FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Day 3 notes

Chapters 8, 9, 10

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 8 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Paul's First Missionary Journey

The Antiochian outpouring launches the Gentile mission; ministry on Cyprus and in Asia Minor; planting indigenous churches

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 8)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies the launch of the Gentile mission: the Antiochian "outpouring" sends Barnabas and Saul, they minister on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, they plant indigenous churches, and they report to the sending church in Antioch.

The transitional period ended with the door opened to Gentiles. Now the Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch, the sixth of the seven key outpourings. The author writes it as an "outpouring" in quotation marks. Keep those quotation marks.

Bible reading: Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Each part of the lesson then has its own shorter reading: Acts 13:1-3, Acts 13:4-12, Acts 13:13-52, Acts 14:1-7, Acts 14:8-20, Acts 14:20-23, and Acts 14:24-28.

Learning Objectives

• State the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, and show how this "outpouring" confirms Luke's empowerment-witness motif.

• Identify, from Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field.

• Explain what part the demonstration of spiritual gifts played in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ.

• State three important indigenous church-planting principles learned from Paul's first missionary journey.

• Explain what it means that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking."

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Keep your Bible open. The chapter reviews a shorter passage before each part of the lesson.

The Big Idea

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

The Gentile Mission Begins

• We now progress in our study to the period of the Gentile mission. This is the third part of Jesus' missionary agenda as outlined in Acts 1:8.

• The church has already extended into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The time has now come for it to expand to the "ends of the earth."

• The "ends of the earth" in Acts 1:8 corresponds to the Gentile mission.

• The Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in the church in Antioch. We call this move of the Spirit the Antiochian "outpouring."

• It is the sixth of seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts and the first outpouring during the Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

The Story: The Antiochian "Outpouring" (Acts 13:1-3)

There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. These included Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger, or the Black Man), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. Once, during a time of worship and fasting, a prophetic word was given. In this word the Holy Spirit instructed the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the missionary ministry to which He had called them. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid their hands on the two missionaries and sent them on their way.

Commentary on the Antiochian "Outpouring"

• The church's Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church of Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• We have put the word "outpouring" in quotation marks because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings in Acts.

• It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit. We are calling it an outpouring, however, to maintain continuity in our terminology.

• It must be noted that this powerful move of the Spirit points to one or more prior outpourings of the Spirit in the church in Antioch.

• Luke has already described the beginning of the church in Antioch in 11:19-26. The church was started by Christian refugees who fled Jerusalem during the persecution that broke out after Stephen's martyrdom.

• It quickly grew into a powerful multiethnic church. Under the guidance and care of Saul and Barnabas and other talented leaders, it became a truly Spirit-anointed missional church.

• It was from this congregation that the church's first ever intentional missionary effort was launched and the Gentile mission officially began.

• Luke locates a pneuma event (that is, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit) near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys. These interventions of the Holy Spirit are more specifically located at the launching of new missionary initiatives, as indicated in Table 8.1.

• These pneuma events are significant because they let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

• The Antiochian outpouring is yet another key example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif first presented in 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

• By showing this pattern over and over, Luke is trying to show his readers that any believer or any church can be used mightily by God if they will be filled with the Holy Spirit and remain committed to fulfilling Christ's mission.

13:1 Antioch

• Antioch, Syria, was called the "Queen of the East" and was the third greatest city

in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

• It was a cosmopolitan city and a commercial trading center. Its population was made up mainly of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans.

• Antioch was an ideal location for the emergence of a thriving missionary church and as a base for Paul's three missionary journeys.

Prophets and teachers

• Every healthy church should have prophets and teachers in its membership.

• Paul describes both ministries as grace gifts given by Christ to the church (Ephesians 4:7-11).

• Both are also charismatic giftings, and according to Luke, both operate by inspiration of the Spirit (Luke 5:17; Acts 2:17-18; 4:2; 5:21, 25, 28; 11:28; 13:9-12; 21:10-11).

• Jesus himself was a prophet and a teacher (Luke 24:19; John 3:2; 13:13), as were Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:26; 13:1). Both ministries are needed in the church today.

13:2 Worshiping the Lord and fasting

• Luke sees the church as a worshiping body.

• Before Pentecost the disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53). After Pentecost the newly Spirit-baptized believers spent much time together "praising God" (Acts 2:47).

• The Jerusalem believers praised God after Peter's report that the Gentiles had received the Spirit at Caesarea (11:18). Also in Jerusalem, the brothers praised God for what He had done among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry (21:20).

• Now, in Antioch, Luke pictures the church "worshiping the Lord." Prayer with fasting was also a common practice of the New Testament church (Luke 5:35; Acts 13:3; 14:23).

The Holy Spirit said

• Luke included this move of the Spirit in Antioch because he wanted his readers to know that Paul's missionary journeys were an initiative of the Holy Spirit.

• On this occasion the Spirit spoke to the church through a prophetic gift. The

message could have come through tongues and interpretation or, more likely, through the gift of prophecy (compare 1 Corinthians 14:1-5).

The work to which I have called them

• True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed; they are called by God.

• Paul and Barnabas already knew their calling, and they knew God had sent them previously to Antioch. The issue here seems to be timing. The Spirit was saying that it was now time to begin the mission.

13:3 After they had fasted and prayed

• The church fasted and prayed after hearing the prophetic word concerning Barnabas and Saul. It seems that the church was testing the prophecy.

• Paul later wrote that prophecies must be tested. He said that "two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (1 Corinthians 14:29).

• We are to weigh prophecies by the Word of God and through prayer and fasting. No prophecy given in an assembly should be received until it is first tested and approved.

• The believers in Antioch could have also been seeking God's further insight and direction, or they may have been interceding for the safety and success of the two missionaries.

They placed their hands on them

• Just as apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed, neither are they self-sent.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit (compare 13:4).

• Paul himself later asked this question concerning missionaries: "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:15).

The Story: Cyprus: Spirit-Empowered Ministry (Acts 13:4-12)

Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the church in Antioch and by the Holy Spirit. With them was John Mark, Barnabas' nephew. The men traveled southwest from Antioch to the nearby coastal town of Seleucia. From there they

sailed to the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, disembarking at Salamis. There they preached the gospel in the local synagogue. They then traveled west across the island, preaching from town to town. Eventually, they reached Paphos on the western coast of Cyprus.

In Paphos, Barnabas and Saul met two men: the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus, and a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus. The proconsul sent for Barnabas and Saul to visit him so he could hear the word of God. However, Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas) opposed them and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith.

As this was happening, Paul was again filled with the Holy Spirit and given divine insight into what God was about to do. He looked straight at the sorcerer and announced that the hand of the Lord was against him and that he would go blind for a season. Immediately it happened: Elymas began to grope about in darkness, begging for someone to take him by the hand. When the proconsul saw this, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 13:4-12

• Being sent on their way by the church and by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Cyprus and began the primary work of missions, proclaiming the message of Christ.

• They moved systematically across the island preaching the gospel, and likely establishing congregations, wherever they went.

• It is also likely that there were already congregations of believers on the island that had been started by Christian refugees who fled because of the persecution begun after Stephen's martyrdom (8:1-4; 11:19-20).

• The meeting of Paul and Elymas is a classic power encounter. A power encounter is a situation in gospel ministry when the power of God is challenged by the power of Satan.

• Here the sorcerer Elymas opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith. He probably did not do this by using rational arguments against the Christian faith. He more likely tried to turn the proconsul from the faith by using his occultic arts.

• Paul, however, was filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly challenged him.

• Through a word of knowledge, the Spirit revealed to Paul what God was about to do. Acting in faith, Paul announced to Elymas that the hand of the Lord was against him, and that he would be blinded for a season.

• When Paul's prediction immediately came true, Sergius Paulus' heart was opened to the gospel, and he believed in Christ. The power of the God of Paul was superior to the dark powers of the sorcerer.

13:4 Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit

• Again the Holy Spirit is presented as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• He is the primary missionary strategist, the equipper, the sender, the director, the encourager, and the sustainer of missions.

Cyprus

• The residents of Cyprus were notorious for their immoral worship of the Roman goddess of love, Venus, and the Assyrian goddess of fertility and war, Astarte.

• The island was the birthplace and home of Barnabas. There was already a Christian presence on the island when Barnabas and Saul arrived (11:19).

13:5 Proclaimed the word of God

• The apostles' message was the word of God, or the gospel. This phrase is often used in Acts to mean the preaching of the gospel.

• In missions, our message is the full counsel of God (20:27), and the heart of that message is the message of Jesus (4:2; 5:42; 8:5; 9:20; 17:3).

13:9 Filled with the Holy Spirit

• This phrase is not describing Paul's initial filling with the Holy Spirit, for that happened several years earlier when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• This experience of Paul's can more properly be termed a refilling or an anointing with the Holy Spirit.

• Like Peter in 4:8, Paul is being anointed by the Spirit to release a spiritual gift.

13:12 The proconsul... believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord

• Power ministry is not an end in itself. The ultimate goal of power ministry is to bring people to faith in Christ.

• Power encounter (a demonstration of God's power) must always be accompanied by truth encounter (the proclamation of the gospel).

• In this verse "the teaching of the Lord" includes both proclamation and demonstration.

The Story: Pisidian Antioch: The Gospel Is Proclaimed (Acts 13:13-52)

From Paphos, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed northward until they arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There John left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, however, continued northward through Pamphylia as far as Pisidian Antioch. The next Sabbath Paul was invited to speak in the Jewish synagogue there.

Paul began his message by reminding those present of how God had blessed Israel in many ways. He especially blessed Israel by sending to them the message of salvation through Jesus, the Savior and descendant of David. Though the people of Jerusalem and their rulers rejected Jesus and asked Pilate to execute Him, God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. This was all foretold by the prophets. Now, through this same Jesus, they could have forgiveness of sins, and through faith in Him, they could be justified before God. This was a thing that the Law of Moses could never do. They therefore must not reject Jesus. If they were to do so, God would judge them, as the prophets had solemnly warned.

