

**The United Benefice of St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield  
with St John, Wall**

**Bible Study 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**The Book of Acts**

**Session 8: Missionary Travels and Preaching**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace  
and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

**Acts Ch 13.1 – 15.35**

**Please read the whole passage before the session**

**Only certain sections are printed below and they are not in order**

**Preaching - Chapter 13.13-43**

13 Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup>but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup>After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, 'Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.' <sup>16</sup>So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

'You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. <sup>17</sup>The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. <sup>18</sup>For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup>After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance <sup>20</sup>for about four hundred and fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. <sup>21</sup>Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. <sup>22</sup>When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, "I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes." <sup>23</sup>Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised; <sup>24</sup>before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup>And as John was finishing his work, he said, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet."

26 'My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. 27Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. 28Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30But God raised him from the dead; 31and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. 32And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors 33he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, "You are my Son;

today I have begotten you."

34As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

"I will give you the holy promises made to David."

35Therefore he has also said in another psalm,

"You will not let your Holy One experience corruption."

36For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; 37but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. 38Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; 39by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:

41 "Look, you scoffers!

Be amazed and perish,

for in your days I am doing a work,

a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you." '

42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next sabbath. 43When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

### **Signs and wonders - Chapter 13.4-12; Chapter 14.8-18**

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John also to assist them. 6When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they met a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. 7He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. 8But the magician Elymas (for that is the translation of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10and said, 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11And now listen—the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind for a while, unable to see the sun.' Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he went about groping for someone to lead him by the hand. 12When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

8 In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. <sup>9</sup>He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, <sup>10</sup>said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And the man sprang up and began to walk. <sup>11</sup>When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!' <sup>12</sup>Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup>The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. <sup>14</sup>When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, <sup>15</sup>'Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. <sup>16</sup>In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; <sup>17</sup>yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.' <sup>18</sup>Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

### **The council of Jerusalem - Chapter 15.1-35**

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' <sup>2</sup>And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. <sup>3</sup>So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup>But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.'

6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup>After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. <sup>8</sup>And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; <sup>9</sup>and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup>On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'

12 The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. <sup>13</sup>After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup>Simeon has related how God first looked favourably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup>This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, <sup>16</sup>"After this I will return,

and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;  
from its ruins I will rebuild it,  
and I will set it up,

<sup>17</sup> so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—  
even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called.

Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things <sup>18</sup>known from long ago.”  
<sup>19</sup>Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who  
are turning to God, <sup>20</sup>but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted  
by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from  
blood. <sup>21</sup>For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim  
him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.’

<sup>22</sup> Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to  
choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and  
Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the  
brothers, <sup>23</sup>with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders,  
to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. <sup>24</sup>Since  
we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no  
instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your  
minds, <sup>25</sup>we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to  
you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>who have risked their lives for the  
sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who  
themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup>For it has seemed good  
to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these  
essentials: <sup>29</sup>that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood  
and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these,  
you will do well. Farewell.’

<sup>30</sup> So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the  
congregation together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When its members read it, they  
rejoiced at the exhortation. <sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said  
much to encourage and strengthen the believers. <sup>33</sup>After they had been there for  
some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent  
them. <sup>35</sup>But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others,  
they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

## Questions

- How can we preach the good news of Jesus that is relevant to those around us?
- How can we overcome prejudice and misunderstandings about the gospel message?
- The Council of Jerusalem drew boundaries for belief and practice. What should be the church’s boundaries today?

## Closing prayer

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:  
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace  
and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom  
those who take counsel for the nations of the earth  
that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward,  
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen**