

CHURCH TURMOIL AND CHALLENGES

Antioch, VA?

Discussion

Recently the Lord has been pressing on me the similarities between the early Christian Church at Antioch and the work the Lord is doing at Southview. I'm beginning to wonder if what He plans for us is for us to become the church in Antioch, Virginia.

Consider what we know today about that early church; here are just a few key points: Acts 13:1 tells us that in that church were prophets and teachers. We also know that the congregation was made up of many different ethnic groups and cultures. They were a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers from diverse parts of the Roman Empire. We also know that Antioch was located approximately twenty miles inland from the sea, that it was the third biggest city in the Roman Empire and that it had the Pagan Goddess "Fortune" as its patron deity.

Besides Jerusalem, the church at Antioch was the most closely tied to the spread of Christianity in the early Church period. For instance, among the leaders in the church in Jerusalem was "Nicholas of Antioch" (Acts 6:5). The stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem caused the Jewish believers to scatter out to three cities – Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch (Acts 11:19).

The church was active in seeking and teaching the lost from all walks of life, both Jew and Gentile. We know that Barnabas, for example, traveled to Tarsus with the express mission of fetching Paul and bringing him to Antioch to teach the mixed congregation of new believers.

The church also had prophets. It was Agabus the Prophet at Antioch who foretold the coming famine that would shortly overtake the Roman Empire (Acts 11:28). It was from Antioch that the disciples directed and carried out famine relief for the church at Jerusalem.

Antioch set apart Paul and Barnabas for what would become the first organized mission trip of the early Christian Church, and it was at Antioch where Paul would confront Peter face-to-face. (Galatians 2:11)

Is God perhaps preparing us to be such a church? – one that does not compromise the Gospel, a church earnestly seeking and teaching the lost? A church that attracts and trains leaders who themselves go and impact the Kingdom of God on a grand scale? Is God bringing to Southview teachers, prophets, evangelists, and prayer warriors? Is God preparing to reach the lost and dying around our Nation's Capital through Southview? Are we ready for the challenge and are we prepared to go forth and send forth those who earnestly seek the lost for Him?

Frankly, how you could arrive at any other conclusion? Today Southview is comprised of people from many cultures, nations, and Christian walks with talents and gifts that range from preachers to prayer warriors and everything in between. We are at the heart of the Capital of one of the world's premiere Super Powers – and not by accident. I believe God is calling us to be involved in His Kingdom building in ways that we've never imagined, ways that can't be contained within the physical walls of a church, and ways that will impact the growth of the Kingdom for generations to come. I believe that as a church today, we at Southview are "Under Construction", and I'm beginning to see that what God is doing is building Antioch of Virginia – the church He'll use to reach the lost around the corner, and around the world. How awesome is that!?

In Christ,

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