

Brentwood Bible Fellowship
Reading thru the New Testament
2017

Week 6
The Book of Acts
Acts 10-14

Suggested Weekly Memory Verse: Acts 10:34 or 10:34-35

*Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,
but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.*

NAS Version

February 6 - February 12

Monday - Acts 10 (God does not discriminate according to race!)

Tuesday - Acts 11 (Jews learn that they are not alone in the church.)

Wednesday - Acts 12 (James is Martyred - Peter is Spared)

Thursday - Acts 13 (Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey)

Friday - Acts 14 (The first missionary journey completed)

Saturday - Review

Sunday - Review

Questions and comments concerning the daily readings

Acts 10-14

Week Six

Acts 10 (Gentiles can be Christians too!)

Acts 10 is an extremely important chapter in the history of the universal church. Throughout the Old Testament, God and the Old Testament prophets dealt primarily with the descendants of Abraham; the nation of Israel. Jesus was a direct descendant of Abraham as well as King David. Jesus Christ was the Israelites promised messiah and our Lord and Savior. In Genesis 12:3 God had promised Abraham, that in him, all of the families of the world would be blessed, not just the Israelites. Yet, Jesus did come first to the Jews, and the earliest converts to Christianity were Jews.

In Acts 8, Philip carried the gospel message from Jerusalem to Samaria. For centuries, there had been a religious hatred and racial prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said the gospel would spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. Proof that the Samaritans had been added to the church along with the Jews was when Peter and John went up from Jerusalem to the Samaritans in Acts 8:14-17. The proof of their conversion came when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in different tongues, just as the disciples had done when the holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost. This was the fulfillment of Jesus statement to the Samaritan woman in John 4 that a time was coming when neither Jerusalem nor the mountain on which the Samaritans worshipped would be the place where God would be worshipped, but true worshippers would worship God in Spirit and in truth. Neither race, nor location would be an issue any longer. (John 4:21-22)

As we move into our study of Acts 10, Peter introduces the gospel to Cornelius, a Roman Centurion and his friends and family. Like the Apostles and disciples at Pentecost, and the Samaritans of Acts 8, Cornelius and the other gentiles with him receive the Holy Spirit as well, and as proof of their conversion they begin to speak in tongues. Christianity, a faith primarily centralized in Jerusalem and Judea with only Jewish converts now becomes an international universal faith to be embraced by all peoples. The promise to Abraham that all people would be blessed in him was now a reality. It was all made possible by the fulfillment of Christ's words in Acts 1:8 that the message would move from Jerusalem to Samaria and ultimately the remotest parts of the earth.

It is the message of Acts 10 which made the gospel accessible to you and to me.

1. Verses 1-2 introduces us to the first known gentile convert to Christianity, that is if the Ethiopian Official of Acts 8 was already a proselyte to Judaism and I believe he was.

We know that he was a soldier from Italy since he was part of the Italian cohort. He was a centurion, an officer in command of 100 Roman soldiers. He was stationed at Caesarea, an important port city on the Mediterranean coast. It was the Roman capitol of Judea. It was located about 30 miles north of Joppa where Peter happened to be ministering at that time.

Cornelius was friendly to and highly respected by the Jews. Though not a full Jewish proselyte, he did worship and pray to God and gave freely to the needs of the Jewish people.

2. Verses 3-8 According to verse 4, God honored Cornelius' prayers and generosity.
Note that our prayers and good works do not go unnoticed by God.

An angel that came to Cornelius with specific instructions for Cornelius to send for Peter. When the angel had departed, Cornelius responded in immediate obedience to his instructions. He sent two of his servants a devout soldier to get Peter.

What can we learn from the example of Cornelius in verses 1-8, which we can apply to our lives?

3. Acts 10:9-16

According to verse 9 it was the sixth hour or about noon. Peter went to the roof to pray, and while he was praying, he became hungry. When Peter was in the garden with Jesus, instead of praying, he went to sleep. Physical need can sure interrupt our prayer time, can't it?

