

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 14

Acts 16:20 - 17:34

Last week, we looked at Acts Chapter 15 through Chapter 16 verse 19. We are now approximately twenty years removed from Christ's ascension into heaven, and the Apostles and Disciples of Christ continue to struggle with major doctrinal issues that will shape the church for centuries to come. Two lessons ago, we saw Peter realize for the first time that the gospel was not meant just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. We also saw the church at Antioch commission Paul and Barnabas to go and spread that message during what is known today as Paul's First Missionary Journey.

When Paul and Barnabas return, they spend a long time at Antioch telling the church there about all of the miracles and life-changing things that they saw God do among the Gentiles. Chapter 15 picked up that narrative with the dilemma that addressed the question: Do you also need to be circumcised to be saved? More importantly do you need to be Jew in order to be saved? In other words, once you accept Christ, are you then required to become circumcised and come under the Law of Moses?

After a lengthy discussion before the council at Jerusalem they realized, that people are saved through grace and not because of an act or something that they do. This message was sent back to the church at Antioch, and being encouraged by the council in Jerusalem to continue their work, Paul set out on his Second Missionary Journey. While they are at Philippi, he and Silas are arrested and thrown in jail for casting out a demon from a fortune teller. This lesson picks up the story from there.

For this study, let's read the remaining verses in Chapter 16 and also Chapter 17 then answer the following questions:

1. What happened to Paul and Silas in Chapter 16 verses 20-23?
2. Following what happened to them in verses 22- 23, what remarkable thing do we find Paul and Silas doing in verse 25?
3. When the jailer sees that God has answered their prayers, he asks the question that mankind has been asking down through the ages, "What must I do to be saved?" How do Paul and Silas answer him, in verse 31?
4. When Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica, what does it say in Acts 17:1-2 that they did first, and why?
5. In Thessalonica, did Paul just make a token attempt to preach the Gospel to the Jews in the synagogue before being rejected and shifting his focus to preaching to the Gentiles?
6. What was Paul's approach with the Jews? How did he tell them about Christ?
7. Besides a number of the Jews in the synagogue, who else heard Paul during these three weeks and believed?
8. As was the case in every town that Paul preached the gospel in, the unbelieving Jews raised up a mob against them and drove them out of town (in this case, to Berea). In Acts 17:10-14, we read of Paul's and Silas' visit to Berea. What made the Synagogue at Berea stand out from all the other synagogues that they would visit? (Acts 17:11)

9. Looking back on what that we have read regarding all of the stops on both of Paul's trips so far, what do you think of the comment that what is required of us to be saved is "blind faith"? In contrast, what do we see in every instance where people received the gospel message and were saved? Was their faith "blind"?
10. What does Peter tell us about our faith? Is it blind? See 1 Peter 3:15 and 2 Peter 1:16-21.
11. What did Paul do when he went to Athens, and why? (Acts 17:16-17)
12. Paul's debate in the remaining verses of Chapter 17 with the Greeks on Mars Hill is well known. What principles for reaching the lost can we see Paul developing in his Mars Hill discourse?

In summary, we see that Paul spent considerable time trying to reason with both the Jews and the Gentiles and explaining to them why he knew for a certainty that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. The Messiah, the Christ, was indeed Jesus; and it was only through Him that mankind could find salvation.

We also see that Paul did not water down the truth nor the Gospel message. He knew how to meet people where they lived, and on an intellectual plane equal to their own, with a logical and well-thought-out defense of his faith (just as Peter commands us to do).

We can learn much from Paul regarding how to share the Gospel with others. Let's pray that God will reveal these lessons to us and empower us to continue to let others know about Jesus.

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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