

# Bible Study: Acts

## (Part 7- Chapters 13-15)

by Gary T. Panell

### **Chapter 13**

Introduction for this section: "THE JOURNEYS OF PAUL The initial journey was concentrated primarily in the province of Galatia (chapters 13-15); the second in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (chapters 16-18); the third in the province of Asia (chapters 19-20). [Between the record of the first and second journeys is the narrative of the Jerusalem Council, occasioned by the teaching of certain men that the Gentiles must observe the Jewish law (cf. 15:19-21, 28, 29)] In these places, Paul spent most of his time in population centers--cities like Antioch of Pisidia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. Once the evangelization of these cities had been completed, the Gospel radiated to the surrounding country (cf. I Thessalonians).

"Paul found himself in a variety of situations and audiences. On occasion the missionary was in the Jewish synagogue (as in Pisidian Antioch, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus); or in prison (as in Philippi). When preaching to a Jewish audience, Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures as a basis for his message (as in Antioch and Thessalonica); whereas in addressing pagan, or at least non-Jewish groups, he generally began with their natural surroundings (as in Lystra and Athens). His usual approach was to preach first to the Jews of the region, if they were to be found; then to the Gentiles.

"Paul's ministry in these areas, covering a period of about ten years, resulted in the establishment of a chain of churches all along the Mediterranean shores. As he wrote to the Roman Christians, he recalled that 'from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ' (Romans 15:19). This period of his labors was terminated with the final visit to Jerusalem which resulted in his arrest (on a false charge by some Asian Jews) and his consequent imprisonments, both in Caesarea and Rome.

"The final section of Acts is the record of Paul's experiences while a prisoner. He makes his defense before a Jewish mob and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (chapters 22, 23), before Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II in Caesarea (chapters 24-26) and finally is taken to Rome, amid many harrowing experiences, including shipwreck (chapters 27, 28). Here, in his own rented house, though constantly chained to a guard, he is free to carry on his preaching and teaching. No wonder 'they of Caesar's household' heard and received the good news of salvation." (*Broadening Your Biblical Horizons, New Testament Survey, Evangelical Training Association*)

(1-2) There in the church in Antioch they were blessed with prophets (preachers) and teachers. Of these five teachers and preachers, God called upon the church to be willing to give up two. We should always be glad to share those in the church who are gifted, with others who may need them more than our congregation, even though we hate to see them leave. Some have described missions as three people

carrying one end of a heavy log, and only one person at the other end. Missions is sending one of those three to the other end to help the person who needs more help.

"First Mission: Galatia. 13:1-14:28. The first mission carried the Gospel from Antioch to Cyprus and to the cities in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. 1. The church in Antioch was characterized by many outstanding Christians. Niger. A Latin word meaning *black*, here used as a nickname. It apparently describes the dark complexion of Simeon and suggests that he was of African origin. He may have been the Simon of Cyrene mentioned in Mark 15:21, who carried Jesus' cross. The adjective describing Manaen means *foster brother* and was applied to boys of the same age as royal children who were brought up in the court.

"Herod, whose playmate was Manaen, was Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee and Perea between 4 B.C. and A.D. 39. Prophets were enabled to give new revelations of God's will by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Teachers were gifted in the interpretation of (OT) Scripture. 2. The utterance of the Holy Spirit came probably through a prophet" (*Wycliffe*). It is interesting that you only hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through believers, whereas Jesus uses His own voice. We should not think that the Holy Spirit will speak in an audible voice to us. We should listen for His guidance and direction in our hearts as a soft still voice or possibly through the gift of prophecy. If it is a true prophetic word from the Holy Spirit it will agree with Scripture!

(3) We notice that they also believed fasting was still an avenue to show God how serious we are about His business. I believe this is part of the blueprint that God wants us to use in the Church to see what God's will is, and to know what He is saying to us for sure.

"The call to this mission came from the Holy Spirit; the church recognized and confirmed the divine call. The laying on of hands does not constitute ordination [here] but separation to a special task and approval of the mission" (*Wycliffe*).

(4) The Holy Spirit was guiding them every step of the way, and so too, we can be guided by the same Spirit today as we seek for God's perfect will in our lives. "Seleucia. The port of Antioch. Here Barnabas and Saul took a ship for Cyprus, a large and important island. Possibly the evangelistic mission was begun in Cyprus because the island was Barnabas' home.

(5) John Mark went along as a helper, maybe besides teachers and prophets [preachers] we see the gift of helps in action here as well. Salamis, the eastern port of Cyprus and its largest city. Jews were so numerous that there were several synagogues. It was Paul's custom to preach the Gospel 'to the Jew first' (Romans 1:16); but the Gospel usually took root among the Gentiles who attended the Jewish synagogues.

(6) "Paphos, the official capital of the province. Bar-Jesus means *son of salvation*. He was a false prophet not because he gave false predictions but because he falsely claimed to be a prophet. It was a common practice for rulers to have magicians and astrologers in their retinues.

(7) "Sergius Paulus was the proconsul of the province. Rome had two types of provinces--those under the emperor and those under the senate. The former, like Judea, were governed by procurators appointed by emperors, while the latter were governed by proconsuls. In 22 B.C., the status of Cyprus was changed from imperial to senatorial province, as Luke correctly indicates.

(8) Elymas. "Another name for Bar-Jesus, probably a Semitic word bearing a meaning similar to the Greek *magos*, which means *sorcerer*' or *magician*.' Elymas sensed that if the proconsul accepted the message of Barnabas and Saul, his own position would be impaired, and he therefore attempted to turn the proconsul from his faith.

(9) Saul "is the Semitic form, Paul the Greek. Of the several reasons suggested the most likely is that as Paul now assumed the position of leadership in the Gentile mission, the Greek form of his name was more appropriate, and Luke so designates him.

(10) "Instead of 'son of salvation,' Elymas was a son of the devil." (*Wycliffe*) I remember distinctly something that happened to me when we were missionaries in Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies. They have a large Hindu population and one evening I was witnessing to the son of a shop owner. The son was interested in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the father would have nothing to do with it or us. He said that we believed that they as Hindus were sons of the devil, which is hard to argue with, but I said that it didn't have to stay that way, Jesus loves them and that is why He died on the cross to save them from their sins.

