

An Evangelistic Church (The Antioch Church)

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon focuses on the birth of the Antioch Church, highlighting the importance of evangelism amidst persecution, the breaking of religious traditions to reach all people, and the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church was birthed by normal believers who faced hardships but saw a great number believe and turn to the Lord due to the hand of God working through them.

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Description

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Transcript

I want to take you to the Word of God tonight. You know why? Because the Word of God washes us. It renews our minds and I'd like to do that for a bit even if I don't go too far into this tonight.

But I want you to turn in your Bibles with me to Acts chapter 11. Acts chapter 11 and we're starting a new series here tonight. And I've called this series The Antioch Church, A Vision for LCC.

I preached one message several years ago called A Vision for LCC and it was on this. It was all my messages, several nights packed into one night. So if you want this entire series at the beginning, go look up that A Vision for LCC, it's on our website and you can get a feel for where I'll go over the next several weeks.

But I'm really going to break this down. We're going to the Church of Antioch in the book of Acts in the Bible and I'm going to draw out several key marks of that church that I've actually taken very personally to be the vision for this church. I believe it's got a message for us and insight and wisdom and help.

And I believe that there's several themes, at least seven, I think I'm going to deal with. I'm going to take each of them and show you in this church how we want to follow the example of a biblical church. I don't create a vision for this church.

We only get a vision, not through gifts or prophecies or a dream. We do not get a vision for this church from those things. I believe in all those things, but we don't get our vision out of that.

I get my vision from the Bible, from Christ's commission. I can't improve on that and neither can you. So let's go to Acts chapter 1. Here's my first message here tonight concerning the Antioch church and I believe what we are to be.

See we're having people come in now. We need to understand what this church is about. We need to be unified.

We need to understand some things. I want you to know that the things I'm going to preach, we're not moving from. They're very important.

They're very essential in this church. And this is my first message tonight, an evangelistic church. Reading from Acts chapter 11 and verse 19.

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phineas and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none, but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, speak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.

Father, we ask for your blessing here tonight. Father, from tonight over these several weeks, Lord God, we do want clarity. We do want direction.

We're asking that you speak by the power of your Holy Spirit from the word of God, that we understand tonight what an evangelistic church is, what it is in the scripture. Lord God, we want your wisdom. We want you to mold us.

We want you to guide us, O God. We want you to lead us as individuals, as a body, as a leadership. Lord God, we want to be marked by evangelism.

We want every member evangelizing in this church, O God. We want even our influence online upon those that listen to be that many will be released in evangelizing and witnessing and sharing the gospel and their personal testimony. And Father, tonight, teach us and make this clear in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen. Now, we're going to deal, beginning with Acts 11, with a particular church. After the church in Jerusalem, this is the second most important church in the book of Acts, and it's very important.

The city of Antioch was the third biggest city in the entire Roman Empire. First, there was Rome. Second, Alexandria in Egypt.

And then third of all, there was Antioch in Syria. It was a mega city of that day of about 300,000 people. Some say half a million or closer to a million, but I'm sure it was at least 300,000.

It was the third mega city of the empire, and it was a cosmopolitan city filled with diverse religion, diverse culture, diverse opinions and ideas on everything you can imagine. They were diverse in nationality, culture, tongues, religion, in trade, and all manners of things. They were famous for their chariot races, and as an entire city, they were most known for their pursuit of pleasure, sexual immorality, and they had a reputation for being one of the most beautiful cities of the east.

Within the city of Antioch, a temple was erected right at the heart of the city with the worship of the Caesars of Rome magnified right within that place. At one point, Julius Caesar placed his statue of himself in the temple in the city to be worshipped. And so you had this deity worship of the political Roman emperors, even in ancient secular city, even in that culture of that day, they called it an immoral city.

In fact, its reputation was so bad that all the great poets in Rome used to say that it was like a sewer that poured its filth into the city of Rome. Antioch was far worse than Rome. It was a bad influence upon Rome, and believe me, Rome was bad as a city, immoral, false religion.

It was a horrible place to raise your children. But Antioch was far worse. Welcome to the city of Antioch and the church that we're going to see.

Isn't this a good example of a 21st century church and how to raise your children? What sort of church do you want to raise your children in in the 21st century? We'll see more about the culture and city, but I want to get straight into this church. You see, I'm going to give you the backdrop, the history, and to show you that those who first formed the city were very evangelistic. This church was evangelistic even at its birth, because the people who birthed it were highly evangelistic.

What I mean by evangelistic is they believed in evangelism, sharing the gospel, telling sinners, being proactive to share that Jesus is the only way. And so I've got five points here tonight which I'm going to rush into. My first point about an evangelistic church, Antioch and I hope us, evangelism birthed amidst growing persecution.

That's what I want to show you first. Evangelism for this church that led to the raising up of this church, this evangelism that birthed the church was birthed amidst growing persecution. Look with me in your Bible at Acts chapter 8 and verse 1. And it says there in Acts chapter 8 verse 1, and at that time, and this is speaking about Jerusalem, the Christians who are going to birth the church at Antioch are presently in Acts chapter 8. They are in the city of Jerusalem.