After the meeting, some asked Paul and Barnabas to come and speak again on these topics. Many Jews and God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and the apostles urged them to continue in God's grace.

The next Sabbath almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. This caused some Jews to become jealous, so they began to contradict what Paul was saying. Paul and Barnabas then turned to the Gentiles. As they did, they applied the words of Isaiah the prophet to themselves: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles." When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the Lord.

The word of the Lord then spread through the whole region. In response, the Jews

stirred up some high-ranking officials of the city, who in turn instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas, expelling them from their region. Paul and Barnabas therefore shook the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. The disciples in Antioch, nevertheless, were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Commentary on Acts 13:13-52

• Paul's sermon in Antioch is another example of apostolic preaching, sometimes called the apostolic kerygma. (For a discussion on the apostolic kerygma, see comments on 2:22-36.)

• As in every other case in Acts, Jesus is the central theme, especially His death and resurrection. Paul appeals to Scripture to prove his case. Finally, he calls his hearers to repentance and faith in Christ. These elements should be a part of all gospel preaching.

• Some commentators have pointed out that verses 38 and 39 are a summary of Paul's letter to the Galatians that he would later write to these same people: through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, and through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything they could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

13:30 God raised him from the dead

• In this short sermon Paul mentions Christ's resurrection five times (vv. 30, 33, 34, 35, 37), demonstrating its importance to the message of the gospel.

13:38 Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you

• We do not preach the gospel simply to transfer information.

• The purpose of gospel preaching is to call people to make a decision to follow Jesus and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him.

13:47 A light for the Gentiles... to the ends of the earth

• Jesus is Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). He is a light not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.

• The phrase "ends of the earth" (Greek eschatos tes ges) reminds us of Jesus' promise in 1:8: "You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth."

• Our mission is to preach the gospel in pentecostal power to all nations before Jesus returns (Matthew 24:14).

13:50 They stirred up persecution

• Although persecution came again and again, the apostles persisted in proclaiming the gospel.

13:52 The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

• This verse reveals that Paul led the new converts in Antioch into Spirit baptism, for they were "filled... with the Holy Spirit." This fact is borne out in Paul's own words (Galatians 3:2-5, 14).

• As a result of these people being filled with the Spirit, "the word of the Lord spread through the whole region" (Acts 13:49).

• Joy is one natural by-product of being filled with the Spirit (Luke 10:21; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

The Story: Iconium: Signs and Wonders (Acts 14:1-7)

Upon arriving in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue, as was their usual practice. There they preached with such power and clarity that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. However, as in Antioch, several Jews rejected the message of Christ and began to poison the minds of the Gentiles against the apostles by saying evil things about them. Paul and Barnabas were undaunted and stayed a long time in Iconium, preaching boldly. The Lord confirmed their message by performing mighty signs and wonders among the people.

The people of the city were, nevertheless, divided in their opinion concerning the apostles. Some supported them; some opposed them. When Paul and Barnabas learned of a plot to incite a mixed mob of Gentiles and Jews to capture and stone them, they fled for their lives from the city. They then went to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. Everywhere they went, they faithfully preached the gospel.

Commentary on Acts 14:1-7

• In Iconium, as in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas encountered the hostility of the Jews.

• Their preaching of the gospel resulted in division in the city. The cause of this division, however, was not their preaching; it was the reaction of those Jews who violently opposed the message.

14:1 They spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed

• It is important that we learn to proclaim the word of the Lord effectively.

• Effectiveness in preaching comes from the preacher's personal character, thorough knowledge of Scripture, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

14:3 Confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders

• Again God confirmed the word they preached with "miraculous signs and wonders." This is a favorite expression of Luke.

• In its various forms he uses it eleven times in Acts (2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12).

• Jesus promised that He would confirm the preaching of the gospel with "signs following" (Mark 16:15-18). That promise has never been taken away from us.

• As we faithfully go and preach the gospel to those who have never heard, we can expect God to confirm the message in the same way today. Signs and wonders are manifestations of the Spirit's power (Romans 15:19).

14:4 The apostles

• Here both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles. Apostolic ministry is broader than the original twelve. Apostles exist today.

• However, nowhere in Scripture is the word apostle used as a title (for example, the apostle Paul); it is always used to describe a function or ministry.

• We have no scriptural warrant for calling any person by the title "apostle." Those who use this title today may risk becoming guilty of pride or manipulation.

• We do, however, have abundant scriptural warrant for those who function in an apostolic ministry.

• Apostolic ministry involves pioneer church planting done in the power of the Spirit in formerly unpenetrated areas and among unreached peoples (Romans 15:17-21; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

14:6-7 They continued to preach the good news

• Even after being chased out of the city, Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the gospel.

• We cannot let opposition keep us from preaching Christ to the lost.

The Story: Lystra: Gifts in Operation (Acts 14:8-20)

One day, as Paul was preaching in Lystra, a crippled man was present who had been crippled from birth. During his message Paul looked directly at the man and saw that he had faith to be healed. Paul commanded the man, "Stand up on your feet!" The man immediately jumped up and began to walk.

The crowd went wild with excitement and began to shout that Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes come down to earth in human form. When the two apostles saw a pagan priest bringing two bulls to sacrifice to them, they ripped their clothes in dismay and cried out, telling the people to stop. "We are bringing you good news," they shouted to the people, "telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them." They told them that He was the same God who had revealed himself to them with rain and crops and had given them joy to fill their hearts. Even so, Paul and Barnabas had difficulty keeping the people from sacrificing to them.

About that time a delegation of Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and as they had done before, they began to poison the people's minds against Paul and Barnabas. An angry crowd then seized Paul, stoned him, and dragged him outside the city, leaving him for dead. But when the disciples gathered around him, he was revived and emboldened and went back into the city.

Commentary on Acts 14:8-20

• As a result of a wonderful miracle, Paul and Barnabas gained great credibility among the people of Lystra. They then seized the opportunity to present the gospel

to a more receptive audience.

14:9 Paul... saw that he had faith to be healed

• Only God can see into a person's heart and determine if there is faith. Paul could have known this only by divine revelation.

14:10 Stand up on your feet

• Like Peter, Paul uses a command of faith to heal the sick man (compare comment on 9:40).

• Speaking (or commanding) was the method Jesus used most often in healing the sick (Mark 7:34; Luke 4:39; 6:10; 7:14; 8:48; 13:12; 17:14; 18:42; John 5:8; 9:7; 11:43).

• Paul could have been exercising the gift of faith on this occasion (1 Corinthians 12:9).

• If the man had not stood up, Paul would have been shamed, and his ministry in Lystra would have been greatly hindered. However, since the man did stand, a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel resulted. Paul had to act with great faith to perform this miracle.

14:15 We are bringing you good news

• The primary purpose of all missionary ministry is to present the good news and call people to faith in Christ.

14:20 The disciples... gathered around him

• These disciples gathered around Paul to pray. They probably prayed for him to receive healing, which he did.

• They may have also prayed for him to receive a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

• He must have received strength and boldness from the Lord, for after they prayed, he went back into the city.

Further Insight: Spiritual Gifts in Missionary Work

• We learn from the book of Acts that the operation of spiritual gifts is an important part of missionary work.

• In Paul's ministry in Lystra, spiritual gifts opened the way for effective

evangelism. This was true in many other instances in Acts.

• According to this author's count, there are sixty-six instances of spiritual gifts in operation in Acts. This includes gifts from all three categories: prophetic gifts, revelation gifts, and power gifts (compare 1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

• Unlike Paul's epistles, which focus on the operation of spiritual gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12-14), Acts focuses on the operation of spiritual gifts in evangelism and missions.

• These gifts often worked together in groups to bring about the desired result of people coming to Christ.

• This happened in Lystra. As Paul was preaching a Spirit-anointed message (a prophetic gift), he was enabled by the Spirit to look into a man's heart and see that he had faith to be healed (a revelation gift). Then, acting in extraordinary faith, Paul commanded the crippled man to stand on his feet. The man obeyed, and a miracle occurred (a power gift).

• A similar thing took place when Peter and John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (3:1-4:4). Gifts were manifested from all three categories. Through a word of knowledge (revelation), Peter knew that it was God's time to heal the lame man. Through a gift of healing (power), the man was miraculously healed. And through a manifestation of the gift of prophecy (prophetic), Peter stood and powerfully addressed the crowd. Because of the release of these three categories of spiritual gifts, many were added to the kingdom (4:4).

• Every missionary and minister of the gospel must ensure that spiritual gifts are in operation in his or her life and ministry. The missionary or minister should also ensure that the church he or she plants understands how to operate in the gifts of the Spirit.

The Story: Derbe: Soul Harvest (Acts 14:20-23)

The following day Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe. While there, they preached the gospel and won many new disciples to the Lord. They then returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they strengthened the new believers, encouraging them to remain true to the Lord in spite of persecution. They also appointed elders in each church and committed them to the Lord with a time of prayer and fasting.

Commentary on Acts 14:20-23

• Few details are given concerning Paul and Barnabas' missionary ministry in Derbe. What we are told, however, is exciting. As a result of their preaching the gospel there, the apostles experienced a great soul harvest!

14:21 They preached the good news... and won a large number of disciples

• True to their commission from Christ, the apostles preached the gospel in Derbe, as they had done in every other place (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). As a result, they won many people to the Lord.

14:22 Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them

• The missionary's role goes beyond simply preaching the gospel and bringing people to salvation. Jesus told us that we are to make disciples of them (Matthew 28:19).

• A disciple is more than a convert; a disciple is a follower and learner of Christ.

• The missionary's role thus includes encouraging Christ's followers to remain true to Him. This can be done through fellowship (Romans 1:12; Ephesians 6:21-22; Philemon 7; Hebrews 10:25), teaching (Acts 20:2; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 2 Timothy 4:2), and prophetic words (Acts 9:31; 15:32; 27:33-36; 1 Corinthians 14:3).

The kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is mentioned eight times in Acts (1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

• It can be defined as God's sovereign reign over His creation. Christ has been declared king over the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15).

• Therefore, to preach the gospel of the kingdom is to preach Christ (Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31).

• We are to preach the gospel in all the world before Jesus comes again (Matthew 24:14).

The Story: Antioch: The First Missions Convention (Acts 14:24-28)

Leaving Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas returned through Pisidia into Pamphylia. After they had preached in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where the church had first committed them to the work they had now completed. When the church gathered, the apostles gave a report of all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. They then remained in Antioch with the disciples for a long while.

Commentary on Acts 14:24-28

• This passage tells us of the world's first ever missions convention in Scripture.

• After Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary journey into southern Galatia, the church gathered to hear their report. It was a report of how God's grace had reached out to the Gentiles.

• The apostles shared how God had sustained them in the work and how the Spirit had moved in power among the Gentiles.

• The sending church in Antioch must have rejoiced when its members heard about the healing, deliverance, hope, and salvation that had come to those who had never before heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

14:26 The work they had now completed

• The two apostles did not just begin their mission; they completed it.

• They were able to endure the hardships and complete their mission because they were truly called of God (13:2), because they remained focused on their mission (14:21, 25), and because they stayed full of the Holy Spirit (13:9).

• We too can complete the work that God has given us, even under trying circumstances, if we will do the same.

14:27 They gathered the church together

• The church was excited and anxious to hear what God had accomplished through their missionaries. They therefore called a special missionary meeting to hear the apostles' report.

Reported all that God had done through them

• The believers in Antioch must have rejoiced when they heard how God had worked through Paul and Barnabas to bring Christ to the Galatians, both Jews and Gentiles.

• The essence of missions is God working through Spirit-filled missionaries to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost and to demonstrate the power and superiority of His kingdom through mighty signs and wonders.

God... opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

• When Paul was saved and filled with the Spirit, God had informed him that he would be His "chosen instrument to carry [His] name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18).

• Now Paul's apostleship and missionary calling to the Gentiles had been firmly established. God used Barnabas and him to open to them "the door of faith."

Further Insight: Planting Indigenous Churches

• Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey gives us our first insight into Paul's missionary methods.

• Paul planted churches. Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

• Indigenous churches are churches that are able to support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

The methods he used to plant such churches

• Proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13:5, 23-43; 14:3, 7, 14-18; 14:21).

• Demonstrating God's power through signs and wonders (13:9-12; 14:3, 8-10).

• Ensuring that those who were saved were also filled with the Holy Spirit (13:52).

• Teaching and encouraging new disciples to remain true to the faith (13:43).

• Mobilizing believers to reach out to others (13:49).

Paul appointed leaders over the churches

• According to Acts 14:23, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church." These men would lead the church in Paul's absence.

• Church leaders should be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). They should also be people of mature character and respected in the community (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Paul trusted the Holy Spirit

• The last part of Acts 14:23 says, "With prayer and fasting, [Paul and Barnabas] committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

• Paul and Barnabas could commit these new disciples to the Lord because they knew that they had been truly converted and filled with the Spirit (13:52; 14:1).

• If we make sure that people have been truly born of the Spirit and that they have been filled with the Spirit, then we can trust the Holy Spirit to teach and guide them, just as He has taught and guided us (compare John 14:25-26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

Conclusion

• God had opened the door to the Gentiles; however, not all of the church was convinced.

• Certain Jewish Christians in Jerusalem felt strongly that one must first become a good Jew before becoming a Christian.

• This meant that before the Gentiles could follow Christ, they must first accept and adopt a Jewish lifestyle, which involved keeping the Jewish laws, including circumcision.

• This was a nearly impossible requirement for most Gentiles. It would keep most of them out of the church.

• The question needed to be settled once and for all. In the next chapter we will see how the church addressed this critical question.

Figure 8.1: Paul's First Missionary Journey

Figure 8.1. Paul's first missionary journey, reconstructed from the chapter narrative. The original is a map in the printed book.

• Antioch: The sending church. During worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid hands on

them and sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

• Cyprus: Via Seleucia they sailed to Salamis, preached across the island, and at Paphos the proconsul Sergius Paulus believed after a power encounter with Elymas (Acts 13:4-12).

• Pisidian Antioch: Via Perga in Pamphylia. Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:13-52).

• Iconium: They preached boldly a long time. The Lord confirmed the message with signs and wonders. A plot to stone them drove them on (Acts 14:1-7).

• Lystra: Paul healed a man crippled from birth. The crowd tried to sacrifice to them as Zeus and Hermes. Jews from Antioch and Iconium had Paul stoned; the disciples gathered around him, and he went back into the city (Acts 14:8-20).

• Derbe: They preached the gospel and won a large number of disciples (Acts 14:20-21).

• Return: They returned through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, strengthening the disciples, appointing elders in each church, and committing them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. Then through Pisidia and Pamphylia they preached in Perga and went down to Attalia (Acts 14:21-25).

• Report: They sailed back to Antioch of Syria, gathered the church, and reported all that God had done and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles: the first missions convention in Scripture (Acts 14:26-28).

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions. Luke locates a pneuma event, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys, at the launching of new missionary initiatives. These pneuma events let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Journey · Pneuma event · Scripture

• Journey: First missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Antiochian "outpouring". Scripture: Acts 13:1-4

• Journey: Second missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Spirit redirects the team to Macedonia. Scripture: Acts 16:6-10

• Journey: Third missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Ephesian outpouring. Scripture: Acts 19:1-7

Important Terms

Antiochian "outpouring". The powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch that set apart Barnabas and Saul and launched the Gentile mission.

Pneuma event. A moment marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern: the Spirit comes, and witness follows.

Power encounter and truth encounter. Power encounter: God's power meeting Satan's power. Truth encounter: preaching the gospel. Both belong together.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs and oversees the work of missions.

Apostolic kerygma. The apostles' gospel preaching: Jesus at the center, especially His death and resurrection, proved from Scripture, calling people to repent and believe.

Indigenous churches. Churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

Apostolic ministry. Pioneer church planting in the Spirit's power among peoples who have not yet been reached. It is a function, not a title.

Key People

• Barnabas: Prophet and teacher in Antioch; sent with Saul by the church and the Holy Spirit. Cyprus was his birthplace and home. In Iconium both he and Paul are called apostles.

• Saul (Paul): Prophet and teacher in Antioch; set apart with Barnabas for missionary ministry. On Cyprus he was again filled with the Spirit and released a spiritual gift. This was a refilling, not his initial filling, which happened when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen: Prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, along with Barnabas and Saul. Simeon was also called Niger, or the Black Man.

Lucius was from Cyrene. Manaen was the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch.

• John Mark: Barnabas' nephew. He traveled with them from Antioch to Cyprus and as far as Perga in Pamphylia, where he left the group and returned to Jerusalem.

• Sergius Paulus: Proconsul of Cyprus. He sent for Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God. After the power encounter with Elymas, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

• Elymas (Bar-Jesus): A Jewish sorcerer and false prophet at Paphos who opposed the missionaries and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith, likely by occultic arts. Paul announced that he would go blind for a season, and it happened immediately.

Key Places

• Antioch of Syria: Called the "Queen of the East," the third greatest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. A cosmopolitan trading center of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans. Base of Paul's three missionary journeys, and the sending church of this journey.

• Seleucia: The nearby coastal town southwest of Antioch, from which the missionaries sailed to Cyprus.

• Cyprus: Island in the eastern Mediterranean, birthplace and home of Barnabas. They preached from Salamis in the east to Paphos in the west. There was already a Christian presence there (11:19).

• Perga in Pamphylia: Where John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. They later preached there again on the return journey.

• Pisidian Antioch: Where Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

• Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe: Cities of the first journey in Asia Minor. In Iconium, signs and wonders confirmed the message. In Lystra, a crippled man was healed and Paul was stoned. In Derbe, they won a large number of disciples.

• Attalia: The port from which they sailed back to Antioch after preaching in Perga.

Key Event

The Antiochian "outpouring": while the church was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them, and the church and the Spirit sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

This is the sixth of seven key outpourings in Acts and the first of the Gentile mission. The author places "outpouring" in quotation marks because it is technically an action or move of the Spirit rather than an outpouring like the other six. It launched the church's first ever intentional missionary effort.

Key Verse

"Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit."

Acts 13:4

Remember This

• The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit.

• Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

Life Application: Become a Spirit-Empowered Missional Church

• If we are to have powerful missionary churches, we must be ever open to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

• We must ensure that our members have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and that they thoroughly understand their responsibility of remaining full of the Spirit and focused on the mission of God.

• A truly missional church like the church in Antioch will reach out aggressively in evangelism and church planting. At the same time, it will remain focused on the nations that need to hear the gospel.

• Such a church will be strong in pastoral care and discipleship training. The gifts of the Spirit will be in operation, and the people will be taught to give generously and sacrificially to the work of missions.

• The truly missional church will gather often for Spirit-anointed worship and times of intensive prayer and fasting.

• It is God's will for every local congregation to be a Spirit-empowered missional church.

Life Application: Trust the Spirit in Opposition

• When involved in gospel ministry, we must trust the Lord to anoint us to proclaim the gospel with power.

• We must also trust Him to manifest His power through us in the release of spiritual gifts.

• When we face opposition from Satan, we can be confident that the Spirit of God is more powerful than the power of the enemy (1 John 4:4).

• If we are full of the Spirit, we can boldly challenge demonic forces in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• In all that we do, our goal must be to point people to Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Life Application: Preach Christ to All Peoples

• We must be faithful to preach the gospel wherever we go. As we preach, the cross of Christ must remain our central message.

• We must clearly teach people of His saving work on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead.

