

Over these past few weeks, we have been mixing in case studies of faith. We began with a look at Elijah (slide). Then a look at Hannah (slide). Last week we moved to the New Testament with Luke (slide).

This morning we will round out our little mini series, and exhaust all the Bible names in my family, with a look at a little known character from Acts 6: Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. Our information on him is limited to one verse, but his name shows up at an important time in church history. Let's see what we can learn about him, and how his faith influences God's people. This will be a brief examination and lead us to look very quickly at 4 PERSONAL QUESTIONS, to see how our faith matches up with this great man.

- 1) He was a Gentile. Likely not raised in a "God-fearing" home (a Jewish household). He probably didn't hear about the things God had done for Israel or the prophecies concerning Christ in his youth. He and his family were on the outside looking in before Christ came.
  - a. **Eph. 2:1, 11-12** – Outside of a relationship with God. Certainly not a hopeful start.
- 2) But then he became a Jew. Not in lineage, but faith. This was called a proselyte. A Gentile who converted to Judaism. So, he learned of Yahweh God and converted to the Law of Moses. This wasn't where he needed to be in the end, but a step toward knowing and loving God.
  - a. **Matt. 23:15** – Not exactly the final destination of faith. Because in Judaism at that time they were taught about God, but also deceived by unprincipled teachers.
  - b. Religious confusion could have become his life, but he was on a journey!
- 3) Then, not stopping there, this man was converted to Christ! It is strongly possible he was one of the 3,000 baptized on Pentecost. His search for God led to the cross and he obeyed the gospel.
  - a. **Acts 2:5,8-11; 2:36-38,41** – proselytes in Jerusalem, saved in Christ!
- 4) Don't think he stopped at baptism and being added by God to the number. He pressed on, quickly, purposefully, to become a dependable, faithful, worker in the Kingdom!
  - a. **Acts 6:1-5** – A Gentile among them. Overcoming his past, the humble changes in his journey, to develop a "good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom." Trusted to lead!

I was tuned into this study by a short article a now departed friend put in a bulletin one time. The unnamed author made a few comments about the journey Nicolas travelled and then wrote: "*Each person is his own 'Restoration Movement'*" It was in him, by his resolve that he was restored from outside the gates to serving God's people in the presence of the King!

Questions: Where are you in the journey? Will you bring about your own restoration movement? Is it time to make the move from one stage to another?

- 1) Are you on the outside looking in?
  - a. Maybe not raised in the church; a Gentile never taught to know God in full faith.
  - b. Maybe you've lived without Him; pushed Him away, and tried to live life your way
  - c. **Eph. 2:12-16** – Jesus has cleared a path for you! You can skip straight into His grace
  - d. **Eph. 4:4-6** – One way, one chance, on faith, one Lord, one baptism!
  - e. The restoration movement from away and alone to in Him and about Him is in you. No one can make that happen for you. No one can look at the world (**Matthew 6:19-24**) – evaluate what life has been about, and humbly turn to God. That begins with you. Are you ready?
- 2) Is it time to grow from spiritual to religious?
  - a. I've told you about that before right? People I invite to worship who say, "*well, I'm more spiritual than religious.*" They have found a way to know God, but aren't interested in learning the way FROM God! In truly challenging themselves with real faith actions.
  - b. When **Nicolas** was a Judaizing believer, he thought He knew God, but not God's way. On Pentecost, he laid down all His pride, accepted His need to do what Christ died to enforce

- c. **John 4:20-24** – Jesus to the woman: “It Matters!” It matters what you believe. It matters how you have been saved and how you worship and what the authority is for your life
- d. Nicolas, as with all the Jews starting with Pentecost, had to mature their faith. They had to challenge the substance of their belief in God, even so far as acknowledging their positions were not right and making real CHANGES. The ultimate: are you spiritual or are you religious? Do you just believe in God or will you follow the Pattern of God?!?!
  - i. **Acts 2:36-38** – It’s not just belief but obedience that grows out of belief.
  - ii. **Acts 2:42** – Not just “I love God” but “I yearn for God”
  - iii. **Acts 2:46-48** – Not just “I love God’s people” but “I want to be with and influence.”
- e. The Restoration of your soul starts with you. It says, “*I believe in God. I love God. I want to be with God.*” But doesn’t stop at the level of a Jew who feels close to God. “*I am willing to accept the challenges that come along with belief. I am willing to CHANGE, to GROW.*”

3) And now, are you just in, or ALL IN?

- a. Nicolas became a Christian, up out of the water and joined the local church in Jerusalem. This was JUST THE BEGINNING. The start of who he would be for God and His people.
- b. If you are in Christ and in this church, are you finished? In and done?
- c. **Rev. 3:15-16,19** – Christ wants all you’ve got. Get hot. Get cold. Get extreme. Get zealous. Set goals. Make progress. Be great in this church.
- d. No sermon about Nicolas tonight if he had come up out of the water, found his seat and stayed there. **Heb. 5:11-14** – He could have been this guy, but refused to do so.
  - i. *What about taking an active role in hospitality, helping our aged, our youth?*
  - ii. *What about getting involved in teaching at services and outside?*
  - iii. *What about training to do these things by meeting with others to grow?*
- e. The restoration movement to leader, teacher, servant... starts with the goals you set for you

4) Names and recognition aside, can God’s people count on you?

- a. Nicolas, not a big name success story, or hand picked from birth apostle.
- b. A Gentile, a proselyte, a newer convert. Could he ever really make a difference?
- c. **Acts 6:1-5** – I want you to make sure my mother gets aid. Lead this project for my family.
- d. **Romans 12:10-16** – It’s not about whether everybody knows your name, you preach, shepherd, are a deacon or 50 year Christian. None of that matters. This is what matters.
- e. The people who make local churches strong and keep people close and become the heart and soul of our family are rarely preachers or shepherds. They are more valuable than a designated role or public duty. They breathe life into the work every day, every week.
- f. They find their areas and cultivate and grow in them. They become
  - i. *The Inspiration to others who follow them like ELIJAH to ELISHA*
  - ii. *The Faith and Patience for the family like HANNAH during her struggles*
  - iii. *The “Fellow Servant” who is always there like LUKE was to PAUL.*
- g. Making something of yourself, a restoration movement, that makes God’s people better. For that person pleases the Lord. And He will welcome them with open arms.

Where are you in the progress of Nicolas’ life? Where will you stop? With what will you settle? He became what God created Him to be: humble servant and needful soul in the kingdom of Jesus!

Come from the world to God  
 Come from spirituality to true religion  
 Come ALL IN to this, for life and as your life.  
 Be a part of our family (**Phil. 1:27; 2:1-4**).