

# The Book of Acts: The Church Begins

Summary Bible study notes are from Men@Midweek Bible Study Group,  
Winter Garden Florida led by Larry Roach, 2017-2018

## Acts 13-19: Missionary Journeys of Paul, Barnabas and Timothy

### Acts 13

#### **13:1-12 Barnabas and Paul's journey**

In Antioch, the prophets and teachers were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul [Paul] for the work which I have called them," (vv.1-2). They placed their hands on them and sent them off, (v3). The Scriptures state that they were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit," (v4). This is traditionally what is called Paul's first missionary journey, (A.D. 46-48). They went to Seleucia, then to Cyprus. In Salamis it is said that they "proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues," (v5). In the next town of Paphos they had an encounter with the proconsul (the governor of the Roman province), and his attendant who was a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet.

The proconsul sent for Paul and Barnabas and wanted to hear the word of God; however the sorcerer opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. In verse 9, it says that "Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit" looked straight at the sorcerer and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun," (vv9-13). After seeing this, the proconsul believed, (v12).

A couple of things are worth mentioning here. First, the passage of Scripture states that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. However, what does this mean? We know that Paul received the Holy Spirit after his encounter with the risen Lord when Paul believed. Since this is true of all believers let us look at what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 contains this imperative from the Apostle Paul: "Be filled with the Spirit." This concise, straightforward injunction is very significant for us. Each of us is indwelt by the entire Holy Spirit from the time we repent and believe: "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness," (Romans 8:9-10).

An understanding of the Greek for "be filled," *plerousthe*, quite clearly reveals the correct meaning of Paul's command in Ephesians 5:18. A literal translation of the verb would read something like "be being kept filled." The idea is one of keeping yourself constantly filled, as you yield moment by moment to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we call this "walking in the Holy Spirit."

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Three examples of the Greek word include: 1) The Greek word for “filled” can be used convey force like the wind billowing the sails on a ship, providing the push to move the vessel across the water. In the spiritual realm, this concept depicts the Holy Spirit providing the thrust to move the believer along the pathway of obedience. A Spirit-filled Christian isn't motivated by his own desires or will to progress. Instead, he allows the Holy Spirit to carry him along where Christ wills to take him.

2) The Greek word for “filled” can also convey being permeated. The Spirit of God permeates our life or he is absorbed into our very being so that we become like him in every way.

3) The Greek word for “filled” also conveys the sense of being fully controlled. It is used much like the term filled with love, filled with joy, filled with fear, filled with rage, or filled with sorrow. Each of those uses reveals an emotion so overwhelming within people that it can dominate their thoughts and leads to corresponding actions. We are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit so much so that it dominates all of our thoughts and actions.

In our spiritual lives we are commanded to yield to the total control of the Holy Spirit, so every emotion, thought, and act of the will is under the Lord's direction. A parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18 is Colossians 3:16, explains a slightly different meaning of the command, "be filled with the Spirit." The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." One can be filled with the Spirit only when controlled by the word of God. Jesus said it this way, "If you hold to my teaching then you are really my disciple. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." This is a conditional statement. An "if" statement, which is a command—followed by a "then" statement, which contains the promise. The promise is conditional based on the command being obeyed.

Back to our passage in Acts 13:9 where it states that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. First, we see Paul's obedience to the imperative to be filled with the Holy Spirit. His actions concerning the sorcerer were moved (force, pressure, thrust) by the Holy Spirit. Second, Paul was so permeated by the Holy Spirit so that there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit through Paul that demonstrated the very character or mind of Christ. Third, Paul was controlled by the Holy Spirit—He was moved along by the Spirit of God and not by his own will.

What we see of Paul in this passage of Scripture is not something he decided to do, but it was the work of the Holy Spirit that moved him along without reservation to condemn and prophesy regarding the sorcerer that stood before him. A word of caution is in order. If we try to take these actions without being “filled by the Holy Spirit,” we could find ourselves in a very difficult situation. In Acts 19:13-16, we see some men who were attempted to cast out demons without being filled by the Holy Spirit. It backfired on them and they were run away beaten and naked. Jesus said it to his disciples in this way regarding casting out demons: He said that it requires much prayer and fasting. What he meant was that you better be walking so close and in union with the Spirit that you

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will be so filled (pressured, permeated and controlled) by the Holy Spirit that it is him doing the work –not you.

