace of God instead of the law from God begins to reign in their hearts > **2 Cor 3:6**- realizing the letter of the law kills but the spirit of the law gives life.
- Its right after this Peter gives this rousing speech in which the Jew witness the miraculous as the gentiles receive the spirit of God right in front of them > **Acts 10:44-48**- no temple, no church, just willing and open hearts to receive all that the Lord wanted to give to them. Finally this brings us to our study verse for after the persecution arose the believers fled and some ended up in Antioch the capital of Syria some **300** miles north of Jerusalem.
- It was the **3rd** largest city in the Roman Empire, it was the only city in the ancient world that had its streets lighted at night, and its main street was more than four miles long, it was given the name "**Antioch the Golden**" "**Queen of the East**", it attracted the wealthy as many of the Roman officials would retire there. It is here where believers were **1st** called "**Christians**" or "**little Christ's**" this had nothing to do with a **church, temple or building**, but had everything to do with a lifestyle.
- They didn't call them Christians because of where they went to church, or what day they had their services, this was all about what the people observed in the believers everyday life. As they **1st** encountered the believer at his **worst** and that's when we often are at our **best** > **Acts 11:19**- the only reason we were there is things got a little too uncomfortable in Jerusalem so we ran as far as we could and some ended up there in the middle of one of the most wicked cities **2nd** only to Corinth.
- This place was busy being home to one of the most active ports in the world, filled with magnificent buildings, streets paved with marble, and lined in marble colonnades, all kinds of nationalities and cultures; it had a large cosmopolitan population that presented the church with a vast opportunity for evangelism.
- It also had its share of false gods with Greek, Roman, and Syrian deities all honored there with its temples and shrines. But that didn't intimidate these believers they had realized through the persecution that as long as the Word of God was on their lips then the hand of God would be on their witness, and boy were they right! **Acts 11:21-22** that their witness was so powerful and so profound that news traveled as far as **300** miles to Jerusalem, where many of them came from, and the church decided to send Barnabas.

- I believe for two reason, **1st to authenticate**- the church is new exciting things are happening many false movements are popping up let's send one of our best scholars to investigate. **2nd** if this is real they'll need help discipling- Barnabas name meant **encouragement Acts 4:36**, they wanted someone who was experienced in rooting-grounding these new converts
- **Acts 11:23-24**- he comes sees its real and notice his response not one of skepticism or doubt but he was glad, and then he does what God gifted him to do, he encourages them all to **continue with the Lord** but with **purpose of heart** > it's the same word used for when God told the priests to place the showbread out > it meant that God would provide for His people.
- God wanted Barnabas to tell the people to follow Him whole heartedly and not just intellectually, believing that He would always provide for their needs, so serve Me as if you believe I'm able. **Acts 11:25-26** give Barnabas spiritual profile mentioning **3** things that all say he is a man of character. This event is what reintroduced the Apostle Paul to the gentile church bringing him to Antioch.