Well, the father kept his son from listening still. I then saw a flame that was burning on a candle, I said, "What if you put your finger in the flame, do you know how bad that would hurt, would you like yourself and your son to experience this?" Still he resisted the Gospel, but who knows what happened after we left and the son became of age. It is bad enough for a person not to accept the Gospel for themselves, but to withhold it from others is very wrong! The Holy Spirit was pointing this out to Elymas and the proconsul.

(11) "The fact that Luke attributes Paul's rebuke to the fullness of the Holy Spirit indicates he is acting as God's mediatorial agent of divine judgment, not speaking forth personal judgment or vindictiveness. See 5:1-11; Romans 1:28; 2:5." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*) The word translated mist is used by medical writers to describe an inflammation of the eye that gives it a cloudy appearance." (*Wycliffe*)

(12) "Astonished at the teaching of the Lord: This does not refer to the mere presentation of religious truths. The proconsul was astonished at the *power* of the teaching." Jesus taught independently without appealing to previous authorities, whereas the scribes only repeated what others had said. Both the substance and the manner of the Lord's teaching differed from that of the efficacies interpreters of the Law. (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*) "And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22)

(13) "The missionaries turned from Barnabas' native land of Cyprus to the country bordering Paul's native land. Pamphylia, a district on the coast of Asia Minor. Perga, a city situated about twelve miles inland. For some unexplained reason, John Mark forsook Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem. Paul considered this desertion inexcusable, for later when Barnabas wished Mark to accompany them on another trip, Paul refused to take him (15:37, 38), and separated from Barnabas over this issue.

"Mark's desertion may have been due to some change in their missionary plans of which he did not approve. Others have suggested that he was jealous because Paul was outshining his cousin Barnabas. There is no reason to think that the basis of the differences was doctrinal" (*Wycliffe*). We will see later in Acts how Paul changed his mind about John Mark and in 2 Timothy 4:11 he says, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." Aren't you glad that God can change our hearts!

(14) "First, [Acts] continues and, in one sense, completes the narrative begun in the Gospels. The earthly life of Christ is followed by the ministry of His apostles. Second, it shows the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy of the Church (Matthew 16:18) and prepares the way for the expounding of this subject in the Epistles. Many questions are thus answered regarding the circumstances of its beginning, the early leaders, and its growth into a universal fellowship. Third, it gives the background for several of Paul's epistles, relating the details concerning the founding of the churches to which the letters were subsequently written.

Background for Galatians--Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:14 - 14:28).

Background for Philippians--Philippi (Acts 16:11-40).

Background for I and II Thessalonians--Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9).

Background for I and II Corinthians--Corinth (Acts 18:1-16).

Background for Ephesians--Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41; 20:17: 35; cf. also I and II Timothy).

"By reading these chapters before reading the respective epistles, light is cast on the nature of the city, the people, and the problems faced by Paul. Fourth, it illustrates in the active life of the Church many of the principles enunciated in the Epistles. Such matters as organization, discipline, witnessing, evangelism, and teaching are clearly mirrored in the narratives of Acts. Especially prominent is the stress upon the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit. The early Church not only taught this truth but experienced it as well." (*Broadening Your Biblical Horizons, New Testament Survey, Evangelical Training Association*)

(16-19) We notice in this passage as Paul is speaking, that he had a logical sequence to it. Paul and Barnabas spoke the truth in love with tact and then left the results to the Holy Spirit. Some believed and some rejected the truth. Others, like some of the Jewish leaders didn't even listen. So we find it is this way when we witness, those who have been appointed to eternal life will believe. In other words, those whom God foresaw would accept His Son after hearing the Gospel, accepted Him, because God had already predestined that it be so. [See [our Ephesians Study, Part One](#), for more details on this.]

As a result of the Jews' deliberate rejection of Christ their Messiah, God also predestined that the Gentiles have more of an opportunity to hear and receive the Gospel. We need to live up to the light God has given us or else He will take away what light He has given us!

(20) "about 450 years. The 400 years of the 'stay in Egypt' (v. 17) plus the 40 years in the desert and the time between the crossing of the Jordan and the distribution of the land (see Joshua 14-19). (7:6) *four hundred years*. A round number for the length of Israel's stay in Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41 has 430 years).

That four generations would represent considerably less than 400 years is not a necessary conclusion (see note on Genesis 15:16 '*In the fourth generation*'. That is, after 400 years A 'generation' was the age of a man when his son {from the legal standpoint} was born--in Abram's case, 100 years.).

Exodus 6:16-20 makes Moses the great-grandson of Levi, son of Jacob and brother of Joseph. This would make four generations from Levi to Moses. But in 1 Chronicles 7:22-27 a list of ten names represents the

generations between Ephraim, the son of Joseph, and Joshua. The ten generations at 40 years each would equal 400 years, the same period of time noted as four generation. But one list is abbreviated and the other gives a full genealogy." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(21-41) "Paul began his message with a review of Israel's history up to the time of David (vv. 17-25). He then showed that Jesus was of the seed of David (vv. 25-33). He based Jesus' claims as Son of God and Messiah on His resurrection from the dead (vv. 26-37). He then offered the Gospel to the Jews and warned them against rejecting it (vv. 38-41)." (*Through the Bible Book by Book* by Myer Pearlman)

(42) The Jews left, but the Gentiles begged to hear the message of salvation!

(43) There were also many Jews and devote proselytes who did believe in Christ as Messiah.

(44-45) The Jews who did not believe came back the next Sabbath and were filled with jealousy when they saw so many coming to hear the Good News. They were also filled with the devil because they tried to disrupt the service by contradicting and blaspheming. In other words they came back to heckle Paul as he spoke and they called Jesus names. Wherever the Gospel has gone, Satan has opposed it. He uses people often to do this. I remember one time in Trinidad, where we were missionaries, evangelist KK was speaking at a tent crusade meeting. During the singing a drunk man came in and tried to disrupt the service. KK had us sing that famous old hymn "*There is Power in the Blood.*" In no time at all the drunk man turned on his heels and left the tent.

