



FOR OUR LIVES JAN - MAR (ACTS 13-16)

SERIES INTRODUCTION:

Every believer has been called to be a missionary in their community and beyond. Following in obedience to the Great Commission, Vintage Church is launching a brand new series called #4OURCITY. This series will be broken down into 4 themes:

- **FOR OUR LIVES**
- **FOR OUR COMMUNITY**
- **FOR OUR CHURCH**
- **FOR OUR WORLD**

Each of these themes will be crucial to your spiritual growth and be the catalyst for the vision God has given Vintage Church to reach the great city of Pittsburgh and beyond! This series will carefully walk us through Acts 13-28 as we see these themes play out in the formation of the Early Church! To help walk you through this series we have created a short commentary guide for each chapter as well as a reading plan so you can follow along in your personal time with the Lord.

BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF ACTS:

The book of Acts was at one point not just a single installment; it was a continuation of the book of Luke. At one point in time, it was a single scroll called Luke - Acts. These were later separated as they made their rounds around the early church thus becoming “The Gospel of Luke” and “The Book of Acts.”

The title “Acts” is a shortened name for “Acts Of The Apostles”, which makes sense when we realize it follows the story of the Apostles obeying the Great Commission to build the Church. Some called it “The Acts of Paul”, but this doesn’t make a lot of sense considering Paul is not introduced until chapter 7. Another title that has grown in favor is “The Acts of The Holy Spirit.” One of the most important moments in the book of Acts is Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out onto the church. The rest of the book follows the Apostles and the church empowered by the Holy Spirit to build the Church. The truth is all these various titles can be cultivated into one shortened title that everyone can agree on “The Book of Acts.”

Ironically, Luke does not declare himself the author right from the start. The authorship can be deduced from the original format of "Luke - Acts" and the various passages where the pronouns would leave only Luke to be the author. Luke is also known to write in the format that is historical. The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts both share those same characteristics.

The Book of Acts is a historical account of the formation of the early church. It is also apologetic in nature. One commentator

writes, “The book is a work of apologetics, a defense of the truth claims of the Christian faith. Along with that, conceivably, is a very important defense of the authenticity of the apostolic authority and office of Paul, because Paul was not one of the original twelve Apostles. Three times in this book there is an account of Paul's call and his conversion on the road to Damascus, which grants more and more credibility to this one to whom the Lord gave an apostolic mission to the Gentiles.”¹ This book is not only important from the perspective of a historical account; it is also vital evidence for the power of the calling and conversion of the lost through the power of the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 13

Acts 13 gives us the commissioning of Barnabas and Paul, and their first two missionary journeys. Barnabas was a prominent part of the the early church who was introduced in Acts 4. He was a Levite from Cyprus whose name means “Son of Encouragement.” In the early chapters of Acts we see his heart in his willingness to serve faithfully in the church. He is also characterized by his giving. Paul uses Barnabas as an example of one with a proper perspective on money and property. When he sold his land, he brought the proceeds to the Apostles and laid it at their feet (*Acts 4*).

Paul, who was formerly called Saul, was a persecutor of the early church. He was a Jewish Roman citizen who trained under Rabbi Gamaliel and became an expert in the law. He was actually a part of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. Christ encountered him on the road to Damascus where he was then saved and joined the church, which he had once persecuted.

The chapter begins with Paul and Barnabas's commissioning from the Spirit and the church in verses 1-3. The way this sending takes place is something worth focusing on.

¹ SPROUL, R. C. Acts: An Expository Commentary. (Pg 2). LIGONIER MINISTRIES, 2019.

First, there is a focus on fasting. Fasting is an important practice in the life of a believer. The act of fasting is often correlated throughout the Bible as an act of preparation. This is seen prior to preparation for war (*1 Sam 14:24*), and most commonly seen in preparation for the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:29*). It is also seen as a practice during mourning, but in this context, it is seen as preparation.

Second, we see the Spirit's verbal calling. The Holy Spirit speaks and sets apart Barnabas and Paul for this journey. The Holy Spirit calls people into ministry. It is not always verbal but it is nonetheless a calling. Here we see the Spirit calling two leaders who have been training and preparing for what the Lord has called them to do.

Third, we see a laying on of hands. The elders of the church lay their hands on these two men and commission them. "This is not the time when Paul becomes an apostle, since he claims that he knew his call from God earlier (*Gal. 1:15–17*), but rather a time of prayer both of blessing and for power to do the work which these men were sent to accomplish."² From here they were sent out after more fasting and praying.

The rest of the chapter can be broken into two separate journeys. The first journey is seen in verses 4-12 when they set out for Cyprus. The second is their journey from Cyprus to Antioch in Pisidia found in verses 13-52.

From Antioch they set off on their first journey to Cyprus. As we see in verse 5, John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas joined them on the first leg of their journey as an assistant of sorts. Not a lot is disclosed to us on why he departs in verse 13, but we know that this caused Paul not to trust John Mark in Acts 15:36-40.

When they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. This is by no accident. They typically went to preach this news to the Jews first. Going to the synagogues was a pattern Paul followed starting in Antioch of Pisidia (*13:14*), Iconium (*14:1*), Philippi (*16:13*), Thessalonica (*17:1–2*), Berea (*17:10*), Athens (*17:17*), Corinth (*18:4–6*), and Ephesus (*18:19; 19:8*). As they go through the whole island teaching and preaching they come across two important figures, Bar-Jesus - a magician disguised as a Jewish prophet - and Sergius Paulus - a Governor in Rome. Sergius summoned them, wanting to hear what they were proclaiming. He was eager to know more about the Lord, but the magician tried to stop him. This leads us to the confrontation between the five of them.

Paul, being filled with the Spirit looks at Bar-Jesus and says, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Verse 11 teaches that immediately mist and

² McDonald, L. M. (2004). [Acts](#). In C. A. Evans & C. A. Bubeck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon* (First Edition, p. 92). Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

darkness fell upon him and he was blind. The last time we see this man is here, seeking for people to lead him as he can no longer lead himself. The irony of this event is that Bar-Jesus wanted to lead astray this Roman governor with his own vision and plan. As a result, the Lord took his own literal sight away so that he had to be led by others. Verse 12 shows us that through this event and the teaching of the Lord, he was saved. In verses 13 and 14, we see Paul and Barnabas sail from Paphos and go to Perga in Pamphylia then Antioch in Pisidia.

This is also where John Mark departs. On the Sabbath day they proceeded to the synagogue and sat under the teaching of the prophet. The prophet encouraged anyone with a word of encouragement to say it. Paul used this opportunity to deliver a Gospel message. This message is known as one of the most persuasive of his messages. It also is most likely his first ever recorded. This message displays the genius of Paul through his ability to teach the Jews by using the foundation of the Old Testament.

He begins with laying out the history of the Jewish people and the Lord's provision and unwavering dedication for the promise of a messiah. He begins with Moses, the story of the exodus, desert wandering, and promised land. He talks about the 12 Judges from the book of Judges and how the Lord gave them to provide and protect. He highlights King Saul, the king the people wanted, but also how he was sovereign in the kingship of David whom the Lord raised up to lead. The Jewish people would also be reminded of the covenant made with David. From the line of David would be the Savior of all. Paul traces this to Jesus, calling him the savior of Israel. This revelation is

ground breaking for the hearers as we will see towards verse 42. He highlights the word promise in verse 23. The Lord had made a covenant promise with His people that he never broke. The significance of this fulfilled promise can not be an understated. He goes on to highlight the ministry of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and how he prophesied a savior was coming.

Next Paul moves to the rejection. Not only was this for the Jews (sons of Abraham) but also for all who fear the Lord (Gentiles). He then talks about his accusers. The ones who did not recognize him and the ones who did not understand the prophets, meaning their prophesies of his coming. This is no small accusation. Not only is he accusing the religious leaders of not knowing Jesus was the promised one, but he also questions their knowledge on the holy texts and prophesies. But they, in fact, fulfilled the prophesies by putting him to death. Paul points out that Jesus was found guilty of no crime by Pilate, yet they still wanted him killed. Paul continues to reflect on the prophesies of the Old Testament by showing them that his death on the cross was a fulfillment of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

Verse 30 is the mic drop moment, "But God raised him from the dead." Death could not hold him. The power of resurrection is displayed. Paul writes, "And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'" Paul moves into a plea and presentation of the gospel, "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man

forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.” This message was life changing. They were no longer bound to the Law. Christ had set them free.

This caused shock waves in the community. Verse 42 shows us that the people wanted this taught again! They wanted to hear these words of fulfillment and salvation. Verse 43 is beautiful; many of the people in the synagogue were saved. They believed these words and pressed them to continue to share them. This event had such an impact that when the next gathering took place, the entire city was there.

This upset the Jews and they sought to discredit Paul and Barnabas out of jealousy. Paul and Barnabas fired back, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”” The Jews were too hardheaded and blinded by jealousy to believe. The invitation had been given and the good news had been proclaimed. Paul wanted to highlight that not only as this for the Jews, but also for the gentiles as he highlighted the great commission. To this the Gentiles rejoiced and many were saved. This message, this salvation, this promise was liberating. It was not held back, it was to all.