• We must tell them that through faith in Him, they can have forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

• Further, we must let them know that Christ has ascended to the right hand of God where He has poured out the Holy Spirit to fill us with His joy and to empower us to reach others with the message of the cross.

• And, in all that we do, we must never forget that the gospel is not for our people only; it is for all people everywhere on earth.

Life Application: Keep Preaching When Some Oppose

• When we go out to preach the gospel, we must not expect everyone to receive

our message gladly. Some, however, will.

• Apostolic ministry in formerly unreached areas will be difficult work. There may be powerful spiritual forces present that will blind people to the gospel.

• Whatever the case, we must continue to preach the good news as long as God wants us to remain in an area.

• If we will live holy lives, remain full of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully proclaim the gospel, we can expect God to confirm His Word by performing signs and wonders.

Life Application: Gospel Ministry Is More Than Talking

• To be truly effective missionaries and ministers of the gospel, we must know how to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to be used by Him to minister spiritual gifts.

• Gospel ministry is more than simply talking (1 Corinthians 4:20).

• It also involves hearing and obeying the voice of the Spirit and preaching and teaching the gospel under His anointing (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

• It further involves acting in faith and allowing the Spirit to minister through us by prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance.

• If this is to happen in our lives and ministries, we must learn to walk in the Spirit daily. In addition, we must live lives of prayer and holiness before the Lord.

Life Application: Have Confidence in the Gospel

• In Derbe the preaching of the gospel resulted in a great harvest of souls.

• Because Paul had great confidence in the gospel he preached, he did not hesitate to preach it wherever he went. He knew that it contained the power of God to bring people to salvation (Romans 1:16).

• We, too, should have great confidence in the gospel, and we should be faithful to preach it often, calling people to faith and repentance.

• We must never forget that the message of Jesus is the only message that will get people to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Life Application: Hold Missions Meetings

• Like the church in Antioch, churches today should also have missionary meetings.

• In these meetings, missionaries can share with the church their calling and burden for the lost. They can also share news about what God is doing among the people to whom they have been sent.

• Such meetings will encourage the people to participate in missions through prayer, giving, and maybe even going themselves.

• They will also encourage the missionaries, knowing that the church stands behind them in their work.

• Every church must be involved in missions in this way.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch? How does this "outpouring" of the Spirit help to confirm Luke's empowerment-witness motif?

• 2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field?

• 3. What part did the demonstration of spiritual gifts play in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ?

• 4. Discuss the role of spiritual gifts in missionary work in the contemporary world. Are they primary or secondary in demonstrating the superiority of the gospel?

• 5. What three important indigenous church-planting principles can we learn from Paul's first missionary journey?

• 6. What does it mean that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking?"

• 7. Has your church held any missions services or conventions? Discuss this question.

Quick Review

1. Why does the author put "outpouring" in quotation marks when he writes of the

Antiochian "outpouring"?

Answer: Because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings. It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit.

2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who sent Barnabas and Saul?

Answer: They were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed and not self-sent.

3. How did spiritual gifts play a part in Sergius Paulus' conversion?

Answer: Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Through a word of knowledge he announced that Elymas would go blind for a season. When it happened immediately, the proconsul was astonished and believed. Power encounter was accompanied by truth encounter.

4. What three indigenous church-planting principles come from this journey?

Answer: Paul planted indigenous churches (churches able to support, govern, and extend themselves). He appointed Spirit-filled, wise leaders (elders) in each church. He trusted the Holy Spirit, committing the new disciples to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

5. What does it mean that gospel ministry is more than just talking?

Answer: It involves hearing and obeying the Spirit, preaching under His anointing, and acting in faith so the Spirit can minister through prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance (1 Corinthians 4:20; 2:1-5).

Chapter Summary

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. This is the sixth of seven key outpourings and the first of the Gentile mission.

• On Cyprus a power encounter opened Sergius Paulus to the gospel. In Asia Minor they preached, God confirmed the word with signs and wonders, and they planted churches.

• Paul planted indigenous churches: he proclaimed the gospel, demonstrated God's power, saw new believers filled with the Spirit, appointed elders, and committed them to the Lord.

Remain full of the Spirit and focused on Christ's mission, preach more than words,

and plant churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

A powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch launched the Gentile mission; Barnabas and Saul preached on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, planted indigenous churches, and reported back to the sending church.

CHAPTER 9 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Missionary Council in Jerusalem

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 9)

Chapter purpose. This chapter discusses the missionary council in Jerusalem, where the church officially determined that Gentiles did not have to submit to the Law of Moses, which required circumcision for one to be saved.

After the first missionary journey, a dispute in Antioch about circumcision of Gentiles is settled in Jerusalem by the Spirit-guided council.

Bible reading: Acts 15:1-21

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 15:1-21. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage, and the last part of the lesson covers Acts 15:22-35.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the nature of the dispute that arose in the church in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5).

• State the evidences Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give that God had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes.

• Show from this chapter whether certain Jewish believers were mistaking Jewish cultural requirements for gospel requirements.

• State the result of the Spirit-guided decision that followed the council.

• Explain how important it is to God that His children preserve the bonds of peace and unity among culturally diverse groups of believers, and how a leader can help keep this kind of unity between the churches.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 15:1-21

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 15:1-5; read Acts 15:6-12; Acts 15:13-21; Acts 15:22-35.

The Big Idea

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone. This decision freed the church to be the global missionary force that Christ intended it to be, rather than a mere sub-sect of Judaism.

The Gentile Question

• After the Caesarean and Antiochian outpourings, the church continued to grow and extend itself. By now, it had ranged as far north as Galatia in eastern Asia Minor.

• There, Paul and Barnabas had been sent as the church's first intentional missionaries to the Gentiles. They had experienced great success, and several indigenous churches had been planted, resulting in many new believers being added to the Lord.

• These new believers came from four classes of people: Jews, Jewish proselytes, God-fearers, and Gentiles. It was the last two classes that created controversy in the church.

• Certain Jewish believers contended that before these two groups could be saved, they must first submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision. This debate has been called the "Gentile Question." Acts 15 records the story of how the controversy was resolved.

• In this chapter we will discuss the church council in Jerusalem where the issue was addressed directly. It occurred soon after Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, and we refer to it as the missionary council in Jerusalem.

• It was a highly significant event in the church's missionary development. It was for this reason that Luke included it in his narrative.

• At this council the church officially determined that Gentiles did not have to submit to the Law of Moses, which required circumcision for one to be saved.

• As Scripture makes clear, salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• This decision freed the church to be the global missionary force that Christ intended it to be, rather than a mere sub-sect of Judaism.

The Story: Dissension in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5)

Some Jewish brothers arrived in Antioch from Judea and began to teach the Christians there that believers must be circumcised before they could be saved. Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed this teaching and entered into a sharp dispute with them. The leaders in the church in Antioch, therefore, appointed Paul and Barnabas, along with some other believers from the church, to go to Jerusalem and discuss the matter with the apostles and elders there.

On their journey to Jerusalem, the delegation traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, where they gave reports about how the Gentiles had come to Christ. This news made the believers in those places glad. When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, they were received warmly by the leadership of the church. They then gave a report of all that God had done through them among the Gentiles. However, some of the Pharisees who had become believers objected, saying that the Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to be saved.

Commentary on Acts 15:1-5

• Must a Gentile first become a good Jew before he or she can become a Christian?

• As simple as that question may seem to us today, it was not so simple for the early church. Christianity had been born into the cradle of Judaism.

• However, in order for it to grow into a worldwide movement, it had to break free from the binding legalism of the Jewish religion.

• Some Jewish Christians resisted the call for liberation. Others, like Paul and Barnabas, knew that it must take place if Christianity was to prosper among the nations.

• That is why they decided to travel all the way to Jerusalem to settle the matter once and for all.

15:2 Sharp dispute

• That some would teach that a person must keep the Law of Moses before becoming a Christian was no small issue. It struck at the very heart of the gospel of grace.

• Paul and Barnabas had no choice but to oppose this teaching, even if it meant sharp dispute.

• Some issues are so important that they cannot be ignored; they must be addressed and resolved.

This question

• The "question" referred to is the Gentile question.

• After God had poured out His Spirit on the Gentile believers in Caesarea, the apostles and brothers in Jerusalem praised God and said that "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). It was a historic occasion. It did not, however, finally settle the Gentile question.

• The question was this: How could those who were ritually unclean according to the Law of Moses be accepted by God?

• On one hand, how could uncircumcised Gentiles, who ate nonkosher foods and defiled themselves by participating in pagan practices, be true followers of Jehovah God without first becoming good Jews?

• On the other hand, had not Jesus himself commanded the church to take the gospel to these very people? Had He not commissioned His church to be His witnesses to the "remotest parts of the earth?"

• How, then, were they to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory issues? This was the question that needed to be resolved.

15:5 The party of the Pharisees

• These legalistic Jewish Christians are sometimes called Judaizers.

• They were true believers in Christ. In fact, they were probably the most biblically conservative members of the church.

• They were, however, wrong in their belief that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses before they could be saved.

The Story: Peter, Barnabas, and Paul Testify (Acts 15:6-12)

Soon after Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders met to consider the Gentile question. After much discussion, Peter stood up and reminded the delegates of how God had used him to bring the message of the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea. He told them how God had seen into the Gentiles' hearts and had accepted their faith in Him. God proved this by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He had given to the Jewish believers at Pentecost. He made no distinction between them and the Jews, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Peter concluded his address with a challenge: "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." After Peter had concluded, the whole assembly sat in silence and listened to Paul and Barnabas tell how, through them, God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

Commentary on Acts 15:6-12

• At the Jerusalem Council Peter, Paul, and Barnabas stood as witnesses to the fact that God had chosen to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation.

• They testified how God, by pouring out His Spirit, had extended His hand toward uncircumcised Gentiles. God himself had chosen to include them in His plan of salvation.

