

SESSION 3

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

I. PRAYER/REVIEW

A. Book of Acts: Charted

BOOK OF ACTS			
Author: Luke Theme: Beginnings of the Church Key Verse: Acts 1:8			
Chapter 1	Chapter 2-7	Chapter 8-12	Chapter 13-28
Introduction	Witnessing in Jerusalem	Witnessing in Judea/Samaria	Witnessing to the Ends of the Earth
Focus: Jews		Jews + ½ Jews	Gentiles

B. Book of Acts: Outlined

1. Key Verse
Acts 1:8
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
2. Key points:
 - a. Witnessing in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)
 - b. Witnessing in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)
 - c. **Witnessing to the Ends of the Earth (Acts 13-28)**

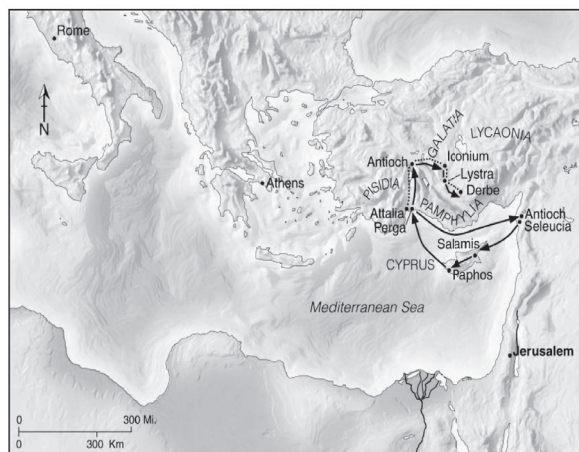
II. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF PAUL

Paul's Missionary Journeys			
Acts 13-14	Acts 15	Acts 15-18	Acts 18-21
Journey #1	Jerusalem Council	Journey #2	Journey #3
Journey to Rome (Acts 21-28)			

III. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT: MISSIONARY JOURNEY #1 (ACTS 13-14)

Acts 13:1-3

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: **Barnabas**, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and **Saul**.² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me **Barnabas and Saul** for the work to which I have called them."³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and **sent them off**.



Taken from Jensen, Acts, 175.

A. In Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

1. From Antioch to Seleucia, Paul and Barnabas set sail to the island of Cyprus (4).
 - a. They preached in Salamis (east side of the island) (5).
 - b. They were joined there by John Mark, their helper (6).
 - c. They traveled across Cyprus to Paphos (west side of the island) where they encountered the “Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus,” an attendant to the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus (7).
 - d. The proconsul wished “to hear the word of God” but was opposed by Elymas the sorcerer (perhaps the nickname of the man, Bar-Jesus).

Acts 13:9-12

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

2. The Biblical text records the notable results on preaching in Cyprus.

Acts 13:12

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

B. In Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52)

Refer to the map, “Paul’s first Missionary Journey” (see pg. 44)

1. The travel itinerary (13-14): note places on map.
2. Paphos (on Cyprus) to Perga (in Pamphylia) (13).

At Perga John Mark left to return to Jerusalem. This action will frustrate Paul (note that “Paul” is the apostle’s name from this time on—v.13). Later, Paul will refuse

to allow John Mark to accompany him on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41), a harsh dispute that separated Paul from Barnabas.

3. Perga to Pisidian Antioch (14-52)
 - a. On the first Sabbath of their visit, Paul and Barnabas attended the synagogue (14-15).
 - b. Paul was invited to speak "a message of encouragement for the people" (15).

Synopsis of Paul's Sermon

Acts 13:16-41

"From the Exodus to Jesus"

- A. Exodus from Egypt and Conquest of the Land (13-19)
- B. Judges to Samuel to Saul and David (20-22)
- C. From David's Descendants to the Forerunner to the Savior Jesus (23-25)
- D. Salvation through Jesus Rejected (26-27)
- E. Death, Resurrection, Appearances of Jesus (28-31)
- F. Gospel Promised to Fathers Fulfilled in David's Descendant, Jesus (32-37)
- G. Summary and Application (38-41)

Acts 13:38-41

"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: ⁴¹"Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."

- c. Paul and Barnabas are invited to speak again—on the next Sabbath (42-43).

Acts 13:42-43

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

- d. On the second Sabbath, Paul spoke in the synagogue (44-48).

(1) The Jewish leaders were “filled with jealousy and talked abusively” against Paul (45).

