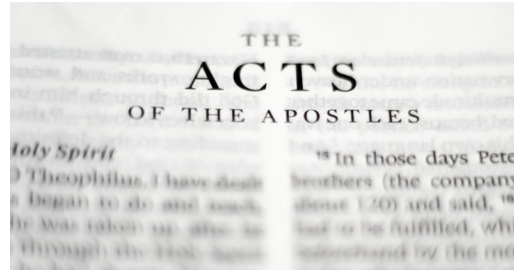


Dr. Edward O. Williamson, Pastor-teacher
Bible Study and Discussion Group
Topic: The Book of Acts



Handout #7

The Early Church Continues to Grow: Chapter 17

Key verse: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

Outline (from The Knowledge Bible Commentary – NT Volume):

- I. The Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-6:7)
- II. The Witness in all Judea and Samaria (6:8-9:31)
- III. The Witness to the End of the Earth (9:32-28:31)**

Introduction -- Growing Pains

- Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch – strengthening the disciples, appointing elders, preaching, and reporting (Acts 14:21-28)
 - Confusion Over the Gentiles -- Circumcision vs. Uncircumcision
 - The First Church Council and The Decree
 - Division Over John Mark
- I. Confusion over the Gentiles – Acts 15:1-5
 - a. Men from Judea teach that circumcision is necessary for salvation.
 - b. Paul and Barnabas dispute with them.
 - c. A delegation lead by Paul and Barnabas are sent to meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
 - d. Paul and Barnabas report what God has been doing through them and opposition arises.
 - II. The First Church Council – Acts 15:6-21
 - a. The apostles and elders come together to form the first church council and discuss the matter.

- b. Peter provides a defense.
- c. Paul and Barnabas provide a defense.
- d. James provides a defense.

III. The Jerusalem Decree – Acts 15:22-29

- a. A delegation is assigned to return to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.
- b. A letter/decreed is written.
- c. Details of the decree:
 - 1. Addressing the nature of the dispute – unauthorized men with an unauthorized message.
 - 2. This decree is a unified statement.
 - 3. Identifying authorized representatives – Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas.
 - 4. The message in alignment with the Holy Spirit – no need for circumcision and other burdens of Jewish tradition; abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

IV. Return To Antioch – Acts 15:30-35

- a. They gathered the multitude and delivered the letter.
- b. They rejoiced over the encouragement.
- c. Judas and Silas exhorted and strengthened the brethren.
- d. Judas returned to Jerusalem with greetings from Antioch; Silas, Paul, and Barnabas remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

V. Division Over John Mark – Acts 15:38-41

- a. The decision to revisit cities and see how they are doing.
- b. Barnabas and Paul are divided over John Mark.
- c. The team divides.
- d. They go separate ways with the blessings of the brethren.

Questions/Comments

Closing Prayer

Assignment: Read Chapter 16 for next week.