

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson Plan for Thursday – April 4, 2013

Resource Book – Kerygma Series - *“into the world”*

Chapter 10 – *“Barnabas and Paul”*

ACTS 13:1 – 15:35

Our objectives for this Session:

- 1) To trace the route of Barnabas and Paul’s “first missionary journey.”
- 2) To discuss the relevance of Paul’s speech at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13) for the newly developing church and for the church of today.
- 3) To look at examples of the persecution Barnabas and Paul faced as reported in Acts 13-14, and relate the outcome to Luke’s purpose in writing Acts.
- 4) To understand the process by which the early church handled the disagreement reported in Acts 15.
- 5) To discuss the process described in #4 and its usefulness in settling conflicts in the contemporary church at the local, synodical, national and inter-denominational levels.

An Opening Pastoral Prayer: - *asking for God’s wisdom, love and guidance in all things and especially for courage to follow the Holy Spirit’s prompting into new ways of faithfulness!*

ACTS 13:2-3 - The Commissioning of Barnabas and Paul:

² As they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul to the work I have called them to undertake.” ³ After they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on these two and sent them off.

significant points to note:

- nothing is done without the initiation of the Holy Spirit;
- Barnabas & Paul are “set apart” as missionaries;
- they are not “free agents” moving at their own initiative
- this new step is declared by the Spirit and confirmed through the church by fasting, prayer and laying-on-of-hands

ACTS 13:4-12 – Initial journey to Cyprus

⁴ After the Holy Spirit sent them on their way, they went down to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ In Salamis they proclaimed God’s word in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their assistant. ⁶ They traveled throughout the island until they arrived at Paphos. There they found a

certain man named Bar-Jesus, a Jew who was a false prophet and practiced sorcery. ⁷ He kept company with the governor of that province, an intelligent man named Sergius Paulus. The governor sent for Barnabas and Saul since he wanted to hear God's word. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that's what people understood his name meant) opposed them, trying to steer the governor away from the faith. ⁹ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Saul, also known as Paul, glared at Bar-Jesus and ¹⁰ said, "You are a deceiver and trickster! You devil! You attack anything that is right! Will you never stop twisting the straight ways of the Lord into crooked paths? ¹¹ Listen! The Lord's power is set against you. You will be blind for a while, unable even to see the daylight." At once, Bar-Jesus' eyes were darkened, and he began to grope about for someone to lead him around by the hand. ¹² When the governor saw what had taken place, he came to believe, for he was astonished by the teaching about the Lord.

For our consideration: (use Lesson Plan Resource 10A or map in Resource Bk. – pg. 122)

1. On map, follow the initial route taken by Barnabus & Paul
2. Who and what was the function of Bar-Jesus?
3. Paul's confrontation is reminiscent of an O.T. contest between Elijah and prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (*1 Kings 18:19-40*)
4. Although Christianity is not magic, the gospel does not mind "squaring off" with the alleged gods and powers of the world.

ACTS 13:13-25 – From Cyprus to Antioch in Pisidia; Paul's Speech-Part One:

¹³ *Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia. John deserted them there and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They went on from Perga and arrived at Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath, they entered and found seats in the synagogue there. ¹⁵ After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders invited them, "Brothers, if one of you has a sermon for the people, please speak."*

¹⁶ *Standing up, Paul gestured with his hand and said, "Fellow Israelites and Gentile God-worshippers, please listen to me. ¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors. God made them a great people while they lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. With his great power, he led them out of that country. ¹⁸ For about forty years, God put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ God conquered seven nations in the land of Canaan and gave the Israelites their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ This happened over a period of about four hundred fifty years.*

"After this, he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹ The Israelites requested a king, so God gave them Saul, Kish's son, from the tribe of Benjamin, and he served as their king for forty years. ²² After God removed him, he raised up David to be their king. God testified concerning him, 'I have found David, Jesse's son, a man who shares my desires. Whatever my will is, he will do.' ²³ From this man's descendants, God brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, just as he promised. ²⁴ Before Jesus' appearance, John proclaimed to all the Israelites a baptism to show they were changing their hearts and lives. ²⁵ As John was completing his mission, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I'm not the one you think I am, but he is coming after me. I'm not worthy to loosen his sandals.'

For our consideration:

1. A journey that encompassed 1/3 of Asia Minor!
2. Luke depicts the "wildfire like" spread of the Gospel
3. Assertions made in opening part of Paul's speech
 - a) Jesus is a member of David's royal lineage
 - b) Jesus is fulfillment of God's promises (*Romans 1:3*)

- c) Paul's assertion is that even as God liberated Israel; helped Israel conquer the Promised Land, and gave them a leader like David.....
 - d) Now God is acting in a similar way to liberate, conquer (*the Romans?*), and lead in Jesus.
4. What was significance of this review of "holy history" for listeners @ Antioch?
 5. How might this review have differed for Jews and Gentiles?
 6. Do you see any relevance in this review for the church of today?
 7. What implications are there here for teaching/preaching in the 21st century church?

