

1. Chapter 14 Concludes Paul's first missionary journey.
2. Chapter 15 records the Jerusalem Council.
3. 3 Crises:
  - a. Internal - The Hellenistic Jewish widows felt they were being neglected. This led to the choosing of deacons to make sure all needs were met.
  - b. External - Persecution began with the stoning of Stephen.
  - c. The crisis in today's reading was precipitated by the Gentiles responding in large numbers to the Gospel.
4. Apostles:
  - a. They had special authority that came from Christ.
  - b. There were more than the original 12.
  - c. The total number was very small.
5. Some will accept the Gospel and some will oppose it.
  - a. The opposition's strategy:
    - 1) Shout down the teaching so offensive to them.
    - 2) Create a civil disturbance.
    - 3) Accuse Paul and his companions of causing the problems.
    - 4) Force Paul's party to leave town.
6. The opposition used the above strategy in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra.
7. The Gospel is still offensive to some today.

8. Paul was willing to pay a high price physically to spread the Gospel.
9. Paul and Barnabas are adamant that they are only messengers.
  - a. God gets all the glory.
  - b. When Paul spoke with people who had little or no consciousness of God, he began with “God is the Creator.”
10. Paul’s message to the new believers: “We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.”
11. The first mention of elders occurs in today’s’ reading.
12. The Council in Jerusalem – Chapter 15:
  - a. Paul’s preaching to the Gentiles and their response has given him enemies among the Jewish Christians.
  - b. The theological level of the conflict: Faith plus works versus faith alone
  - c. The cultural level of the conflict: Do “they” have to become like “us” to know Jesus?
  - d. The answer of the Council: Gentile believers do not have to become Jews to know Jesus. Acts 15 is a pivotal chapter in the New Testament.

1. Galatians was probably written just before or after the Jerusalem Council, which happened in 49 A.D.
  
2. Some matters of doctrine and practice are worth fighting for.
  
3. The critical issue for Paul is justification by faith alone.
  
4. We have the same issues today that Paul had with the Judaizers.
  - a. “Doing things” can never make you right with God.
  
  - b. Only be justified by faith in Christ can make us right with God.
  
5. It is the message – not the messenger – that is important – evaluate the messenger in light of the message; do not evaluate the message in light of the messenger. This is one of the reasons why we need to “know the Word”.
  
6. Paul felt the need to confront and rebuke Peter.
  - a. Paul took the risk because a fundamental principle was at stake.
  - b. He was obeying the New Testament injunction to “admonish one another”.
  - c. Peter responded positively to Paul’s rebuke.
    - 1) He accepts it.
  
    - 2) He did not hold it against Paul – he is still his dear brother in the Lord.

1. We have read historical passages – the facts of a story. We have read wisdom literature like the Psalms. Today we read a "didactic" portion – teaching us what and how we are to think and believe.

2. Some have suggested that Galatians is a kind of "rough draft" for the Book of Romans that was written later.

3. Galatians 3 and 4 – "Justification by faith alone."

4. Legalism is the view that keeping the law is the central factor in determining a person's status before God.

5. Paul's thesis that justification is by faith alone:

a. Your experience - Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the Law or by believing the message of the Gospel?

b. Abraham's experience – "He (Abraham) believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." Salvation has always been by faith alone.

c. So why did give the Law?

1) "Because of transgressions"

2) A “schoolmaster to lead is to Christ”

6. Galatians 4:7 – “So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has also made you an heir.”

The 2-fold effect of God’s promise:

- a. It unites us to other believers who belong to Christ
- b. It means that God has adopted us.

7. Paul uses the historical story of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory.

- a. Allegories generally have several points to make, unlike parables that have one point.
- b. This is the only time Paul uses an actual story as an allegory and we should not allegorize other portions of Scripture because Paul does so here.

8. In chapter 3, in talking about the promise that God made to Abraham and his “seed”, Paul places an extraordinary amount of emphasis upon the fact that Scripture says “seed” (singular) instead of “seeds” (plural).

- a. Christ is the “seed.”
- b. Paul believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

1. Galatians is divided into 3 equal parts:

- a. Galatians 1 and 2: The personal part of the argument – Paul denounces the Judaizers and establishes his personal credentials.
- b. Galatians 3 and 4: The main theological argument: It is faith in what Jesus Christ has done that justifies a person before God.
- c. Galatians 5 and 6: The practical chapters - Paul helps us work out the implications of our theology in the arena of everyday life.

2. Theology:

- a. It always has practical applications.
- b. It is impossible to live properly if your theology – your understanding - is faulty.

3. The theme of Galatians 1-4: The righteous live by faith – they do not depend upon the keeping of the law.

How does this work itself out in the life of the believer?

- a. 5:1 – “Stand firm and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”
  - 1) We are no longer driven by fear and guilt and must not allow ourselves to be placed into the bondage of legalism again.
  - 2) Christianity is a relationship, not a list of rules and regulations.
  - 3) If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, it really “is finished.”
  - 4) However, we must not fall into the error of “antinomianism” – the belief that because I am justified by faith alone, I can live as I please.

- 5) 5:13 – “Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Rather serve one another in love.” This involves the motives for the actions we choose.

4. Chapter contrasts the acts of the sinful nature with the fruit of the Spirit.

- a. The acts of the sinful nature are both external, and internal (where everything starts).
- b. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
  - 1) The “fruit” are the characteristics of Christ’s own life reproduced in those who believe by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - 2) The “Fruit of the Spirit” is given more prominence in the New Testament than the “Gifts of the Spirit”.
  - 3) We cannot produce the fruit in our lives; the Spirit does that.

5. Chapter 6:

- a. The Spirit-filled person will seek restoration for the believer who has fallen into sin, while keeping a careful watch on his own life.
- b. Paul appears to have a problem with his eyesight.
- c. Paul asks for the respect of his readers, because he “bears on his body the marks of Christ.”

1. Paul's second missionary journey:

- a. This great work of God begins with a sharp controversy between Paul and Barnabas.
  - 1) It centered on John Mark.
  - 2) Two Spirit-filled Christians can disagree.
  - 3) They went their separate ways, but their disagreement did not make them enemies.
  - 4) Barnabas performed an invaluable ministry to the church in not giving up on John Mark.
- 5) The result was 2 effective ministries instead of one:
  - a) Paul and Silas
  - b) Barnabas and John Mark

2. Before setting out on this second missionary journey, Paul has one of his young apprentices, Timothy, circumcised, which seems rather confusing after the Council of Jerusalem's decision.

- a. Timothy had a Jewish mother and had been raised observing Jewish ceremonial laws.
- b. Paul was adamant about principles and would not compromise them, but he was also practical when it came to reaching people with the Gospel.
- c. They began their journey through Asia Minor and people came to know the Lord daily.

3. Paul's vision at Troas:

- a. This marks a turning point in the history of the Christian faith. Paul had made his plans, but God overrules with His own plans.
- b. Paul aggressively evangelized in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens:

- 1) Go to the principal city of the region
- 2) Begin at the place where there are most likely to be receptive people.
- 3) Until a strong core group has been founded or until he is driven out of the city, Paul attached himself to a new convert and explored their “web of influence”, looking for more converts.
- 4) He taught and established those who had put their faith in Christ.

4. In Athens he found the altar dedicated to “The Unknown God.”

- a) Paul uses this to begin a discussion about the true God with the Athenians.
- b) This altar came as a result of a plague that could not be stopped by trying to appease all of their many gods. A mysterious Cretan prophet instructed them to build this altar (and others). His name was Epimenedes.
- c) Paul used this altar to “The Unknown God” as a “key” to enable him to reach them with the Gospel. “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:11)