

Acts 14:19 – 5:12.

We are studying Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

- Today – We will complete the first missionary journey
- Introduce the growing conflict that must be resolved upon their return
- Two rejections.
 1. The rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the Jews.
 2. The Jews rejection of Gentile salvation by faith in Jesus alone.

Background/Catch up on journey: They established a beachhead in Antioch of Syria.

Act 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,^[a] Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the **Holy Spirit** said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off..

- Sent off on first missionary journey to Cyprus, Antioch Pisidia and the area of Galatia.

Antioch of Pisidia

Acts 13:16 ¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen.

- The **Characters are introduced**: Paul addresses the crowd. **Jews** and “**you who fear the Lord**” – Those that were not Jewish by birth but were believers in the Jewish religion. He goes on in verses 17-31 to present the history from Moses, to the Judges, to David, to John the Baptist, to Jesus concluding with.

Acts 13:32-33 ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus,

Acts 13:38-39 ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed^[a] from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Paul follows the pattern of preaching to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. The Jews reject his message.

Acts 13:44-48 ⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: (and he quotes Isaiah 49:6)

“I have made you^[a] a light for the Gentiles,
that you^[b] may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’^[c]”

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Acts 13:51 ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.

- And they were rejected by the Jews and driven out of the Antioch of Pisidia by the Jews and went to **Iconium**. 80-90 miles or 4-6 days by foot.

Chapter 14 – They go to Iconium and preach in the synagogue.

Acts 14: 1-4 Now at **Iconium** they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.^[a] ³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.

- Paul and Barnabas became aware they were going to stone them and fled to the Lystra and Derbe. This was only about 20 miles that could be traveled in a day by foot.
- Bryan taught how the synagogue was a place used throughout the week by Jews and Greeks. Paul and Barnabas remained for a long time teaching truth and being affirmed by signs and wonders.
- Bryan also taught about the healing of the **crippled man**.
 - They were in Lystra

Acts 14:8-10 there was a man crippled from birth and Paul looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well said in a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he sprang up and began walking.

- **Paul Looked intently at him** – Spirit nudged, received word of knowledge
- Important distinction – His faith was a component of his healing, but he was not healed because he had enough faith.
- It was the will of the Holy Spirit to heal in that person for the purpose of affirming the authority of the Spirit not simply the faith of the person to be healed.

Pick up from last week.

Acts 14:19-20 ¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, **they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city**, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, **he rose up and entered the city**, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

- They chased him 90 miles – 3-5 days by foot seeking to kill him. But “he rose up and entered the city.”- What did he do in the city bloodied and beaten?
- The next day he goes with Barnabas to Derbe. Derbe is about a 60 mile walk and was fairly rugged.

Acts 14:21-23 ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, **they returned to Lystra and to Iconium** and to Antioch, ²² **strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging** them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many **tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- V21 –They preached the gospel in Derby and made many disciples. They were close to Antioch of Syria but they chose to returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.
- V22 They went back to the converts, **“strengthening the souls of the disciples”** – He encouraged them to continue in their faith expecting that the many trials and tribulations will pale in comparison to the kingdom of God.
 - **We all need an encourager** to “strengthen our souls”
 - We all need encouragement to face the trials that will surely come. I remember having a **discussion with Julie** recognizing we had not had many

trials, but they would come. We did not know we would experience **brain tumors, cancer, financial concerns and mental health**. But we had many friends and a church that surrounded us, encouraged us and we grew deeply in our faith through these challenges. I would never want to go through those times again, but I can “**consider it all joy**” because the result was to grow in my faith and rest in the confident assurance of our Lord's grace.

- **We need encouragement to persevere** and to build up our hope in the knowledge that Jesus will return to rule and to reign and we are part of building His kingdom that He promised.
- V 23 He stayed there a while. Long enough to know the leaders, appoint elders, and spend time with them discipling them, encouraging them, praying and fasting with them before they committed them, entrusted them to the Lord's care.

Acts 14: 24-26 ²⁴ Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, ²⁶ and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been **commended** to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

- 24 – 26
 - They had been traveling for about 2 years.
 - Returned to home church whereby God's grace they were “commended” or entrusted to do the work of the Holy Spirit
 - **Do you know** that you have been entrusted to do the work of the Holy Spirit? Don't miss it. Don't miss the great privilege to participate in the work the Spirit is doing every day.
 - **Do you feel** that by God's grace you have been entrusted to do the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of your children?
 - **Do you feel** that it is by God's grace that you have been called to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people you work with and encounter in each day?
 - **Do you feel** that it is by God's grace that you have been called to the work of the Holy Spirit to minister to the lives of the people that we worship and serve with at VCC?

Acts 14:27-28 ²⁷ And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they remained no little time with the disciples.

How do we do the work of the Holy Spirit?

I Peter 2:9 ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- We declare all that God has done with us.
- The easiest way to share the gospel is to **share your stories**. To share how your faith intercedes in your everyday life in the daily conversations and interactions you have with others.
- They remained “no little time.” They stayed a while with the disciples. **They rested** in the fellowship of believers. **Missionaries need** to spend time with their home church to rest, to be encouraged, to be filled up and prepare for the next mission.

Chapter 15

Background:

As Paul takes the gospel to the Gentiles on his first missionary journey. Jews and Gentiles came to faith, but many of the Jews rejected his teaching.

- Paul had disrupted and upset the cultural norms.
- “He opened a can of worms”
- He essentially went out and lit the religious world on fire, returned to his home church to declare all that God had accomplished.
- As the dust settles, serious questions and arguments began to emerge that required intervention. They needed to go to the Church in Jerusalem, to the Apostles Peter and James to settle the dispute.
- Walking in the neighborhood and thinking on the Scripture, the picture that comes to my mind is that of **a caterpillar who is breaking out of the cocoon** of Judaism. It is a comfortable and familiar place. Accepting grace through faith alone is totally new. It is **like living a new life as a butterfly**.
- Leaving the comfort of Judaism and standing on faith alone did not sit well for many Jews that had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. They wanted to return to the cocoon. They were a cancer to the church. They were false teachers. They were called **Judaizers**. These Jewish zealots accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but could not leave the Mosaic law. They preached a gospel of **Jesus plus the Law**.
- This element plagued the early church and was a focus of Paul’s attention:

Galatians 1:6-8 ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that

there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Galatians 3:1-3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by^[a] the flesh?

- So quick to go back to the cocoon, go back to Judaism.
 - O foolish Galatians!
 - Did you receive the grace of salvation by works of the Law or by Faith?
 - Change is difficult and difficult for the early Jews who believed Jesus as the Messiah. This really was a BIG problem for the church.
 - Salvation through Faith in Jesus + circumcision + Law + Ordinances
 - Your Bibles may title this, The Jerusalem Council. I will only set the table, describe the issue that will be resolved in the rest of chapter 15.
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- At this time Christians were just a natural extension of Judaism and were considered a sect of Judaism.
 - It was only logical that one to become a Christian they would have to be a Jew first as the faith of a Christian was just the logical fulfillment of Judaism through Jesus as the Messiah.
 - The thought that a pagan, someone completely outside the faith, had lived without the Law could “jump the line” and become a Christian was very difficult for them.

How many of you were Eagle Scouts or had sons that earned an Eagle Scout?

- Grandfather, Father, Son – I am the loser.

EAGLE SCOUT REQUIREMENT

- **Be Active in Your Troop as Life Scout for at least 6 Months**
- Live by the **Scout Oath and Law** in your daily life and provide references from people (like parents, teachers, religious leaders) who can speak to your character.

- A minimum of **21 merit badges, 13 of which are required**, including:
- Serve **actively for at least six months in a Leadership position** of responsibility (like Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Quartermaster, etc.) while a Life Scout.
- **Eagle Scout Service Project** – benefits a school, religious institution, or community
- **Take Part in a Scoutmaster Conference** to review your readiness for the Eagle Board of Review.
- **Board of Review** - A panel of adults (not including your Scoutmaster) reviews your achievements and character to determine if you've met the Eagle Scout standards.

What if the Boy Scouts changed the rules and said all you have to do is raise your right hand and pledge your oath to the Scouts and you can be an Eagle Scout.

