

THE ACTS OF JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 13:4 – 15:35

Paul's First Missionary Journey

Introduction

In an age of practically uninterrupted wireless data and social media along with it, it's no surprise that news travels fast. Imagine if Paul could have updated his Facebook status from Damascus, "Saul from Tarsus is saved by grace and called to be an apostle of Christ." What if Peter could have tweeted from Cornelius' house "#hangingwithgentiles #nothingthelordhasmadeisunclean #salvationisforallpeople" or at the very least Snapchat a selfie of him and Cornelius back to the apostles in Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, the good news about Jesus Christ spread just like he promised it would. Jesus' parting words to his apostles on the day of his ascension were, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world." Infrastructure was by no means primitive in the Roman Empire during the time of the early church. During this time, the empire enjoyed a long period of peace (*Pax Romana*) and boasted a sophisticated road system. Relatively speaking, news traveled safely and efficiently in the early church. It is in this historical setting that the Apostle Paul would play a key role in spreading the good news overseas to different countries and cultures.

Read Acts 13:1-3. How did Barnabas and Saul get to be apostles? Why is this little detail important then and now?



Read Acts 13:4-15. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark arrive in Cyprus (see map). Describe Paul's technique or methodology for preaching the gospel. What did he typically do when he came to a new city?

Whether we are talking about the early church or the present day, what is the source of false teaching? What is its purpose? What is the antidote? (Verse 10).

There is only a brief reference to Perga in Pamphylia (13:13), but some scholars speculate that something very significant may have happened here. Do you know what it might be? (For a hint see **Galatians 4:12-16.**)

In Pisidian Antioch, the synagogue rulers invite Paul and Barnabas to speak (John Mark returned to Jerusalem). What follows is Paul's message. **Outline or summarize Acts 13:16-41** in groups and discuss the following:

- How does this sermon help me better understand and explain the connection between Old and New Testament?
- How does this sermon help me see Jesus more clearly in the Psalms?
- If I were listening to this sermon in Antioch, the part that would impress me the most is . . .

Outline/Summary

Read Acts 13:42-52. How was Paul's sermon received by the people in Antioch?

Paul would later write in his letter to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: *first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*" How do you understand the latter thought of that passage based on what happens in Pisidian Antioch?

Was Paul claiming to be the "light to the Gentiles" prophesied in Isaiah 49:6?

What is the significance of the disciples shaking the dust off their feet? (See **Matthew 10:14,15.**) When you proclaim the truth about Jesus and his word to someone, at what point do you shake the dust off your feet?

Read Acts 14:1-20. What similar pattern do we see in Iconium as Paul and Barnabas carry out mission work?

What differences do we see in Lystra as Paul and Barnabas carry out mission work?

When Paul shared the gospel with Jews, his starting point for discussion was Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. He didn't have the same advantage with the Gentile audience in Lystra. What was his starting point for discussion in order to preach the gospel?

Discuss: Do you find anything especially ironic about Paul's experience in Lystra?

The riot in Lystra is a good example of how fickle humans can be, especially when it comes to religion. What similar attitudes do you see with religion in America?

Map out Acts 14:21-28. Paul and Barnabas go to Derbe before they backtrack. Little is said about Derbe other than, "They preached the good news... and won a large number of disciples." On their way back, they stop at the congregations in the cities they previously visited. The purpose of revisiting each city was twofold: encouragement and orderliness. They encouraged the brothers and sister to remain strong and they appointed elders in each church for the sake of order and spiritual leadership. Paul and Barnabas make one last preaching stop in Perga before they sail back to their home base, Syrian Antioch.

The Jerusalem Council

Read Acts 15:1-21. What is the main issue in dispute?

What was the main outward sign of obedience to the law of Moses?

What other matters of obedience did submission to the law of Moses entail?

What obvious proof did God give that obedience to the law of Moses was not required for Gentiles to become Christians?

In verse 20 the apostles identified four specific things the Gentiles were to abstain from. Only one of them (sexual immorality) falls into the category of moral law. Why abstain from the other things?

Read Acts 15:22-35. How does the letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentiles reflect *Christian freedom* in practice?

How did the Gentile believers receive the letter from Jerusalem?

Scripture to treasure

Memorize Romans 1:16:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.