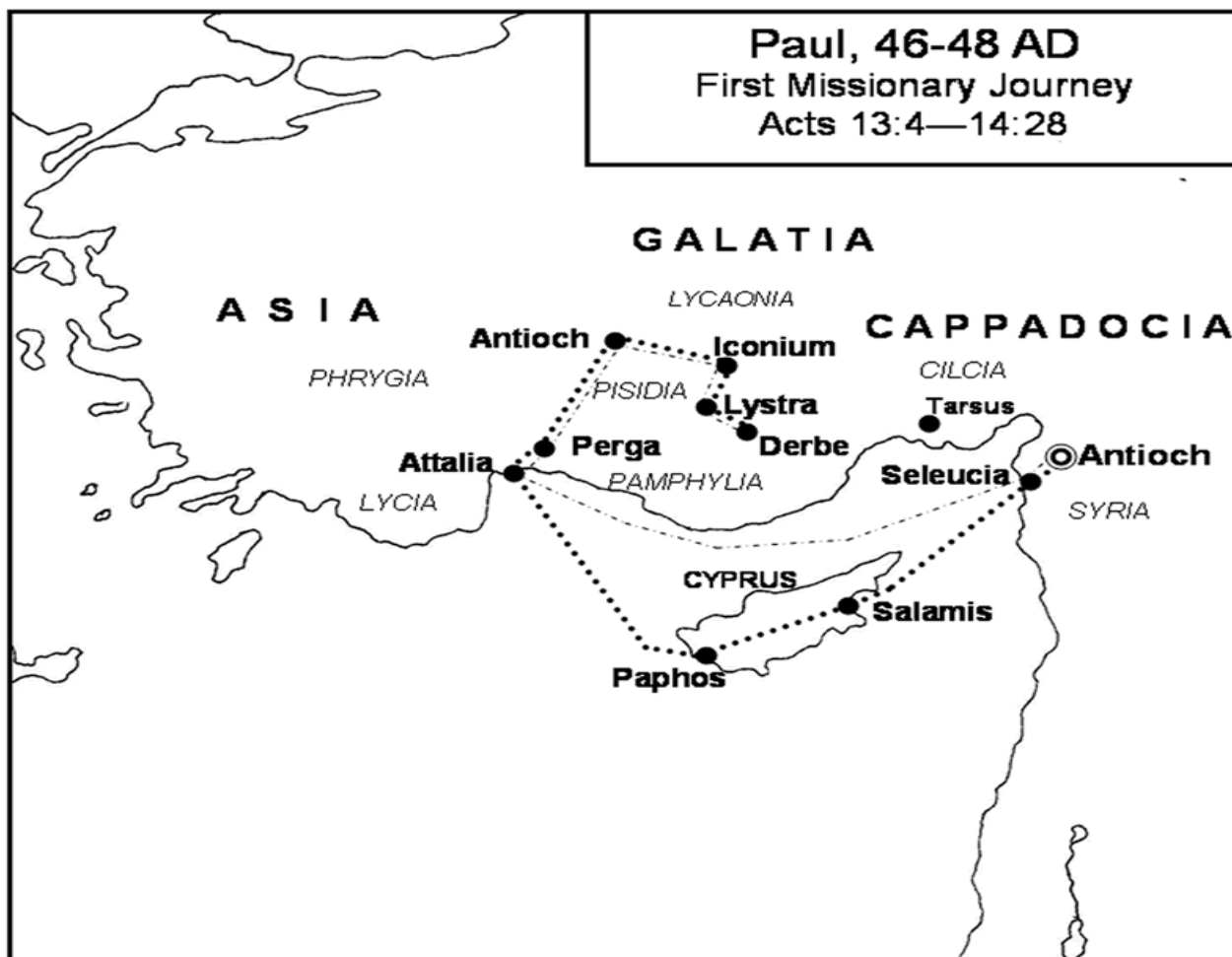


SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD
HAS TO BE CENTRAL IN ALL MINISTRIES!
ACTS CH14:1-7

ILLUSTRATION

Chinese whispers is an internationally popular children's game in which messages are whispered from one person to another person and then the original and final messages are compared. Let's have a go!