Peter had been a devout Jew all his life, faithfully keeping the law. While he was in prayer, and waiting for lunch, God placed him in a trance. God gave him a vision of a sheet being lowered from heaven filled with all kinds of unclean, detestable animals, unfit for Jewish consumption. (To see list of the animals included, go to Leviticus 11). Three times this took place. Peter was instructed to do the unthinkable, to kill and eat. Peter's response: NO WAY!!! Peter had never eaten anything unholy or unclean. The voice said, what God has cleansed is no longer consider unholy.

Jesus made a similar statement concerning food during his earthly ministry. (See Mark 7:19) Somehow Peter had missed what Jesus had said.

If you had kept some rules relevant to your faith for years and then someone said you didn't need to keep them any longer, how do you think you might have responded?

If you chose to keep the old laws, how might you respond or judge others who didn't?

God seemed to deal with Peter in 3's. Three times Peter failed to pray in the garden before Jesus was tried and crucified. Three times Peter denied Jesus during Jesus trial. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. When Peter responded in an affirmative, Jesus instructed him to feed His sheep. (John 21:15-18)

Now, three times God displays a vision of unclean animals to Peter and instructs him to kill and eat.

Why do you think Peter was reminded or confronted concerning something three times on each occasion? Has God ever had to remind you of something more than once? Can you think of an occasion when that took place?

4. Acts 10:17-23

The three representatives of Cornelius arrive. Peter is directed to receive them and then to go with them. They are most likely all gentiles.

Do you think Peter's vision only had to do with unclean food, or might it also have had to do with accepting people who Peter, himself, may have considered unclean or unfit to spend time with, such as a gentile Roman soldier and his friends?

Is there anyone or any group of individuals you might have trouble associating with, even if it gave you an opportunity to share your faith with them? Can you think of anything that might keep you from associating with any non-believers?

5. V. 23 Why was it important that others from Joppa went with Peter?

6. Notice how excited, according to verse 24, Cornelius was about the arrival of Peter. He had invited a house full of guests. How do you think Peter felt about this? How do you think you would have felt if you were in Peter's sandals?

7. It must have been a shock for Peter when Cornelius fell down to worship him in verses 25-26. That would have been a WOW moment for Peter. A Roman officer falling down to worship him. What do you think Cornelius believed about Peter? Why? How do you feel about Peter's response in verse 26?

8. How might you have responded to Peter's opening statement in verses 27-29. Listen to my paraphrase. Remember the house is full of gentiles.

Two days ago, I, a Jew, would not have entered this home full of unclean gentiles who were surly not as good as me. But now, God has informed me that you are not really unclean or unholy. (The vision) So, I came without any objection. So, I am here, what do you want?

9. How do you feel about Cornelius' response to Peter? What do you think about his attitude? Remember he is a man of authority . How might you compare Cornelius' attitude to the attitude of Peter?
10. How did Peter's attitude and understanding seem to change in verses 34-35?
11. Acts 10:36-43 Peter shares, saying that they are already aware of the events which surrounded Jesus in Judea. I would expect that any Roman soldiers who were at the crucifixion and then on guard when Jesus was resurrected shared what they had seen and heard with the other Roman soldiers. A centurion would need to be aware of the current events which might affect him and his men. It may have been that some of those in the house had actually been in Jerusalem during the crucifixion.

In Luke 23:47 the centurion at the foot of the cross commented that surly Jesus was innocent. In Mark 15:39, the centurion professed that Jesus must have been the Son of God. Such a response I would expect had been shared with the troops at Caesarea.

Also, notice in verse 41 that not everyone saw the risen Lord. Only the witnesses that God had chosen beforehand. These witnesses ate and drank with Jesus during this time and in so doing proved that He was not simply an apparition or a spirit being. To eat and drink he had to have a physical body.

In I Corinthians 15 there is a list of the witnesses who were privileged to see Jesus.