They're in another church. They're in the church of Jerusalem. They are believers there maybe six years before the church was actually birthed in Antioch.

Now let's look at how the evangelism that was going to lead to the birth of a church, how that evangelism was birthed, how the mission was birthed. Verse 1, and at that time, there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. And they were all, notice that word all, all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

I want you to see here that the evangelism that's going to birth the church at Antioch, this is where it began. It began in Jerusalem, 300 miles away to the south with believers who are coming under serious persecution. This is where the evangelism was birthed in the hearts under intense, overwhelming persecution.

Notice here in verse 1 it says great persecution. And the word persecution is used twice in the book of Acts. It's used again in Acts 13 verse 50, but it says great persecution.

This is the first organized widespread intense persecution of the church in the book of Acts. James is beheaded before this. Stephen is just stoned to death here.

Jesus was crucified. But this is the first overwhelming organized saturation of Jerusalem, of every home. Do you realize this persecution, they were going to go to every single door in the city of Jerusalem to hunt down Christians.

And so it says it was a great persecution. The word persecution means to chase, pursue, or to hunt down. It says it was the great persecution.

The word great is mega. This is a mega persecution. Welcome to God's plan to raise up evangelism.

Do you realize God's hand was in this? It wasn't just man doing this. God had a plan. You know what had just happened? What triggered this great persecution? They took Stephen, a remarkably gifted, spirit filled man who brought the word of God to the Jews and they stoned him to death.

That triggered this persecution. It says in verse 2, and devout men, chapter 8 verse 2, and devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. Look at this.

They're going to bury Stephen. This is the beginning of a great pursuit of every Christian. They're going to hunt every Christian down the city, but it starts with the death of Stephen.

Devout men carried him to his burial. In other words, they're godly. They're mature men of stature in the church of Jerusalem.

They are carrying his body. These mature, godly, spiritual men, look what they're doing. They made great lamentation.

Do you know what lamentation means? It means great sorrow or to beat your breast, to wail aloud. It puts it in perspective when I have Christians tell me, you need to move on from mourning about your wife. I've had them from weeks after burying my wife.

People say, you need to just decide to move on. You've got mature, godly men lamenting, beating their breasts, and yet it's commended in Scripture. Men lamenting over a man who died.

Do you realize how spiritual this is? I'm giving you a backdrop of evangelism being birthed in the hearts of real, genuine, normal believers. You see, I believe these believers that were about to be scattered from Jerusalem, they knew what disappointment was. They were shocked by Stephen's death.

They had suffered a real loss in the loss of Stephen. Then in verse 3, it says, as for Saul, he made havoc of the church. It says in verse 3, he entered into every house and hailed men and women, committing them to prison.

This is persecution. This hits the church with a shock. They're grieving over their good, godly friend.

They're beginning to watch people being torn away, put in prison. You know what it says? It says in verse 1 that they're scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria. The entire church for the first eight years of its history has been confined to Jerusalem.

The 12 apostles, all the seven deacons, all of the church, it's growing, thousands, thousands growing. Guess what? It's confined to Jerusalem. The 12 apostles didn't go into Samaria or Judea or into further afield.

For eight years, they're in the city of Jerusalem. Can you start to understand how God's hand could be in this then? So it says they were scattered abroad throughout the region, but not the apostles. They stay there in the city.

Do you know, you begin to understand what's happening in Acts chapter 8 when the church is suddenly shocked, suddenly hit by this like a tornado out of nowhere. They're disappointed. They're sorrowing.

They're grieving. They're in shock. All of their homes are being visited.

Can you imagine that happening tomorrow and me notifying you on WhatsApp, every single one of your homes is going to be visited by authorities and they're not playing games? It's just started. It says they were scattered into Judea and Samaria. Do you remember the great commission Jesus gave them eight years before? Acts chapter 1 verse 8. This is the key to the book of Acts, the entire key to that book.

A whole new phase is about to begin in the church, but the apostles are being confined. Look what it says in verse 8. But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem. Notice that.

Then second of all, it says, and in all Judea and in Samaria. That's the second phase of all of this. And then third of all, it says, and onto the uttermost parts of the earth.

In other words, the book of Acts shows us in this three areas, the spread of the gospel. In Acts chapter 1 to 7, they stayed in Jerusalem for about a period of eight years, 12 apostles over one mega church. And then it comes to Acts chapter 8, things are going to change.

Suddenly the church moves out into Judea and Samaria as they were commissioned eight years ago, but they've never fulfilled that until now. What is it that pushes them out into the second phase of evangelism? Persecution, mega persecution. But then there's a third area of moving beyond those two areas.

And you're going to see it here in these verses tonight. Now go with me back to Acts chapter 11 and verse 19. I've just given you the backdrop.

See, they were scattered, scattered in the Judea, in the Samaria, and they begin evangelizing those two regions beyond Jerusalem, but no further. Then look at chapter 11 verse 19. Now they which were scattered abroad, do you see that? That was Acts 8 verse 1. This is Acts 11 verse 19.