God says there is a purpose in everything He has allowed, look at this Scripture concerning what the Jews are doing. "They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation." (Deuteronomy 32:21) Christians are not a nation, but we are provoking the Jews to jealousy. They are jealous of what God is doing through the Church, and they will get more jealous until they receive Jesus as their Messiah.

(46) Because many Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Paul and Barnabas said it was necessary to turn to the Gentiles. Jesus' ministry had mainly been to the 'lost sheep of Israel' Matthew 10:6; 15:24; John 4:22, Romans 1:16; 15:8-9, but when the Jews rejected the message it was then given mainly to the Gentiles. If we reject 'light' (the light of God's word), God takes away what light we have. If we receive light, God gives us more light.

"I say then, have they [the Jews as a nation] stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles." (Romans 11:11) Some teach a doctrine called 'Replacement Theology' (there are also other names for this false teaching like 'supersessionism,' etc. ), this states that because the Jews, as a nation rejected their Messiah, now, there is no future for them as a nation. These Christians teach that the Church has replaced Israel so that all the promises to Israel as a nation are now ours. This is nothing but a gross misunderstanding of Scripture! God will fulfill every promise He has ever made to Israel as a nation!

This misunderstanding of the Gentile Christians and their position before God happened soon after the Bible was completed. "The true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ." That erroneous statement was

written by a Christian who addressed himself to a Jewish man as they debated about Christianity. He later added, 'We who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ are the true Israelitic race.'

"The debate occurred [about] 1,900 years ago (AD. 155) between Justin Martyr and his Jewish opponent, Trypho. In a mere 50 years after the last book of the New Testament was written, Gentile Christians had already come to believe that their church had replaced the Jewish people in God's program and that the only thing the Jewish nation could look forward to was condemnation. Unfortunately, the roots of Replacement Theology run deep in Christian history.

"...In an attempt to define themselves as the true inheritors of Israel's relationship with God, Gentile Christians blamed the Jews for rejecting Jesus, which the church said led God to reject them.

"Why did such a theology develop? After all, the first generation of Christians was Jewish and centered in Jerusalem. Jewish believers in Jesus participated in Temple worship, sharing common ground with other Jews (Acts 21:26; 22:17; 24:18). The city of Jerusalem maintained its Jewish leadership for one generation, while the message of faith in Jesus the Messiah moved out from Judea to synagogues across the Roman Empire.

"However, as the apostle Paul took the gospel to his Jewish brethren, he found that Gentiles responded as well. The expanding church soon contained more Gentiles than Jews. In addition, the character of Jewish-led Jerusalem changed when Rome destroyed the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70 (the First Jewish Revolt) and all Jews, including Jewish Christians, were forced to flee. The church's new leadership came from its other centers in Antioch and, eventually, Rome--both Gentile cities.

"Another event propelled Gentiles into church leadership. The Jewish people organized another revolt against Rome, hoping to regain the freedom they lost in AD. 70. Their leader was Simon bar Kokhba, who had been proclaimed messiah by Rabbi Akiva, the most highly esteemed rabbi of that generation.

"Bar Kokhba considered Christians his enemies, since they rejected his revolt and messianic claims. When Rome crushed this rebellion in A.D. 135, Christians believed they saw God's hand of judgment against the Jews, reinforcing their claim that they had become the 'new Israel.'

"How could the early Christians read the promises that God had made to Israel and justify this substitution? They found that they could do so only by spiritualizing the promises. This method of interpretation allowed them to replace Israel as the beneficiary of God's unfulfilled promises. [and so it is today, many Christians are claiming that the promises given only to Israel are for themselves]

"Would that more theologians who replace Israel would reconsider their views, as did New Testament scholar C. E. B. Cranfield, who offered words of personal regret while commenting on Romans 9-11: 'These three chapters emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people, and I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of the replacement of Israel by the Church [C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 2:448]." (*Israel My Glory* May/June 2007)

When God promised the land to Abraham and his descendants he put Abraham asleep, so God alone promised Himself that He would keep His promises. It was not an agreement that Abraham had to

uphold his side of the bargain (Genesis 15). "The direct requirement of a blood sacrifice as the means of establishing a covenant first appears in this episode (Gen. 15 1-21) and God's instruction to Abraham. The animals to be offered were selected, cut in halves, and arranged in proper order opposite one another. The covenant parties then passed between the halves indicating that they were irrevocably bound together in blood.

"The cutting in halves of the sacrifice spoke of the end of existing lives for the sake of establishing a new bound or covenant. The sacred nature of this bond was attested to by the shedding of lifeblood. In this instance, only God passed between the pieces, indicating that it was His covenant and He would assume responsibility for its administration. Present in this account of covenant-making are three essential ingredients: 1) a bond that originates from God's initiative, 2) the offering of a blood sacrifice as a requirement of covenant, and 3) God's sovereign administration of the outcome of His oath." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

Now the Mosaic covenant was different, the nation had to fulfill its side of the bargain or else curses would come upon them. (Deuteronomy 31:20) Also in Deuteronomy, chapters five and six God makes clear to the nation what will happen if they don't keep His commandments.

(47-48) "A marvelous and mysterious aspect of God's purposes in creation shines through here. Most of these Gentiles who believed were probably among those who had already come to 'fear God' (Acts 13:16, 26), even though they had not been willing to become Jewish proselytes.

"When they heard that, because of Christ, 'all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses' (Acts 13:39), 'they were glad,' and responded in saving faith in Christ. God had already 'ordained to eternal life' those who would believe, and He had led Paul and Barnabas to come and preach the gospel so that these Gentiles could learn how to be saved (just as He had sent Peter to Cornelius), and yet they 'believed' on Christ by their own free will.

"There are numerous places in Scripture where these seemingly paradoxical truths are juxtaposed (divine predestination vs. human freedom--Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). Our finite minds may be incapable of comprehending and resolving such paradoxes, but that does not mean both cannot be resolved in the infinite mind of God. It may be something like the two sides of a coin: we can only see one side at a time, but both are real and true." (*The Defender's Study Bible*) [You will want to see our Ephesians Part One Study for more on the free will of man and predestination.]