• This salvation does not come through keeping the law but through faith in Christ.

15:7 God made a choice

• It is not our choice who should and who should not hear the gospel and be saved.

• The choice to include all people in His plan of salvation was God's alone.

• It was also in God's sovereign plan that Peter would first preach the gospel to the Gentile believers in Caesarea.

15:8 By giving the Holy Spirit to them

• God proved that He had accepted the Gentiles into His family by giving them the Holy Spirit.

• The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience for believers only.

• Jesus taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to God's children (Luke 11:13). He further taught that the world (unbelievers) cannot receive the Spirit (John 14:17).

Just as he did to us

• God gave the Spirit to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house just as He did to the Jews at Pentecost.

• He gave them the same Spirit, in the same way, with the same evidence (2:4; 10:46), and for the same purpose: empowerment for witness (Acts 1:8).

15:9 He purified their hearts by faith

• It is through faith that all people are saved, whether Jews or Gentiles.

• Salvation does not come by the works of the Law but "through the grace of our Lord Jesus" (v. 11).

• Paul would later write, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

15:12 Miraculous signs and wonders

• The fact that God had done miraculous signs and wonders among (and on behalf of) the Gentiles is another strong indication that He wants to bless them and include them in His family.

The Story: A Word From the Lord (Acts 15:13-21)

After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas had finished their speeches, James spoke up and reinforced what Peter had said. He noted that in Caesarea, God had visited the Gentiles and received them to be part of his people. This was in agreement with the words of the Hebrew prophets: "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages" (Amos 9:11-12; Isaiah 45:21-22).

James then delivered his judgment on the matter, stating that the leaders of the

church should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who were turning to God. Only four out of thousands of Jewish religious prohibitions were to be followed by Gentile converts. He said the council should write a letter and tell the Gentile believers that they should not eat food sacrificed to idols and that they must abstain from all sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood.

He noted that these were some of the very things that Moses taught and had been preached against in Jewish synagogues for many generations. Sexual immorality is clearly forbidden in Scripture, and the other items were important to ensure that Jewish and Gentile Christians would be comfortable eating and fellowshipping together. In this way, James was making a way for the bond of unity and peace to be preserved between culturally diverse Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Commentary on Acts 15:13-21

• Paul and Barnabas, who had opposed the Judaizers in Antioch, were now joined by Peter.

• All three spoke in favor of including the Gentiles into the church without requiring them to first submit to the Law of Moses.

• James also joined them in saying that the church should not make it difficult for the Gentiles to turn to God.

15:13 James spoke up

• This James was the half-brother of Jesus. He was pastor of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the New Testament epistle of James.

• James the apostle and brother of John was martyred by Herod in 12:2.

15:15 The words of the prophets are in agreement

• God's intention to include the Gentiles in His redemptive plan was nothing new.

• It had always been His intention to take out "from the Gentiles a people for himself" (v. 14).

• God told Abraham that through his seed (Jesus), all the nations of earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18; compare Galatians 3:16).

• The Hebrew prophets consistently testified to the same thing (Isaiah 45:6, 22;

49:6; 51:4-5; 52:10; 56:7; Amos 9:11-12; Zephaniah 2:11; Zechariah 2:10-13).

• As a result, the Gentiles could also bear the Lord's name (v. 17).

15:16 I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent

• This prophecy of Amos said that God would rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David so that Gentiles might seek the Lord.

• Jesus is now the Head of the church as the new place of worship that replaced the temple.

• It is thus God's appointed time for full Gentile inclusion into the kingdom of God.

• Note how James appealed to Scripture to settle the Gentile question.

The Story: An Encouraging Letter (Acts 15:22-35)

After James' speech, the apostles and elders, with the consent of the whole assembly, chose two men from among them, Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas, to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. With them they sent a letter addressed to "the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia." The letter assured the Gentile believers that the men from Judea who had been troubling them did not have the authorization of the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. They were, therefore, sending Judas and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas to confirm that the letter had come from them.

The letter called Paul and Barnabas "dear friends" and "men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostles further informed its recipients that the decision they had reached "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," indicating that the Holy Spirit had inspired the decision. They assured the Gentile believers that they did not want to place any unnecessary burden upon them; however, they would be required to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.

As soon as the four men arrived in Antioch, they called a meeting of the church and read the letter aloud. When the Gentile believers heard it, they rejoiced. Afterward, Judas and Silas, who were prophets, encouraged and strengthened the believers there. After a while, Judas returned to Jerusalem with the blessing of the church. Paul, Barnabas, and Silas, however, remained in Antioch, where they and

others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 15:22-35

• The decision reached by the Jerusalem Council was momentous.

• Because the delegates were open to the Spirit and the teachings of Scripture, the correct decision was reached.

• It resulted in great joy among the new Gentile believers in the church.

• More importantly, the door was opened for the church to continue to expand among the Gentiles unabated.

15:22 Apostles and elders, with the whole church

• Not only were the top leaders of the church brought into the decision-making process, but the whole church was involved.

• This seems to indicate that some primitive form of democracy may have been used in the early church.

15:23 Believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia

• The church, as it was led by the Spirit, continued to expand into new regions.

• What accounted for these believers in Syria and Antioch? The believers in Syria possibly resulted from church-planting efforts of the church in Antioch. The believers in Cilicia possibly resulted from Paul's ministry there. He had spent time in Tarsus, Cilicia, and was probably involved in planting churches in that city and in the surrounding region, as was his custom (11:25).

• Luke did not record all of the church planting efforts of the early church, only those that helped to further his intent in writing.

• Hundreds of other churches were no doubt being planted by the apostles and other Spirit-filled disciples in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia Minor.

• Because these early disciples were empowered by the Spirit and totally committed to fulfilling the mandate of Christ, there was a spontaneous multiplication of churches.

15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us

• The Holy Spirit was active in the Council's deliberations. The issue was too

important to trust to human reason.

• Again, we observe the Holy Spirit acting as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• Exactly how the Holy Spirit helped these leaders and delegates to reach their decision we are not told.

• Possibly a word of prophecy was given, as in Antioch on two earlier occasions (11:28; 13:2); possibly a word of knowledge was given to James or another delegate; or possibly there was a strong inner witness of the Spirit in their hearts.

• However the leading came, the Holy Spirit played an active and significant role in their decision-making process.

15:31 The people read it and were glad

• The Spirit-directed decision of the Jerusalem Council brought great joy to the Gentile believers.

• They could now focus their energy on truly serving Christ and advancing His kingdom rather than on keeping nonessential legalistic rules.

Conclusion

• Having settled the Gentile question, the church was now prepared to continue its Gentile mission unhindered by doctrinal disputes.

• After an extended time of teaching and preaching in the church in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas prepared for their second missionary journey.

• This journey, however, was to begin with a dispute of another sort. In the next chapter we will look at that dispute and Paul's missionary journey that followed it.

Important Terms

Gentile Question. The debate over whether Gentiles and God-fearers had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses before they could be saved.

Judaizers. Legalistic Jewish Christians who taught that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved.

Missionary council in Jerusalem. The meeting of apostles and elders in Jerusalem, soon after the first missionary journey, that settled the Gentile Question.

Gospel of grace. The good news that people are saved by faith in Christ, not by keeping the Law.

Jewish proselyte. A Gentile who had fully converted to Judaism, including circumcision.

God-fearer. A Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not been circumcised.

Yoke. Peter's word for the heavy load of the Law, which neither the Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs the work of missions, including the Council's decision.

Key People

• Paul and Barnabas: Opposed the teaching that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved. The church in Antioch sent them to Jerusalem. At the council they told how God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

• Peter: Reminded the council that God had used him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea, had given them the Holy Spirit just as at Pentecost, and had made no distinction between them and the Jews.

• James: The half-brother of Jesus, pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and writer of the New Testament epistle of James. He appealed to Scripture and judged that the church should not make it difficult for Gentiles turning to God. (James the apostle and brother of John was martyred by Herod in 12:2.)

• The party of the Pharisees (Judaizers): True believers in Christ, probably the most biblically conservative members of the church, who objected that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to be saved.

• Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas: Chosen by the apostles, elders, and the whole assembly to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas and confirm the letter. They were prophets. Judas later returned to Jerusalem. Silas remained in Antioch.

• The apostles and elders: Met in Jerusalem to consider the Gentile question. With the whole church they reached a Spirit-guided decision and sent the letter.

Key Places

• Antioch: Where the dispute began when Jewish brothers from Judea taught that believers must be circumcised to be saved, and where the church later received the letter with joy.

• Jerusalem: Where the missionary council met with the apostles and elders to settle the Gentile Question.

• Phoenicia and Samaria: On the way to Jerusalem the delegation reported how the Gentiles had come to Christ, and the believers there were glad.

• Caesarea: Where God had used Peter to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and had poured out the Spirit on them, the evidence Peter cited at the council.

• Syria and Cilicia: Named with Antioch in the letter to Gentile believers. The believers in Syria possibly came from the church in Antioch; those in Cilicia possibly from Paul's ministry in Tarsus and the surrounding region.

• Galatia in eastern Asia Minor: As far north as the church had ranged by this time, where Paul and Barnabas had planted indigenous churches among Jews, Jewish proselytes, God-fearers, and Gentiles.

Key Event

The missionary council in Jerusalem decides that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses to be saved. The decision "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

This decision was momentous. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone. The door was opened for the church to continue to expand among the Gentiles unabated, and the Gentile believers in Antioch rejoiced.

Key Verse

"We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

Acts 15:11

Remember This

• Must a Gentile first become a good Jew before he or she can become a Christian?

• God proved that He had accepted the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit.

• God's intention to include the Gentiles was nothing new.

• Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• The decision "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

Life Application: Stand Firm on the Gospel of Grace

• We must stand firm in our conviction that people can be saved by faith in Christ alone.