Google Images - (Missionary Map Project | Paul's First Missionary Journey)

BACKGROUND

"The Acts of the Apostles was originally written as the second part of a two volume work, and its inseparable relation to Luke's Gospel must be kept in mind if we are to understand the work. The prologue (Introduction) to the two volume work (Luke Ch1:1-4) suggests, in fact, that the authors intention was to write "an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us" - things that stretched from the birth of John the Baptist to the entrance of the Good News into Rome. And the use of the emphatic verb "began" (erxato) as he commences his second volume (Acts Ch1:1) sets up the parallel between "all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach" as recorded in his Gospel and what he continued to do and to teach through his Church as is shown in Acts"(Cited in Richard Longenecker, Commentary on Acts, pg231-232).

Luke is only mentioned **three times in the New Testament** and each time through the apostle Paul's writings we learn something about the qualities of Luke, **Colossians Ch4:14 (my dear friend Luke the Doctor), Philemon 24 (my fellow worker) and 2**

Timothy Ch4:11 (Only Luke is with me).

We need to see the Book of Acts as Luke wants his friend, Theophilus, to see it, with Luke as:

- **A dear friend (Colossians Ch4:14)**
- **A doctor (Colossians Ch4:14)**
- **A fellow and faithful worker (Philemon 24 + 2 Timothy Ch4:11)**

What do we learn about Luke? He is a dear friend to Paul and others, along with being a medic! He is regarded by Paul as a fellow worker in the Gospel and remains a faithful friend, helper and encourager to the end, **as he was present in Rome for both of Paul's imprisonments!**

Along with the above references, in the Book of Acts also written by Luke, he is mentioned in the we/us accounts, during Paul's second missionary journey covered from Acts Ch15:36 – Ch18:22. Finally he is mentioned once on the third missionary journey of Paul in Acts Ch20:15, where we can gather that Luke was part of the team that Paul had assembled to spread the Gospel, making Luke an evangelist!

According to Howard Marshall "Luke is both historian and theologian, and the best term to describe him is evangelist, a term which we believe, includes both of the others ... As a theologian Luke was concerned that his message about Jesus and the early Church should be based upon reliable history He used his history in the service of his theology" (Cited in John Stott Commentary on Acts – pg 29-30).

"Luke's theology of salvation is already adumbrated (future event, foreshadow) in the 'Song of Simeon' or Nunc Dimittis which he records in his Gospel. **Three fundamental truths stand out.**

First, salvation has been prepared by God. In speaking to God, Simeon referred to 'your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people' (Luke Ch2:30-31). Far from being an afterthought, it had been planned and promised for centuries. The same emphasis recurs throughout the Acts. In the sermons of Peter and Paul, not to mention Stephen's defence, Jesus' death, resurrection, reign and Spirit-gift are all seen as the culmination of centuries of prophetic promise.

Secondly, salvation is bestowed by Christ. When Simeon spoke to God of 'your salvation', which he had seen with his own eyes, he was referring to the baby Jesus whom he held in his arms and who had been 'born a Saviour' (Luke Ch2:11). Jesus himself later made the unequivocal statement that he had come 'to seek and to save what was lost' (Luke Ch19:10), and he illustrated this by his three famous parables of human lostness (Luke Ch15:1-32). Then after his death and resurrection his apostles declared that forgiveness of sins was available to all who would repent and believe in Jesus (Acts Ch2:38-39; Ch13:38-39). Indeed, salvation was to be found in no-one else (Acts Ch4:12). For God had exalted Jesus to his right hand 'as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins ...' (Acts Ch5:31).