(49-50) Even though Paul was persecuted by his own people he never hated them, but says he would be willing to go to hell for eternity if it meant that all the Jews would be saved. "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1)

Paul made it very clear that this was not some sort of oversight by God, but that He had told them ahead of time that the Gospel would go to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected the truth. "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth." The Gentiles

rejoiced and many received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. When the Jews saw that they couldn't win the argument fairly, they persecuted the believers. This is what happens all over the world to this day when the Gospel goes out, Christians are persecuted in communities where they are.

(51) They shook off the dust from their feet and went somewhere else because they were following their Lord's commands. "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city!" "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."  
(Matthew 10:14-15; 23-24)

(52) We notice that 'joy' is another result of the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is consistent with other passages of Scripture on this subject of the filling of the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:22; and Colossians 3:16.

This filling as we see here takes place many times in the believers' lives. There is that 'initial' filling, but as someone has said, we are leaky vessels so we need to be filled over and over again. If we are not filled over and over again we will become 'dry' vessels! God wants us to have His fullness in our lives all the time. Even at this time in the middle of persecution and opposition, the believers were refilled!

Oswald J. Smith in his book *The Spirit is Working* says, "'Be filled with the Spirit.' (Eph. 5:18). 'Be being filled,' as it is in the original. We are to be filled, and then filled again, and again and again. And now we come to the truth that is especially for us to-day.

"Every true believer has been baptized by the Spirit, as we have seen; he has received the gift of the Holy Ghost; he is indwelt by the Spirit; he has been sealed, and he has the earnest. But not every believer is filled. Hence, the command, 'Be filled with the Spirit.'

As we turn to Christ, from sin; as we yield ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to do His will, He fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we are enabled to live Spirit-filled lives. Thus we become fruit-bearing Christians.

"This experience is, therefore, continuous from the time we believe, until we see Him as He is. In most lives, however, there is an initial crisis experience, and in some, many. All do not fully yield at the time of conversion. But when they do, He fills. And the Spirit-filled life becomes the normal life [should become the normal life] of the believer.

"'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:18,19).

"Here, my friend, is the work of the minister. To do it Jesus Christ was anointed. Have you, too, been anointed? If your ministry is to be effective, you must be an anointed man.

"You are to preach the Gospel. You are to bring comfort to the broken-hearted. Satan's slaves must be set free. Men spiritually blind must be made to see. Souls in bondage to sin, their lives wrecked and

ruined, must be saved. You must be able to bring men to an immediate decision in this, God's day of grace.

"Can you do it? Not unless you are Spirit-anointed. It is a big order for any man. And only the enabling power of the Spirit will suffice. All down the centuries God has anointed His servants. He came upon Samson, Elijah and Elisha. He came on Jesus and Peter and Paul. On Brainerd and Wesley and Finney. And He came on Roberts and Spurgeon and Moody. And when he did, He wrought mightily through them.

"For these men tarried before the Lord in prayer. They wrestled in intercession. They agonized for souls. And as they did, the Spirit came upon them and thousands upon thousands were swept into the Kingdom. Not that they were satisfied with but one experience; it was their constant contact with God and their daily anointing of the Spirit that made them what they were.

"You, my friend, may never be a Moody or a Wesley. But God will use you to the full limit of your capacity, for He is no respecter of persons. Oh then, wait before Him; spend much time alone with God; agonize for souls, and though you know it not, you will be anointed with the Spirit of God. And in the power of the anointing you will be used for His glory." (*The Spirit is Working* by Oswald J. Smith)

## ***Breathe on Me, Breath of God***

*By Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what thou dost love,  
And do what thou wouldst do.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Until my heart is pure,  
Until with thee I will one will,  
To do and to endure.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly Thine,  
Till all this earthly part of me  
Glows with thy fire divine.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
So shall I never die,  
But live with Thee the perfect life  
Of Thine eternity.*

### **Chapter 14**

(1-2) "Iconium was the easternmost city of the district of Phrygia and lay in the Roman province of Galatia. Here the experience of Jewish opposition and Gentile faith was repeated.

(3) "However, since it took a while for the opposition to become effective, the apostles were able to preach the word for a long period of time. This indefinite note of time is typical of Luke's method of writing.

(4-5) "The hostile Jew succeeded finally in inciting a riot and stirring up the rulers. And so Paul and Barnabas had to leave Iconium.

(6) "While Luke is often indefinite as to chronological references, he is often very definite in his geographical notes. This statement that Lystra and Derbe belonged to the region of Lycaonia implies that Iconium lay outside Lycaonia. Other writers of about Luke's time placed Iconium in the district of Lycaonia. [In the interior regions of what is now Turkey. (*Defender's*)]

"Many scholars assumed that at this point Luke was inaccurate. Ramsay tells how this reference caught his attention and how careful examination vindicated Luke's statement. "This was the beginning of Ramsay's change in attitude toward Acts, and he became one of the most vigorous and learned proponents of the accuracy of the book (see *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, chapter III).

(11) "In their excitement, the people fell into their native Lycaonian tongue, and Paul and Barnabas could not understand what was happening. Much of the Mediterranean world was bilingual, the people speaking the general language, Greek, and also their native dialect.

(12) "The two visitors were thought to be two gods. Zeus was the chief god of the Greek Pantheon, and Hermes was the herald of the gods. Jupiter and Mercurius (*AV*) are the Latin equivalents for the Greek names of these gods, but the Greek terms ought to be used.

"Since Paul was the spokesman of the two, the people called him Hermes; while Barnabas, the more silent partner who stood in the background, they called Zeus, the father of the gods. Legends existed that told of other occasions when these two gods visited people of this area.

(13) "Before the city probably refers to the temple located outside the city. The priest of Zeus prepared oxen adorned with woolen decorations to offer sacrifice to their unexpected visitors. The gates probably refer to the gates of the city near the temple.

(14) "Although the apostles could not understand the Lycaonian dialect, the actions of the priests soon indicated their purpose to sacrifice, and the apostles strongly protested. They tore their clothes, a Jewish gesture of horror at blasphemy (Mark 4:63).

(15-17) ["When Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogues, they could begin on the premise that their hearers already believed in God, in creation of all things by God, and in the authority of the Scriptures. On this foundation, they could then preach Christ and the resurrection.