A second interesting note about this passage in Acts 12:9-13. The condemnation that Paul spoke to the sorcerer, who he called the child of the devil, was also like a prophecy concerning Satan himself. It reminds me of chapter 20 of the book of Revelation where Satan is to be bound for a 1000 years and thrown into the Abyss –not to see the light of day for a time, and then he would be released for a short time.

### 13:13- 52 Paul and Barnabas in Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch

Paul and Barnabas preached the good news about Jesus to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, (Acts 13:13). He declared that the good news which God had promised to their fathers has been fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus the Christ (v.32). Many of the Jews were very interested in what Paul declared, however the religious leaders were jealous and slandered Paul and Barnabas creating dissension among the Jews. Unfortunately this is like the seed that Jesus mentioned which is cast along the path, that when sown the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart of the hearer (Mt. 13:18). In spiritual boldness, Paul and Barnabas addressed the Jews by declaring, “Since you reject it [this good news] and do not consider yourself worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles,” (v.46). Verse 48 states, “When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

**AQ:** For us who have believed, how can we practically honor the word of the Lord? What does that look like in your daily life?

### Acts 14

Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the region of Iconium, (Acts 14). A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed, yet once again the Jewish leaders refused to believe and stirred up trouble and poisoned the mind of the crowd against the brothers. The message of the apostles was confirmed by miracles. In Lystra, those of the temple of Zeus, the primary pagan religion of the region, tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas as gods. Paul and Barnabas tried to correct the people and point them toward the living God –yet with minimal success. Once again the Jews stirred up trouble among the crowd resulting in the stoning of Paul. The next day Paul and Barnabas returned to previous visited cities in the region to strengthen and encourage the brothers who had remained true to the faith.

**AQ:** Who in your current mission field needs to be strengthened and encouraged in the faith? Is there anyone from a previous journey that you may need to revisit and encourage?

### Acts 14:21-28: The return to Antioch in Syria

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In Derbe, Paul and Barnabas preached the good news and won a large number of disciples. They then returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. He reminded them that “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” (v22). Obviously Paul was not a feel good positive confessor –he was a truth teller. He was speaking what was true to the word of God.

Paul wrote in the letter to the Roman assembly, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us,” (Romans 5:2b-5). Paul at his conversion was told how much he must suffer for the name of Christ, (Acts 9:16).

Jesus made it very clear, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first....If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also....He who hates me hates my Father as well,” (John 15: 18, 20b, 23).

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthian assembly he wrote that he was being afflicted by an angel of Satan. When he took it before the Lord, the Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in [your] weakness,” (1 Corinthians 12:9a). Peter wrote in his first letter, “Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God,” (1 Peter 4:1-2). This passage says to “arm yourselves with the same attitude.” An attitude is a “mind set for action.” So be armed and ready to face the trial with the mind of Christ, just as he did, in which the flesh was brought under submission and obedience to the will of God. We were called to stand in this way.

Peter earlier said, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps,” (1 Peter 2:21). Romans 8:17 states it this way, “Now if we are [God’s] children, then we are co-heirs with Chris, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Jesus made it very clear, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first....If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also....He who hates me hates my Father as well,” (John 15: 18, 20b, 23).

Recommended Song: [Although I Walk Through the Shadow of the Valley of Death](#)

### **Acts 15**

#### **The Council at Jerusalem**

Church strife concerning ceremonial law arose when some of the Jewish brothers from Antioch began teaching that the Gentile converts must be circumcised to be saved (v.1), and that they obey the Law of Moses (v.5). A council of the apostles and leaders was convened in Jerusalem to address this issue that faced the early church. In their

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conclusion they confirmed that we are saved through the grace the Lord Jesus (v.11) and that the church should not put the yoke of the Law of Moses upon the new Gentile converts.

The council did agree that they should direct the Gentiles to abstain from four practices: food polluted by idols, sexual immorality, meat of strangled animals and from blood. At first this may seem strange that they would pick these things and not mention so many other sinful practices. To understand this passage it is helpful to remember that the counsel was trying to resolve one particular conflict within the church. Its motive was not to provide a list of rules for holy living –that will come later in the development of the church as the need arose.

These items were directly related to the idolatrous practices that surrounded the Gentile communities from which the Gentiles were converted: meat sacrificed to idols, temple prostitution, defiled sacrifices and blood from sacrifices eaten or drank. This directive was to a church in its infancy where people had previously been involved in the pagan temple worship of gods, goddesses and idols. The four items of this directive were related to idolatry and pagan temple worship in which any practice of was highly offensive to the Jewish believers.

