

Acts 13-28: From Antioch to Rome

By Bev Kilts

Reading through the book of Acts we find Luke has given us a rich, historical account of the early Christian church and the people who became the “pioneers” of our faith. Considered to be the second part of Acts, chapters 13-28 change focus from Peter and a ministry primarily to the Jews to Paul and a ministry primarily to the Gentiles, thus opening God’s promises to every man and the “whoever” in John 3:16 becomes clear.

In a little review, in chapter 7:58, Luke has already introduced Paul (Greek name), then called Saul (Hebrew name), a fervent persecutor of Christians. In chapter 9 Luke tells of Paul’s conversion when he meets the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. To say Paul’s life was changed from that time forward is an over-simplification. In “The Applause of Heaven”, author Max Lucado calls Paul “a Pharisee turned preacher who sets the world on fire”. The promise given at Pentecost (Acts 1:8) unfolds as the Word is spread throughout Judea, in Samaria and to the “ends of the earth”. Throughout Acts 13-28 we read of the progress of Paul’s journeys which not even imprisonment or persecution could stop. (You’ll find a detailed map of Paul’s journeys throughout the known world and the same area today on the display table in our library.)



In chapter 13:1-3 we are given the names of five workers coming out of the Antioch church. Such a variety of backgrounds, but with one thing in common – a deep faith in Christ. We can be certain there were many unmentioned – ordinary people held together in a common cause by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. And that common bond is still at work in the church today, enabling His people, by faith, to be motivated, to have the desire, the energy and ability to do the works He has them to do.

And finally Paul comes to Rome. The Good News had truly reached “to the ends of the earth”. The power of the Gospel has triumphed. Over a period of about 30 years, the Holy Spirit has changed the church itself from an entirely Jewish church to a strong and stable church made up of Jews and gentiles (who at one time were thought to be “unclean”) working together. In a world like ours today, with ethnic and racial violence in the news every day, this fact of God’s power, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to transform the hearts of both Jews and gentiles so they could be unified and loving in His Church is an inspiring and worthwhile example.

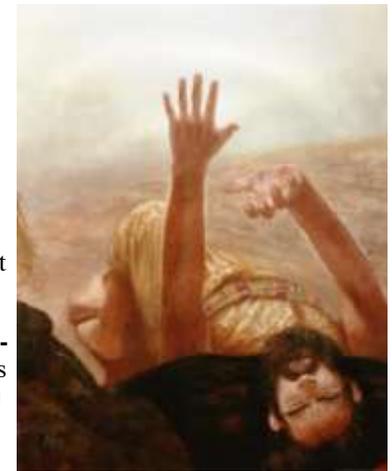
And so the Book of Acts ends. Paul, a prisoner in Rome, still boldly preaching the Good News of the Risen Christ. We are to continue to write the Book of Acts – boldly. From small rural churches to large edifices, God’s people are called upon to step out for Him in ways grand and ways small not by our own power, but through the power of faith in the Living God.

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