And he goes right back and he repeats himself, what he said back in chapter 8 verse 1. In other words, he's bringing you right back in, he's connecting. This is six years later. So they had eight years in Jerusalem.

Now there's been six years since that point, and he's taking you right back because he said, what happens right now is connected to that. Persecution breaking out in Jerusalem, being forced out, something comes out of that six years later. And you have it in verse 19.

And they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about traveled as far as Phineas and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word. So he opens with familiar words, taking you back those six years. Do you see it says they were scattered abroad.

So we've seen that word twice, scattered abroad. It's used in chapter 8 verse 1, and it's used here in chapter 11. And it's talking about the same thing.

That word isn't used anywhere else in the book of Acts, only concerning this, this scattering. Do you know what the word scattering there actually means is *dispara*, where we get dispersion from. That's where we get it, this dispersion of everyone.

So since Pentecost, the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit's poured out, until this scattering, the gospel was confined in Jerusalem. Now it has to be scattered abroad. It's got to go everywhere.

Do you know what this word *dispara* means? It's talking about a seed being planted. That's what the Greek word is. It's to have seed taken and scattered or planted.

That is significant. What it's talking about is these believers are being scattered. Notice the apostles stay in Jerusalem.

They didn't budge at that point. But the normal believers, they're not a ministry. They don't have callings.

They don't have titles. They don't have reputations. You don't know any of their names.

None of you know their names. And yet they are the seed. They're being scattered abroad in every direction.

And it says in chapter 11 about this persecution again, and it calls it the *thlipseis*. It's a different Greek word. It's the word used for the great tribulation.

It means great pressure, affliction, anguish, to be burdened down, to have tribulation around you, to have trouble. So here are these believers, normal believers. And do you know what? This evangelism that's going to birth the church in Antioch is going to be birthed out of great persecution.

Do you want a great missionary movement to go forth out of Limerick? Do you want a great movement across this island? See, I believe God is going to move again, but maybe not like what we expect. And so I want you to grasp this tonight. It's so, so important that you begin to see that this people were actually prepared of God.

The mark of these persecuted believers was not self-preservation or self-pity. Woe is me. I'm going to have to leave my house, and my job, and my friends, and my family, and my church.

I was so enjoying eight years of this church in Antioch, revival, listening to the apostles every single night, if you want to. YouTube hasn't got anything on the early church, I want to tell you. Message after message every single night.

Do you think they were filled with self-pity? No, not according to what we read here. Look at the evangelism that comes out of this, but a desire to evangelize. They were unhindered in evangelism.

What would hinder you from sharing your gospel? Oh, there's a mega persecution. Be very careful of sharing the gospel. Oh, I've lost my house.

How can I possibly speak the gospel or share the gospel? I've lost a friend in Stephen. I've lost my wife. My husband was locked up in prison.

They're going to kill him. I can't evangelize. Really? I want to tell you, these early Christians, rank and file, young believers, were very different.

They weren't filled with self-pity. Whenever they're driven, persecuted, when they come under tribulation, when they're being chased and hunted down, you know what? The Bible says they're scattered abroad, and everywhere they go, do you know what they do? They're given the word of God to anybody they meet in the way. They begin to evangelize.

It says that they traveled to Phoenice, which is up the Mediterranean coastline, and Phoenice was Phoenicia. You know, Phoenicia, we said about all the boats, all the trade, and the country covered 120 miles. They just went up evangelizing through an entire country.

They're fleeing persecution. They don't know where they're going. They've got all their possession.

They're dragging their kids. Mommy, where are we going? I really don't know. Just somewhere where we can settle down and be.

What do they do the whole way? Evangelize, share the gospel, tell people the word of God, and so this is how they traveled. Would you travel like this under persecution, traveling hundreds of miles? It also says they fled to Cyprus. That's 200 miles by sea to the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean, and then third of all, they traveled north as far as Antioch, and that's where this church was raised up that we're dealing with, that we won't understand.

You see, persecution will not quench evangelism. It spreads evangelism. Everywhere you get persecution in the book of Acts, doesn't matter whether it's Jerusalem or Antioch or Rome or anywhere else, let persecution come to real Christians.

It spreads the gospel. It increases the intensity to tell men and women the gospel. It's a bit like the eagle that stirs up the nest of its young ones.

Fluffy and flowery and nesy, they're a bit settled in the nest. They think they're just going to stay with mommy forever, and so mother eagle, what does the Bible say? You can look up videos on it. It stirs up the nest.

You know what it starts doing? Takes out all the fluffy bits and all the nice comfortable parts. You mummies listen very carefully when they get to 16, 17. So you remove all the nice comfort.

These kids are going to get worried now, and you move the comfort. Then the mother starts breaking up the nest, will remove. I'm tired.

Things are going to get uncomfortable. You know what? Mommy said, it's about time you flew. I can see those wings.

I can see that you're beginning to grow and mature. You need to start thinking, do you not think God does that with your life? You know what? I need to help you because you want to just stay in the nest and have mommy and daddy feed you all the time. We're going to begin stirring up the nest.