(2) Paul and Barnabas replied (46-47):

Acts 13:46-47

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

- e. The result of Paul and Barnabas’ preaching:

Acts 13:49-52

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. ⁵²And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

C. In Iconium (14:1-7)

Paul and Barnabas next traveled to Iconium (about 90 miles east of Pisidian Antioch). As customary they preached first at the Jewish synagogue where a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed (1). Opposition arose from certain Jews

who plotted to “mistreat and stone them” (2-5). Before the plot could be carried out, the two departed (6).

D. In Lystra and Derbe (14:8-20)

1. Miraculous healing: the setting (8)

Acts 14:8

In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked.

Note that there is no mention of the synagogue in this story. Apparently there was none, thus the two may have preached openly and widely in the city.

2. Miraculous healing: the sign (9-10)

Acts 14:9-10

He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

- a. The man heard Paul’s preaching.
- b. The man “had faith to be healed.”

This incident parallels the earlier account of a lame man near the Temple gate (Acts 3-4).

Similar Healings	
Acts 3-4	Acts 14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man crippled from birth • Peter (and John) • Peter: "Look at us." • Miraculous healing (no faith mentioned) • Jumped and walked • Crowd amazed • Peter corrects crowd (not "by our own power or godliness") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man lame from birth • Paul (and Barnabas) • "Paul looked directly at him" • Miraculous healing (faith present in man) • Jumped and walked • Crowd amazed • Paul and Barnabas (tore clothes, "...only men, human like you")

3. Miraculous healing: the sequel (11-18)

a. The crowds thought that Paul was Zeus and Barnabas was Hermes; even the local priest wanted to sacrifice to the "gods."

b. Paul responded:

Acts 14:14-18

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵"Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

4. Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrive (19-20)
 - a. They won the crowd over to their view of Paul (19).
 - b. They stoned Paul and left him for dead (19).
 - c. Paul and Barnabas departed (20).

E. Return to Antioch (in Syria) (14:21-28)

1. From Lystra to Derbe (21)

Acts 14:21

They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch...

2. From Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch (22-23)

Acts 14:22-23

...strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. ²³Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

3. From Pisidian Antioch to Region of Pamphylia (24-25)
4. From Perga to Attalia (25)
5. From Attalia to Antioch (in Syria, the home-base) (26-28)
 - a. The first missionary journey was completed.
 - b. Paul and Barnabas reported to the church "all that God had done through them" (27).
 - c. Paul and Barnabas shared how God "had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (27).

IV. EPISTLES WRITTEN NEAR THIS TIME

At the conclusion of Paul's First Missionary Journey (Apr 48-Sept 49; Hoehner chronology) and before the Second Missionary Journey, a momentous gathering occurred in Jerusalem. This was the famous Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15). A summary of the issue faced and its resolution will be discussed in the next section (V. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL—ACTS 15).

But prior to this gathering, two New Testament letters were penned: James and Galatians. An overview of each letter follows.

A. James

1. Authorship

James 1:1

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

a. There are four “James” mentioned in the New Testament.

- (1) James, the brother of John and one of the Twelve (martyred by Herod Agrippa I around 44 AD); death too early to be the author.
- (2) James, the son of Alphaeus and one of the Twelve (Mk 3:18); considered to be too obscure to be the author.
- (3) James, the father of Judas (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13); also considered to be too obscure to be the author.
- (4) James, the half-brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church (Matt 13:55; Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13-21; et al.). This James became a believer after the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:7).

b. Note that James describes himself as “a servant (not an apostle) of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Additionally he does not add “and half-brother of Jesus.”

2. Addressees

The letter is sent to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (1:1). Likely, there are Jewish believers living outside of the land of Palestine (Israel). Their dispersal (“scattered”; Grk. diaspora) occurred with the persecutions associated with Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 8:1; 11:19).

3. Theme

James focused on encouraging dispersed people in the face of persecution. His letter consists of practical counsel for everyday conduct. Theologically, it is a necessary companion to Galatians. Galatians argues that believers are justified by faith not works. James argues that true (authentic) faith works itself out in conduct.

4. Distinctives

- a. James closely parallels the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). Note the comparisons that follow (taken from Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook, 928).

