

The only thing that matters is that you are reading God's word regularly. While that is still true with this schedule, the goal with this one is to get a better understanding of the entire story of the bible. There is no substitute for reading God's word. Keep reading! My website is at <http://graceofourlord.wordpress.com>. I encourage you to get the actual reading plan I am currently following. You can get it from the same place I do - at [this link](#). They have some great guidance for the reading plan there as well, and they have it all in both PDF and in Kindle format!

October 2012						
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### October Week 3 (Week 42) Summary

**Acts 14, 15, Galatians 1, Galatians 2, and Acts 16 - Click the chapter below to go to the ESV Bible passage for that chapter and read or listen.**

[Act 14](#) - At the Jewish synagogue in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas preached in such a way that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and "poisoned their minds" against the believing brothers and sisters. They stayed for a long time, performing many signs and wonders. But the divided city resulted in a conspiracy of both Jews and Gentiles to persecute and to stone Paul and Barnabas. When they learned of this, they fled the city.

One of the places they went to from there was Lystra. There Paul healed a man who was crippled from birth. When he began walking, many people started calling Paul and Barnabas gods, referring to Paul as Hermes, and Barnabas as Zeus; and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifices. When they saw this, they were tremendously distressed and, assuring the people that

they were just men, preached to these polytheists about the one true God and how he is evidenced in all the things of this world.

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and they turned the minds of the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him from the city, leaving him for dead. In verse 20, the disciples gathered around him and he rose up and went into the city. The Scripture does not tell us that this was a miracle, or even what Paul's actual condition had been. Enough to say that the Spirit was with him, and he was not deterred. The next day, he and Barnabas went to Derbe. After preaching and making many new disciples there, they returned to Lystra and Iconium, and to Antioch. They encouraged and strengthened the disciples in those places and appointed elders for them in every church.

They went back to speak the word in Perga, and then to Attalia. From there, they sailed back to Antioch of Syria, where they had started their journey, telling all the brethren about the new "door of faith" that had been opened to the Gentiles.

*Side note: [This article from Ferrell's Travel Blog](#) contains interesting information about the connection that the people in Lystra made to Hermes and Zeus. [This second article there](#) is interesting in light of the sacrificial element.*

[Acts 15](#) - Despite Peter's vision, and the fact that the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles in [chapter 10](#), the acceptance of Gentiles in the church was still meeting resistance. In [Acts 6:7](#), we are told of a significant number of priests that believed and were added to the church. Many of these would be of the Pharisaic party referred to in verse 5. There were people being taught that all had to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, causing Christianity to be looked upon as a sect of Judaism (and to some, a sect that had gone very wrong). The time had come to deal with this issue once and for all.

Paul had been given his revelation on the matter, as the Lord had told Ananias in [Acts 9:15](#) that "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles..." He and Barnabas and others were appointed to go to Jerusalem to speak to the apostles and elders about the matter. In verse 3, we have them passing through Phoenicia and Samaria, bringing great joy as they describe the conversion of the Gentiles.

Peter spoke to the council in verses 7-11, reminding them of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then Paul and Barnabas related the signs and wonders God had done through them on their journey. James, the Lord's brother, then affirms by quoting [Amos 9:11-12](#) in verses 16-18. The apostles then chose men to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and sent a letter with them, affirming with one accord that the Gentiles were not to be burdened with the requirements that the circumcision party was trying to impose. The stipulations referred to in verses 20 and 29 were to make clear that they were to abstain from behavior that would make them appear to the world as the idol-worshippers that were so common (sexual immorality was a predominant theme in idol worship).

Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch (of Syria) preaching for a while, then prepared to re-visit the cities where they had been. Verse 39 describes "a sharp disagreement" between the

two. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them. But verse 38 says that "Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work." Separating, Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia. The Scripture does not elaborate on this, but it has been pointed out that the disagreement had the end result of making their efforts doubly fruitful.

[Galatians 1](#) – Paul's letter to the Galatians was one of the earliest written epistles; and there is much speculation as to which Galatians it was written. It was a circular letter, almost certainly written to the churches of southern Galatia that he established on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. The context of the letter can be understood best if one keeps in mind that many of the circumcision party - Judaizers - had come after Paul teaching, as was their custom, that in order to be saved, the Gentiles had to be circumcised, and had to keep the law of Moses. In effect, they were being taught that they first had to be converted to Judaism.

It is clear from Paul's writing in the first chapter that these Judaizers had also suggested, if not outright declaring, that Paul was not really an apostle - certainly not on the level of the original twelve. He opens the letter with a greeting that immediately declares his apostleship - something he only does in his letters to churches that were unfamiliar with him or where his authority was questioned (Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians), as opposed to the letters to Philippians and Thessalonians. He goes to some length in chapter one to be candid about his background as a persecutor of the church, and to declare that he was called by the Lord himself to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (verses 11-16).