This offense was making it difficult for the Jews and Gentiles to share the same table of fellowship together. So for the sake of unity, this directive was asking the Gentiles to abstain from any hint of these practices. In return the Jewish believers were not to put the Gentile converts under any obligation to the Law of Moses. This directive was certainly to address a specific conflict that had arrived in the early days of the church's development. The apostle Paul later addressed this issue from in a different setting in the life of the Corinthian church concerning food sacrificed to idols (see 1 Cor. 8).

**AQ:** Scripture calls for us to live in peace with one another. Even when we don't agree with a brother or sister we are called to love one another. Is there anyone you have let a root of bitterness hinder your ability to love a brother or sister? If so, what specific things do you need to do to correct this situation?

In the second part of chapter 15 the conclusion of the Jerusalem council was received by the church in Antioch. The church was reported to be glad and encouraged by the news. Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch for some time teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. Later Paul wanted to go back to the churches they had previously established to see how the brothers were doing. It is important to note that this is a key element of making disciples –following up to see how they are doing in the faith. Paul and Barnabas are reported to have had a sharp disagreement about taking along John Mark. Paul did not want to take him along since he had deserted them earlier in the ministry. Barnabas disagreed.

This is much like Barnabas who continued to be the encourager even when someone had fallen short of expectations. It is interesting to mention that Paul must have forgotten how Barnabas had stood by him early on when the other Apostles were suspicious of him. Nevertheless Paul took Silas with him, and Barnabas took another

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route with John Mark. Although unfortunate how it all came about, now there were two missions instead of one. We know from later in the book of Acts Paul spoke well of Barnabas and John Mark.

**Personal Application:** First, discipleship requires us to not only preach the gospel it requires us to continue to teach others to follow what the Lord taught. The Great Commission states, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you,” (Matthew 28: 18-20). In this study we see this concept demonstrated as the Paul and Barnabas followed up on the brothers they had instructed before. Who in your life do you need to follow up on to see how they are doing in the faith? Second, providing encouragement is an essential element of making disciples who are steadfast. **AQ:** Who in your life do you need to be a Barnabas to?

### Acts 16

#### Paul and Timothy; Macedonia

In the first part of [Acts 16](#) Paul met up with Timothy. Timothy was well spoken of by the brothers and his mother was a Jew as well as a believer in Jesus. His father was a Greek although there was no mention of him still being alive. It is reported that Paul wanted to take Timothy with him on the journey and so he circumcised him. We might think this odd since the previous passage stated that circumcision was not required for the Greeks. However, Timothy also had Jewish ancestry and could be valuable in preaching the gospel to the Jews. To be accepted in the Jewish synagogues he would need to be circumcised.

This is a powerful testimony of the commitment of Timothy to do whatever it took so that he could enter the Jewish synagogues and be able to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the Jews. Certainly circumcision is not required for salvation –but if it advances the gospel then so be it. This is similar to what Paul later taught, “To the weak I become weak [humility], to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings,” ([1 Corinthians 9: 22-23](#)). Timothy demonstrated this truth without reservation.

**Personal Application:** To share in the blessings of the gospel it is essential that we are humble and faithful to God as we walk in this world. **AQ:** Is there anything the Lord would have you lay aside in order to follow him more closely and in order to be ready to share the message of Christ to those around you?

In the second part of chapter 16 Paul and his companions, in the district of Macedonia and the Roman city of Philippi, encounter two women with different backgrounds and character. The first was Lydia, who was described as a worshipper of God, who began to listen to Paul as he spoke about Jesus Christ. The Scriptures is clear to say that “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.” Afterwards, she and the members of her household were baptized.

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It is important to note that it was not Paul who opened her heart, nor did Lydia open her own heart –it was the Lord that opened her heart. It is the Lord who draws people unto himself through his son Jesus Christ, (c.f. John 6:44). Paul knew that he must be faithful to pray and share the good news of Jesus and let the Lord do the work of the heart. Lydia turning to Christ was so impactful that her family followed her lead.

The second woman was of different background and character. She was a slave and had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She was what we may call today a fortune teller or psychic. We see that she heard the message of Paul and followed them shouting that “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” Since we know that what she was proclaiming the truth, her intention was somewhat unclear at first. However, what happens next gives us clarity that she was not trying to help Paul and Silas with her proclamation.

She followed them for several days until Paul became troubled or annoyed. Paul turned to her and commanded the spirit that was in her to come out –and it did. It is apparent that Paul discerned that the woman was possessed by an evil spirit who was mocking the word of the Lord, (C.f. 1 Cor. 12:10c; re: discernment of spirits). Obviously it was by this spirit that she had been making money for her owners by telling the future. Consequently her owners became very angry and began to stir up trouble for Paul and Silas bringing charges against them to the authorities, (C.f. Luke 8:26-39; re: Jesus’ encounter with the demon-possessed man).

**Personal Application:** With Lydia we see evidence that the Lord had done a work in her heart. First, as a result of God’s work in her heart she believed the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Second, her testimony impacted her family. Third, she practiced hospitality. **AQ:** What is your testimony of the evidence of the work of the Lord in your heart?

In the last section of chapter 16 Paul and Silas were attacked by the crowd, and the magistrates had them stripped and beaten and thrown into prison. About midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening in. At that time there was an earthquake that shook the prison causing the prison doors to open and everybody’s chains came loose. The jailer was terrified thinking that everyone had escaped –however Paul and Silas reassured him they had not. The jailer came running to Paul and Silas asking, “What must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved –you and your household,” (v.31). They then spoke to them the word of the Lord. In other words, they spoke to them the particulars concerning the gospel –the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

This is what they consistently preached and asked people to believe and to place their faith in this finished work of Christ. As with Lydia, the jailer immediately showed them hospitality by caring for their needs and inviting them into his house. The Scriptures state, “The whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God,” (v.34b).

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**Personal Application:** Paul and Silas had obviously committed themselves to the Lord and the mission before them. Their faithfulness led them to the divine appointment that God had in mind –the salvation of a jailer and his household. After being beaten and thrown into prison they could have become discouraged. However they were persistent to rejoice in all things –even their suffering. They must have been fully aware that God had placed them in their situation. They were having a prayer meeting and singing praises to God –all while having a captive audience listening in. **AQ:** When have you had situations like this when what seemed to be a painful, difficult situation turned out to be a divine appointment for God to demonstrate his grace?

### Acts 17

#### **Berea and Thessalonica**

In chapter 17 Paul establishes a church in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a major city of the time. Paul began the work by entering the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath days and reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures. He explained and proved from the Scriptures (what we would basically call the Old Testament) that the Messiah or Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He went on to say that this Christ is Jesus. Many believed, and as we have seen before, some were jealous and stirred up trouble and began to persecute the brothers. More can be learned about the Church in Thessalonica by reading Paul's letter 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

**Personal Application:** We are reminded once again in this passage that the gospel message that Paul was proclaiming concerning the Christ was the about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Let us be faithful to preach no other gospel. This message is the key to understanding the salvation that God has brought through his Messiah.

#### **Acts 17: 16-34 Athens**

In chapter 17, beginning at verse 18, it is made clear that Paul is continuing to preach the good news about Jesus and his resurrection. To the Epicureans and the Stoic philosophers in Athens he was babbling nonsense and advocating foreign gods they did not understand. They took him to appear before the Areopagus counsel who was an aristocratic counsel and advisors. They too had not heard such strange teaching before and wanted to know what it meant.

Verse 21 makes an interesting comment that those who lived in Athens spent their time talking about and listening to the latest idea. Obviously they would be curious about this new idea Paul was proclaiming. Paul began to proclaim to them about the living one true God that created heaven and earth and everything in it. He stated that God determined a time and a place for each man to live. Verse 27 reveals that God did all of this so that man would seek him and perhaps reach out to him and find him since he is not far away.

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Paul went on to warn them that their idolatry would no longer be overlooked by God, and that “God commands all people everywhere to repent,” (v30). The repentance he was calling for was to turn away from idols and turn to God. He went on to warn them that not only has God appointed a time and a place for each man to live, but he has also appointed a day for each man to be judged by him. God has given proof of all this by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. When hearing this some sneered and a few believed (v34).

**Personal Application:** This sermon has been credited to Paul as one of his greatest sermons –yet some sneered and a few believed. Obviously the others didn’t respond or at worse were indifferent. Sometimes we can become discouraged because we pray and pour out our hearts in service or proclaiming the gospel of Christ –yet few believe and many are indifferent. Let us be like Paul who obeyed God and proclaimed what God said to proclaim and went where God said to God without looking back. He left the results to God. **AQ:** How about you?

### Acts 18

In the first few verses of chapter 18 Paul left Athens and going about 50 miles to the city of Corinth. Paul met a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Both of them were exiled from Rome, along with other Jews. Historical evidence indicates that the Jews were exiled from Rome because of Jewish riots. There is some indication that these riots were over the issue of Christ. Paul stayed and worked with them as a tentmaker or leatherworker. On the Sabbath Paul spoke to the Jews and Greeks concerning Christ.