That's what happened to the church in Jerusalem. In the future, I want to tell you, persecution will not quench the evangelism of this church. Do you hear me? If scattered, it will spread.

If persecuted, it will intensify. If they take your houses, if they take your liberties, then I tell you saints, we've only got one thing to live for, and it's this gospel. Do you realize that this church, LCC, was birthed out of a lot of opposition? Candice and I came to the city to birth the church at a time where we've gone

through years of persecution from people in the church, opposition.

Two key leaders, one in Northern Ireland, one in Southern Ireland, two prominent leaders joined together and they sat with a friend of mine and said, we will not rest until Keith Malcolmson and School of Christ is out of all of Ireland. We are going to close this thing down. Well, I want to tell you, that just made me go, I know God wants me here all the more.

I want to assure you, I can't tell you what brokenness led to the birthing of this church. Opposition, betrayal, lies, hardship. I can't even begin to tell you, but we went, we're going to get souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.

There will be a church here. This was not organized evangelism. This was real life, not planned, not like missions today, organizing their strategies, or coming in here to evangelize our people when they should be out on the streets evangelizing.

Why would you take people from Limerick to some other country or say, come to our mission Bible school? Sure, we've got a mission field here. Why don't you come to this city and evangelize our city, our sinners? There's an absolute mission field right on our doorstep. That's why God put this church here.

We haven't even begun saints of God. So that's number one, evangelism birthed amidst growing persecution. Number two, evangelism birthed by normal unnamed Christians.

This is some of the best evangelism you can read of in the Bible, happened in the raising up of the church at Antioch. Yet no apostles are mentioned, no evangelists are mentioned. Some people call them evangelists because souls got saved.

No, they're not called evangelists. Philip was an evangelist. Peter was an apostle.

None of them raised up this church. Look at Acts 8, 1 again. They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

They were, who are they? They're not the apostles. They didn't go everywhere evangelizing, except the apostles. The apostles stayed where they were being persecuted.

You know, the old great ship masters of old days, do you know what they used to say? If your ship ever gets into a bad, dangerous storm, do you know what they said? If you're the captain of that ship, steer that ship, always keep her facing into the storm. Never turn your back. See, when it gets really bad and you think we could lose our lives, keep the front of that ship, steer it straight into the face of that storm.

That's the only way you're likely to survive. Do you know what those apostles done? They stood, let everyone else be scattered across the nations. Those 12 stayed in Jerusalem and they faced into the eye of the storm.

All hell will not move them from Jerusalem. The 12 stayed, used to be in old days, the captain, he'd be the last one. Get everyone off.

The captain would be standing there saluting as the ship sank. I don't think we get captains anymore like that. I'm going to tell you.

But they that were scattered abroad, they weren't apostles. They weren't gifted ministries. Do you know these people, these normal mothers, fathers, old people, young people who are being scattered, they lost their home, lost their friends, lost everything that they knew.

Do you realize they also lost godly leadership? They lost the 12 apostles. They would no longer sit under the 12 night after night, Sunday after Sunday, Saturday, Sabbath. They wouldn't have that environment anymore.

They lost that leadership. But when they lost this godly leadership, it gave birth to new enterprises within their own hearts. The loss of direct access to gifted apostolic ministry led to their personal growth of taking on the responsibility of evangelism.

Can I insert a word here about the loss of Candace? One of the greatest losses this church has suffered is Candace. There's no doubt about that. Her influence on the ladies, the ladies meetings in this church, the kids work in this church, the music in this church, the organization in every aspect of this church.

Not one single person is removed. But can I tell you while it breaks our heart and it breaks my heart and I don't understand it, I want to tell you something. The way is open to take on responsibility.

Losing godly leadership throws you into an entire new situation. What are you going to do? Sit down and die? Stagnate? Become stale? What have you heard all these years? What are you going to do with it? So what the famed apostles should have done long ago, eight years before, now you're getting unnamed nobodies. They're going to do it.

The apostles would not move. They stayed there. They didn't go out to evangelize.

But these nobodies from nowhere being scattered, carrying their belongings, not knowing where they're going, not having a job. Do you realize the loss of their homes, personal possessions? They're having to carry everything. I think a lot walked.

I'm sure there were many that had horses or a donkey, but I think an awful lot walked. You've got all your possessions, the loss of your home. Suddenly the church, and I'm not talking about a building.

It was left behind in Jerusalem. The church becomes very, very important. The temporary loss of your jobs, en masse, all these believers.

Suddenly you take on the task of evangelism and you're telling people the gospel everywhere you go. You lose your job. Think of all the time on your hands.

Are you in a in-between jobs, a quiet time? Maybe God's ordained that you go serve him. It says in chapter 11, 19. Now, they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far, and then it mentions these places, preaching the word.

To travel means you're on the move. You're on the move for hundreds of miles, going out in different directions. Hundreds of genuine believers, maybe with their family or with one or two friends.