12. Verse 43 is the inclusion of gentile believers into the church. The gospel message is that anyone, Jew, Samaritan or Gentile, who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of their sins. Everyone means everyone. It is not limited to a few, or one race. That means me!!! Praise the Lord we were not left out!!!
13. In verses 44-48 it is evident that they believed. The Holy Spirit came upon them as he had the Apostles at Pentecost and the Samaritans later. The presence of the Holy Spirit was evidenced because they began to speak in tongues. Due to the filling of the Holy Spirit as evidenced through the use of tongues, Peter saw no reason not to accept the new gentile believers into the body and baptize them as an external evidence of their internal conversion.

Acts 11 Peter convinces the Jews that God has accepted the gentiles

1. Acts 11:1-18 is simply a verification by Peter that God has included the gentiles in the church. No one who believes is to be excluded.

2. Acts 11:1-3 What does the attitude of the Jewish believers seem like to you? Shouldn't they have been ecstatic about the news that Jesus had included the gentiles into the body as well as the Jews and Samaritans? What was their problem? Is that attitude ever evidenced in the church today? Explain your answer.
3. Does it sound like Peter might have been just a little apologetic when he explained the events leading up to and including his visit in Cornelius' home?
4. Why was it important for Peter to share about the six men who went with him into the home of Cornelius? Acts 11:12
5. What do you think about Peter's attitude in verse 17? Does he sound very excited about the situation?
6. How do you like the response of the believing Jews in verse 18?

Acts 11:19-30 The church moves to Antioch

7. As you read verses 19-21 note how the church is spreading geographically from Jerusalem to Samaria, to Antioch. It is also moving racially from the Jews to the Samaritans, to the Greeks. These were gentiles who spoke Greek and lived according to Greek customs.
8. Acts 11:22-24 What do you remember about Barnabas? Why would he be the ideal pastor for the new church in Antioch? Why did the church continue to grow according to this passage?
9. Acts 11:25-26 When the church grew, Pastor Barnabas went looking for an Associate. Why would he choose Saul?

Note, in Antioch the believers were first called Christians or Christ-ians.

10. The famine which Agabus foretold has been verified historically. It was said to have been especially severe around Jerusalem. It was special to see the extended church dig deep to send relief to assist their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. How might we develop or demonstrate a similar action of generosity in 2017 at BBF?

Acts 12 - James is Martyred – Peter is spared!

Chapter 12 appears to be a transition chapter. The focus moves from Jerusalem to Antioch. In chapter 13 we will begin to observe the Missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul and his companions.

1. In Acts 12, the church experiences the first government or state sponsored persecution. In verses 1-2 Herod, the grandson of Herod the Great, who we read about at the birth of Christ, had James the Apostle, brother of John, killed by the sword. This was the first of the apostles to be martyred. Interestingly, his brother John would be the last of the apostles to die and the only one not martyred. Until now, the persecution had been at the hands of the Jews, not the state.
2. Seeing that his actions in killing James pleased the Jews, Herod decided that he would arrest Peter and when the feast was over, have him tried and executed as well. Herod was taking no chance that Peter might escape. He assigned four squads of soldiers to guard Peter, even though he was in prison. They would stand six hour shifts. Four soldiers were on guard at any one time. It appears that two would be chained to Peter and two would stand guard at the door. That should have been sufficient to make sure Peter would not escape.
3. Peter's Escape – Acts 12:6-11

As you read this passage of scripture, what impresses you about the escape of Peter? How do you think Peter was able to peacefully sleep through the night knowing that he would be tried and executed the next day? What were Peter's thoughts about his escape in verse 9? How had his thoughts about the escape changed by verse 11?

4. According to the twelfth verse, how did the church respond to Peter's imprisonment? Do churches today respond to crisis situations either for the nation, the church or individuals in the same way? Can you give some examples.

We will learn more about John Mark later in the Book of Acts. At the present it is enough to know that his mother was an important part of the Jerusalem church. It is also important to know that this John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark.

5. When Peter escaped, he went immediately to the home of Mary. Apparently he believed a segment of the church would be there. When he arrived a servant girl named Rhoda came to the door. Why didn't she let Peter in? She ran and announced to the rest who were probably in prayer that Peter was at the door. They were in prayer for his deliverance. They did not believe her, even though they were praying that God would deliver him. They even thought it might be Peter's guardian angel at the door, but they

did not believe it could be Peter. Finally they went to open the door and there was Peter. Note, God had heard and responded to their prayers.