Acts 18 verse 5 states that Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia and Paul was able to devote himself exclusively to preaching. Paul worked to pay his own way so not to be a burden to anyone. In 2 Corinthians 11:9a Paul states, “When I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed.” Philippians 4:15-17, Paul wrote to the Philippians, “In the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia , not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only; for when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.” When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia they also brought with them a monetary gift from the church there which allowed Paul to devote his time fully to preaching the gospel. He did not ask for this gift it was given freely out of love for him and for Christ.

In Acts 18 verse 6 the Jews opposed Paul in Corinth and became abusive. Paul evidently had enough and turned away from them proclaiming that he would go to the Gentiles. Here we see Paul like never before, frustrated and worn down by the

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pressures of proclaiming the gospel to an obstinate people. He wrote in 1 Corinthians about his state when he was in Corinth. "I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling," (v.2); (Recommend reading the entire chapter). Paul wrote the Thessalonians while in Corinth.

In chapter 3 of 1 Thessalonians he wrote, "Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brother, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith," (vv. 6-7); (Recommend reading the entire chapter). The letter to the Roman church was also written by Paul while in Corinth.

Paul obviously had some difficulties when he arrived at Corinth. He appeared to be discouraged, weary, weak, and perhaps physically ill. In Athens the people worshiped the mind. In Corinth the people worshiped the body. It was an immoral city –in particular a sexually immoral city. The city was so corrupt that the word "Corinthian" became a slang term for someone immoral. It was a city of much activity, being the center of trade and travel for the region. It was located in the midpoint in a narrow strip between north and south Greece.

At the center of much of the immoral behavior was a large hill called Acropolis. It was a temple mount for the goddess Aphrodite. It was reported that it was served by 1000 priestesses that were primarily prostitutes. At night they would go down into the city to spread their religion. The city was an open carnival atmosphere of immorality. This is the atmosphere that Paul found himself preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the very gates of hell, near the throne of Satan, Paul faithfully held out the words of life from a loving God.

Acts 18:9-10, the Lord spoke to Paul a word of encouragement, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." What a reassuring word to let Paul know that he was safe and was not alone. God had already gone before Paul preparing the way for his people to be saved.

**Personal Application:** It is often discouraging for us to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in a culture that is bent on going its own way. We often face trials and persecution. Let us be encouraged that God has our backs and has gone before us preparing the hearts of those he is calling unto salvation. Let us press on in obedience to proclaim Christ and trust God for the results.

Also see: Letter to the Corinthians, 1 and 2

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### Acts 18b Paul in Syria, Ephesus, Caesarea, Antioch, Galatia, Phrygia

In chapter 18, verses 18-23, Paul sailed for Syria and went into Ephesus. From there he went to Caesarea and then to Antioch. From there it is reported that he traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, A.D. 53. He did all this to strengthen the disciples in those areas. It is important to remember that what we are observing in Acts is a church in transition. It is a church that is rooted in Judaism and is slowly moving toward becoming distinctly Christian. At times, as we read through Acts, it will seem like the two overlap. Because of this it may not be advisable to take a snapshot of what we see in Acts and try to fit it perfectly on the church as we see it today.

One example we see is in verse 18 when Paul took a Nazirite vow and cut off his hair. Paul was carrying over parts of his Jewish tradition into the new emerging church. In no place here or elsewhere did he suggest Christians to take on the Nazirite vow or other oaths rooted in Judaism. Apollos also was a Jew and spoke of Jesus accurately—however only as a Jew since he only had the baptism of John. He was in transition. Although he had heard of Jesus he had not come to the Cross yet. He had the Jewish teaching and the teaching that John the Baptist and his disciples had, but his understanding of Jesus was lacking. Priscilla and Aquila explained to him the way of God more accurately. More than likely they brought him up to date as far as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit.

### Acts 19

When Paul was in Ephesus (chapter 19) he encounters some others that were part of John the Baptist's teaching. Look back at Acts 1:5 to refresh yourself on what John was preaching. John was an Old Testament saint and so were these folks that Paul encountered. They too were in transition. I think the word "disciple" in 19:1 causes some confusion. Who were they the disciples of? The answer is John the Baptist (cf. v. 3). They had received his baptism which was a baptism of repentance. It was a baptism of preparation for the coming of the Messiah. They had not received the Holy Spirit for they were followers of John and had not even heard of the Gospel of Christ (the Messiah) or the coming of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they were not Christians yet. Paul told them to believe on the Lord Jesus the Christ, and upon doing so they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in other languages and prophesized.

