

God's Means Of Growing His Kingdom (Acts 11:19-30)

I. God Uses Persecution To Grow His Kingdom (19)

A. Believers Were Scattered From Judea Because of Persecution

1. Remember that Stephen's execution sent the believers away from Jerusalem
2. They scattered in order to protect themselves

B. Believers Spoke the word of God Wherever they went

1. Remember Jesus said they would be witnesses to the utter ends of the earth
2. Until the persecution of Stephen, they stayed in Jerusalem ministering to those who came there
3. God used the Persecution to keep them from staying in Judea
 - a. At the time, they probably thought the worst
 - b. God was sovereignly working to fulfill the spread of His Kingdom
 - c. Even when we don't understand why something bad is happening, God uses it for His purposes

C. God was with the believers as they ministered through trials (see v. 21)

II. God Uses Every Believer To Grow His Kingdom (19-21)

A. Some Unnamed Believers Traveled Preaching to the Jews (19)

1. Believers are dispersed to Phoenicia (Phenice – along the sea coast), Cyprus, which is an island 30 miles off shore in the Mediterranean, and Antioch which was the capital of the Roman Province of Syria.
 - a. Antioch (in modern Turkey) was the third largest city in the Roman world after Rome and Alexandria.
 - b. Antioch was a commercial center of trade and the political capital of Syria
 - c. Antioch was also known as a center of wicked morals. There were Temples for the cult of Artemis, Apollo, and Daphne, as well as the worship of Astarte which included ritual prostitution.
 - d. Antioch was a most unlikely place to become the central hub of Gentile Christianity.
2. Notice that none of these believers are named, yet the missionary endeavors in Antioch will prove to be central to the missionary journeys in the rest of the book of Acts.
3. These Jewish believers centered on the synagogues, preaching the gospel to the Jews who were dispersed in those lands

B. Some Unnamed Believers Traveled Preaching to the Gentiles (20)

1. Believers from Cyrene also traveled to Antioch preaching to the Greeks and Gentiles
2. So as God scattered the believers, they went preaching to men from every nation, both Jew and Gentile

- C. Unnamed Believers Were Used To Convert Many People (21)
 - 1. In Acts, we tend to focus of the “superstars” of the Christian movement, but there were multitudes of believer whom we never hear about that greatly served Christ and were used mightily of God
 - 2. This shows that one need not be a big name celebrity or a leader throughout the Christian world to be an effective tool in Christ’s Kingdom
 - 3. God uses every believer. Every single Christian has a ministry and is called to serve the Master with their lives

III. God Uses Believers’ Specific Gifts To Grow His Kingdom (22-26)

- A. Barnabas Works Among The Church in Antioch (22-23)
 - 1. The Jerusalem Church Sends Barnabas to Antioch (22)
 - a. Remember that Barnabas’ name means son of encouragement
 - b. Barnabas was also a Jew from Cyprus so he would have common ground with those who began the church in Antioch
 - c. The Apostles sent Barnabas knowing that his gift of encouragement would be needed in this growing church
 - 2. Barnabas Rejoiced That God’s Grace Has Spread (23a)
 - a. He saw that God was pouring His Spirit out on Jew and Gentile alike
 - b. He marveled that now the whole world would be the recipients of God’s promises
 - c. Barnabas was not an “us four and no more” believer – he rejoiced that so many were coming to faith in Christ
 - 3. Barnabas Encouraged The Church To Be Steadfast (23b)
 - a. True to his name, Barnabas began discipling these believers and encouraging them to cling to the Lord
 - b. The Church desperately needs people who will come along side others and exhort one another, encouraging one another to keep running the race for Christ
- B. Barnabas’ Gifts Are Used to Grow God’s Kingdom (24)
 - 1. Barnabas Was a Good Man (of Good Report)
 - a. This doesn’t mean Barnabas was sinless
 - b. It means Barnabas was a man of good report among the people
 - c. He was well liked among the church because he actually care for the people with whom he ministered
 - d. It is easy to give advice or teach, but loving the brethren goes much further in discipling believers
 - 2. Barnabas Was Full of the Spirit
 - a. Barnabas was a man who was led by the Spirit
 - b. The fruits of the Spirit were abundantly seen in his life

- c. To be an encourager and lover of the brethren, one must be patient, long-suffering, gentle, kind – these things only come by the Spirit of God
 - 3. Barnabas is Used to Turn Many To the Lord
 - a. Because of the gifts that Barnabas possessed, many turned to faith in the Lord and many were strengthened
 - b. God uses Barnabas' particular skills in ministry to grow the Church and edify the believers
- C. Barnabas Unites With Saul To Disciple The Church (25-26)
 - 1. Barnabas Brings Saul To Antioch (25)
 - a. Barnabas quickly realizes that he doesn't possess all the gifts that the Antioch church needs in a leader
 - i. Perhaps Barnabas saw a need for more discipleship
 - ii. Perhaps Barnabas Knew someone trained in the Scripture was needed
 - b. Barnabas Realizes that He needs Saul to Help Him
 - i. Perhaps Barnabas remembered Saul's Fire and Zeal
 - ii. Barnabas Needed Saul so bad He left the work at Antioch to travel 100 miles to Tarsus to bring Saul back
 - iii. Barnabas was more concerned about the church than his own pride and ego as a prominent leader in the church – He was humble enough to know when he needed help
 - 2. Barnabas and Saul Teach in Antioch For a Year (26)
 - a. Not only were people being converted, but people were being taught
 - i. Barnabas had the pastoral skills of an encourager and Paul had the skills of a scholar and teacher (this doesn't mean Paul wasn't pastoral, but that each excelled in his own way and both were needed)
 - ii. Jesus said to baptize all nations "teaching them everything I have commanded" – Barnabas realizes that instruction in the Scriptures is necessary
 - b. The Church in Antioch grew to such renown that it was there where believers were first called "Christians"
 - i. Probably it was the pagans in Antioch who first used the name for the believers
 - ii. They followed this man called Christ and held to His teachings so they were called "Christians"
 - iii. There is a distinct difference between the church at Antioch and the church at Jerusalem – In

Antioch both Jew and Gentile believers were
meeting together in harmony

IV. God Uses The Local Fellowship to Grow the Kingdom (27-30)

A. God Foretells a Famine to Come (27-28)

1. The Jerusalem Church obviously approved of what was going on in Antioch because men holding the office of prophet were sent
 - a. Prophecy is not just predicting the future, but speaking the words of God
 - b. At this time there was no New Testament Scriptures. God still spoke through His Apostles – these prophets sent from Jerusalem were no doubt ordained by the Apostles
 - c. Agabus foretells that a famine is to come upon the land and there is such a famine recorded in Judea around 47 A.D. during the reign of Claudius
 - d. The Jerusalem Church sent aid to Antioch in the form of Barnabas and prophets (those with a message from the Lord)
2. The Church at Antioch Sends Aid to Jerusalem (29-30)
 - a. They collected money – everyone according to his ability and sent it to Judea by Saul and Barnabas
 - b. Remember that the Jews and Gentiles weren't on the best of terms
 - c. First we saw Jews being scattered by persecution bring the gospel to a city of Gentiles
 - d. Now we see that city of Gentiles sending aid back to their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem