Missions – Acts and Onward

Week 6 – Paul's Gentile Apostleship

I. Commissioned to Work

1. The Commission

A. Paul was a faithful teacher and leader in Antioch

† **Acts 13:1 –** *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

i. "Antioch's importance is twofold. First, it modeled the ethnic diversity appropriate to the gospel that brings people of all backgrounds into the one family of God (see Eph. 2:11–22)." **PTQ**

ii. "Second, it became the primary missionary church of earliest Christianity."[1]

iii. "Barnabas is a Levite from Cyprus. Saul is a Pharisee educated under Rabbi Gamaliel. Simeon called Niger (the Latin word for "black") is most likely a black man;[1] Manaen was a boyhood friend of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great and tetrarch of Galilee during Jesus's ministry. Manaen probably would have been in his midsixties."[2]

B. Barnabas and Saul were separated for the work of ministry

† **Acts 13:2-4 –** *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.[3] And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.[4] So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

i. This church would have here given up its two head teachers and would have sought leading from the Lord because it would have been easier to try to keep them. **PTQ**

2. The Communication

A. Barnabas and Saul began preaching at Salamis

† **Acts 13:5 –** *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.*

i. John Mark was helping Barnabas and Paul much like Joshua was to Moses. However, he did not stay long. **Acts 13:13** **PTQ**

B. Paul preaches in Antioch of Pisidia

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[1] Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Fourth Edition, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 225.

[1] If he comes from North Africa, is he the Simon from Cyrene who carried Jesus's cross (Luke 23:26; Mark 15:21)?

[2] David E. Garland, *Acts*, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 132–33.

i. Paul preaches here, giving the message of salvation by invitation in a synagogue.
   1) He begins talking about the history of Israel much like Stephen did. V.17-22
   2) Paul then shows the Old Testament promises find their fulfillment in Jesus. V. 23-41.
      - Paul quotes Psalm 2 and Psalm 16, just like Peter did in his opening sermon in Acts 2. **PTQ**
   3) Initially, this preaching is met with some success, but Paul does not immediately address how great their decisions are.

† **Acts 13:43 –** *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.***PTQ**

ii. Paul, in his second time preaching had the entire city show up unfortunately, many of the Jews decided not to continue in following Christ.

† **Acts 13:45-48 –** *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.[46] Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.[47] For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.[48] And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

iii. Paul's preaching especially seemed to point towards Jews first but often was better received by the Gentile hearers.

iv. Faithful preaching and teaching may at times mean people reject or find offensive the word or its effects.

v. The phrase used I have set thee to be a light unto the Gentiles is interesting because it was the work of the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah that, in general, we would extend toward the Messiah, but Paul uses it for him and Barnabas. Possibly, as the body of Christ, they saw themselves as fulfilling what needed to be done as a part of Christ's mission. **PTQ**
   - "His commission is also described in terms similar to the servant passages of Isaiah 42:6–7 and 49:6."[3]

3. The Pushback

A. Elymas **PTQ**

† **Acts 13:8-11 –** *But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.[9] Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him.[10] And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the*

[3] J. D. Payne, *Theology of Mission: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 102.

Lord?[11] And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

B. Jewish jealousy in Antioch **PTQ**

† **Acts 13:50 –** *But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.*

C. Jews created issues in Iconium

† **Acts 14:2-5 –** But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.[3] Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.[4] But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. *And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,*

D. Paul being run out of towns, and persecuted, continued his work

† **Acts 14:6-7 –** *They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:[7] And there they preached the gospel.*

† **Acts 14:19-20 –** And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. *Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

4. The Purpose

A. Paul used Miracles to advance the Gospel's reception while caring for those in need. Note: Paul and Peter heal a lame man.

† **Acts 14:8-10 –** *And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:[9] The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,[10] Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.*

i. The point was not for self glory and it did cause some confusion in that regard in which Barnabas and Paul had to correct misunderstanding. **Acts 14:11-18**

B. Paul's goal, although it included preaching the Gospel, was more so about creating churches through God's saving message. **PTQ**

† **Acts 14:21-23 –** *And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,[22] Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.[23] And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

i. St Paul did not go about as a missionary preacher merely to convert individuals: he went to establish churches from which the light might radiate

throughout the whole country round." Elsewhere Allen observed, "One other effect of St Paul's training is very clear. His converts became missionaries. … The Christians of the Four Provinces were certainly zealous in propagating the faith, and apparently needed no exhortation on the subject. … [T]his was not really surprising. Christians receive the Spirit of Jesus, and the Spirit of Jesus is a missionary spirit, the Spirit of Him who came into the world to bring back lost souls to the Father[4]

- Our growth as a Christian will remain stagnant as long as we fail to see propagating the truth of Christ as our job both in the lives of unbelievers and those behind us in the walk of Christ. **PTQ**

† **Acts 14:26-28 –** *And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.[27] And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.[28] And there they abode long time with the disciples.*

ii. "Paul the missionary is often seen as a solitary figure who worked on his own, independently of churches. However, a close look at the book of Acts—where Paul commands center stage from the second half onward—and at his extant letters indicates that Paul's mission was embedded in several early Christian churches, supported by these churches in various ways and extended through the ministry of churches."[5]

iii. When talking about churches, people often go back to the term *ekklēsia.* "It is well known that the term *ekklēsia* can be used to represent two realities: (1) a local congregation and (2) the universal church (i.e., "the community of all true believers for all time"). Most of the uses of *ekklēsia* are references to the local church."[6]

iv. The church is recognized with several different word pictures and while grappling with the concept of the church it is important to remember. "These images demonstrate the richness of the concept of *church* and we must therefore be careful to consider them all. None of these images should dominate to the exclusion or minimization of the others."[7]

v. The church, like all of Creation, is made to glorify God. "There are at least five main ways this purpose is accomplished. **PTQ**

1) First, the church glorifies God through worship which involves reading and preaching God's word (1 Cor 1:23–24; Col 4:6; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2),

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[4] Christoph W. Stenschke, "Paul's Mission as the Mission of the Church," in *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 75.

[5] Ibid., 74.

[6] Benjamin L. Merkle, "Paul's Ecclesiology," in *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 57.

[7] Ibid.

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praying (1 Tim 2:8), singing (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16–17), taking a collection (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:6–12) and celebrating the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34).

2) Second, the church glorifies God through fellowship, which includes bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2; also see Acts 2:42; Heb 10:24–25).

3) Third, the church glorifies God through discipleship, which includes equipping all believers (Eph 4:11–12) and training new leaders (2 Tim 2:2).

4) Fourth, the church glorifies God through service, which includes using one's spiritual gifts (1 Tim 4:14).

5) Finally, the church glorifies God through evangelism and missions. Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission (Mt 28:19–20) and Paul expected the churches he planted to share the good news with others."[8]

II. Council to Clarify

1. Unfortunately, the difficulties of the church extended again beyond external persecution to now include internal heresies.

† **Acts 15:1-5 –** *And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.[2] When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.[3] And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.[4] And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.[5] But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

2. The church clarified this in a council, hearing from three of the leaders in the church at that time.

A. Peter V.7-11

i. Opens the meeting, reminding the Pharisaical sect that God had brought the Gentiles in and they believed equally like the Jews did, showing salvation was by faith. **PTQ**

† **Acts 15:9 -** *And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*

ii. Peter then asks an important question.

† **Acts 15:10 -** *Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*

B. Paul/ Barnabas V.12

i. Paul focuses clearly on the work that God is currently doing within the lives of Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas.

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[8] Merkle, "Paul's Ecclesiology," 58.

† **Acts 15:12 –** *Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.*

C. James (The brother of Jesus) V.13-21

i. James's argument is based upon the fulfillment of Scripture. (Namely Amos 9 and possibly an allusion to Isaiah 45:21)

† **Acts 15:15-17 –** *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,[16] After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:[17] That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.*

ii. Thus the council determined it important to not add unnecessary difficulties.

† **Acts 15:20-21 -** *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.[21] For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

iii. The Council's conclusion was not to trouble the gentiles who turn to God, but to offer them a letter that would address a few points of significant tension between gentiles and Jews (Acts 15:19–21).[9]

- "James's statement here could mean that Moses already has enough observers of his law; or it could mean that believers are to abstain from the practices in verse 20 lest they offend the many people of verse 21."[10] **PTQ**

D. The pronouncement of the council's findings is sent with Paul, Barnabas (those from Antioch), Judas and Silas (Those from Jerusalem), showing the uniformity of the decision-making across the Apostles and leaders. V. 22-32 **PTQ**

III. Contention to Separation

1. Once everything had settled, Paul and Barnabas wanted to visit the places where they had established churches, but a problem ensued.

† **Acts 15:37-40** – *And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.[38] But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.[39] And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;[40] And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.* **PTQ**

2. A new trainee is brought on board as Paul and Silas moved through the churches, namely Timothy.

† **Acts 16:1-3** – *Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:[2] Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.[3] Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and*

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[9] Payne, *Theology of Mission*, 105.

[10] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 367.

took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

A. Why did Paul have him circumcised if circumcision is not necessary for salvation? **PTQ**

3. The group found the Spirit moving them opposed to their initial desires on where to go. V.6-7. **PTQ**

4. Instead, these men found themselves called to go to Macedonia.

† **Acts 16:9-10** – And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.[10] And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

5. Two notable people that were saved in a chief city of Macedonia, namely Philippi, were Lydia and the Philippian jailer.

A. Lydia, a seller of Purple, was found where the Jews would often congregate if they did not have enough men for a synagogue, namely at a river. **PTQ**

i. Upon her salvation she gave Paul and Silas a place to live while in Phillipi.

† **Acts 16:15** – *And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*

B. In Phillipi a demonic damsel went about crying after Paul ad Silas saying something surprising. **PTQ**

† **Acts 16:17-18** – *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.[18] And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*

C. This act got them labeled as troublemakers, so they were beaten and thrown into prison. V. 19-24

i. Paul and Silas rejoiced in the Lord even in this dire circumstance, which gave God another opportunity to use it for his glory. **PTQ**

† **Acts 16:25-28** – *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.[26] And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.[27] And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.[28] But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*

ii. This led to receptivity of the Gospel to the Philippian Jailer, who was saved and baptized along with his family.

† **Acts 16:31-34** – *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.[32] And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.[33] And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his,*

straightway.[34] And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

iii. Finally, the next day the magistrates sought to let out Paul and Silas only to find they had unjustly persecuted Roman citizens. This created great potential for damage on the part of the magistrates. **PTQ**

Conclusion: Ultimately, the first missionary journeys of Paul showed the great effect he would have on the world and the reach, especially, he and his cohorts would make into the Gentile populations. This growth came with heretics, and the expansion of the church came with the necessity of learning to live amongst others. Yet the word of God is working richly, and God is accomplishing all his will, seeing souls saved, churches planted, and disciples being raised up to take on the work. This all, however, is done in the real world, requiring time to be spent together, and the churches' focus continually renewed on the mission at hand.

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