- What type of reaction do you think those generations of Eagle Scouts who put in the work and lived according to the Scout Oath and Law would have toward those new Eagle Scouts?

This is kinda like what happened in the early church.

The Jewish Christians had allowed non-Jews into their community of faith.

Samaritans

- Remember: In Jesus' time the only good Samaritan was a dead Samaritan.
- Following the conquering of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians the Jews in Samaria had **interbred with the Assyrians**. They rejected the Temple in Jerusalem and only followed the 5 books of the Torah. No prophets.
- Following Stephen's stoning the Christians dispersed. **Phillip goes to Samaria** and proclaimed Christ and many believed. **Peter** and John were sent to affirm these first Gentile believers and they received the Holy Spirit.
- Samaritans were accepted into the church.

God Fearers

- Gentiles who followed Judaism. The **Ethiopian Eunuch** and **Cornelius** and his family were followers of Judaism. Peter was also present when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles.

Greeks

- Now, Paul was traveling to the Greek world, preaching to the Gentiles and they were coming into the Christian faith through grace. They had not followed the practices or lived according to the Mosaic Law. They came into Christianity through **faith and grace alone** and had no plans to get circumcised, to eat kosher or follow the cultural norms of the Jews.
- The Jewish believers ability to see Christianity completely apart from Judaism **naturally led to a conflict.**

Acts 15:1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

- Some conservative Jewish Christians argued that the Gentiles should follow all the same rituals as someone who converts to Judaism. The Gentiles needed to become Jews in order to become saved, to become Christians.

Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

- 15:2 "**Had no small dissension and debate with them.**" - a heated disagreement. It is good to have disagreements in the church about things that matter. **Salvation through faith alone matters.** So they go to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders to settle their dispute.

Acts 15:3-4 ³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought **great joy** to all the brothers.⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and **they declared all that God had done with them.**

- V3 The **joy** came from seeing God's grace extending beyond the Jewish people, confirming that the message of salvation through Jesus was reaching the nations, just as the prophets had foretold.
- V4 They were welcomed and "they declared all that God had done with them." – **It is what they did. It is what we are to do.** To declare all that God has done with them.

Acts 15:5 ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

- 15:5 "But some" – They need to become Jews before they can become Christians.

Acts 15:6-9 ⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

- Verse 6: Apostles: Peter and James, brother of Jesus and the leaders of the Jerusalem church.
- Verse 7 Peter references his experience with Cornelius from chapter 10.
- If you recall from Matthew 16:19, Peter has **keys to the kingdom**.
- He was first to authenticate a Gentile conversion.

Talking about the salvation of Cornelius, the first Gentile conversion.

Acts 10:34-35 ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Acts 15:10 ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

- 15:10 –**What is the test?** To challenge God's plan of **grace through faith alone**. Why would you put the Gentiles under the Law that condemns when we cannot accomplish the Law.

Acts 15:11 ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

- 15:11 – We are all saved by grace. **Jesus + Nothing else**.
 - Human instinct always falls back to works. Every religion except Christianity falls back on works.

Acts 15:12 ¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

- 15:12- So they listened to Paul and Barnabas declare all that God had done with them among the Gentiles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Brett will pick up after Easter and cover the consideration and judgment of Peter, James and the other Apostles and Elders regarding this first thorny matter within the church.

Paul's First Missionary Journey

Respond to the call. Go and make disciples.

Acts 1:8 ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will **be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 14:22 ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

- **We will experience tribulation, and we all need encouragement to persevere and build up our hope in the kingdom to come.**

Acts 14:26 ²⁶ and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

- **We have been entrusted to do the work of the Holy Spirit. Don't miss it.**

Acts 14:27 ²⁷ And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

- **Declare all that God has done in your life.**

1 Peter 2:9 ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Acts 15:11 ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

- Jesus + Nothing.

The late **RC Sproul** says, “We're saved by **grace alone**, through **faith alone**, in **Christ alone**, as revealed in **Scripture alone**, to the glory of **God alone**.”

Communion:

We come to the table remembering we are saved by Jesus, the Christ ALONE. Jesus + nothing. We accept His body and His blood shed for us.