ACTS 13:26-37 – Paul's Speech – Part Two

²⁶ ***"Brothers, children of Abraham's family, and you Gentile God-worshippers, the message about this salvation has been sent to us. ²⁷ The people in Jerusalem and their leaders didn't recognize Jesus. By condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸ Even though they didn't find a single legal basis for the death penalty, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they finished doing everything that had been written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead! ³¹ He appeared over many days to those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people.***

³² ***"We proclaim to you the good news. What God promised to our ancestors, ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it was written in the second psalm, You are my son; today I have become your father.***

³⁴ ***"God raised Jesus from the dead, never again to be subjected to death's decay. Therefore, God said, I will give to you the holy and firm promises I made to David. ³⁵ In another place it is said, You will not let your holy one experience death's decay. ³⁶ David served God's purpose in his own generation, then he died and was buried with his ancestors. He experienced death's decay, ³⁷ but the one whom God has raised up didn't experience death's decay.***

For our consideration:

1. Unlike some earlier passages in Acts, which harshly depict the guilt of the Jews, the message of vs. 27ff. seems to put an emphasis on the innocence of Jesus rather than the guilt of his people. Moreover, in vss. 28-29, the Cross is depicted as a result of ignorance, evil, and collaboration with the Romans. What effect do you think Paul's message about Jesus' death and resurrection, in this account provided by Luke, had on Paul's Jewish listeners in the Antioch synagogue?
2. How does this theology in Acts differ from that contained in many of the Pauline epistles? (*cf. 1 Cor. 15:3 "Christ died for our sins"*)
3. What would the effect have been in the Jewish/Gentile Christian church?
4. In your Resource Book for this course, Dr. Miller writes: *"...what is important about Jesus' death is that it was a result of his obedience to God. It was Jesus' living of the gospel message ... that led to his death."* (pg. 81) In other words, Jesus suffered and died (*as Luke also depicts the disciples suffering and dying*) because He sought to reach the lost and the outcast. Luke's theology seems to attest that God's Will for this world is realized through servants (*like Jesus*) who are obedient to the divine purposes, even when that means death. How might this interpretation affect Jewish-Christian relationships today?

5. What relevance, if any, does it have for the church's mission and ministry in 2013?

ACTS 13:38-41 – Paul's Speech - Part Three

³⁸ *“Therefore, brothers and sisters, know this: Through Jesus we proclaim forgiveness of sins to you. From all those sins from which you couldn't be put in right relationship with God through Moses' Law, ³⁹ through Jesus everyone who believes is put in right relationship with God. ⁴⁰ Take care that the prophets' words don't apply to you: ⁴¹ Look, you scoffers, marvel and die. I'm going to do work in your day—a work you won't believe even if someone told you.”*

For our consideration:

1. In his conclusion, how does Paul tie together Israel's history and Jesus' death and resurrection?
2. What impact do you think that would have on his listeners?
3. What is its impact on us as listeners today?
4. How does the church today make known the urgency of the gospel message?

***A concluding comment regarding the stop @ Antioch:** *“The visit of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Pisidia was a watershed event for Paul's ministry, for all Jews, and for the Christian church. With the rejection of their message by the Jews, Paul and Barnabas announce their intention to focus their mission activity on the Gentiles. They will continue to preach the gospel to the Jews, but they are free now to welcome non-Jews as followers of Jesus Christ.”*

GROWING ACCOUNTS OF CONFLICT:

Instruction: *As the following passages are considered, be alert for three things:*

1. *Why is there an objection to Paul's message?*
2. *How is the situation resolved?*
3. *What effect did it have on the church?*

ACTS 13:50-52 ⁵⁰ *However, the Jews provoked the prominent women among the Gentile God-worshippers, as well as the city's leaders. They instigated others to harass Paul and Barnabas, and threw them out of their district. ⁵¹ Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet and went to Iconium. ⁵² Because of the abundant presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the disciples were overflowing with happiness.*

ACTS 14:2, 4-7 ² *However, the Jews who rejected the faith stirred up the Gentiles, poisoning their minds against the brothers. ⁴ The people of the city were divided—some siding with the Jews, others with the Lord's messengers. ⁵ Then some Gentiles and Jews, including their leaders, hatched a plot to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas. ⁶ When they learned of it, these two messengers fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area, ⁷ where they continued to proclaim the good news.*

ACTS 14:19-21 ¹⁹ *Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won the crowds over. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead.* ²⁰ *When the disciples surrounded him, he got up and entered the city again. The following day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.* ²¹ *Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the good news to the people in Derbe and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch*

OPPOSITION IN THE CHURCH – Is it forever to be expected?

Dr. Miller, in Resource Book (pg. 82) writes: **“Church growth comes when those entrusted with the gospel live it and speak it, even to their peril.”**

- 1) Does this assertion represent the truth for you?
- 2) What evidences do we have?
- 3) What possible message does that statement have for us @ SAKLC?
- 4) What does it imply for the ELCA and other denominations?

ACTS 15:1-35 - The Jerusalem Council

¹*Some people came down from Judea teaching the family of believers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom we’ve received from Moses, you can’t be saved.”* ² *Paul and Barnabas took sides against these Judeans and argued strongly against their position.*

The church at Antioch appointed Paul, Barnabas, and several others from Antioch to go up to Jerusalem to set this question before the apostles and the elders. ³ *The church sent this delegation on their way. They traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling stories about the conversion of the Gentiles to everyone. Their reports thrilled the brothers and sisters.* ⁴ *When they arrived in Jerusalem, the church, the apostles, and the elders all welcomed them. They gave a full report of what God had accomplished through their activity.* ⁵ *Some believers from among the Pharisees stood up and claimed, “The Gentiles must be circumcised. They must be required to keep the Law from Moses.”*

⁶ *The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter.* ⁷ *After much debate, Peter stood and addressed them, “Fellow believers, you know that, early on, God chose me from among you as the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and come to believe.* ⁸ *God, who knows people’s deepest thoughts and desires, confirmed this by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.* ⁹ *He made no distinction between us and them, but purified their deepest thoughts and desires through faith.* ¹⁰ *Why then are you now challenging God by placing a burden on the shoulders of these disciples that neither we nor our ancestors could bear?* ¹¹ *On the contrary, we believe that we and they are saved in the same way, by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”*

¹² *The entire assembly fell quiet as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through their activity.* ¹³ *When Barnabas and Paul also fell silent, James responded, “Fellow believers, listen to me.* ¹⁴ *Simon reported how, in his kindness, God came to*

the Gentiles in the first place, to raise up from them a people of God. ¹⁵ *The prophets' words agree with this; as it is written,*

*¹⁶ After this I will return,
and I will rebuild David's fallen tent;
I will rebuild what has been torn down.*

*I will restore it
¹⁷ so that the rest of humanity will seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who belong to me.
The Lord says this, the one who does these things
¹⁸ known from earliest times.*

¹⁹ *"Therefore, I conclude that we shouldn't create problems for Gentiles who turn to God.* ²⁰ *Instead, we should write a letter, telling them to avoid the pollution associated with idols, sexual immorality, eating meat from strangled animals, and consuming blood.* ²¹ *After all, Moses has been proclaimed in every city for a long time, and is read aloud every Sabbath in every synagogue."*

²² *The apostles and the elders, along with the entire church, agreed to send some delegates chosen from among themselves to Antioch, together with Paul and Barnabas. They selected Judas Barsabbas and Silas, who were leaders among the brothers and sisters.* ²³ *They were to carry this letter:*

The apostles and the elders, to the Gentile brothers and sisters in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings!

²⁴ *We've heard that some of our number have disturbed you with unsettling words we didn't authorize.* ²⁵ *We reached a united decision to select some delegates and send them to you along with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul.* ²⁶ *These people have devoted their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁷ *Therefore, we are sending Judas and Silas. They will confirm what we have written.* ²⁸ *The Holy Spirit has led us to the decision that no burden should be placed on you other than these essentials:* ²⁹ *refuse food offered to idols, blood, the meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid such things. Farewell.*

³⁰ *When Barnabas, Paul, and the delegates were sent on their way, they went down to Antioch. They gathered the believers and delivered the letter.* ³¹ *The people read it, delighted with its encouraging message.* ³² *Judas and Silas were prophets, and they said many things that encouraged and strengthened the brothers and sisters.* ³³ *Judas and Silas stayed there awhile, then were sent back with a blessing of peace from the brothers and sisters to those who first sent them.* ³⁵ *Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, where, together with many others, they taught and proclaimed the good news of the Lord's word.*

***SUMMARY COMMENT:** The dispute which led to the Jerusalem Council was a serious one; it was over the status of Gentiles in what up until now had been just a new sect of Judaism. It was an issue that could have split the fledgling church. There were three parties in the debate that is reported above:

1. The "Judaizers"
2. Paul and Barnabas
3. The Jerusalem Council (*apostles and elders*)

For our consideration:

1. What were the issues at stake in the first century situation?
2. In your opinion, to what extent were the concerns of both parties justified?
3. How was the matter settled?
4. What seem to have been the criteria for decision making in the early church?
5. How can 21st century believers hear the Holy Spirit and discover God's Will?
6. When decisions are made in the contemporary church, how are they communicated?
7. How does this practice compare with that of the Jerusalem Council?
8. What function do tradition, experience and the teachings of Scripture play in decision-making in the church?
9. What criteria for decision-making do we use @ SAKLC?

A CLOSING PASTORAL PRAYER

***Paragraphs marked with an asterisk** in the foregoing lesson plan represent the insight and contribution of Dr. William H. Willimon, in the commentary he has authored, entitled: "ACTS – A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching" (John Knox Press 1988). Insights and thoughts from Willimon have frequently been referenced during our entire study of the Book of Acts.

Next Week: April 11, 2013

Read – RESOURCE BOOK – Chapter 11 "On to Macedonia and Philippi"

ACTS 15:36 – 16:40

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