From this gathering the message began to spread and explode across the land and the Jews hated this. They had to stop this

message at all cost. Verse 50 tells us that they convinced men and women of high standing and leadership to bring persecution and drive out Paul and Barnabas. This didn’t stop them. Paul and Barnabas were filled with joy from the Spirit and they shook this off, going on to the city of Iconium.

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION + SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Every chapter of the Bible has life changing application for spiritual formation. The goal of this section of each chapter is to help assist the reader on how to apply the content of the chapter to their everyday lives.

Chapter 13 gives us the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas and the first part of their missionary journey. The commissioning is an important thing for us to focus in on when it comes to theological application.

MISSIONS

First, believers are called to the mission of the Great Commission. Every believer has been called to reach the lost in their lives, community, and world. Some believers have been specially called by God to take the Gospel into places it is dying or has never been heard. We see this here with Paul and Barnabas. They were called to go out to these places that had not yet been reached and teach the Gospel.

In our current church dynamic, we call this a missionary. A missionary goes to help further the gospel in a location or even plant a church. This calling is not one to be overlooked. The way the elders commission them is important. They take note of the calling from the Lord, fast, pray, and lay hands on them before they depart.

With this in mind, it is important for us as the church to be missionaries in our communities. It is also important to be listening to the Lord and the Spirit's promptings to see where we are specifically called to be missionaries. If you are sensing that calling, talk to your location pastor so they can begin praying for you and helping you discern if this is your calling.

Do not forget to also be praying for your local missionaries and church planters. Consider supporting them financially as that is an intimidating burden.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

As we approach verses 6 - 12 we encounter spiritual warfare through false teaching. Sergius, a Roman official wants to hear more about this Gospel, but Elymas, a false prophet, attempts to deceive him through opposing the teaching of Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas do not back down; they rebuke the false teacher boldly and the Lord reigns justice down on the wicked man. Sergius believes and professes Christ.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, it is important to be bold. The Lord has given us, through the Spirit, a boldness to carry on the mission we've been given (*1 Timothy 1:7-8*). As we

approach situations where spiritual warfare is opposing the Gospel, we must boldly stand our ground. Remember to pray for boldness and zeal to pursue this calling. The Lord will prevail.

CULTURAL MINISTRY

Verses 13 - 52 follow Paul and Barnabas's journey further. There is a lot of meat in this chapter, but I think there is a very important thing Paul does when sharing the Gospel and it has to do with the culture he is witnessing to.

Paul specifically uses the information they already believe. The Jewish people knew the Old Testament very well. Many had memorized portions. So Paul specifically uses that to help them understand his message. This helps them relate to Paul and the message he has for them.

When it comes to ministering to cultures, it is important that we take their lifestyles and beliefs into account. This allows us to relate to them and help get the message across. From there, just as Paul did, we are able to move into the reality of sin, and the salvation that Jesus offers. Remember that the Gospel is primary. Never let culture dictate the message, but rather let it be an asset to the mission.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

1. *Make a habit of praying for local and global missions. Give regularly to the advancement of the kingdom through Vintage Church or directly to the missionaries.*

2. *Pray for discernment and sensitivity for spiritual warfare. Study and prepare for apologetics. Pray for boldness to stay firm to the mission.*
3. *Get to know the culture you are ministering to. Pray daily for God-given opportunities to minister to people in your everyday life.*

ACTS 14

Paul and Barnabas travel to the city of Iconium where they do the same thing they did in the last chapter; they go to the Jewish synagogue and preach the Gospel. Just like before, a large number of Jews and Gentiles believe! This is again proof of the Spirit working through His chosen agents, Paul and Barnabas. But, just as before, there is opposition. Verse 2 tells us that the unbelieving Jews “stirred up” the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the believers.

This resistance did not immediately scare Paul and Barnabas; in fact, they remained there for a “long time.” Not only did they remain in the city, but they preached the Gospel boldly, and the Spirit worked through them to display signs and wonders. This caused the city to be divided and an attempt was made by the unbelieving Jews, Gentiles, and their leaders to stone them. When this news reached their ears they fled to Lystra and Derbe, which were cities of Lycaonia, but their mission did not stop. They continued to boldly preach the Gospel. No amount of pushback could stop these men from doing what the Lord had called them to.

In the city of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas encounter a man who was disabled, unable to use his feet. He had been crippled from birth and never walked. Paul saw him listening intently and the Spirit revealed the faith he had to be healed. Paul called upon

him with authority saying, “Stand upright on your feet,” and the man stood up and began to walk.