What are they actually doing? Are they trying to plan? Are they crying? Are they bemoaning? Saying, what am I going to do with my future? Are they sitting there telling each other their sad stories, crying the whole way? Do you realize they're consumed? What does it say? Preaching the word. Do you know the word preaching there? This is what it means. It's the Greek word *lelio*.

It means to talk, to speak, or simply share. Often in the church, I've heard it, makes me sick to the stomach. It's a saying that goes through the church.

Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary. Makes me sick.

It's utterly unbiblical. In other words, they say, yes, evangelize. The odd time maybe you need to put something on your lips and say something.

How ridiculous and anti-biblical. Look at these normal believers. They're not preachers.

They're not apostles. They're being scattered. They're husbands.

They're workers. They're traders. Here they are being scattered.

There's fishermen among them being driven away from the sea. Do you know what? They preached. The word preach means to simply talk.

They're not heralding the gospel. They're not straight preaching. All they're doing is sharing, talking.

That's what the word preach there means in the Greek. Lelio, just talking, it's coming up. What are they sharing? It says the word, logos.

Logos is the scriptures, the word of God. What are they preaching? They're sharing in conversation. They stop along the way to get some water, to sleep somewhere.

They find people. They're walking with people. You know what they do? They just start sharing, talking in conversation.

The logos, the logos, the logos. That's what they're doing. If you just lost everything, your life was in danger, you're being driven out of your nation, your city.

Your entire life has changed in one night. Everything. Would you be there with a mission, hundreds of miles, sharing? Simply keep every opportunity.

I like to talk about the logos. Would you be doing that? The early church did. You're very quiet.

Chapter 11, verse 20. And some of them, notice that some of them. So all these that got scattered from Jerusalem, that's what it's talking about.

Some, you don't know any of their names. They're nameless. They're faceless.

There's no books written on them. You can search Amazon. You won't get one book on the life of one of the founders of the church at Antioch.

Oh yes, the 12 apostles were there at Jerusalem, but try to find the founder of the church at Antioch. They're nameless, faceless people who are evangelized, sharing, talking about the gospel, not preaching in the city center, not heralds of the gospel. They're simply sharing the word of God.

And some of them, so out of all of them, just some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. Doesn't say they came directly from there. They're in Jerusalem being scattered, but originally they come from Cyprus, the island, and Cyrene.

Where's Cyrene? Cyrene is about 200, sorry, 800 miles away, North Africa, Libya. So that means there were Gentile speaking Christians in Jerusalem who got scattered, who were as far away from Libya. Oh, in Acts chapter two, doesn't it say that Libyan was spoken by some of the normal Christians in the church of Jerusalem? It was one of the languages that was preached.

Cyrene was preached on the day of Pentecost. There was people from Cyrene who got born again, who obviously stayed there. And they've been there in this church.

So they moved into Jerusalem. They're travelers. There are a lot of travelers in this church, I want to tell you.

We need some more travelers, I want to tell you. And so you had them here, and it says some of them from these two places were actually there as well. It says that they were a part of this, of what was just about to happen.

In the whole story of Antioch, we only have the name of three leaders that eventually lead it. And even they are Bluins, okay, to Antioch. It's a remarkable thing.

You had normal believers begin to evangelize at Antioch. Number three, evangelism that broke through religious tradition. This is my third point, verse 19.

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenix, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word, notice the next statement, to none but unto the Jews only. See these wonderful, normal, faceless Christians I've told you about, that's one thing I didn't tell you until now. See the whole way for hundreds of miles, 300 miles until they reached Antioch, they only preached, shared the word of God with Jews, no one else.

That's a long journey, isn't it? So my point is evangelism that broke through religious tradition. Do you realize there was a custom in the church of Jerusalem? It hadn't pushed out into evangelism. Then when they get persecuted and scattered, they don't evangelize any of the Gentiles, only the Jews.

They're witnessing everywhere they go for 300 miles, only the Jews, only the Jews. That's what it says. Isn't this strange? To none but the Jews only.

Look at their evangelism for 300 miles. It was deliberate. It was evangelism.

It's very focused on a cultural group, the Jews. They are absolutely after the Jews, but they are restricted. It's a messianic mission.

We're sharing the word of God with every Jew that we find, and Jews were everywhere, in every city, in influential places. They're evangelizing the Jews, but they're not speaking to the Gentiles. And it says here that they speak to none, and some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they would come to Antioch, and look at these ones from Cyprus and Cyrene, when they would come to Antioch, not until that point, they spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

So suddenly when they get to Antioch, something changes. Some of all of them that have been evangelizing only Jews, can you imagine being bound by tradition? See, there's the hangover at the Church of Jerusalem. It's a mega church.

It's a revived church. It's an amazing church. It's an apostolic church, 12 apostles.

But they're constantly battling, discussing, should we evangelize Gentiles? All the people are bound by tradition, the Jewish influence. Do I have liberty to do this? If you come from a Calvinistic church, you'll be going, does God want all to be saved? Is that possible? I better be careful not to witness or evangelize someone who's non-elect, in case they get saved. I've met Calvinists like that.

Lovely brothers, but they're wrong. They're my brother in Christ, but they're wrong. And don't judge that sort of person because you have them here.

