

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

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

Lesson Plan for Thursday – April 11, 2013

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

Chapter 11 – *“On to Macedonia and Philippi”*

Our Objectives in this Session:

1. To review the contents of Acts 1-16 with the help of Resource 11A, and a brief PowerPoint presentation on The First Missionary Journey of Barnabus, Paul and John Mark.
2. *continued from last session:* To understand the process used at the Jerusalem Council by which the early church handled the disagreement reported in Acts 15.
3. *continued from last session:* To discuss the process described in #2 above and its usefulness in settling conflicts in the contemporary church at the local, synodical, national and inter-denominational levels.
4. To articulate the rift that grew to exist between Paul, John Mark and Barnabus; its consequences; and, possible lessons for the modern church.
5. To discuss similarities and differences in the conversion stories in Acts 16:11-40, and the implications for church growth and evangelism in the 21st century.

An Opening Prayer:

Initial Time for Review:

- a) Distribution of Resource 11A (*return with your answers @ next session!*)
- b) PowerPoint presentation (*Resource 11C*) on destinations visited during Apostles' 1st Missionary Journey

(Renewed consideration of)

ACTS 15:1-35 - The Jerusalem Council:

(a major issue for the entire church)

¹Some 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 ON THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL: The dispute which led to this high-level meeting 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? What role was played by the Apostle James?
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 role is allocated to the Holy Spirit in bringing "new revelations" of God's truth?
10. What criteria for decision-making do we use @ SAKLC?

ACTS 15:36-41

(a major conflict between church leaders)

36 Some time later, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit all the brothers and sisters in every city where we preached the Lord's word. Let's see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. 38 Paul insisted that they shouldn't take him along, since he had deserted them in Pamphylia and hadn't continued with them in their work. 39 Their argument became so intense that they went their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. 40 Paul chose Silas and left, entrusted by the brothers and sisters to the Lord's grace. 41 He traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

For our consideration:

1. Recognizing that most quarrels have multiple levels of reasoning and feeling, what may have been involved here?
2. Looking back in retrospect (*as Luke does here...*) what were the consequences of this disagreement between two strong and respected church leaders?

The emergence of a new Church Leader - SILAS:

Where –

- a) Roman Citizen living in Jerusalem
- b) Occupation – one of the 1st career missionaries
- c) Contemporaries – Paul, Timothy, Peter, John Mark, Barnabus

Accomplishments and Strengths –

- a) A leader in the Jerusalem Church
- b) Representative of that church in carrying the “acceptance letter” provided by the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile believers in Antioch of Syria
- c) Starting with 2nd Missionary Journey was closely affiliated with Paul
- d) When in prison with Paul in Philippi, sang songs of praise to God
- e) Worked as a Scribe for both Paul and Peter, using “*Silvanus*” as pen name

Lessons from Silas’s life –

- a) Partnership is a significant part of effective ministry
- b) God never guarantees that his servants will *NOT* suffer
- c) Obedience to God often means “*giving up*” that which makes us feel secure

The emergence of another new Church Leader - TIMOTHY:

Where –

- a) Lystra
- b) Occupation – Missionary and Pastor
- c) Relatives – Mother: Eunice; Grandmother: Lois; father was of Greek origin

Accomplishments and Strengths –

- a) Became a believer after Paul’s 1st Missionary Journey; joined Paul on 2nd & 3rd Missionary journeys
- b) A respected Christian in his own hometown
- c) Served as Paul’s special representative on repeated occasions
- d) Recipient of two personal letters from Paul which are part of N.T.
- e) Probably knew Paul more intimately than anyone else...became like a son!

Lessons from Timothy’s Life –

- a) Youthfulness should not be an excuse for ineffectiveness
- b) Inadequacies and inabilities should not keep us from being available to God

ACTS 16:6-10 – THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL, SILAS and TIMOTHY

⁶ Paul and his companions traveled throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from speaking the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they approached the province of Mysia, they tried to enter the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn’t let them. ⁸ Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas instead. ⁹ A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul

during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"¹⁰ Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

For our consideration:

1. Map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey will be helpful (see Acts Resource #11B)
2. Initial intent was to visit cities where Paul had preached earlier.
3. Travel done by land, rather than by sea, using the Roman road through Cilicia and the Cilician Gates – a gorge thru the Taurus Mountains – then northwest toward Derbe, Lystra and Iconium.
4. The Spirit told them not to enter Asia, so they turned northward toward Bithynia.
5. Again the Spirit said "NO," so they turned westward through Mysia, to the port city of Troas.
6. Following the vision reported above, the journey extended into Macedonia
7. In. vs. 10, note the designation "**WE**" (*some biblical scholars interpret this as evidence that Luke accompanied Paul and company on this 2nd journey*)

MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE MINISTRY AT PHILIPPI

For your personal consideration: (*a shortage of time will undoubtedly prevent significant group discussion of each personality listed, however, in your own personal devotion/study you are invited to consider each person and ask questions like those suggested below:*)

1. What was this person's status in society?
2. What do Paul and Silas do that result in a change in that person?
3. What change actually occurs in that person?
4. What are the consequences of the change for the person?
5. What are the consequences of the change for Paul and Silas?

LYDIA – Acts 16:11-15, 40 ¹¹ *We sailed from Troas straight for Samothrace and came to Neapolis the following day.* ¹² *From there we went to Philippi, a city of Macedonia's first district and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city several days.* ¹³ *On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered.* ¹⁴ *One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message.* ¹⁵ *Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.* - - - ⁴⁰ *Paul and Silas left the prison and made their way to Lydia's house where they encouraged the brothers and sisters. Then they left Philippi.*

THE SLAVE GIRL – Acts 16:16-24 ¹⁶ *One day, when we were on the way to the place for prayer, we met a slave woman. She had a spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners through fortune-telling.* ¹⁷ *She began following Paul and us, shouting, "These*

people are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming a way of salvation to you!”¹⁸ She did this for many days. This annoyed Paul so much that he finally turned and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave her!” It left her at that very moment.¹⁹ Her owners realized that their hope for making money was gone. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the city center.²⁰ When her owners approached the legal authorities, they said, “These people are causing an uproar in our city. They are Jews²¹ who promote customs that we Romans can’t accept or practice.”²² The crowd joined in the attacks against Paul and Silas, so the authorities ordered that they be stripped of their clothes and beaten with a rod.²³ When Paul and Silas had been severely beaten, the authorities threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to secure them with great care.²⁴ When he received these instructions, he threw them into the innermost cell and secured their feet in stocks.

THE JAILER – Acts 16:25-34²⁵ *Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.²⁶ All at once there was such a violent earthquake that it shook the prison’s foundations. The doors flew open and everyone’s chains came loose.²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the open doors of the prison, he thought the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword and was about to kill himself.²⁸ But Paul shouted loudly, “Don’t harm yourself! We’re all here!”*

²⁹ *The jailer called for some lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ He led them outside and asked, “Honorable masters, what must I do to be rescued?”*

³¹ *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your entire household.”³² They spoke the Lord’s word to him and everyone else in his house.³³ Right then, in the middle of the night, the jailer welcomed them and washed their wounds. He and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.³⁴ He brought them into his home and gave them a meal. He was overjoyed because he and everyone in his household had come to believe in God.*

FOR FINAL GROUP DISCUSSION:

- As you think about the conversions reported in Acts 16, what implications do you see for evangelism and growth in the church today?
- Paul encountered two women in Philippi, one was wealthy, the other a slave. One became a part of the Christian church, the other dropped out of sight. What responsibilities were given to women in the early church? What about today?
- In the passages recorded above, a favorite theme of Luke/Paul is introduced:
FREEDOM!
 - a) in each situation who is imprisoned? Who is free?
 - b) What is the nature of the imprisonment? Of the freedom?

- What does a Christian need to be free? How would you describe ***“Freedom in Christ?”***
- What part can/does/should the Christian community play in helping those who are physically, mentally and emotionally imprisoned find and maintain their freedom in Christ?
- How is it possible to pray and sing hymns to God (*like Paul & Silas did*) when circumstances enclose us in prison walls?

“OFF-BEAT” THOUGHT FOR CLOSING DEVOTION: *If you were unjustly confined in a prison cell, what hymn(s) would you want to sing?*

NEXT WEEK: Thursday, April 18, 2013

Read: RESOURCE BOOK – Chapter 12 “Paul Upsets the Empire”

Acts 17:1-19:20

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