PARALLELS BETWEEN JAMES AND JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT	
James	Matthew
1:2	5:11-12
1:4	5:48
1:5	7:7
1:17	7:11
1:20	5:22
1:22	7:24
1:23	7:26
2:5	5:3, 5
2:10	5:19
2:11	5:21-22
2:13	5:7
2:15	6:24
3:12	7:16
3:18	5:9
4:2	7:7
4:3	7:7-8
4:4	6:24
4:11-12	7:1
4:13-14	6:34
5:2	6:19-20
5:9	5:22; 7:1
5:10	5:11-12
5:12	5:34-37

- b. James contains a large number of imperative commands (50+) in the 108 verses of the letter.
 - c. There are no personal references to original recipients in James; the phrase “my brothers” or “dear brothers” occurs 13 times.
 - d. James does mention the Old Testament characters of Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah. Further, he speaks of the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses. James may have the most Jewish flavor of any New Testament book (perhaps excluding Hebrews).
 - c. There are but two references to Jesus (yet allusions to the Sermon on the Mount are prominent).
5. Chart of James
(Adapted from *Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 926)

THE BOOK OF JAMES		
3 Key Themes (Presented)	3 Key Themes (Repeated)	3 Key Themes (Expounded)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trials (1:2-4) • Wisdom (1:5-8) • Riches/Poverty (1:9-11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trials/Temptations (1:12-18) • Wisdom/Speech (1:19-26) • Possessions (1:27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riches/Poverty (2:1-26) • Wisdom/Actions (3:1-4:17) • Trials/Tribulations (5:1-18)
Closing (5:19-20)		

6. Key Passages
- a. James 1:2-4 (Trials)
*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face **trials** of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- b. James 1:5-6 (Wisdom)
*If any of you lacks **wisdom**, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*
- c. James 1:9-10 (Riches/Poverty)
*Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰But the **rich** should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.*
- d. James 1:12-15 (Trials/Temptations)
*Blessed is the one who perseveres under **trial** because, having stood the **test**, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. ¹³When **tempted**, no one should say, “God is **tempting** me.” For God cannot be **tempted** by evil, nor does he **tempt** anyone; ¹⁴but each person is **tempted** when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*
- e. James 1:19-20 (Wisdom/Speech)
*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to **speak** and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*
- f. James 1:27 (Possessions)
Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
- g. James 2:1-4 (Riches/Poverty)
*My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ²Suppose a **(rich)** man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a **poor** man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to*

the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Insight:

In light of riches and poverty, James challenges those who might profess faith but show no concern or practical action.

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

- h. James 3:13-16 (Wisdom/Actions)
*Who is **wise** and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from **wisdom**.¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.¹⁵ Such "**wisdom**" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*
- i. James 5:7-9 (Trials/Tribulations)
***Be patient**, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.⁸ You too, **be patient** and **stand firm**, because the Lord's coming is near.⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!*
- j. James 5:19-20 (Conclusion)
My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person

back,²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Insight:

Note that the Book of James restates all (but verse 14) of Leviticus 19:12-18:

“Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

¹³“Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. “Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.

¹⁴“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.

¹⁵“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

¹⁶“Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord.

¹⁷“Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

¹⁸“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

B. Galatians

1. Authorship

The letter purports to have been written and sent by Paul (cf. Gal 1:1; 5:2); most scholars agree.

2. Addressees

There has been scholarly debate about the intended recipients.

- a. Some believe the letter was sent to the northern Roman Province known as Galatia, thus the letter was written (according to this view) sometime during the Third Missionary Journey.

- b. Others believe (and I think correctly so) that the letter was written to churches Paul visited in his First Missionary Journey and prior to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). This is called the “South Galatian View.”

3. Theme

In Galatians Paul strongly and passionately defends his apostolic message that salvation (justification) is by **faith alone in Christ alone** apart from human works or merit.

Galatians 2:16

*...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be **justified by faith** in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.*

4. Distinctives

- a. This is likely Paul’s first letter (as inspired scripture).
- b. This letter contains a lengthy vigorous defense of Paul’s authority as a true apostle, “sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...” (1:1).
- c. This letter is a corrective to false teaching that slipped into the churches after Paul’s departure. It is intended for Galatian believers to reset their doctrinal understanding of grace vs. the law.
- d. This letter contains the discussion of “works of the flesh” vs. “fruit of the Spirit.”
- e. This letter is the perfect answer to the coming debate of the Jerusalem Council and is written just prior to the Council (49 AD).