They're only evangelizing Jews. They're scared. They're unconfident.

They're suffering and will evangelize Jews, but not a Gentile. Why? Because of this thinking that come down through the apostles that was in the Church of Jerusalem. And it says, when they came here, they speak.

It's the same word as preaching. They talked. They shared.

They began to speak to the Grecians. The Greek word is Hellenistic. The word for Greek speakers, non-Jew Gentiles.

Only at Antioch, they begin to speak. What a break. This is radical in church history, and the book acts.

This is major. This is history changing. And you go, it's not a big deal to me.

I know because that didn't bind you. But you know, you could have all sorts of traditions and things that are hindering you. And you say, I can't pray in a prayer meeting.

I can't evangelize. I can't give out a gospel tract. That's it in a little form.

But take something that becomes, maybe there's something in this entire church. Only God says. I don't say.

You don't say. There could be something that needs broken in this church to give us liberty, freedom, to do the will of God. What's hindering us in our evangelism? Why is it stunted? Do you know, we lost ground in evangelism.

We had to pray it back in, didn't we? Again. And thank God, we've re-established these Saturdays. You're doing a wonderful job going out preaching, evangelizing.

It's wonderful to be there preaching on these streets, handing out gospel tracts, reaching the lost. Someone will hear you preach who will never read your gospel tract, never listen to a sermon online, never come in the door of this church. But they'll hear you for 30 seconds as they walk past you.

They can't help it. You're going to preach to them. And so it says here that they began as soon as they got to Antioch to speak to the Grecians.

Then notice what it says, preaching. So their speaking, their sharing was preaching. The word preaching there is the Greek word evangelizo, where we get the word evangelism.

And this word evangelizo means to announce good news. Have you only been telling bad news to the sinners? Stop it. Evangelism, the word actually means good news, glad tidings, proclamation of the gospel to non-Jews.

They make a radical break. This is what the apostles were struggling to do. Here come a batch of faceless, nameless Christians who are persecuted, who have lost everything, and they make a big step and begin to evangelize the Gentiles in one of the mega cities of the entire empire, an immoral city.

Would you take your children into the city? Would you take your family? Would you go here and begin looking for a job after leaving Jerusalem? They did, but I believe they had a mission. We're going to go in and reach this city. We're going to evangelize this city.

We're going to reach the Gentiles, not just the Jews. We're going to go into the heart of this immoral, putrid society. Aren't we living in a putrid society? Mothers, fathers, they're coming for your children.

Now they've got trans, homosexuals, marching on the streets saying, we're coming for your children. We're coming for your children. They're doing that on the streets of our cities.

If you trust the education system now, you're so stupid I can't even speak to you. Do you hear me? This is so dangerous. I couldn't have believed it a year ago.

What I'm saying now, the schooling system is hyper dangerous. And I say that without apology. I want to show you some videos, may make your hair stand on end, of what parents are having to deal with in this hour.

I never could have imagined it. They mean business. And you know what? We better mean business Church of God.

We need a revival of evangelism. And so you have this evangelism that broke through religious tradition. They actually broke through and they began to evangelize.

They began to proclaim. You know what the good news is? You're sinners. You're on your way to hell, but Jesus died for you.

There's an answer. You can be forgiven. You can be set free.

There is good news in this. It was at Antioch that these normal rank and file believers broke from the last remnants of Judaism that was still binding the church in Jerusalem. And they held forth the free offer of the gospel to every sinner, every man, every woman, fourth of all, evangelism that preaches the Lord Jesus.

All evangelism doesn't preach Jesus. All churches that have missions, outreaches, they have entertainment. There's a church not far from here.

We can remember when it opened and they offered iPads. Come to the service, first service. We're giving iPads out free.

You could be the winner of an iPad. Come to our service. Not all evangelism preaches the Lord Jesus Christ, but this church did.

Look at verse 20. They speak unto the Grecians. What did they say to these Greeks, these Gentiles, these heathen, these pagans? Preaching the Lord Jesus.

They preached the Lord Jesus. They preached that Christ was their message. It wasn't gimmicks.

It wasn't strategies. It wasn't good worship. It wasn't self-esteem.

It wasn't counseling. It wasn't money. It wasn't prosperity.

You know what they preached? The Lord Jesus. They walked into the center of that city. They preached a person.

They preached the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so real evangelism is preaching Jesus. Don't preach a church.

Don't go on the streets and say, our job is to get people in for Sunday. Who told you that? Who told you that? That is not evangelism. You know, it's a lot easier to invite someone to a meeting.

Why don't you come along to one of our meetings? Then to preach the gospel and say, do you realize you're a sinner in need of Jesus Christ? Oh, I can't do that, Brother Keith. I'll bring them here and you can gut them and clean them and do all of the rest. Real evangelism is going to proclaim him.

Give the clear message of Christ. Preaching the Lord Jesus, not your best life now. That's what the churches of this hour do.

That would be preaching you all about a better life. That's preaching you. Self-help, counseling, an improved life.

