

FINDING THE CHURCH INSIDE YOU

**“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
—GALATIANS 3:28**

After Pentecost, the church in Jerusalem became well established and enjoyed its stature as the central power of the Christian faith, but regrettably was mired in centuries of Jewish tradition and self interest. Favoritism was shown to local Jews over Grecian Jews, and many believers advocated that becoming a Christian involved converting to Judaism first.

Jewish Christians seriously regarded their heritage and retained an exclusivity about themselves over and against the Gentiles. It was not until the stoning of Stephen that the church in Jerusalem dispersed into Judea, Samaria, and traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus, but it was in Antioch that the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down. Antioch in Syria became the new central authority and the first church to preach the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile. While Jerusalem became a dying church, Antioch became a dynamic church with its embracing of different colors, cultures, backgrounds, nationalities and continents.

Acts 11:26 interestingly states, “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Only twice in Scripture are disciples called ‘Christians’. It was a nickname, meaning ‘Christ-in’, which is what characterized the disciples. Christ is in them, and they were called

‘Christians’ as there was no other way to explain them. Today, ‘Christ followers’ is a popular term, but that is not only frustrating, but impossible. The only one capable of living the Christian life is Christ, which is why He is in us, so that through Him our lives will express something of what He is like.

We live in a different era, but we can look back at the history of the Jerusalem church and see to what extent we might be looking into a mirror. Although the details are different, the principle remains the same. Finding the church inside you is not about rules, tradition, ethnic background or any discriminatory factor, all of which violate the mandate of Christ. It is discovering the life of Christ within us, and the purpose for which we are called.

We are not called to the Christian life to sit on the power of Christ’s indwelling Spirit, but to draw upon it. It is learning to operate in the sufficiency and strength of Christ, so that we may become missional people. Under His direction, bringing the Gospel to those around us will have a rippling effect, spanning into our communities, cities and around the globe. Finding the church inside us is about one faith, one body, one humanity, breaking down barriers and reaching the world for Christ.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, grant me the courage to speak of Christ living in me.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I drawing upon the sufficiency of Christ in conveying the Gospel message to others?