• While we must never be arrogant or contentious in our dealings with others, neither can we allow anyone to change the gospel.

• Paul was so firm on this position that he wrote, "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8).

Life Application: Do Not Add Extra Requirements

• We should not put unnecessary requirements on people that the gospel does not specifically command.

• Our job is to lead people to Christ, and then to help them grow into Christian maturity.

• This cannot be done by just giving them a set of rules to live by. They must be brought into a living relationship with Christ and then taught to follow Him fully.

• In the words of Paul to the believers in Galatia, "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

Life Application: Base Decisions on Scripture

• At the Jerusalem Council the delegates listened to the testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas; however, their final decision was based on Scripture.

• We must ensure that all of our decisions concerning the work of God are based solidly on the word of God.

Life Application: Seek the Spirit's Guidance in Decisions

• Throughout life we are required to make many decisions concerning our ministries and our personal lives.

• We should never forget that God has a plan for each of our lives. That plan includes our participation in advancing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

• Therefore, every important decision that we make should be made in consultation with other committed believers and with God.

• We should seek the guidance of the Spirit so that when we make our decisions, we can also say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

• When we make such decisions, great blessing comes to our lives and to the work of God.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the nature of the dispute that arose in the church in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5)?

• 2. What evidences do Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give that God had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes?

• 3. Based on the evidence in this chapter, is it fair to say that certain Jewish believers were mistaking Jewish cultural requirements for gospel requirements? Can you think of circumstances in history and your own experience when church leaders and/or Christians made the same mistakes?

• 4. What was the result of the Spirit-guided decision of the church in Antioch?

• 5. How important is it to God that His children preserve the bonds of peace and unity among culturally diverse groups of believers? How can a leader help to keep this kind of unity between the churches?

Quick Review

1. What was the Gentile Question?

Answer: Whether God-fearers and Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses

before they could be saved.

2. How did God prove that He had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes?

Answer: By giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He had given to the Jewish believers at Pentecost, with the same evidence and for the same purpose: empowerment for witness. Paul and Barnabas also told how God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

3. What four things did James say Gentile converts should abstain from?

Answer: Food sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, the meat of strangled animals, and blood.

4. What phrase in the letter showed that the Holy Spirit had inspired the decision?

Answer: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

5. What was the result when the letter was read in Antioch?

Answer: The Gentile believers rejoiced. They could now focus on serving Christ and advancing His kingdom rather than on keeping nonessential legalistic rules.

Chapter Summary

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• A dispute in Antioch over circumcision of Gentiles was taken to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

• Peter, Paul, and Barnabas testified that God had accepted uncircumcised Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit and by working signs and wonders among them.

• James appealed to Scripture and judged that the church should not make it difficult for Gentiles turning to God. The Spirit-guided letter brought joy in Antioch and opened the door for unhindered Gentile mission.

Stand firm that people are saved by faith in Christ alone, do not add extra requirements the gospel does not command, and seek the Spirit's guidance so that decisions can be said to seem good to the Holy Spirit and to us.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

The Spirit-guided council in Jerusalem settled the Gentile Question: people are saved by faith in Christ alone, so Gentiles need not first become Jewish proselytes.

CHAPTER 10 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Part 1)

Background of Paul's second missionary journey, pastoral visits, Paul's missionary strategy, to the regions beyond, opposition and deliverance

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 10)

Chapter purpose. This chapter examines the first half of Paul's second missionary journey, the most extensive of his three journeys: the dispute over John Mark, the pastoral visits in Galatia, the Spirit's guidance into Europe, and the planting of the church in Philippi.

Chapter 9 ended with the Gentile question settled. Gentiles did not have to first become converts to Judaism before they could become Christians, so the door was now opened for uncontested outreach to the nations. This chapter examines how that outreach continued with Paul's second missionary journey.

Bible reading: Acts 15:36-16:40

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 15:36-16:40. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the disagreement over John Mark, why Paul and Barnabas parted company, and the two ministries God kept going as a result.

• Describe how the Holy Spirit, as the Superintendent of the Harvest, kept the missionaries from Asia and Bithynia and guided them to Macedonia.

• Identify the first Christian convert in Europe and explain why Luke tells her story.

• Explain how Paul and Silas' praying and singing in the Philippian prison served as a witness, and what followed it.

• State the instructions Paul gave the Philippian jailer on how to be saved, and the evidence of the Spirit's work in him.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 15:36-16:40

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 15:36-39; read Acts 15:39-16:5; Acts 16:6-10; Acts 16:11-15; Acts 16:16-18; Acts 16:19-28; Acts 16:29-34; Acts 16:35-40.

The Big Idea

Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Second Journey

• The Gentile question had at last been settled. Gentiles did not have to first become converts to Judaism before they could become Christians.

• The door was now opened for uncontested outreach to the nations.

• Paul's second missionary journey is the most extensive of his three journeys.

• During this journey, after revisiting the churches in Galatia, Paul and his missionary team were directed by the Spirit to venture westward into Europe.

• There they planted churches in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (Greece).

• After a brief stopover in Ephesus, they returned to Antioch where their journey began.

The Story: Paul's Second Journey Begins (Acts 15:36-39)

After a long stay in Antioch, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they visit all of the places where they had preached the gospel during their first missionary journey to see how the believers were faring. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again.

Paul, however, was strongly opposed to the idea, noting that during their first journey Mark had deserted the work and returned home. Their disagreement became so heated that Paul and Barnabas parted company and went their separate ways.

Commentary on Acts 15:36-39

• Paul's second journey began with controversy. This time the controversy was not between Paul and the Judaizers but between Paul and his close missionary associate and friend, Barnabas.

• Paul felt that because of John Mark's unreliability, he should not accompany them on their upcoming journey. Barnabas, however, thought that the younger man deserved a second chance.

• The controversy became so intense that the missionaries separated, with Barnabas revisiting the work on Cyprus and Paul journeying northward through Syria and Cilicia into Galatia and eventually into western Europe.

• This controversy candidly reveals the humanity of these early Christian missionaries.

• It also shows how God provided for two different and important ministries to continue: (1) the ministry of strengthening newly established churches and (2) the apostolic ministry of planting new churches where none yet existed.

15:36 Let us go back and visit the brothers

• This statement shows Paul and Barnabas' pastoral concern for the churches they had planted in Cyprus and southern Galatia.

• Their purpose in returning was to find out how the churches were getting along, encourage the believers, and strengthen the churches.

• It was Paul's desire to see every church he planted emerge as a Spirit-empowered missional church, one that could extend itself into the surrounding region.

15:39 They parted company

• After a heated debate over John Mark, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways.

• It is significant that neither man left the work, but both continued as active missionaries.

• It seems that even after their disagreement, Paul and Barnabas came to a strategic agreement about who would go where.

The Story: Galatia, Pastoral Visits (Acts 15:39-16:5)

Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas as his missionary partner and, commended by the brothers, traveled northward by land into Syria and Cilicia. As Paul and Silas traveled, they took time to strengthen the churches in these regions.

Passing through Cilicia, they went to Derbe in southern Galatia and then on to Lystra. There they met a well-respected young man named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek.

Since Paul wanted Timothy to join their missionary team, he circumcised him, so that Timothy's presence would not bring offense to the Jews living in the area. This was an example of an action taken not because the Bible required it but simply to help create unity between the culturally different Jewish and Gentile Christians.

As the missionaries moved from place to place, they read the letter from the Jerusalem Council containing the apostles' decisions and orders concerning the Gentile believers (15:23-29). Because of their visits, the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew in numbers daily.

Commentary on Acts 15:40-16:5

• Paul's first order of business during his second missionary journey was to return to the churches he and Barnabas had planted in southern Galatia during their first journey.

• His purpose was pastoral, to encourage the believers and strengthen the emerging churches. He took Silas with him.

15:40 Paul chose Silas

• Silas, along with Judas Barsabbas, had come to Antioch from Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the decree from the Jerusalem Council concerning Gentile believers.

• Judging from his name, Silas was probably a Hellenized Jew, a Jew who lived in the Greek culture.

• He was also a prophet and former leader of the church in Jerusalem (15:22, 32).

• After delivering the decree, he remained in Antioch and ministered in the church through his prophetic and teaching ministry (15:30-32).

• Paul referred to him in his epistles (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Peter called him a "faithful brother" (1 Peter 5:12).

15:40 Commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord

• As at the beginning of the first journey, the Antiochian church is again actively involved in sending the missionaries to the field (compare 13:3).

• Even though Paul had a divine call to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17-18; Galatians 2:2), and the clear direction of the Spirit (Acts 13:2-4), he did not proceed to the field on his own initiative.

• He went with the blessing and commendation of the church.

16:1 A disciple named Timothy

• Timothy had probably been converted during Paul's first missionary journey or at some later time through the evangelistic efforts of the church in Lystra.

• He became a faithful coworker with Paul. Paul called him his "true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

16:3 He circumcised him because of the Jews

• Paul's requiring Timothy to be circumcised was not a compromise of his principles nor a violation of the Jerusalem Decree (Acts 15:23-29).

• It was rather an application of Paul's missionary strategy of becoming "all things to all men" in order to win as many as possible to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

• The reality of cultural diversity required Paul to adapt to the many cultures he faced so that people of each cultural group could understand his message.

• Jesus did this when He came in the flesh (incarnate) so that we could understand God. Paul's actions, then, serve as an example of incarnational missionary ministry.

• Since Titus was a Gentile, Paul did not require him to be circumcised (compare Acts 15:1-2).

16:5 The churches were strengthened in the faith

• One important role of missionary ministry is to strengthen churches and believers in the faith.

• Jesus' command was not to make converts but disciples (Matthew 28:19).

• Paul would later write that the ministry of apostles (namely, himself) and prophets (for example, Silas), as well as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, was "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12).

16:5 Grew daily in numbers

• Because Paul and Barnabas had intentionally planted Spirit-empowered missional churches, the churches continued to grow in strength and number.