The ministry Paul and Barnabas were doing was one that not only met the spiritual needs of the unbelievers, but also their physical needs. This physical healing brought authority to their message. This is revealed in verse 11 when the crowds saw them as gods, calling them Zeus and Hermes. In fact, word reached the priest of the Zeus temple in the city, and he came to bring a sacrifice to these “gods.”

The reaction of Paul and Barnabas was not one I'm sure the crowd expected. They immediately tore their clothes.

One commentator writes, “³When the two apostles discerned what was happening, they were horrified. Their tearing of clothes was a way of showing strong aversion to blasphemy. Usually rips were made four or five inches into the neckline of the garment.” They rushed into the crowd pleading with them, “why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news.” Paul and Barnabas plead with them to not see them as anything more than fellow men, but to turn to the Lord, the one and only true God. Verse 18 tells us that even with this plea, they were barely able to keep the people from offering sacrifices to them.

Moving into verse 19, the story takes a turn. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to the city and gathered a crowd, of those who had just called Paul and Barnabas's god to stone and

drag Paul out of the city. They believed they had killed him, but when the disciples found him outside the city, he rose up and returned inside. This event seems to have started the fulfilling of the prophecy back in Acts 9:16 and Paul seems to refer back to this event in 2 Corinthians 11:25. Suffering for the Gospel is not a foreign concept. This was widely understood as reality for the early church.

This event did not stop Paul and Barnabas. They went on to the city of Derbe to continue spreading the Gospel. Verse 21 tells us that after they had made disciples there, they then returned to Lystra and Iconium, the city where he had just been stoned, to strengthen and encourage the disciples they had made there. He imparts an important truth to them - "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." These trials and tribulations were not optional. Persecution would happen to them, but the Lord would bless it and use it. This earth was not the reward; eternity with the Lord was.

Paul and Barnabas then, with prayer and fasting, appoint elders to lead the churches in the cities. This behavior is the pattern that has been set over and over again, and was last seen in the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas in the previous chapter.

Verses 24-26 display the journey back home to Antioch. In Antioch, they were commended for their journey and the church was gathered together. Paul and Barnabas declared what the Lord had done on their journey, and how the Lord was moving in the hearts of the Gentiles.

³ Toussaint, S. D. (1985). [Acts](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 392). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

This is the conclusion of the first missionary journey of Paul. Scholars believe this journey lasted around 1-2 years. Paul and Barnabas traveled over 700 miles on land and around 500 miles by ocean. This journey is of utmost importance because it broke down the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles. Salvation is offered freely to all who believe.

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION + SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Chapter 14 gives us the second half of Paul's first missionary journey. It reveals to us the zeal Paul and Barnabas possessed through the Spirit to further the Gospel, face persecution, and break down barriers between the Jews and Gentiles.

BOLDNESS + PERSECUTION

Paul and Barnabas both possessed a boldness in the face of persecution to continue on their mission. We see them first stand firm in the city until they get word of a stoning. Then when Paul is actually stoned almost until death, he gets back up and continues onto the next city. Nothing would hold them back from the mission before them and they trusted that the Lord would preserve and protect them despite the resistance they faced.

As believers we must remember that suffering for the name of the Lord should not be a surprise. Instead, we should expect

this suffering and face it boldly. Many believers all around the world suffer daily for the Lord. We should pray not only for those being persecuted but also for those doing the persecuting. I wonder how many of the early church were praying for Paul's conversion prior to it happening.

MIRACULOUS HEALING

In this chapter, we encounter a miraculous healing. Paul tells a crippled man to walk and he stands up! The Lord heals this man to bring an end to his suffering and an authority to Paul's message. The gospel is a message of inward healing and change. What better way to display the healing power of the gospel and the authority of the message than a physical healing!

It is important for us to remember that not all who believe will be healed of physical disabilities or sufferings. The Lord heals people in His time, in His will, for His glory. In all these things, the glory and honor is to be given to the Lord. His way is perfect. Pray faithfully for those who are suffering and rejoice with them all in the healing salvation of Jesus.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

- 1. Make a habit of praying for our brothers and sisters being persecuted and the unbelievers doing the persecuting. Give to ministries that help aid those being persecuted.*
- 2. Pray for boldness and opportunities to share the Gospel. When the Lord brings an opportunity, face it boldly.*

3. *Pray for healing for those we know are suffering. In all things, give Him glory.*

ACTS 15

Acts 15 moves from a missions style setting to a more theological setting. The converted Jews were having a hard time figuring out how to view the Mosaic law, specifically circumcision, post-salvation and concerning the Gentiles. This issue must be solved for the purpose of unity and theology so Paul, Barnabas, and a few others are sent to Jerusalem to ask the Apostles and Elders.

Verse 15 opens up with the a group of men, most likely Jewish men, coming down from Judea and teaching, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Some scholars believe these were the same men talked about in Galatians 2:12. With this ideology these men brought dissension. This causes Paul and Barnabas to enter into a debate and argument with them. These men had no authority, yet still came to “condemn” those who disagreed. The church saw this as a big enough issue that a group, including Paul and Barnabas, were sent to Jerusalem to appeal to the Apostles and Elders there.

Along the way to the Jerusalem, they used this opportunity to share what God had done with the Gentiles and many were excited. This sort of good news is a source of encouragement for these new churches, especially in the face of the persecution and social pressures they were facing.

When they arrive in Jerusalem they are welcomed by the church, apostles, and elders. This meeting is known as the first of many church council meetings which most scholars believe was around A.D. 49. Notice the first thing they do. They do not immediately jump into the question at hand. They first spent time rejoicing over the victory God was having through the salvation of the Jews, and especially the Gentiles; how they had made new disciples and planted churches. God was working. Then the wind shifts.

There were believers from the party of the Pharisees who rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.” To this predicament the Apostles and Elders gather together to figure this out. After debating, Peter stands up and delivers this plea,

“Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Peter emphasis first that God designed that the Gentiles could be saved through hearing and believing the Gospel. It is only God who knows their hearts and imparts this salvation. Peter

reiterates that God made no distinction between the Jews and Gentiles. They are both saved through faith. This act of creating false requirements for salvation is nothing more than putting God to the test. He finishes with reiterating the Gospel message, “But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” Peter boldly stood up for what united them and what their faith was built on, being Jesus and the salvation bought for all. One theologian wrote on this passage,

⁴“Whereby it appeareth that the law was not given to the fathers that they might thereby purchase salvation, neither were the ceremonies added, that, by the observing thereof, they might attain unto righteousness; but this was the only end of all the whole law, that, casting from them all confidence which they might repose in works, they might repose all their hope in the grace of Christ.”

To this the council fell silent. Paul and Barnabas pick up with telling the council about all the miraculous signs and wonders that the Lord had done through the Gentiles. This is important because it strengthens the case of the Gentile converts. The signs were not only happening among the Jewish people, but among the Gentiles as well.

After Paul and Barnabas conclude, James, who was the head of the church of Jerusalem addressed the council. James was the half-brother of Jesus; and also the author of the book of James. He refers to Peter’s statement, calling him Simeon, and

connects it with the words of the prophet Amos (*Amos 9:11-12*), agreeing that the prophets affirm this conclusion. This was very important for the Jewish individuals in the council. They needed to see how the Old Testament affirmed this conclusion. James delivers his conclusion saying,

“Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

James is saying that instead of focusing on something so trivial as circumcision, let us instead tell them to refrain from pagan practices of idol worship and sexual immorality.

The council was in agreement with this conclusion so they penned a letter to Antioch, detailing their conclusion on the topic, and sent it out with Paul, Barnabas, Judas (Barsabbas), and Silas. The letter first talked about Barnabas and Paul, affirming their ministry, and how they were also sending two other men to affirm these words. This would bring proof and authority to this message. They conclude that circumcision should not be forced; rather, they should pursue purity by avoiding sexual immorality and pagan worship.

⁴ Calvin, J., & Beveridge, H. (2010). [Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles](#) (Vol. 2, p. 60). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

When they arrived in Antioch, they gathered the church together and they rejoiced over this letter! Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas were also prophets and used their gifts to encourage and strengthen the church. It is important to understand that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not only there to strengthen the message of the Gospel, but they were there to strengthen and encourage the church as well.

Eventually their time came to end. Silas and Judas (Barsabbas) were sent off by the church back to Jerusalem while Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch to teach and preach.

It is important to note here that verse 34, “However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.”(NKJV) is missing from most translations. Most scholars, after examining the original manuscripts, have come to the conclusion that this verse was added by a scribe to bring clarity to verse 40. One commentator explains, ⁵“The awkwardness of Silas’ return to Jerusalem in v. 33, but being chosen by Paul to join him on his second missionary journey led to a later addition to the text found in C and D texts. That addition found its way into the Bible as v. 34 in the King James translation of the Bible, but it is not in the earliest manuscripts of this passage. The addition reads: “But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.” It may be that in time Silas returned to Antioch or that Paul met him elsewhere (Jerusalem) before beginning his second missionary journey, but there is no clear evidence for this. It is possible that the “they” who returned in v. 33 included others (15:22)

besides Judas and Silas who accompanied them to Antioch. In ancient times, it was unusual for individuals to travel alone because of safety’s sake. At any rate, Silas is chosen to accompany Paul on his second journey (15:40) and when that occurred, he was obviously back in Antioch. This is, nevertheless, an awkward passage in Luke’s story and, as we saw above, there were efforts to smooth it out in the early church.” All in all, while this may seem confusing, it does not have any effect on the message of the text itself. Let us remember to dwell on the message of God, and not in the errors made by translators.