Paul often opens his letters with a commendation, but instead he opens with a rebuke here, as he declares his astonishment at hearing that many of them had accepted this false teaching. He strongly proclaims that if anyone (even he himself, or an angel from heaven) would proclaim to them a different gospel than was preached to them previously, they were to be accursed. This false teaching threatened the very foundation of Christianity and had to be quashed immediately and thoroughly.

One final note on this chapter is worthy of comment. Verses 17-20 contain statements affirming (strongly underscored in verse 20) that Paul had not been among apostles other than Peter and James, the Lord's brother, in the first years after the Lord had called him. This point was important because efforts to disparage his apostleship had also suggested that he had merely been approved by them, or had been given his knowledge of the gospel by them. The reference to James, the Lord's brother, as an apostle should be understood in light of 1) his relationship to Jesus and/or 2) the fact that James became the official leader of the church in Jerusalem. As Coffman pointed out, this James was not a plenary apostle, as were the twelve and Paul.

[Galatians 2](#) - Paul continues in this chapter with two important purposes - to defend his apostleship, and by doing so, to reinforce the correct teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ that he had done there previously. Some see the visit to Jerusalem referred to in verse one as being the famine relief effort of [Acts 11:29-30](#). But that occurred at a time of great persecution in Jerusalem ([Acts 12](#)) - so much so that James the son of Zebedee was executed, and Peter was thrown in prison. It was no time for the type of conference described in verses 1-5. Clearly, these events correspond more closely with the Jerusalem Conference outlined in [Acts 15:1-](#)

5. Verse 9 confirms the conviction of Peter and James, the Lord's brother, that bringing the gospel to the Gentiles was indeed God's will. Had this been the case with the trip in Acts 11, the matter would have been settled then - with no need for the Jerusalem Conference to take place at all.

There are aspects of Paul's rebuke of Peter in verses 11-14 that are much debated. Did Peter's hypocrisy about occur before or after the Jerusalem Conference? What did Paul mean when speaking of the men of the circumcision party who "came from James?" We do not all of the answers. We know from [Acts 15:13-19](#) that James was certain of God's will toward the Gentiles. Paul's relating of these facts to the Galatians showed not only that he was equal to the other apostles, but that this truly was the Lord's will.

Paul then underscores all of this in verses 15-21 by pointing out that we as Christians are not justified (counted as righteous) by works of the law. Through the faith in Christ (some translations more accurately say "faith OF Christ") we have died to the law (verse 19, [Romans 7:4-6](#)). As Paul says in verse 20, we "have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." We were "buried therefore with him by baptism" ([Romans 6:4-6](#)). He settles the matter in verse 24 by pointing out that "if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." If we could earn our salvation through works of the law, we would have no need of the grace that we have in Christ.

[Acts 16](#) - After arriving again at Lystra, Paul wanted a disciple there named Timothy to come with him. Some wonder why Paul chose to circumcise Timothy, but clearly states in [Galatians 2:3](#) that Titus was not circumcised. The answer is that Timothy, before becoming a Christian, was raised by a Jewish mother (though his father was Greek). So, as verse 3 says, it was because of the Jews in those places. Having an uncircumcised Jew with him could pose a distraction by having some focus on that fact rather than the important teaching of Jesus Christ.

As they went along, the brethren at various places were encouraged by the relating of the events of the Jerusalem Conference. In verse 6, as they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, it says that they had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. This is not a reference to the continent of Asia, but to a Roman province in what was called Asia Minor - Ephesus being the capital. For whatever reason, the people there were not ready to receive the word yet. The same was true of Bithynia in verse 7, as they went through Mysia to Troas. Then Paul had a vision of a man telling him to come to Macedonia to help them.

In verse 10, Luke speaks for the first time in the first person plural - "we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" - from which we can conclude that Luke had been preaching the gospel for a while already, as he includes himself with Paul, Silas and Timothy. So they set sail to Philippi, a leading city in Macedonia. There was no synagogue there, so on the Sabbath they found women gathered for prayer by the river. One was "Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods." These goods would have been made from an expensive dye made from the murex shell. Note that Luke says that God opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul said, and she was baptized.

After Paul drove the demon from the slave girl in verses 16-18, her owners drug Paul and Silas

before the magistrates with false accusations. In verses 20-22, they were beaten with rods and put in jail. Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns while the other prisoners listened until an earthquake shook the prison, opening the doors and freeing the bonds. The jailer, ready to kill himself as he supposed they had escaped. But Paul stopped him, and he and his family were all baptized. The magistrates sent the police the next day, telling the jailer to let them go, but Paul declared his Roman citizenship, and practically demanded an apology - which he ended up getting, as the magistrates were then afraid. They were asked to leave the city, though, so they visited and encouraged Lydia and the brothers before leaving.