Don't preach an improved life. Preach the necessity of Jesus. Don't tell them how their life can be better.

Don't give them three points on, God wants you to have a successful life, a good life, a better life. God will improve your life. Did you tell them they could be persecuted in this Christian life? All men could hate you for following Christ.

You could lose your house. You could lose a friend. No, you don't tell them that, do you? You want to evangelize them, tell them their best life now.

Not at all. Preach Jesus Christ. He will never fail them.

Not God has a good plan for you, but what is the answer to your sin? What is the answer to you dying and going to an eternal hell? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Don't preach LCC, but preach the Lord Jesus. Look what they've done. As soon as they got to the city, they began to evangelize.

This is the birthing of a church. Saints of God, I believe this church needs to hear this. This church is to be marked with evangelism.

It was birthed in evangelism. It has thrived in evangelism. It has been moved by evangelism.

And I want to tell you, we need to, when we lose any ground, recover evangelism. Did you think I just meant Saturday mornings and going on the high street and preaching and heralding the gospel or handing out a tract? Oh no, that's not what I meant. I mean every member in every area.

All this week you're going to be in different workplaces, homes, families, around different people. You're sitting here in touch with people who will never let me within arm's length of them. They won't want to listen to me.

I cannot get close to them. God has providentially placed you there. Do you know what you need to do? You need to preach Jesus.

That's your message, not religion. They might have looked at you and said, why don't you drink? Why don't you curse? Why don't you go to our parties? And they think you're religious and you stay quiet. You don't tell them, I'm born again and you need to be born again.

I believe Christ has changed my life. He turned me around. I can't go and get drunk.

I don't want to. I used to. I used to have the drugs.

I used to have the partying. I used to have the raves. I used to do all these things.

But you know what? Why not testify to them? You know that man with a legion of demons? He's only just saved. And he says, I'm coming with you. What'd Jesus say? No, go back to your family.

Oh brother Keith, he's had 6,000 demons. He'll need years of counseling. He's been cutting himself.

He's living in the graveyard. Don't you realize? Oh yes, he's saved. And now he's sitting in his mine.

But this is going to take decades of ministry. We'll probably have to cast out lots more demons from him. That's today's church.

You know what Jesus said? Go right back to your home, to your city. You're not coming around me. It would be really safe around me.

Go back to your home and tell them what good things the Lord has done for you. Or what about the woman of Samaria? Remember she'd had five husbands? She's got a problem here. She had five husbands and I don't believe they all died off.

Okay? She's got a problem. Now the man she's living with, you're not married to him. You've got a problem lady.

It's not your husbands. You've got a problem. You do.

And you're out here in the heat of the day because you don't come in the morning. Because all the nice moral ladies come in the morning when it's cool. But you're out here in the heat of the day.

And that's why I'm to evangelize you. And when he reaches her with the gospel, you know what she does? Next thing she leaves her water pot behind. She forgot it.

And she goes off. And they look up. And here she comes with her entire city.

The entire town. Saying, come see a man that told me all things. You know what they all said? If this man can change her, we want to see who he is.

We need to shake this man's hand. We tried everything with this lady. She's got a problem.

But this man cured her. How could he? Saints of God, you may know no theology. You don't know all the apologetics.

You haven't got to watch all the Ken Ham videos online. You haven't read all the books. You don't know the biblical theology.

But do you have a testimony? Can you testify and say this man, Christ Jesus, saved me, changed me. Fifth and lastly, evangelism by God's hand. These are all five important points we've dealt with.

Chapter 11, 21 as we close. And the hand of the Lord was with them. And a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.

Do you see what happened? These nameless, ungifted, genuine believers, persecuted, who've lost home, maybe family members, their lives are being hunted. All of the rest have traveled 300 miles. And when they get to their destination, it's not the best thing you want to do when you get to a new place, is to embark on radical evangelism.

That's what they've done. But I want you to see a great number believed. There's no structure.

There's no elders. There's no pastor. There's no apostles.

There's none of that. But out of the evangelism, out of this normal, natural, simple evangelism, good news, in a wicked city, it says a great number believed. In other words, a mass.

I don't believe that means a hundred or a thousand. This is a great, great number that begin to get saved. This is the beginning of the church at Antioch.

It was birthed in evangelism. God actually began to save, but it wasn't their skill. Do not think they were greatly gifted, had great ability.

They had great ingenuity. They had everything against them. What do you have against you that's hindering evangelism? What excuse would you make for not being on a high street on a Saturday to at least stand or to be there to pray? What would be your reason to not be there? What's your reason why you haven't told anyone in your workplace the gospel? What's your reason that there's family members that you pray for, but you feel you can't speak to or share the gospel with them? Well, what is it that's hindering you that may need broken? You could look at them and say, why didn't they preach the Gentiles only to the Jews? That's real bondage.

Well, what's binding you up? What's hindering you? Who do you think that you can evangelize? Well, look at this. Great numbers are believing. They're really believing.

They're converted. But why? Why did this happen now? Why did it happen here? Why did it happen at this time? It says, and the hand of the Lord was with them. This wasn't good evangelism.