Thirdly, salvation is offered to all peoples. As Simeon put it, it had been prepared 'in the presence of all the peoples' (literally), to be both a light to the nations and the glory of Israel (Luke Ch2:31-32). Without doubt it is this truth on which Luke lays his major emphasis. In Luke Ch3:6, in reference to John the Baptist, he continues his quotation from Isaiah Ch40 beyond where Matthew and Mark stop, in order to include the statement

'all flesh will see God's Salvation'. In Acts Ch2:17 he records Peter's quotation of God's promise through Joel: 'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.' These two words *pasa sarx*, '**all flesh' or 'all humankind'**', stand as a sign-post near the beginning of each of Luke's two volumes, in both cases embedded in an Old Testament prophecy, to point to Luke's principle message. **Jesus is the Saviour of the world**; nobody is beyond the embrace of his love. In his Gospel, Luke shows Jesus' compassion for those sections of community whom others despised, namely women and children, the poor, the sick, the sinful and the outcast, Samaritans and Gentiles, while in the Acts, Luke explains how Paul came to turn to the Gentiles, and describes the Gospel's triumphal progress from Jerusalem the capital of Jewry to Rome the capital of the world" (Cited in John Stott commentary on Acts, pg 30-31).

WHAT SHOULD THE GOSPEL BE CALLED?

*"Throughout Luke's narrative there are references to the promise, gift, outpouring, baptism, fullness, power, witness and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It would be impossible to explain the progress of the gospel apart from, the work of the Spirit. Nevertheless, if the title "The Acts of the Apostles" over emphasises the human element, "The Acts of The Holy Spirit" over emphasises the divine, since it overlooks the apostles as the chief characters through whom the Spirit worked. It is also inconsistent with Luke's first verse which implies that the acts and words he reports are those of the ascended Christ working through The Holy Spirit who, as Luke knows, is "The Spirit of Jesus" (Acts Ch16:7). **The most accurate (though cumbersome) title, then, which does justice to Luke's own statement in verse 1+2, would be something like "The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by His Spirit through His Apostles" (Cited in John Stott, commentary on Acts pg34)."***

SPEAKING THE TRUTH! V1

The biblical source for the requirement of ten men to complete a *minyan* (lit., "count" or "number") is Numbers Ch14:27. Moses sent spies to scout the land of Canaan. Ten of them returned and issued a report concluding that it was not a conquerable land. God was extremely disappointed with their lack of faith in His abilities. He turns to Moses and Aaron, telling them: "How long will this evil 'assembly' provoke [the Jewish nation] to complain against Me?" From here it is deduced that an "assembly" is comprised of ten men. So at the time of Jesus, 10 Jewish men were needed to start a synagogue!

The Gospels speak of the synagogues of Nazareth (Matt Ch4:23, Ch6:2, Ch9:35, Ch12:9, Ch13:54; Luke Ch4:16, Ch6:6) and in Capernaum (Mark Ch1:21, Ch3:1, Ch6:2; John Ch6:59) as places where our Lord ministered! We know that Paul had a strategy of preaching in the Jewish synagogues first (where there were ones) before preaching to the Gentiles – Ch13:5; Ch13:14; Ch14:1; Ch17:1; Ch17:10; Ch17:17; Ch18:4; Ch18:19; + Ch19:8 (9 times). He knew that the synagogues would have both Jews and those gentiles who had converted to Judaism and he also knew that each Sabbath as was their custom the "Scriptures" (for us the Old Testament) would be opened up, read and explained!

Paul's revealed strategy:

1. Hits major cities.
2. Speaks at the places the Jews gathered.
3. Turns to the Gentiles.
4. Is rewarded for such a bold move.

Paul and Barnabas (minus John Mark) have now travelled 600-700 miles!

Luke uses the word “believed” here in verse one and it is the same word that Luke uses for “true believers” in Ch13:48, Ch17:34 and Ch19:18! It is by both men's preaching and teaching that people come to believe! **Good teaching is so important! What is “good teaching” today? How can we increase our knowledge of books in the Bible and how can we increase our knowledge of Bible doctrines (beliefs)? Simple – By studying God's Word and by living out God's Word! According to Romans Ch10:14-17:-**

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” **16** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

STIRRING UP POISON BECAUSE OF THE TRUTH! V2-3

So, as faith comes from hearing and reveals itself through obedience to God's Word, so unbelief comes from hearing the truth and reveals itself in disobedience. Luke records for us that the unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles! How? John Stott writes through “an unscrupulous slander campaign” (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts, pg 229). Words are used again, but words of untruth, deliberate lies about the two – contemporary “fake news”.