• In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that a healthy, well-trained church "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (4:16).

The Story: The Spirit Guides the Missionaries (Acts 16:6-10)

Leaving Lystra, Paul and his missionary colleagues traveled to the northwest through Galatia into Phrygia. They intended to go west into Asia Minor (and possibly Ephesus) but were kept from going there by the Holy Spirit.

Arriving at the border of Mysia, they decided to venture further north into Bithynia on the Black Sea, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go that way either. As a result, they decided to travel westward through Mysia until they arrived in Troas on the Aegean coast. There they were joined by Luke.

In Troas Paul had a vision in the night in which he saw a Macedonian man standing and entreating him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The missionaries concluded that God wanted them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. At once, they prepared to leave for that region.

Commentary on Acts 16:6-10

• As with his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Luke strategically places such a move of the Spirit near the beginning of each of Paul's missionary journeys. He does this so that the reader will know that

everything done during these journeys was done in the power of the Spirit (Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-10; 19:1-7; see Table 8.1).

• Although this is the only mention of the Spirit's active role during Paul's second journey, we know by statements he made in his epistles that he ministered in the Spirit's power in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

16:6-7 Kept by the Holy Spirit... The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them

• The Holy Spirit again acts as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• By keeping the missionaries from entering Asia and Bithynia, He was directing them to the specific fields He had prepared for them.

• The title "Spirit of Jesus" is another name for the Holy Spirit. He is the One whom Christ sent in His place (John 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33) and who reveals the things of Christ to us (John 16:15).

• Peter calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11-12), and Paul calls Him the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19).

16:9 A vision of a man of Macedonia

• The Spirit directed Paul's missionary team into Europe through a vision.

• According to Luke's teaching in Acts, visions are one way that God actively guides Christ's messengers (Acts 9:10-12; 10:9-16; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 23:11; 26:19).

• Other ways include speaking directly to their hearts by His Spirit (10:19-20; 11:12; 15:28; 20:22), providential circumstances (8:1-4), angelic appearances (5:19-20; 8:26; 10:3-7; 12:7-15; 27:23-24), and prophetic speech (2:17-18; 11:28-30; 13:1-2; 15:32; 20:23; 21:10-11).

16:10 We got ready at once to leave

• When the Spirit directed, the missionaries responded quickly and decisively.

• By this and other "we" references, we know that Luke joined Paul's missionary team in Macedonia and accompanied Paul as far as Philippi, where he remained behind.

The Story: Philippi, The Gospel Goes to Europe (Acts 16:11-15)

Paul and his band of missionaries (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) sailed from Troas to Macedonia. They arrived at the Roman colony of Philippi, the leading city of the district.

One Sabbath day, the missionaries went down to the river and found a group of Jewish women who had gathered for prayer. They sat down and began to speak to the women.

While they spoke, the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple cloth who came from Thyatira and who was a God-fearer. She accepted the gospel, and she and the members of her household were baptized. After this, she persuaded the missionaries to lodge at her home, saying, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house."

Commentary on Acts 16:11-15

• Because there seems to have been no synagogue in Philippi, Paul and Silas went down to the river to seek out Jews.

• When there was no synagogue in a place, the Jews would often meet by the riverside, since it provided a convenient place to find water for their rituals.

16:13 Began to speak to the women

• Lydia, a woman, was the first Christian convert in Europe.

• By telling her story, Luke again demonstrates his concern for women.

• Because women can be empowered by the Holy Spirit, they can be full participants in the mission of God (compare Acts 1:8, 14; 2:17-18).

16:14 The Lord opened her heart

• The Holy Spirit works to open people's hearts to the gospel.

• A combination of the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) is needed to effectively lead people to Christ.

• God opens people's hearts; however, they must individually respond to the gospel in faith and repentance.

The Story: A Slave Girl Is Delivered (Acts 16:16-18)

One day in Philippi, as the missionaries were on their way to a prayer meeting, they met a slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination. Her owners used her fortune-telling abilities to earn a lot of money for themselves.

Day after day the girl followed the missionaries, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned to her and commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus. Immediately the spirit left her, and she was set free.

Commentary on Acts 16:16-18

• The story of the deliverance of the Philippian slave girl is yet another example of how Paul and the other ministers in Acts ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• Through the manifestation of spiritual gifts, Paul brought deliverance to a demon-possessed slave girl.

16:18 Paul became so troubled

• Though the slave girl was speaking the truth, the source and motivation of her message was demonic.

• Her activity may have been a demonically-inspired tactic, aimed at undermining the ministry of Paul and Silas in Philippi.

• Through the gift of discerning of spirits, Paul identified the source of her inspiration, and through the gift of miraculous powers and with the name of Jesus, he drove out the demon (see 1 Corinthians 12:10).

16:18 In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!

• Jesus drove out demons by the finger (or Spirit) of God (Luke 11:20; compare Matthew 12:28).

• Today, believers are given this same power when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• Those who faithfully follow Jesus and obey His commands have also been given

the right to use His name in combating evil and advancing His kingdom in the earth (Mark 16:17; John 14:12-14; 16:23-24; Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10, 30; 1 Corinthians 5:4).

• To use the name of Jesus is to act under His authority.

The Story: Opposition and Deliverance (Acts 16:19-28)

The owners of the slave girl became angry at Paul because they could no longer use the girl to make money. They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the city's marketplace. There, they accused the missionaries of causing confusion among the people by advocating practices contrary to Roman law.

The gathered crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. The magistrates then ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, flogged, and cast into prison, where they were placed in the inner cell with their feet fastened in stocks.

That night around the midnight hour as the other prisoners listened, Paul and Silas began singing hymns to God. Suddenly a great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, the prison doors flew open, and the chains fell from all the prisoners.

Waking up, the jailer saw what had happened and started to kill himself, believing that all of the prisoners had escaped. Seeing this, Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

Commentary on Acts 16:19-28

• Even in the severest trials, the apostles stayed close to God and focused on their work.

• As a result, their hearts were filled with joy, and they became powerful witnesses to those around them.

16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God

• The church experienced constant opposition and persecution.

• In spite of this, as the gospel advanced, the missionaries remained full of the Holy Spirit and joy (Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 1:11;

1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 1:9).

• In their joy they prayed and sang hymns to God.

16:25 The other prisoners were listening

• The apostles' Spirit-inspired praying and singing resulted in witness.

• This is a major theme in Acts: the infilling of the Spirit empowers Christians to be effective witnesses to the lost (compare Acts 1:8).

• The other prisoners must have been very impressed when they heard Paul and Silas, who had been falsely accused, beaten, and thrown into prison, joyfully praising God.

16:26 Suddenly... a violent earthquake

• The violent earthquake is yet another powerful theophany in Acts.

• The word "suddenly" reminds us of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (2:1), and the earthquake reminds us of the shaking at the second Jerusalem outpouring (4:31). Both speak of the power and work of the Spirit.

• Characteristically, this move of the Spirit followed a time of prayer and praise (compare Luke 24:53; Acts 1:14; 4:31).

The Story: The Jailer's Household Is Saved (Acts 16:29-34)

The jailer fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He implored them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

The apostles then shared the gospel with him and his family. Afterward, the jailer took them and washed their wounds, and he and his family were baptized in water. He then took the apostles to his house and prepared a meal for them. He and his family were filled with joy.

Commentary on Acts 16:29-34

• At the heart of Paul's ministry was the message of salvation.

• When the Philippian jailer inquired about how to be saved, Paul and Silas were ready with an answer. They told him that salvation comes through faith in Christ.

16:30 What must I do to be saved?

• This is the most important question in the Bible.

• All are lost; therefore, all must be saved (Romans 3:23-24). This salvation was provided through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

• The primary mission of the church is to proclaim the message of salvation to all nations (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).

16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved

• People are saved through faith in Christ.

• Two essential elements of true saving faith are repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus (Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:15; Acts 19:4; 20:21; Hebrews 6:1).

• Repentance toward God involves acknowledging one's sins, asking forgiveness, and turning from sin to walk in newness of life.

• Faith toward the Lord Jesus involves believing in His death and resurrection, inviting Him into one's life as Lord and Savior, and trusting Him alone for salvation (compare Romans 10:9-10).

16:32 They spoke the word of the Lord

• The phrase "word of the Lord" occurs nine times in Acts. In each instance it indicates the preaching of the gospel (8:25; 13:48-49; 15:35-36; 16:32; 19:10, 20).

• The only other place in the New Testament where the phrase is used is in 1 Peter 1:25, where the context indicates the same.

16:33 Immediately he and all his family were baptized

• Although water baptism is not a requirement for salvation, Luke presents it as the new believer's first step of obedience.

• According to Peter, it is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21).

• In Acts water baptism occurs immediately after one has been born again (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8).

16:34 Filled with joy

• The joy the apostles demonstrated by singing to God at midnight now filled the heart of the jailer.

• This newfound joy was an evidence that he had been born of the Spirit, and possibly even filled with the Spirit, on this occasion.

The Story: Apologies and Departure (Acts 16:35-40)

The next morning the city officials sent orders to the jailer to release Paul and Silas, telling them that they could go in peace. Paul, however, refused, saying, "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

The magistrates were distressed, realizing that they had mistreated Roman citizens. They therefore came in person to apologize to Paul and Silas and ask them to leave the city. After this, the missionaries went to the house of Lydia and encouraged the brothers there. They then left for Thessalonica.

Commentary on Acts 16:35-40

• In demanding an apology from the magistrates, Paul's concern was not to preserve his own dignity or status.

• His concern was for the safety and blessing of the new church in Philippi. So he used his Roman citizenship as a means of ensuring fair treatment of Christians in the city.

16:37 Let them come themselves and escort us out

• Paul wanted to leave Philippi with a good name.

• He did this so that the work of the church would not be hindered, and so that it could carry out its work without unnecessary interference.

• For this reason, he demanded that the city officials come and apologize before he left Philippi.