Paul and Barnabas eventually decided to return to the churches and disciples they had made in their first missionary journey and check in on them. This is where the departure of Mark, spoken about in chapter 13 comes into play. Barnabas wants to bring him with them, but Paul disagrees and alludes to his departure in Pamphylia. There was a “sharp disagreement” and so they separated. Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus and Paul took Silas with him to Syria and Cilicia. In the face of disagreement, they both still held to the mission and went out to strengthen the churches they had planted.

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION + SPIRITUAL FORMATION

THEOLOGICAL DISAGREEMENTS

⁵ McDonald, L. M. (2004). [Acts](#). In C. A. Evans & C. A. Bubeck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon* (First Edition, p. 103). Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

Theological disagreements are no new concept. Since the conception of the church there have been countless debates and splits over theology. There are a few things we can learn from this situation here in Acts.

1. Root your theological conviction in scripture. When you have a conviction, it is important that it is rooted in scripture. Tradition can often be inflated to the position of scripture. That is a dangerous practice. Instead, be sure your conviction is founded in scripture. If it is not, examine the heart behind it and—be careful on how you push that conviction among others.
2. Discuss the theological conviction. Nothing will help you work through something better than having it tested by your friends, pastor, and theologians. Appeal to others, be willing to change your opinion, and above all, put the Word of God first.
3. Submit to your elders. The Lord has given you pastors/elders for a reason. Do not be afraid to bring things you are wrestling with to them and let them help you work through it.

DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH

The church is a very diverse place. As we saw, the Jewish people were having a hard time not pushing their convictions among the Gentiles. As the church grows, the more diverse it gets. That is a beautiful thing! We must remember that diversity

is the Lord's intent. Learn from each other, give grace, and love relentlessly.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In this chapter, we saw Silas and Judas use their spiritual gifts to encourage and edify the church. Spiritual gifts have been given to the church by God to aid in the spreading of the Gospel and to encourage the local body. Pray that the Lord would show you your gifts, use them to glorify him, and do so with humility and submission. If you have any questions on this topic, please talk to your location pastor.

DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN FRIENDS

Nothing can be more discouraging than a disagreement with a friend. Paul and Barnabas had journeyed together, been attacked together, planted churches together, and served the Lord faithfully together. The sharp disagreement recorded here in scripture is of no small consequence. It is important to note what Paul and Barnabas don't do.

They don't abandon the mission. When a compromise could not be made, separation had to happen for the mission to go on.

They reconcile later on. Paul writes to Mark, calling him a faithful servant. He also writes to Barnabas, commending their ministry together.

All in all, do not be discouraged over disagreements, but stay firm to the mission and always have a forgiving heart.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

1. *Deepen your knowledge of the word through study and prayer.*
2. *Lean into the diversity in your church by building relationships with those different than you and learning from them.*
3. *Lean into your spiritual gifts, use them in your church, and don't be afraid to ask for help from your elders/pastors.*

ACTS 16

Acts 16 begins the second missionary journey of Paul, armed with his new companion, Silas. They traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches he and Barnabas had planted. Soon they journeyed to Derbe and Lystra where they pick up Timothy, a young disciple who was well spoken of by the church at Lystra and Iconium.

Some scholars believe he had been converted during Paul's first missionary journey to Lystra, while others believe his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice led him to the Lord (2 *Tim 1:5*). Either way, he became Paul's apprentice on this missionary journey.

There was just one small problem; Timothy was not circumcised. Timothy's family was blended, his mom being Jewish and his father being Greek. Paul knew that if Timothy was to accompany them, Timothy could become a stumbling block of offense to the Jews they were trying to reach. This falls in line with Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 9:19-20.

“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I

became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.”

Paul made it his mission to relate to the people he was ministering to; not to abuse them, but to win them over to the Lord. So Paul circumcised Timothy and they went on their way, delivering the decisions the Church council had made in Jerusalem to all the established churches, which were strengthened and growing by number daily.

They then continued to travel through Phrygia and Galatia, but the Holy Spirit would not allow them to journey into Asia. It is important to understand that the leading city of Asia was Ephesus. As we know, a church was eventually established there, but the Lord’s timing is everything.

They then tried to go into Bithynia. Again, the Lord would not allow them so they proceeded down to Troas. That night, the Lord gave Paul a vision of a man in Macedonia calling them there to come and share the Gospel. Paul immediately changed their trajectory and they went into Macedonia, knowing this is what the Lord had for them.