"When they preached to a completely pagan crowd, however, as here at Lystra and later at Athens (Acts 17:15-34), they had to begin with the evidence for one Creator God, as opposed to the popular religions which were centered either on atheism or pantheism and manifest popularly as polytheism. All of these believed in the eternity of the universe and in some form of universal evolutionism, just as most non-believers do today." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)]

"Paul urged the people to worship the living God rather than His emissaries. This sermon given to a purely pagan audience contrasts strikingly with the sermon delivered at Antioch in the Jewish synagogue. Before pagans can appreciate the mission of Jesus, they must recognize the oneness of God.

"Paul's sermon rests largely upon the evidences of natural theology which point to the existence of a Creator and Sustainer. Although God allowed men to go their own way, He provided for them a witness unto himself in granting the rains and harvest times to satisfy the human appetites.

(18) "Paul barely succeeded in persuading the people that he and Barnabas were not indeed divine beings.

(19) "No reference is made to a Jewish synagogue in Lystra, but probably such a synagogue existed, for Jews from Antioch and Iconium were able to raise up such opposition against Paul that he was stoned and dragged out of the city as dead. Paul refers to this event in II Cor. 11:24,25. ["The bitter vindictiveness of the enemies of the gospel is seen in the fact that these Jews came over 100 miles to try to destroy Paul and his gospel. In all probability, he was stoned to death: his murderers observed him at length as they carried him out of the city." (*Defender's*)]

(20) "The abruptness of these words suggests that a miracle took place. It is difficult to conceive of a man's undergoing such a stoning without receiving severe physical injury. 'The marks of Jesus' (Gal. 6:17) may well be the scars inflicted by these stones. Derbe, a frontier city of the province of Galatia.

(21) "No opposition in Derbe is recorded. The apostles made many disciples. This is the meaning of taught (AV). The apostles retraced their steps through the cities of Galatia." (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary) "It is a testimony to Paul's courage and faith, as well as his concern for their new converts, that he would return so quickly to the cities where he had just been so viciously attacked. He could easily have proceeded on to his home in nearby Tarsus." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(22) Even though our salvation is not at stake after we have first believed (truly believed in a saving sense) on Christ by accepting Him as our own personal Savior, still we must continue in the faith, in order to live a fruitful Christian life. [Look at [our Ephesians Study Part One](#) for more on what it means to be "in Christ."]

Many Christians forget this exhortation to continue in the faith. I believe, most of the problems we see in the Church today, are caused by 'Christians' who are not continuing in the faith, yes, they are still saved, but Christianity is more than a fire escape from Hell, it is a life to be lived in the Spirit! Christ wants us to grow into His image, to be millions of little 'Christs' living as witnesses on this earth. "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

St. Paul said through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God, this has nothing to do with 'The Tribulation' spoken of in Revelation. Paul is speaking of everyday problems and persecutions that Christians are promised. This reminds me of the book called Pilgrims Progress, which if you have never read, I would highly recommend. Also, there has been very real persecution that Christians have had to face in almost every country, and since the beginning of the Church Age. Here is just one such example:

"A wave of harsh persecution took place in Japan in the early 1600s, during which many Christians were martyred. On February 20, 1627, church leader Paulo Uchibori, his wife and three children were arrested

for harboring missionaries. On that day, Paulo and 37 other Christians were beaten, paraded naked through town and imprisoned in Shimabara Castle.

"The following day, the Christians were tortured. The government wanted to avoid making martyrs, but used the cruelest methods to force Christians to deny their faith. One of the soldiers teased Paulo as he held a knife, saying 'How many of your children's fingers should we take?' Paulo replied, 'It is all up to you.'

"The soldiers cut off all of the children's fingers except their thumbs and little fingers, saying Christians should have fewer fingers than an animal. Paulo's two oldest children, Antonio and Barutabazaru offered their fingers to the soldiers, without crying or showing pain. The last child was Paulo's youngest, Ignatius, age five.

"He also showed no pain as his fingers were cut off. He raised his bleeding hands to the sky, offering them to God. Those who were watching were surprised by what they saw and were deeply moved by the children's bravery.

"The soldier then bound the hands and feet of 16 people including Paulo's children and threw them repeatedly into the ice-cold water of Shimabara Bay. Still the Christians would not renounce their faith. Antonio's last words before he disappeared into the ocean were, 'Father, we should thank God for giving us such a great blessing.'

"After his children were drowned, Paulo's face was branded with three Japanese characters of the word 'Christian.' He was thrown out on the streets with a sign on his kimono reading, 'Punished for being a Christian. It is forbidden to help this man or give him shelter.'

"A week after they martyrdom of his children, Paulo was sent up Mt. Unzen with 15 other Christians to experience 'torture in the hells of the Unzen volcano.' Paulo was hung upside down and lowered into the boiling sulfur waters many times. He prayed out loud each time, realizing he was part of the Body of Christ, 'The Eucharist should be hallowed.' Finally, his body was thrown into the boiling spring.

"The faith of Paulo and his children encourage us today. We know that they, along with many other unnamed Japanese Christians, were welcomed into Jesus' presence and now wear robes of white. Stained glass windows in Shimabara Catholic Church depict the torture and death of Paul and his children. A Christian martyr is one who chooses to suffer death rather than to deny Christ or His work .sacrifices something. sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God. endures great suffering for Christian witness. (*The Voice of the Martyrs*, June 2007)

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-of whom the world was not worthy.

"They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us." (Hebrews 11:35b-40) So much for

the teaching, of many today, that if you have enough faith you will not have to go through tribulations. This is not what my Bible teaches!

Our brothers and sisters around the world are suffering every day for their faith in Christ our Lord!  
"Catholics and Protestants in Prison: On February 19, 2007, father Ngyen Van Ly was arrested in his Catholic church in Hue, Vietnam. He has issued statements criticizing the government's confiscation of church property, lack of seminary training and the influence of the state in church teachings. He challenged Communist authorities that they do not have the power to defrock any religious leader. In the photo, police cover his mouth as he is again on trial in the Hue provincial court.

