

Introduction:

Charlie Reeves loaned me a book about the churches of Christ in the Louisville area. While reading I noticed that some congregations were started because of growth in a congregation and a group would leave to start a new work. In some cases there would be a "tent meeting" in which Christians from various congregations would do the preaching and there would be a number of baptisms. At the end of the meeting they would announce that the Christians in that area would be meeting at a specified location and this would be the beginning of a congregation (Valley Station, Shivley, etc.)

As we read in the Bible we see that the first congregation was in Jerusalem but persecution arose and Christians were scattered. Those Christians went out preaching the word of God. Antioch is known as the first Gentile congregation. We want to look at **Acts 11.19-21** and see what lessons we can learn.

I) A Congregation is A Group of Christians

A) What did they do to become a part of the Lord's body?

Acts 11:19 *Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.*

Acts 8:35 *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

1. People today must do exactly the same thing they did in **Acts 2.38**.
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. Where and when did it change? .
2. If we do the same thing they did in the Book of Acts we will have the same result as they had in **Acts 2.47**

B) Christians in a local area comprise the local congregation

1. We have a responsibility toward each other. To worship

together, encourage one another, preach the Gospel, help needy saints, to give as we have been prospered, have elders to oversee the local flock, etc.

2. We read of the church at Corinth, Ephesus, in speaking of specific congregations. We also read of the "churches of Galatia" in Galatians.

II) Where the Seed Goes The Kingdom Will Be

A) ***Isaiah 55:10-11*** "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, **11** So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

1. The seed went across borders, political philosophies, geography, time, etc.
2. The seed is the word of God, **Luke 8.11**.
3. The seed is the same as in the first century,

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, **23** having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,.. **25** But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

- a. We may use computers, LCD's, the internet today to spread the seed but the seed is not changed by those things. If it is changed then we no longer have the same seed.
- b. Corn is produced by corn seed, wheat is produced by wheat seed, Christians are produced by the word of God.

B) The power is in the word

1. The power is not in the Sower or preacher,

Acts 11:19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

- a. We may get enamored by a certain preacher but that will only lead to disappointment.
 - b. I have known certain Christians that spoke of the preacher that converted them and how their faith was shaken later on.
 - c. Don't place your faith in a preacher.
2. The power is not in the miracles or the apostles.
 - a. The miracles were to confirm the word but those that followed Jesus because of the loaves and fishes were soon to leave.
 - b. The apostles did not want men following them but Christ.
 3. It is the word that can convict the heart,

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

III) The Seed Is Spread By The Sower (People)

A) God uses people to do His will

1. The Sower must understand his job. Sometimes we wonder why the Gospel is not being spread and sometimes the answer is because of us.
 - a. The Sower's job is not to cause the increase, but to sow,

1 Corinthians 3:5 *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

- b. How do we sow the word? Bible classes, preaching, talking to neighbors, inviting to services, answering questions, looking for opportunities, etc.
 - c. Am I sowing the seed? Who have I last taught? What are my plans for future sowing?
2. There are some things that may hinder our sowing: prejudice -- we weed out people, fear of rejection or not knowing the answers, indifference to the lost, not really persuaded that others are lost, our life style, etc.

B) The Sower must realize some things

1. Sometimes the person you meet may be by accident or chance. A person you just so happen to run into at the grocery store, or at school.
2. Sometimes the seed may be intended for one place but goes to another; in this case you may intend to study with one person but wind up converting someone else.
3. Sometimes you target a specific person or city and it goes according to plan.

IV) Beginnings Are Often Hard

A) There was persecution

1. Stephen was stoned, Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church and ended up being persecuted, Jews were determined to stop the Gospel, the Roman Empire did its best to stop the Gospel.
2. This is not mentioned in **Acts 11** but in **2 Timothy 3.11**.

B) Christians (Babes) will be tested

1. They must be taught to rely on God's word,

Acts 20:32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

- a. Carnal tactics will not work
- b. Submission to false doctrines will not work
- c. Strength in numbers is not ours to rely on.

2. Our reliance is on God's word,

2 Timothy 4:17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

Conclusion:

We have experienced changes in our culture as at one time more people were interested in God's word. We have seen changes in technology as bulletins used to be printed on memo graph machines. We have seen changes in preaching as older preachers used to use sheets but they are gone. We have not seen a change in God's word, in how to become a Christian, and the blessings in Christ.