This here is the Lord speaking through a vision/dream. This occurrence happens over and over again throughout scripture. Perhaps one of the most interesting times is around the birth of Christ. First, the Lord speaks to Mary in a dream, telling her she will conceive through the Holy Spirit and will have the Messiah. Then Joseph has a dream from the Lord where Mary’s story was affirmed. We see the wisemen who came to visit Jesus being told in a dream to not return to Herod. Finally,

Joseph is given a dream instructing him to flee to Egypt with Jesus and Mary, away from Herod. Over and over again, God uses dreams to speak to His people and direct them to do His will.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy set sail to Samothrace from Troas and arrived in Neapolis in Macedonia. From there they went to the city of Philippi which was considered the leading city of Macedonia.

It is believed that this city had a very little Jewish population as there was no synagogue for Paul to attend. As we know from his previous missionary journey, Paul’s method of evangelism was to go where the Jews were. So on the Sabbath, Paul goes outside the gate to the riverside, most likely the Gangites River, where the Jews would supposedly gather and pray. Along with them was a woman named Lydia.

Lydia’s description is important here. She is a woman from the city of Thyatira, a city known for its commerce, who sells purple goods, known to be catered to the wealthy. She is labeled as one who worships God. Not in the sense that she is a Gentile who converted to Judaism, but rather a Gentile who believed in God. The Lord opened her heart to hear the message of Paul. Through this encounter, she was baptized and her whole household, who believed, was baptized as well. She offers them a place to stay, to which they oblige.

As Paul and Silas were going to the place near the river to worship, they were met by a slave girl who was demon

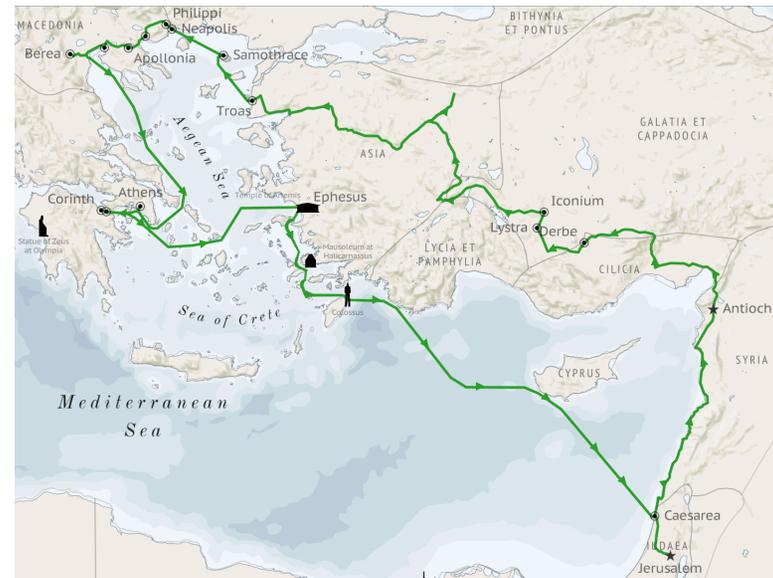
possessed and was used by her owners to make money through fortune telling. She followed Silas and Paul, proclaiming that these men are servants of the most high God who proclaim the way of salvation. She continued to do this for several days. The text says, Paul become greatly annoyed so he commanded the demon, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her and it did. From reading this text at face value, we may ask why this annoyed Paul? The truth was, a woman possessed by a demon with that reputation would hinder their ministry, so Paul commanded it out of her.

This obviously upset those who owned her and were profiting from her possession so they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the market before the city leadership. The charges brought against them were prejudiced. One commentator explains,

“Shortly before this incident the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (18:2). Philippi, a Roman colony, would have caught this flavor of anti-Semitism. This also helps explain why Timothy and Luke were not taken before the authorities. Timothy was a half-Gentile (16:1) and Luke was probably a Gentile. Furthermore, Paul and Silas were accused of disrupting the city by advocating customs unlawful for Romans to accept or practice. Rome permitted the peoples of its colonies to have their own religions but not to proselytize Roman citizens. The civil leaders could not distinguish between Judaism and Christianity (*cf.* 18:14–15), so they would see the preaching of Paul and Silas as a flagrant infraction of imperial law.

The crowd began to attack them and the officials ordered for them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After this had been done they were imprisoned. The jailer was instructed to keep them there safely, so he fastened their feet and put them into the inner prison known as the most secure place.