"Sixty-year-old Ly has been imprisoned many times and has already served more than 10 years. He was sentenced on March 29, 2007 to eight more years in prison for distributing material 'harmful to the state.'

"VOM received a document with the names of 169 tribal Protestant religious leaders in prison in Central Vietnam. (Watch [www.PrisonerAlert.com](http://www.PrisonerAlert.com) for opportunities to write letters.) We also received photographs of Pastor Quang's house church being smashed again by police on September 1, 2006 at 8:15 a.m. You may view a video clip of Father Ly in court and photos of Pastor Quang's smashed house at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com). Go to media rooms and enter the pass code 'Vietnam.'" (*The Voice of the Martyrs*, June 2007)

I am adding this recent information on persecution around the world to let you know that what St. Paul said applies to our brothers and sisters in Christ today. This is not just some history of the Church in Acts. This book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit is what we are to expect as we take the Gospel into all the world today. This book is a blueprint for the Church today! Some say, well, it doesn't talk about Sunday Schools, etc. This is true, we are not saying that everything is explained for us, but the principles are there. We need to stay as close to the blueprint as we can with God's help!

(23) Here we note that elders were appointed in every local church. This is the plan of God for the local church. The reason so many pastors today feel frustrated in the ministry is because no one person has been given all the gifts. Therefore God intends that as the church grows elders be appointed. This is vital to the general health of the church.

(24) "Pisidia. A district about 120 miles long and 50 miles wide, north of Pamphylia. (13:13-14). Bandits frequented the region. Pamphylia. A district 80 miles long and 20 miles at the widest part, on the southern coast of Asia Minor. After A.D. 74 Pisidia was included in the Roman province of Pamphylia.

(25) "Perga. (Perga in Pamphylia. Perga was the capital of Pamphylia, a coastal province of Asia Minor between the provinces of Lycia and Cilicia, and was 5 miles inland and 12 miles east of the important seaport Attalia.) Attalia. The best harbor on the coast of Pamphylia." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(26-28) Now they have come full circle. They were sent out from the church in Antioch, now the Lord sends them back to the church to report on their mission. This is a good practice, so the believers can be encouraged and energized to help with other missions. This plan is still used by many churches today. The apostles probably stayed about a year before they took off again. In the mean time they have to solve the 'problem' of so many Gentiles getting saved. Which God Himself had opened the door for the Gentiles to salvation!

## Chapter 15

(1-5) As it is today, so it was in those days. In the Church there will always be problems. This will be so until we meet Christ in the air. In my years of travel, I have never found a perfect church. They say if you ever find one, don't join it because you will mess it up. No, I'm just joking, of course, but it is true that since Christians will not be perfect until they get to heaven, neither will the Church be totally perfect. The goal is perfection, or to be like Christ in our lives, but we won't see this work completed until we are on our way up to glory. I do believe God is perfecting His Church in these last days and we will see a lot of changes as persecution comes. [See [Chapter 5 of our Ephesians Study](#) which talks about how we will see the Church without spot or wrinkle before she goes to meet her Lord Jesus Christ.]

(6) "[Here is recorded] the convening of the first Christian council, called to settle a very important problem; namely, the relation of the Gentiles to the Jews and the grounds on which the former were to be saved. The two questions to be settled were: Are the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved? And, are the Gentiles to have religious equality with the Jews?"

"It must be remembered that the separation between Jew and Gentile was both religious and social. The Jews had a divine law which sanctioned the principle, and enforced the practice of national isolation. They could not easily believe that this law, with which all the glorious passages of their history was connected, was meant to endure only for a limited period; and we cannot but sympathize with the difficulty they felt in accepting the notion of a cordial union with the uncircumcised, even after idolatry was abandoned and morality observed.

"And again, the peculiar character of the religion which isolated the Jews was such as to place [insurmountable] obstacles in the way of social union with other men. Their ceremonial observances precluded the possibility of their eating with the Gentiles. The nearest parallel we can find to this barrier between the Jew and Gentile is the institution of the caste among the populations of India, which presents itself to our politicians as a perplexing fact in the government of the presidencies, and to our missionaries as the great obstacle to Christianity in the East.

"A Hindu cannot eat with a Parsee, or a [Muslim]-and among the Hindus themselves the meals of a Brahmin are polluted by the presence of a Pariah,-though they meet and have free intercourse in the ordinary transaction of business. So it was in the patriarchal age. It was an abomination for the Egyptians to eat bread with the Hebrews. Genesis 43:32. The same principle was divinely sanctioned for a time in the mosaic institutions.

"The Israelites who lived among the Gentiles, met them freely in their places of public resort, buying and selling, conversing and disputing; but their families were separated. In the relations of domestic life, it was 'unlawful,' as Peter said to Cornelius, 'for a man that was a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation.' When Peter returned from the centurion at Caesarea to his brother Christians at Jerusalem, their great charge against him was that he had gone unto men uncircumcised and had eaten with them; and the weak compliance of which he was guilty, after the true principle of social unity had been publicly recognized, and which called forth the rebuke of his brother apostle, was that, after eating with the Gentiles, he 'withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.' Galatians 2:11, 12.

"How these two difficulties, which seemed to forbid the formation of a united church, were ever to be overcome-how the Gentiles were to be religiously united without the enforced obligation of the whole Mosaic Law,-how they were to be socially united as equal brethren in the family of a common Father,- the solution in that day must have seemed impossible. And without the direct intervention of divine grace it would have been impossible." -*Conybeare and Howson*.

"The question was made an issue by a certain party of Jewish believers, who, though acknowledging that God had granted eternal life unto the Gentiles, insisted that the observance of the Law of Moses was obligatory in their case, and that it was necessary to their salvation.

"The members of this party later became Paul's bitterest enemies, and at different periods of his ministry did all in their power to undermine his authority. Galatians 2:4. It was this class of men that caused the church of the Galatians to go back to the observance of the Mosaic law. Galatians 5:1-7.

