
GOOD NEWS SPREADING

PART 4 · ASIA

We move to a part of Acts which becomes really exciting to see the Good News spread even further abroad (Acts 12:25 – 16:5).

A few major things to note:

- + Paul now becomes central to the story being told
- + Antioch in Syria becomes like the centre of the early church
- + Churches are started throughout Asia Minor because of Paul and Barnabas' mission trip

Good News Spreads Further (Acts 13 – 14)

Paul took Barnabas with him and together they evangelised four primary cities: Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia. In each of those four cities they established churches. After establishing those churches, Paul turned around and travelled back through the area strengthening the saints. He then returned to the church in Antioch of Syria.

From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. Acts 14:26-28 (NIV)

Problems in Jerusalem (Acts 15)

Most of the first converts and early leaders in the church were Jewish Christians who proclaimed Jesus as their Messiah.

As Jewish Christians, they struggled with a dual identity:

- + Jew (following the Law of Moses)
- + Christ Follower

Judaizers – an extremist Jewish faction within the church:

1. They attempted to undermine Paul's apostolic credibility
2. They demanded circumcision as a condition for salvation
3. They required observation of all Jewish ceremonies and ritual.

Essentially the Judaizers were saying:

BEHAVE – BELONG – BELIEVE

Peter's Response (Acts 15:7-11)

- + Peter's own experience in Acts 11
- + Peter solidified his point by telling his colleagues; the yoke of the law was something that "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."
- + Because the participants in the Jerusalem Council were all born-again believers in Jesus, they knew in their hearts that they were saved by grace.

Religious Law:

BEHAVE – BELONG – BELIEVE



Grace:

BELONG - BELIEVE – BEHAVE

Sometimes the Church has emphasised being right which has put us on the opposite side of people we may disagree with.

Love, however, puts us on the same side as people even while we may disagree.

Spiritual freedom comes through the truth and that truth is revealed through Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus Christ and having Him live His life through you is real and genuine freedom.

Salvation, then, is the essence of freedom. A person is a slave to sin and the struggle it causes. When a person comes to Christ, finds truth and is freed from sin – then the person has genuine freedom.

Good News for All People (Acts 15: 13-21)

From the time of Abraham until now, the people of God had been chosen from among the Jews. James is now saying that the believing Gentiles, on their own merits, are accepted by God as if they were Israel – this was part of God's long range plan.

Conclusion

At Riverlife we want to create a community where everyone is welcome and everybody is invited to meet Jesus and hear the Good News.

Loving people the way Jesus did involves deep and radical commitment, a humble acceptance of our own failings in meeting God's standards, sacrificial generosity and a passion to discover and delight in the beauty of God's image in all people, introducing them to the fullness of life that can only be found in Jesus.

We remember that Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners because of the generous love He wanted to share with us. We cannot construct walls of conditions and prerequisites in our own generous love God has inspired in our hearts. Our message of the gospel must reflect the compassion God has shown to the world He loves.

As we move to 17 Mile Rocks will we have an attitude that longs to take the Good News to others in love and with unprecedented levels of compassion?

Discussion Questions

1. Read Acts chapters 13 and 14. Reflect on the wonderful ways God was at work through Paul and Barnabas and the price they paid to see the Good News spread.
2. Would you think it is an exaggeration to say that the Council of Jerusalem was the most important meeting of the Church in all of history? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the difference between: Behave – Believe – Belong Vs Belong – Believe – Behave
4. As we move to 17 Mile Rocks are there unseen prerequisites we have that those who are different from us need to fulfil to come to Jesus? Take some time to bring these before Jesus and repent so He might give us unprecedented levels of compassion for others.