**AQ:** Who do you know that may be in transition? They may have elementary or advanced knowledge of religion or the Bible –yet they have never encountered the truth about who Jesus is and his gospel. They may even be like Apollo who spoke greatly and with authority yet without godly power in their lives. Or they may attend church

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faithfully and do many good deeds but from their speech (or lack of) it is obvious they have never met Christ. I know many like this. Let us continue to pray that the eyes of their heart may be opened to see Jesus.

Acts chapter 19, verses 11 and 12, report that God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. Items that had touched Paul were taken to the sick and they were healed and to the demon possessed and they were delivered. These activities perhaps seem bazaar to us as we are not accustomed to these types of events. Evidently these events were unusual to the early church as well since these Scripture say that these were extraordinary (not ordinary) miracles. It is important for us to reminder that the Scripture states that God is the source of these miracles not Paul. It is God who has absolute authority over sickness and demons.

During this time some Jews failed to realize this fact and proceeded to utilize the name of Jesus in an attempt to drive out evil spirits (vv.13-16). This backfired on them when the evil spirits confronted them that they were not followers of Jesus and then overpowered them and beat them. This should be a warning for those who are not followers of Jesus, not having the Holy Spirit, from using the name of Jesus for personal benefit or using his name casually or in vain. His name is the name above all names.

Rightly so, when news of these events became known great fear seized those who lived in the region and the name of the Lord was held in high honor. As a result many believed and confessed their evil deeds. Among these were many sorcerers who repented and burned all of their scrolls they had used in sorcery (magic and witchcraft). The word of the Lord grew in power and spread widely at this time. In this section we see that God and Jesus have absolute power over sickness, demons and evil. The Church was being established on the power of God, the name of Jesus, and the word of the Lord.

**Personal Application:** It would be wise for each of us to examine ourselves and how we use the name of Jesus. **AQ:** Do we ever use it for our own benefit? Do we ever use it without the Holy Spirit's direction? Do we ever use it flippantly, or in jest or in vain?

Let us remember that it is not a name to be taken lightly—it is the name of God's Son who has been given all power and authority. Philippians 2:9-11, "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Acts 19: 23-41. In Ephesus there were many craftsmen that made money from making silver shrines of the goddess Artemis who the Scriptures state was worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world. In Greek mythology she was known as

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the goddess of hunting and forests or nature. Rituals concerning her were also connected to stories of virginity and childbirth. She was equated with the similar stories of the goddess Diana –the goddess of the hunt, moon and nature. Both were considered to be daughters of Zeus.

The craftsmen were upset because Paul's preaching had led to the conversion of practically the whole province of Asia and they were no longer buying their silver shrines or worshipping Artemis. The craftsman reported that Paul was teaching that man-made gods were no gods at all. They were concerned that their trade would be hindered, and hypocritically they expressed concern that Artemis would no longer receive the worship that she deserved and would be robbed of her divine majesty. They became furious and began shouting praise to Artemis and led the city into an uproar. They worked up the crowd into a frenzy until they took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions, and brought them before the town counsel. It was a chaotic event where they brought charges against Gaius and Aristarchus. The town clerk was able to calm the crowd and advised them to take the issue before the courts if they had a grievance. He warned them against continuing with the riot. This appears to have calmed the crowd and they were dismissed. Obviously the law worked for the benefit of the disciples in this event. We have seen in other parts of the book of Acts and elsewhere that rioting could draw the attention of the Romans who were known for brutally bringing the Army in to maintain peace within cities and provinces.

**Personal Application:** In our previous lesson we saw that when people came to Christ and repented they got rid books they had used to practice idolatry. Now in this passage we see that when people came to Christ they gave up their superstitious idolatry and stopped buying shrines. We may not have little silver shrines on our dashboard or coffee table, but are there superstitions that we may still hold onto. There are too many superstitions in our culture to mention here, but a superstition is a belief that by doing or not doing a certain activity will protect us or bring us good fortune. There certainly are religious and secular superstitions in today's culture. When we enter into this kind of behavior it is like we have created a god or goddess to protect us or bless us, i.e. The goddess of "good luck." We all have heard these things growing up, like don't walk under a ladder, don't open an umbrella inside, or toss a coin in a wishing well.

Our faith is to be totally on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our provider and protector. When we come to him we are to give up our vain superstitions and trust him and follow him without reservation. **AQ:** What superstition is God calling you to give up?

Also see: Letter to the Ephesians