"It should be remembered that these men, known as the Judaizers had the authority of Old Testament Scriptures to support their assertions. (The New Testament was not yet written.) The Old Testament predicted the salvation of the Gentiles (Ps. 22:7; 86:9; Isa. 49:6), but the Old Testament taught that the submitting to the rite of circumcision, and the observance of other Mosaic ceremonies was necessary for union with God's people. Gen. 17:14. So then there comes before us another aspect of the problem; namely, as to how the liberty of the Gospel and the authority of the Scriptures were to be preserved. This and the other problems find their solution in the speeches made by those present at the council.

(7-11) "Note Peter's discourse. His main argument is that the impartation of the Holy Ghost was the true test of God's acceptance of the Gentiles. The fact that the last-named received the gift of the Spirit as well as the Jews proves that God does not place any difference between Jewish and Gentile believers (v.8)

"The fact that the Gentiles received the Spirit before submitting to any external ceremony shows that no outward observance of the Mosaic Law was necessary to salvation. Though under the old covenant, circumcision was required as a condition for belonging to the chosen people, God's action in saving and baptizing the Gentiles without the observance of such a rite indicated that He had made a new covenant, and that the old was passing away. Jer. 31:31. It was by faith, not by the works of the law, that the Gentiles were justified (v. 9).

"God had delivered all believers from the heavy yoke of the Law; therefore to impose that burden on the Gentiles was tempting God (v. 10). The Jewish believers themselves were not saved by the law, but by grace (v. 11).

(12) "Paul and Barnabas contented themselves with telling what God had wrought among the Gentiles. The fact that God was saving Gentiles, filling them with the Spirit and working miracles among them apart from any attempt on their part to keep the law, would prove that the latter was unnecessary to their salvation.

(13-14) "Peter had declared the equality of Jew and Gentile. But, the Pharisees might object, 'How is this fact to be reconciled with the Scriptures that teach the supremacy of the Jews over the Gentiles?' Isa. 61:5, 6; Zech. 14:18. James anticipates this objection and answers it by outlining the divine program for the age. *Conybeare and Howson* taken from the book *Through the Bible Book by Book* by Myer Pearlman

"This important passage shows God's program for this age. It is necessary to observe the purpose of James in his decision. He is not simply arguing that Gentiles can be saved. This is clearly taught in many passages in the O.T. and was recognized by the apostles at their conference described in Acts 11 (note especially v. 18). The problem is circumcision. Must Gentiles become Jews before they become Christians?

"James declares that Amos 9:12 shows that, at the return of Christ, there will not only be believing Jews (here called 'the residue of men') but also believing Gentiles 'upon whom my name is called' (v. 17). Thus the passage, as explained by James, shows the following elements in the divine plan:

"(1) The taking out from among the Gentiles of a people for His name, the distinctive work of the present or Church Age. The Church is the *ecclesia*-the 'called-out assembly.' The Gospel has never anywhere converted all but everywhere has called out some. No mention is made in this passage of gathering out the remnant from Israel in this age (cp. Rom. 11:5), because this was not the issue in dispute at the Jerusalem Council.

"(2) 'After this [i.e. the out-calling] I will return.' James quotes from Amos 9:11-12. The verses which follow in Amos describe the final regathering of Israel, which the other prophets invariably connect with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (e.g. Isa. 11:1,10-12); Jer. 23:5-8).

"(3) 'And will build again the tabernacle of David.' Christ took the title to David's throne back to heaven with Him, assuring that David will never lack a man to sit on his throne, and looking forward to the re-establishment of Davidic rule over Israel (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Luke. 1:31-33).

"(4) 'That the residue of men [Israelites] may seek after the Lord' (cp. Zech. 12:7-8; 13:1-2). And:

"(5) 'And all the Gentiles,' etc. (cp. Mic. 4:2; Zech. 8:21-22) This is also the order of Rom. 11:24-27."

"With the exception of the first five words, vv. 16-18 are quoted from Amos 9:11-12. James quoted from the LXX, which here preserved the original text (see Amos 9:12, note). Amos 9:11 begins with the words 'in that day.' James introduced his quotation in such a way as to show what day Amos was talking about, namely, the time after the present world-wide witness time as well as Jewish believers; hence he concluded that Gentiles are not required to become Jewish proselytes by circumcision. (*New Scofield Reference Edition*)

(15-16) "He first of all explains that not all the Gentiles will be saved during this age, but only certain individuals to make up, together with the Jewish elect, the Church. Then will follow the restoration of Israel as a nation, and their consequent exaltation over nations.

(17-18) "After this, all the nations will turn to the Lord. ["Known to God from eternity are all His works."]

(19-21) There were some stipulation put forward for Gentile converts, and these are that they abstain from things offered to idols (when this was known), from fornication (sex of any kind outside of marriage) [In [our 1 Corinthians Study Part 2](#) Paul goes into more detail as to what fornication is.], and from eating animals that are strangled and from blood. Animals that are strangled have more blood left in them, which causes more diseases. There are those who eat blood puddings, this is forbidden to even Gentiles, because the life is in the blood, and many diseases can be gotten from eating blood.

These were not in order to be saved, because we are saved by grace through faith alone as we have shown in the Romans Bible Study, and as it says in all of the rest of Scripture (Ephesians 2:8-9), but for their own well being Christians should not involve themselves in these things after they are saved. Those that would make the keeping of any of the law above faith alone for salvation, are adding to salvation. Now if a person is practicing in these sins they cannot have assurance of salvation, because Christians don't practice sin. [See [our answers on the Bible discussion page to whether or not Christians can live together before marriage.](#)]

"Refraining from eating 'flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof' long antedated the laws of Moses (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14). It was part of the ancient Noahic mandate; its restatement here indicates the latter is still in effect (Romans 13:1, 4). Furthermore, the primeval dominion mandate given to Adam, which the Noahic mandate merely reconfirmed and extended, is likewise still in effect. Therefore, today's Christians are responsible to obey Christ's primeval command to exercise stewardship over the earth (see notes on Genesis 1:26-28), as well as His great commission to preach the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(22-29) ["The scope of the decision goes far beyond the mere question of circumcision. The whole question of the relation of the law to Gentile believers had been put in issue (v.5), and their exemption is declared in the decision (vv. 19, 24). The decision might be otherwise stated in the terms of Rom. 6:14 'Ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Gentile believers were to show grace by abstaining from the practices offensive to godly Jews (vv. 20-21, 28-29; cp. Rom. 14:12-17; I Cor. 8:1-13).] (*New Scofield Reference Edition*)

"Notice the decision of the council. The Gentiles were not required to be circumcised or keep the law of Moses. However, certain prohibitions were laid upon the Gentiles: They were to abstain from idolatry and fornication, and they were not to eat animals strangled, or the blood of those animals. Lev. 7:22-27. The first two prohibitions were dictated by the moral law; the other two, by the ceremonial.

"The sins of fornication and idolatry are mentioned because they are the two sins which would prove a special temptation to those saved from among the heathen. The last two prohibitions represented a concession to Jewish beliefs.

However, there was no compromise in any fundamental matter. 'The most shameless violations of purity took place in connection with the sacrifices and feasts celebrated in honor of the heathen divinities. Everything, therefore, which tended to keep the Gentile converts even from accidental or apparent association with those scenes of vice, made their recovery from pollution more easily, and enabled the Jewish converts to look on their new Christian brethren with less suspicion and antipathy.'" (*Through the Bible Book by Book* by Myer Pearlman)

In verse 28 where it says, "'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us': An earnest and common desire to know the mind of God leads to unanimity. A church possessing an awareness of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see 10:19, 20; 13:2,3) need not be unassisted in pursuing its decisions."

(30-31) "Legalism is always accompanied by fear and bondage; the message of grace is 'good news,' and brings liberty and joy." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

(32-33) The decision of the Jerusalem church and the letter to Antioch apparently solved the problem. After an interval of some time, Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem, while Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch.

(34) "Silas is short for Silvanus (2 Corinthians 1:19); he was a God-called 'prophet' (Acts 15:32), a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22), and would soon become Paul's missionary companion (Acts 15:40)." (*The Defender's Bible*)

(35-38) "Second Mission: Asia Minor and Europe. 15:36-18:22. Luke now records the preparations for what we call the second missionary journey. After an indefinite period of time, Paul determined to revisit and to confirm the churches already established. An unfortunate rupture occurred just then between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark, who had accompanied them on the first journey but had forsaken them when they had reached the mainland of Asia Minor, and had returned to Antioch.

"Paul regarded this as such a serious evidence of instability that he refused. The result was that Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus to visit the churches established on the first missionary journey. Paul sent to Jerusalem for Silas, who had recently visited Antioch and in whom the apostle recognized a man of great promise." (*Wycliffe*)

(39) "Even though this contention seemed unfortunate, God used it for good. Now there were two missionary teams instead of one. Similar happenings still occur today. The ministry of Paul and Silas was extraordinarily fruitful, and Mark was reclaimed spiritually and was even used to write one of the four gospels (2 Timothy 4:11)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

Even though there are disagreements in the Church on certain issues, there may be good that results; as Paul had his area of ministry to fulfill and Barnabas his. Today, we find many different Christian denominations, we do agree on the main doctrines of the Word of God, but there are certain minor doctrines that we cannot agree upon. God may use one group to reach a certain class or type of person, and others with other gifts to reach another group of people. All born again Christians, no matter which church they attend, agree that we are saved by faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. [Look at [our Romans Study](#) for more detail on salvation by faith alone.]

Sometimes churches will split over various issues, then they go on to start another new church, which is not all that bad, if it is done in love. There are certain major doctrines that we must not compromise on, such as evil-o-lution, immorality, homosexuality, abortion, The Apostle's Creed, so on. [Read [our article the Holy Catholic Church](#) for more on this.]

Does that mean that God likes division in the Church? No, He does not, but He can work around our minor differences. I do believe that one day before the Church goes home to be with Him, we will be ONE spiritually, because Jesus prayed that we would be ONE in John 17. His prayers will be answered. In Ephesians chapter five we go into how the Lord will come back for a spotless Church, and I believe a unified Church. I don't know what He will use to bring us together, but I suspect it will be persecution. It would be nice if we could have revival, but then revival and persecution go together as we see in Acts.

John Mark was young at this point and inexperienced; and he did make a mistake, no doubt, but Barnabas (Son of Encouragement) and also Mark's cousin, took Mark and worked with him as he,

Barnabas, had done with Paul in the beginning, when no one wanted to be around him. As was mentioned above Mark is the one who ended up writing the Gospel of St. Mark, so he turned out alright in the end.

John Mark had been with Jesus from the beginning, in fact, we believe he is the young man, only Mark's Gospel speaks about, who ran away naked when Jesus was arrested. "Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked." (Mark 14:51-52) Sometimes we want to talk about what even is embarrassing to us, somehow it helps.

Mark was a translator for Peter, and evidently a good writer. Peter mentions him in his first letter calling Mark his son (spiritually speaking). "She who is in Babylon (speaking of the church in the feminine form as 'she'), elect together with you (chosen by God as the church he is writing to), greets you; and so does Mark my son." (1 Peter 5:13)

Paul shows he has changed his mind about Mark by the time of writing the letter to the Colossians, where again Mark is working with him. "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him).(Colossians 4:10) Then also Paul mentions Mark again in what was probably Paul's last letter before he was martyred. "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." (2 Timothy 4:11)

(40-41) "Instead of traveling by ship, Paul and Silas set out by land toward Galatia. We know [little to] nothing about the establishment of churches in Syria and Cilicia, but we know from 15:23 that such churches existed. Possibly they were the result of Paul's work before he was brought to Antioch.

## **"TIME IS RUNNING OUT"**

*by President Truman*

*Our days are fleeing fast away  
And we have work to do,  
So let us all redeem the time,  
As Scripture tells us to.*

*Let's spend our days in service to  
And for our fellow man,  
And not in seeking to become  
As wealthy as we can.*

*For he who helps his fellow man  
Is serving, too, the LORD,  
And for his labors will receive  
Eternal, great reward.*

*The wealth of earth will pass away  
But wealth of faith and love*

*Will keep us happy here below,  
And make us rich above.*

*Before our days have run their course  
And Death presents his claim,  
Let's trust in Christ and use our time  
To glorify His Name!*

For more information: [bible-christian.org](http://bible-christian.org)