This is the hand of God. The hand of God was with them. When you read that statement and you get in different places like Acts 4 verse 30, Acts 13 verse 11 or Luke chapter 1 verse 66, you see the hand of the Lord.

When it says the hand of the Lord was with them, it means his assistance, his power, his action, his work. How do you explain these normal believers walk into a city and masses of people start getting born again of wicked, vile sinners, no knowledge of the scripture, and they're beginning to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, it says they turned onto the Lord.

This was not casual evangelism. What were they preaching? The Lord Jesus. The word Lord.

Lord gets mentioned three times in two verses in connection with this move of God. In other words, Christ wasn't just Jesus. He was the Lord Jesus.

That means in their evangelism, when people began to believe, they looked to Jesus as Lord. The word Lord there means he has utter ownership and control over everything in your life. You don't call the shots anymore.

This is what I call real evangelism, preaching Jesus and the hand of God is there. See, when you preach the Lordship of Christ, not just come to Jesus as savior, forgive all your sins, but hey, you can keep your immorality, your worldly music, your fornication, your drunkenness, your drugs. Jesus understands.

We'll sort that out later. Really? He's Lord. He owns you.

You don't have rights over your body, what you put in it. You don't have rights where you go or what bed you sleep in anymore. You don't have rights over the decisions.

You see, real salvation is he is Lord, the Lord Jesus. And if our evangelism doesn't communicate that Jesus is Lord and he's to be believed in and that the power of God is here, then it's no evangelism at all. Oh, I pray for 0.5 to become a reality.

And that's the part we cannot create ourselves. We need to have a right heart. We need to pray.

We need to serve. We need to be a vessel. We need to be a church, but oh, that the hand of the Lord is with us.

I mean the supernatural work of God, the power of God to bring forth thousands out of this city. You see, we can evangelize if thousands suddenly start getting saved in this city. I mean thousands within a very short period of time.

It's not because you've learned good evangelism. You could be doing exactly the same things, have great burdens resting on your shoulder, great concerns about job or family or home or something else. And you're going, why is this happening? So I actually believe even in the past several weeks, we're in a time in this church, something is happening in this church.

And I'm looking and going, we're not doing something different. See you folk who are coming in new to this church. I believe God's actually drawn you.

I see a pattern. I can take it back to a day and a morning and a prayer time with the Lord. Something begin to happen.

There's something going on. I'm going to tell you, and it's the hand of God and I'm watching. I'm not doing, we're not doing anything different.

There's times we lost everyone and we're doing everything right. And then people can be drawn. We're not doing anything.

We're not advertising. We're not doing anything. But you know what? God's hand is so real.

We need it to be revealed. Saints, that's my first part of this series on the Antioch Church, an evangelistic church. And I think you already get a feel for where we're going to.

This is a vision for this church. It doesn't cover everything, but it gives key things. And I believe we've got lessons to learn from the church at Antioch.

And this is the first great one. These five points that you see with an evangelistic church, and it's remarkable. It begins with terrible persecution, the loss of all things, and ends with the hand of God and great multitudes coming into Jesus.

And so they have to form a church. Wouldn't it be wonderful, rather than us organizing things, that we have to do things. Oh, we're going to have to move.

Why? Because the Lord's bringing in souls. We're not trying to... I have a lady online. She watches our messages.

She sent me about her church, the booklet, and they're building in a small community. They're going to spend the next few years gathering money, going on a mission, telling everyone, you've got to give so much more. We've got to build this building.

They don't have the people. They've got 100 people, but they're going to build a mega church, maybe for several hundred. They've only got 100 people, but they're going to squeeze that 100 people for their money to pour into this building.

This is the vision, a building. We need a building. It'll never happen here.

You know what it's going to be? We're going to be busting at the seams, saying, well, God help it. Let's go look. Someone go out Monday and try to find something, or maybe we'll have to start two churches or somewhere down the road.

Saints of God, we're looking for the hand of God and a real move of God. And I want to tell you, the hardest days of my lifetime are about to hit our world. The hardest days maybe in church history are about to come.

And you know what? This could be God's plan that we see one of the most remarkable movements of the spirit of God, of evangelism that we could ever have imagined, but it'll be birthed out of very hard days. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you.

We bless you, Lord God. We have a hunger. We have a desire.

We love, oh God, the church that you raise up. We love, oh God, the church that you have in your heart and your mind that you work. What we read of in scripture breaks all the patterns, all the teachings of men, all the customs of denomination.

But Lord God, we want to be in the center of your will here in LCC. Lord God, we're looking, Lord God, to be led by your Holy Spirit, to be built upon the word of God. And I pray over the next several weeks before the school and then after the school, Lord God, that you'd begin to mold our thinking, that you'd envision us as a church, that you'd burden us, that we'd have a clear vision of God's will for us as a church in the midst of the city in the 21st century.

And we love you, Lord Jesus, to you be all the glory and all the praise and all the honor. Lord God, we are excited about the call of God on our lives and the mission of this church in this city. And we ask for your blessing that your name be glorified.

In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

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