This seems like a strange passage to me. It is hard to believe that they were praying so hard and so diligently for God to deliver Peter and yet when he did, they refused to believe it. Do we sometimes respond in a similar way to answered prayer? Can you think of an example? Or do we lack faith to pray to begin with.

Note: Peter, once he had explained how he had been delivered from prison, encouraged them to tell James and the other believers. This of course is not the Apostle James as he was dead. This was the half-brother of Jesus. During Christ's ministry, James did not seem to accept him as the messiah, the Lord. After the resurrection, it says in I Corinthians 15 that Jesus revealed himself to James. James became leader of the church at Jerusalem. He also authored the book of James.

6. In verses 18-19, when Peter could not be found in prison and there was no visible evidence of his escape, Herod must have concluded it was an inside job and had all of the guards executed instead of Peter.
7. It is not a good idea to cross God. In verses 20-23 we view Herod's ugly premature death. Tyre and Sidon were cities on the Mediterranean coast to the north of Caesarea. They were not Judean cities, but they traded with Judea for their food. For some reason, Herod was displeased with Tyre and Sidon and determined to withhold their food and supplies. They came seeking a peace agreement and to have the shipments of their food again restored.

It was a special feast day when they arrived. Herod was decked out in his finest. They began to call out "the voice of the God not a man" in their honor for Herod, much as they may have done for a Caesar.

God is a jealous God. He does not want the honor of deity attributed to anyone else. Herod accepted their honor of him as deity and immediately God struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died. Not a pretty ending for a petty violent man.

What might we expect if we attribute such honor or receive such honor for ourselves?

8. According to verse 24, what happened to the church as a result, or in spite of the growing persecution?

Acts 13 – Let the International Missions begin

This is the last major division in Acts. The church began in Jerusalem. That was the location of the first seven chapters of Acts. The people reached during that time were Jewish. In chapters 8-12, the church expanded to Judea and Samaria. Again, the primary target audience was Jewish along with a few gentiles.. Beginning in Acts 13 the center of the ministry moves to Antioch. Paul's ministry will become the focus rather than Peter's. The target audience will be primarily gentile rather than Jewish.

Acts 1:8 sets the tone for all of this. The key verse for the book of Acts. Beginning in Jerusalem, the church expanded to Judea and Samaria and now it is moving into the uttermost parts of the earth. God had a plan and it's working out perfectly.

As we start Acts 13, Barnabas and Saul are a team. By Acts 13:9 Saul no longer goes by Saul, but by Paul, his Greek name. In just a short period of time the team will no longer be recognized as Barnabas and Paul, but rather Paul and Barnabas. Paul seem to become the chief preacher and spokesman. Barnabas steps back and Paul takes the lead.

Acts 13

1. In verses 1-4 we find the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul for mission work. What was the church leadership team doing when it became apparent that Barnabas and Saul were to go out on a missions trip? Who called Barnabas and Saul into the ministry? Who confirmed that they had been called into the ministry? Do you believe there is a spiritual calling for pastors today? Who was it that ultimately sent the two out on their missions trip?

What was significant about the laying on of hands?

If you have a study bible with a map section in the back, check out the itinerary of their first mission trip.

You may want to compare Paul's three missionary journeys with a map of the modern Mediterranean area.

2. According to verse 5 they made their first visit at a Jewish synagogue. This became a pattern in Paul's ministry. Why do you think Paul would go to preach in the synagogue when he entered a new town?

Barnabas and Saul, along with John Mark set sail for the island of Cypress. You may remember that according to Acts 4:36-37 Barnabas was originally from Cypress.

The first convert is Sergius Paulus, the proconsul at Paphos on Cypress. What kept the proconsul from initially committing his life to Jesus? What did Paul do to change the circumstances? How did this authenticate Paul's ministry?