16:40 They met with the brothers and encouraged them

• Paul and Silas were not only concerned with getting people saved, as important as that work is.

• Their concern went further: to the establishment of a strong indigenous church.

• So they gathered the brothers together to encourage them in the work of the Lord before departing for Thessalonica.

Figure 10.1: Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Figure 10.1. The route of Paul's second missionary journey, as named in this chapter. It is the most extensive of his three journeys.

• Antioch: Paul chose Silas and, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord, set out by land.

• Syria and Cilicia: Paul and Silas traveled northward by land and took time to strengthen the churches in these regions.

• Derbe: In southern Galatia, one of the churches planted on the first journey.

• Lystra: Here they met Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek.

• Phrygia: They traveled northwest through Galatia into Phrygia, intending to go west into Asia Minor.

• Mysia: Kept by the Holy Spirit from Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go north into Bithynia.

• Troas: On the Aegean coast. Luke joined them, and Paul saw the vision of the man of Macedonia.

• Philippi: The Roman colony and leading city of the district of Macedonia, where the gospel came to Europe.

• Thessalonica: After the apologies of the magistrates, the missionaries left Philippi for Thessalonica.

• Achaia (Greece): The second European province in which the team planted churches on this journey.

• Ephesus: A brief stopover on the way home.

• Antioch: They returned to Antioch where their journey began.

Conclusion

• During Paul's second missionary journey, he and his companions were led by the

Spirit to enter Europe and preach the gospel for the first time there.

• His ministry in Europe began in Philippi in eastern Macedonia.

• There, Paul and Silas established a strong indigenous missional church.

• He would later write a letter to this church and tell its members how he thanked God for them and how he carried them in his heart.

• They became partners with him in the gospel by helping to support his missionary work (Philippians 1:3-7).

Important Terms

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church that is filled with the Spirit and reaches out beyond itself into the region around it.

Hellenized Jew. A Jew who lived in the Greek culture.

Jerusalem Decree. The letter from the Jerusalem Council containing the apostles' decisions and orders concerning the Gentile believers.

Incarnational missionary ministry. Ministry that identifies very closely with the people being reached, as Jesus did when He came in the flesh.

Superintendent of the Harvest. The Holy Spirit as the one who directs the missionaries to the fields He has prepared for them.

Spirit of Jesus. Another name for the Holy Spirit.

God-fearer. A Gentile who has accepted God and the teachings of Judaism but who has not been circumcised.

Indigenous church. A church that is able to support itself, govern itself, and extend itself.

Key People

• Paul: Leads the second missionary journey, the most extensive of his three journeys.

• Barnabas: Paul's close missionary associate and friend. After the disagreement over John Mark he revisited the work on Cyprus.

• John Mark: Deserted the work on the first journey. Barnabas thought the younger

man deserved a second chance. In later years Paul requested that Mark join him in the work (2 Timothy 4:11).

• Silas: Paul's missionary partner, probably a Hellenized Jew, a prophet and former leader of the church in Jerusalem. Peter called him a "faithful brother" (1 Peter 5:12).

• Timothy: A well-respected young man of Lystra, his mother a Jewish believer and his father Greek. Paul called him his "true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

• Luke: Joined the team at Troas and accompanied Paul as far as Philippi, where he remained behind.

• Lydia: A seller of purple cloth from Thyatira and a God-fearer. The first Christian convert in Europe.

• The slave girl: Possessed by a spirit of divination and used by her owners for profit. Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus.

• The Philippian jailer: Asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He and his family believed, were baptized, and were filled with joy.

Key Places

• Antioch: The sending church, where the journey began and ended.

• Syria and Cilicia: Regions Paul and Silas passed through, strengthening the churches.

• Derbe and Lystra: Churches in southern Galatia revisited on this journey. Timothy joined the team at Lystra.

• Phrygia: Reached by traveling northwest through Galatia.

• Asia: The team intended to go west into Asia Minor (and possibly Ephesus) but were kept from going there by the Holy Spirit.

• Bithynia: On the Black Sea. The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go that way.

• Troas: On the Aegean coast. Luke joined the team here and Paul received the Macedonian vision.

• Macedonia: The region the Spirit directed them to through the vision of the Macedonian man.

• Philippi: A Roman colony and the leading city of the district. Where the gospel first entered Europe.

Key Event

In Troas Paul has a vision in the night of a Macedonian man entreating him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," and the missionaries at once prepare to leave for that region.

The Holy Spirit had kept them from Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them into Bithynia. By closing those doors He was directing them to the specific fields He had prepared for them. The Spirit directed Paul's missionary team into Europe through a vision.

Key Verse

"Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Acts 16:9

Remember This

• Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul desired to plant Spirit-empowered missional churches.

• Paul went with the blessing and commendation of the church.

• The apostles' joy now filled the heart of the jailer.

Life Application: When Colleagues Disagree

• Missionaries and other gospel workers are human, and sometimes disagreements arise between colleagues. Unfortunately, on occasion, these disagreements can be sharp.

• At such times we should not be tempted to abandon the work that God has given us.

• We must be mature enough to come to strategic agreements about how each will continue in the work, even if we may at times have to work separately.

• God is able to use people who honestly disagree with one another if they keep their attitudes pure and kind.

• If we remain kindhearted and mature in our attitudes, then in time even greater unity and agreement can come. Such was the case with Paul and Barnabas.

• In later years Paul requested that Mark join him in the work (2 Timothy 4:11; compare Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). Mark even went on to write one of the four Gospels in the New Testament.

Life Application: Pastoral Oversight After Planting

• Our work is not completed when the church planting campaign ends. We have the ongoing responsibility of giving pastoral oversight to the new work.

• Our goals must be to ensure that the new church is filled with the Spirit, strong in the Word, and focused on the mission of God.

• Our methods should include fellowship, prayer, teaching, and godly counsel.

Life Application: Expect the Spirit to Guide

• We should seek and expect the Holy Spirit to guide us when we are actively engaged in the Lord's work.

• This guidance may come in various ways, including dreams, visions, angelic appearances, and providential circumstances.

• The most common way God leads us is by speaking directly to our hearts by His Spirit.

• To experience such guidance, it is essential that we be prayerful and remain full of the Holy Spirit.

• What the Lord speaks to us by His Spirit will always be in harmony with His written Word, the Bible.

Life Application: Release Women in Gospel Work

• Throughout the history of the church, women have played a prominent role.

• Women were the first to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:5-8; Luke 24:9-10; John 20:16-18).

• They were present at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out (Acts 1:14), and the first convert in Europe was a woman (16:14).

• We should never treat women as second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.

• We should release them and encourage them to be full participants in gospel work.

Life Application: Learn to Operate in the Gifts

• We as Christ's ministers should be filled with the Spirit, and we should learn to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

• Had Paul not been able to do this, his and Silas' ministry in Philippi would have been much less effective, and the slave girl would have remained in bondage.

• The Bible commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; Ephesians 5:18). It also commands us to earnestly seek after spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1).

• Those who ignore these commands can never be the effective ministers of the gospel that God intends for them to be.

Life Application: Joy in Trying Circumstances

• Joy during trying circumstances is an evidence of one's being full of the Spirit.

• Our being filled with the Spirit should be evidenced by more than speaking in tongues.

• As we abide in Christ, walk in the Spirit, and obey the Lord's commands, our lives will be filled with the joy of the Lord.

• Such joyful lives will be a witness to those who observe us, and, as a result, they will be encouraged to turn to Christ.

Life Application: Always Be Ready With the Answer

• Every Christian should at all times be prepared to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

• It is the responsibility of pastors and other church leaders to train everyone in the church how to lead others to Christ.

Life Application: Leave Well

• It is important how a missionary or Christian worker begins a work. It is also important how he or she departs the same work.

• Our departure must never result in weakening the church.

• Every pastor or church planter should ensure that the church is strong enough to carry on the work or that the church is left in able hands.

• He or she should also leave with a good name so that the work will not be hindered.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. How did the Holy Spirit again work as the Superintendent of the Harvest in guiding Paul's missionary band to Macedonia and then into Europe? How might this apply to ministry today?

• 2. Who was the first Christian convert in Europe? Is it significant that she was a woman?

• 3. How did Paul and Silas' singing in the prison at night serve as a witness to the other prisoners? What other kinds of witness are present in this story? What was the result?

• 4. What instructions did Paul give to the Philippian jailer on how to be saved? What indication do we have of the Spirit's working in the jailer's heart?

• 5. What is the significance of Paul's comments to the officials of Philippi regarding their treatment of Barnabas and Paul? What purpose was served by Paul's statement that he and Barnabas were Roman citizens? See Acts 22:24-26 also for more information on this issue.

Quick Review

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas part company?

Answer: Because of a heated disagreement over taking John Mark, who had deserted the work during the first journey.

2. Whom did Paul choose as his missionary partner, and who joined the team at Lystra?

Answer: Paul chose Silas. Timothy joined the team at Lystra.

3. Which two regions did the Spirit keep the missionaries from entering?

Answer: Asia and Bithynia.

4. How did the Spirit direct the team into Europe?

Answer: Through a vision at Troas of a man of Macedonia saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

5. Who was the first Christian convert in Europe?

Answer: Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from Thyatira and a God-fearer.

Chapter Summary

Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul and Barnabas parted company over John Mark, and God used the separation to keep two ministries going: strengthening established churches and planting new ones.

• The Holy Spirit kept the team out of Asia and Bithynia, then directed them into Europe through the vision of the man of Macedonia.

• In Philippi Lydia became the first Christian convert in Europe, a slave girl was delivered, and the jailer and his household were saved and baptized.

Seek and expect the Holy Spirit to guide you in the Lord's work, and plant churches that are strong, indigenous, and missional before you leave them.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

The Holy Spirit kept Paul's team out of Asia and Bithynia so He could send them to Macedonia, and the gospel entered Europe at Philippi.