5. Chart of Galatians

GALATIANS					
Chapters 1-2		Chapters 3-4		Chapters 5-6	
Personal		Doctrinal		Practical	
Paul Defends His Authority		Paul Debates His Argument		Paul Discusses His Application	
Paul vs. Human Agency	Paul vs. Religious Tradition	Law vs. Grace	Bondage vs. Liberty	Flesh vs. Spirit	Sowing vs. Reaping
1	2	3	4	5	6

6. Key Passages

a. Paul Defends His Authority (Gal 1-2)

(1) Galatians (1:1)

*Paul, an apostle—sent **not from men nor by a man**, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...*

(2) Galatians 1:6-9

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: **If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!***

(3) Galatians 1:11-12

*I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is **not of human origin**.¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

(4) Galatians 2:7-10

On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised.⁸ For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles.⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

(5) Galatians 2:15-16

"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

b. Paul Debates His Argument (Gal 3-4)

(1) Galatians 3:1-3

*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.² I would like to learn just one thing from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?**³ Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?*

- (2) Galatians 3:6-9
So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁷Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
- (3) Galatians 3:11-14
Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” ¹⁴He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.
- (4) Galatians 3:26-29
So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- (5) Galatians 4:17-20
Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. ¹⁸It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. ¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

c. Paul Discusses His Application (Gal 5-6)

(1) Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

(2) Galatians 5:16-17

*So I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*

(3) Galatians 5:19-21

*The **acts of the flesh** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

(4) Galatians 5:22-23

*But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

(5) Galatians 6:1-2

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. ²**Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.***

(6) Galatians 6:7-9

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.** ⁸Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Insight:

Note the following helpful summary of the message of Galatians (*Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 832-833): Galatians reminds us that there is one true gospel that centers upon the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and that false gospels should be rejected. To say it again, bad theology ultimately hurts people! Salvation is a free gift graciously given by God and is meant to be accepted by faith. Christ has set us free. There is nothing we can do to add to the work of Christ. We become children of God not by performing works of religious law, but by trusting Christ personally. God then gives us his Holy Spirit, who empowered us to please the Lord. We are reminded in this letter that we continue the Christian life the same way we began the Christian life—by depending on God's grace to transform us. It's not that Jesus saves us and then we have to perfect ourselves by moral effort. From beginning to end, we depend on the Lord in faith. We're now free to follow the Spirit who will transform us and empower us to love people. If you're worried about meeting God's holy standard, remember that love fulfills the law.

V. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (ACTS 15:1-35)**A. The Issue (15:1-2)**

Acts 15:1-2

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ²This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

B. The Gentile Converts (15:3)

Acts 15:3

The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.

C. The Theological Issue (15:5)

Acts 15:5

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

D. The Council's Decision (15:6-21)

1. Peter's defense of "faith alone" (6-11)

Acts 15:10-11

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

2. Paul and Barnabas' testimony (12)
3. James agreement (13-21)
Salvation does not require Mosaic works; but Gentiles (for fellowship with Jewish believers) should abstain from certain things as to not unnecessarily offend their Jewish brothers.

E. The Letter Sent to Gentile Believers (15:22-29)

An official letter from the Jerusalem church (led by James) clarified the issue of salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone.

VI. TAKEAWAYS

A. Book of Acts: Missions Focused

The First Missionary Journey of Paul (and Barnabas) Biblically illustrates the working out of Acts 1:8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The church was established as a missionary effort. The Great Commission of Jesus anticipated this:

Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

B. Panorama of the Bible

Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch relates the salvation history of Israel to the point of Jesus the Messiah-King. It is shorter but has close affinity with Stephen's sermon in Acts 7.

Believers need familiarity with the flow of Biblical history as well as the Gospels and other New Testament literature.

Resource:

A helpful resource for grasping the breadth and overall flow of the whole Bible is ***Panorama of the Bible: Revised Edition***.

See The Training Center website at: panorama.fellowshipnwa.org

C. Purpose of Miracles

Signs and wonders continued throughout the Apostolic age. The miracles pointed to (signposts for) authenticating a Biblical messenger and thus, the truthfulness of their message (note the words of Nicodemus about Jesus in Jn 3:1-2). Miracles are not random displays of power; they are given for specific purposes.

D. Galatians vs. James?

Both **Galatians** and **James** were likely penned prior to the Jerusalem Council of 49 AD. Each had a unique message; many believe that these epistles are contradictory to each

other. That is not the case. Each has a specific purpose with respect to the place of faith and works.

A key passage for understanding salvation in this light follows:

Ephesians 2:8-10

*For it is by **grace** you have been **saved**, through **faith**—and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the **gift** of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Note that Galatians picks up on the justification by faith idea (as opposed to works/obedience to the Law).

Galatians 3:11

Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith."

But note also James' contribution (picking up on the idea that authentic, saving faith "works").

James 2:14-18

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

To summarize, a person is justified not by their works, but by grace through faith. And further, that faith issues forth in good works which God planned in advance for us to do (cf. Eph 2:10).

There is no Biblical or theological conflict.

E. Concluding Insight

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) settled this issue (as explained in point D above) for the early church. Authentic Biblical faith works itself out in the life of the follower of Christ.