3. In Acts 13:13 the three set sail for Perga. It was here that John Mark left them to go home. We do not know exactly why, but we do know that when he wanted to go in the second Journey that Paul would not allow him to come. As a result, Barnabas and Paul will separate.
4. They travel from Perga inland to Antioch Pisidia.

Acts 13:16-25 In Antioch Pisidia Paul gives his first sermon in a synagogue. What points stand out to you concerning Paul's message? What did he say was special about King David? What does that mean to you when you think of David?

Acts 13: 26- 37 What important points did Paul make concerning the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus? List the essential things he mentioned had to take place before Jesus could be removed from the cross?

How were David and Jesus different according to verses 36-37?

5. According to Acts 13:38-41, what blessings would come to the audience if they believed and responded to what Paul had said? Is this true for all people today as well?
6. In verse 42-43 all men, Jews and Gentiles were impressed by the message and wanted to hear more. What is true one week is not always true the next week as we will see.
7. In verses 44-47, the next Sabbath the synagogue was packed.

Why were the Jews unhappy with Paul and Barnabas? Everyone seemed so agreeable the week before. Was the problem with the message?

As a result of the Jews response, what did Paul and Barnabas do?

8. What was the impact of Paul's message on the gentile listeners? What was the impact on the surrounding communities? What was the response of the Jews? Why did they respond differently than the gentiles?

How did Paul and Barnabas respond to how they had been treated? Are there any lessons we can learn for ministries today?

Acts 14 – The first missionary journey continues.

1. Acts 14:1-7 Paul and Barnabas travelled to Iconium where once again they spoke in the synagogue. Do you see the pattern of their ministry? To the Synagogue, to the Jew first and then the Greek. (See Romans 1:16) We see that many, both Jews and gentiles believed, but yet there was a group of the Jews who chose not to believe. Though the message was good, and though they performed signs and wonders among them, still the community was divided over who accepted their message and who would not. Sounds like bad American politics to me. When the anti-Paul and Barnabas crowd decided to stone Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas decided it was time to move on. Wow! Tough crowd.

Though they are forced to flee they always leave a group of believers, a new church behind. The church continues to grow in spite of the ongoing opposition.

Do you think Paul and Barnabas were discouraged? Why or why not? Do you think you would have been discouraged? (Read verse 7)

2. The healing of the Man in Lystra (verses 8-10) seems very similar to the healing of the man in Acts 3, by Peter and Paul, but the results are very different.

In verses 11-13 how did the crowds respond to the healing of the lame man? According to verses 14-18, what was the response of Barnabas and Paul? Assess the important points of their message.

How was Paul's message in Lystra different from his messages in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia? (Acts 13:16-25) Why was it different? What important lesson do we learn here about sharing our faith with different people?

3. Acts 14:19-20 Wow! They went from being considered gods to being stoned. Not cool!! Being a witness in the first century was tough. Yet, they continued to minister and share the gospel. They were bold in their faith!!! We think we don't have those problems today? (Guess what, I received an article this week that said in 2016, 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith. 600,000 million were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm or even death.) At what point would most American Christians cease to share their faith? What do you think might keep you from sharing your faith?
4. In verse 20, after being stoned and left for dead, Paul and Barnabas continued on to Derbe to preach the good news there. They were tough men!!!

5. Time to head home to Antioch, but not before a few stops on the way. They stopped at the very cities where they had met all the opposition; Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisida. Why did they return so quickly to these cities? What did they say we might expect as Christians according to verse 22? Would that message encourage you? Do most American Christians expect to undergo tribulations before they enter the Kingdom of God? Why or why not?
6. Paul and Barnabas knew that new Christians needed to be encouraged and taught if they were to grow strong in their faith. How do we help young Christians to grow strong in their faith?
7. Explain what took place in verse 23. Why was it important?
8. Acts 14:24-28 The journey home!

How do you think they were received when they arrived back at Antioch? Is it important for missionaries to have a home base, a home church? Why? Is it important for them to be accountable to someone concerning their ministry? Why or why not? Who should that be?

Mission Trip #1 is complete. Two more to go along with a short trip to Jerusalem to straighten out some doctrinal issues and a long trip to Rome and a Roman prison.