Verse 25 may come as a shock to the reader. It describes Paul and Silas singing hymns and praying. Right before this, they had just been beaten with rods and imprisoned. Their response is to sing hymns and pray to the Lord, and the prisoners around



them listened intently. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, all the doors opened, and everyone’s chains were loosened. The jailer awoke, saw what had happened, and drew his sword to

kill himself assuming that the prisoners had escaped. A Roman jailer was responsible for all the prisoners; and, if any escaped, he was punished sometimes till death.

Paul cried out to him, telling him to stay his blade for none of them had left. The jailer called for the lights and fell before Paul and Silas trembling, asking how to be saved. Paul says,

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” They spoke the word to him and all his household. The jailer took them that night and washed their wounds from their beating. He was baptized along with all his family; they rejoiced and fed Paul and Silas in his home.

The next day, the leadership in the city sent the police to tell the jailer to release Paul and Silas. The jailer relayed this message to Paul and told him to go in peace. Paul had another idea. He said to the jailer,

“They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.”

The police reported this back to the leaders of the city immediately. They were afraid because they did not know these men were Roman citizens. As a Roman Citizen, Paul had certain rights, including a public hearing, and no Roman citizen was supposed to be beaten. They came, apologized to them, escorted them out of the prison, and asked them to leave the

city. They left the prison, visited Lydia, encouraged the new brothers, and they left the city.

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION + SPIRITUAL FORMATION

BEING A JEW TO A JEW

At the beginning of this chapter we saw Paul bring a young disciple, Timothy, on his second missionary journey. Timothy was not circumcised which would have caused an issue among the Jews he was intent on reaching. So Timothy was circumcised.

There is an important practice to learn from this scenario. When ministering to people with different customs and practices, it is important to adapt to those ways and customs to reach them for the Gospel. For Timothy, that was circumcision, for others it could be a head covering. It all depends on the culture you are ministering to.

In 1 Cor. 9:19-20, Paul says he is a slave to all people for the sake of the Gospel. To the Jews he acts like a Jew so he can reach them effectively. We see that in his constant ministry in the synagogues and his sensitivity to this topic of circumcision.

It is important to note that the situation described here is not contrary to what the church council decided in chapter 15. The discussion in chapter 15 had to do with circumcision contributing to justification. This here is a cultural sensitivity.

VISIONS + DREAMS

The Lord uses all sorts of things to get our attention. It could be an incredible blessing, maybe a hardship, or sometimes he also speaks through people. In this situation we see God speak to Paul through a dream. In this dream, he gives him an indication of where he is to go to do ministry. This is not a new concept, but rather a way the Holy Spirit has spoken throughout history and speaks today.

It is important to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading through even the most ordinary things. Pray fervently through the dreams you believe the Lord has given you. Seek wisdom and confirmation through your location pastor in how to move forward (*1 Thess. 5:20 & 21*).

BAPTISM

It is important to note that verses 15 & 33 here are often looked to as evidence for paedobaptism (*meaning infant baptism*) in the New Testament. There are no indications as to the age of the those being baptized or their state of salvation in the text.

One of the most important ways to interpret confusing texts or texts that may seem to give little detail, is to interpret it through scripture that is clear. The New Testament is clear that baptism is to follow salvation (*Acts 2:38 & 41, 8:12 & 38*). Thus we should conclude that those who were baptized were already saved.

DEMON POSSESSION

In the text here we see Paul and Silas encounter a woman who was demon possessed. This woman was attempting to discredit their ministry by proximity and distraction. Paul turns to this woman after several days and calls upon the demon to leave the woman, in the name of the Jesus Christ. The demon immediately leaves the woman.

Demon possession is real and scary. It is the process of someone being controlled by something other than themselves. It is important here to understand how the demon was exorcised from her body. It was not by the power of Paul, but by the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus has the authority over all, only he can set a person free.

JOYFUL PERSECUTION

Verse 25 gives us what happened after they were beaten and imprisoned. Peter and Silas, chained in the most secure part of the prison, began singing hymns and praying to the Lord. Those imprisoned around them heard this and listened.

When we face persecution, the response should be joyful prayer and praise to the Lord. Romans 5:3-5 teaches us that we are to rejoice in all suffering. It was by no accident that Paul and Silas were imprisoned. The fruit of that imprisonment was the salvation of the jailer and his household. God will always use our trials and hardships for His glory.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

1. *Ask the Lord to use dreams to speak to you. Test those dreams through the leadership of the church. Act on what God has called you to.*
2. *Pray for the Lord to release those whom the devil has a grip on. If it is a physical manifestation, boldly ask the Lord to deliver the person.*
3. *Pray for joy in those facing persecution and your own trials. Discipline yourself to remember how God works through those trials for His glory.*