Paul and Barnabas' response to the unbelieving Jews who “stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against them” was to stay for a long time and to speak the gospel boldly - **Boldness translates “as the freedom of speech by those empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God.” It highlights the rights of citizens of the heavenly Kingdom to say anything in public, with an openness to speak the truth BOLDLY.**

The both leaders must have identified an importance of needing to stay, probably based around ongoing discipleship issues.

The phrase “the word of his grace” only appears here in v3 and in Acts Ch20:32, so what does it mean? God's Word is able to save, sanctify, sustain and separate and has to be central in all ministries! God was so pleased to see His Word being so faithfully spoken, that He grants signs and wonders to be done by both Paul and Barnabas. This is a clear sign that God is confirming the truth of His message. However, not all are persuaded by the message!

The signs and wonders that are granted by God confirming the authenticity of the message delivered by Paul and Barnabas.

SIDES BEING TAKEN REACTING TO TRUTH! V4-7

We need to draw attention to the phrase “**apostles**” in verse 4 (along with v14), was Barnabas an apostle? **Barnabas** - Ch4:36 – His name means – son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus! Ch4:37 – He sold a field and laid the money at the feet of the apostles! Ch9:27 – Stuck up for Paul in front of the early Church! (Galatians Ch1:18) Ch11:24 – A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith! Ch11:25-26 – Found Paul and took him to Antioch! Ch13:1-6 – Sent out by the Antioch Church! Ch13:46 – Speaking boldly with Paul!

Ch14:4+14 – He has apostolic gifting! Ch15:36-39 – Had a huge disagreement with the apostle Paul over John Mark! Colossians Ch4:10 – A cousin of John Mark! 1st Corinthians Ch9:6 – Like Paul, never took the rights of an apostle! Galatians Ch2:9-14 – Gentile missionary work, but easily misled! Whenever the apostle Paul mentions Barnabas, it is always with words of sympathy and respect!

Was Barnabas an apostle? John Stott says “On the one hand there were the apostles of Christ, personally appointed by him to be witnesses of the resurrection, who included the twelve, Paul and probably James (Acts Ch1:21; 1st Cor Ch9:1; 1st Cor Ch15:7-9; Acts Ch10:41). There is no evidence that Barnabas belonged to this group. On the other hand, there were the apostles of the churches (2nd Cor Ch8:23) sent out by a Church or Churches on particular missions, as Epaphroditus was an apostle or messenger of the Philippian Church. So too Paul and Barnabas were both apostles of the Church of Syrian Antioch, sent out by them, whereas only Paul was also an apostle of Christ” (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts, page 229). So, I would like to suggest that Barnabas was not an eye-witness to the resurrection of Christ, and therefore not an apostle of Christ, but an apostle of the Church.

Just like in Ch13:50, the slander deteriorates into planned violence against the two evangelists, with city leaders again involved. Somehow, the evangelists discover that there is such a plan and leave, heading off to Lystra (18 miles away) and Derbe (55 miles from Lystra) to continue to preach the glorious Gospel!

Paul and suffering in Acts:

- *Acts Ch13:45 Antioch – Filled with jealousy and talking abusively about what Paul!*
- *Acts Ch13:50 Antioch – Stirred up persecution for Paul and drove them out!*
- *Acts Ch14:5 Iconium – Plot afoot to ill-treat Paul!*
- *Acts Ch14:19 Lystra – They stoned Paul!*
- *Acts Ch16:22 Philippi – Paul was stripped and beaten!*
- *Acts Ch16:23 Philippi – Paul was severely flogged!*

APPLICATION

Where as last week we would have considered, developing a strategy, making a prayer list and being intentional when it comes to creating pathways for people to attend Church to hear the Good News!

This week, we want to consider what ministries has God arranged for us through Church?

How central is the teaching and preaching of God's Word in these ministries?

What, if anything, needs to be done to ensure that God's Word is central?

What things can happen, according to Ch14:1-7, can take place as God's Word is central in mission?