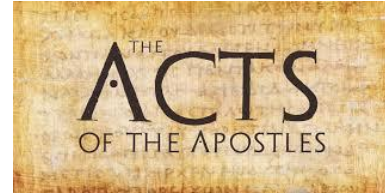


When we began this series on the Acts of the Apostles, we noted the birth of the Church, the change in people's lives and its divinely inspired growth.



It was born on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Christ's ascension into Heaven.

The Holy Spirit filled each believer in that upper room with power and conviction; and knowledge of a foreign language.

Thousands were saved in a day and the people's lives were changed. They studied the Scriptures, and fellowshiped daily, and gave to anyone who had a need.

Now,

Here we are in Acts 21, and we see how the Gospel has continued to spread.

Acts 21 Paul travelled to Tyre, where there were disciples of Christ.

v.3 *When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo.*

v.4 *After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days*

v.7 *When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.*

v.8 *On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*

v.15 *After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.*

v.16 *Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.*

v.17 *After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.*

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Jerusalem is where the Church began.

I want to show you on a map the journey of Paul. This is his 3rd missionary journey.

So what a great work the Holy Spirit was doing through Paul, but not only Paul but through many others who responded to the Gospel.

So,

Here they are, back in Jerusalem and they're talking about all the wonderful things God has been doing through them, and even among the Gentiles!

Originally, the Gospel went just to the Jews.

v.20 *And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;*

Many Jews were getting saved but had not yet received enough light to understand that Christ was the fulfillment of the Law of Moses.

So they continued in that way.

So,

With all of the good that has been happening, there is still opposition to the good news of Christ by those who are still under their religious Laws.

Paul is being accused of leading the people astray. That's the power of a religious system. It binds people and holds them captive.

Whether it's:

- A certain day (Saturday worship)
- Dietary restrictions
- The way they dress
- Even entertainment



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Religious restrictions put people in bondage.
And that is the opposition to the Gospel of Christ.

v.21 *and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

V.22 *"What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.*

Ie.

What can we do to show them that you are not teaching people to forsake the Law of Moses?

Can you see the strength of religion? Even those saved through the Gospel are still entangled in it.

So they had an idea:

v.23 *"Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;*

v.24 *take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.*

Ie.

Join these men in their vow and also pay the sacrifices required by the Law.

Now;

Paul went along with this but we don't know, at least I don't know, whether this was the right thing to do or not.

Paul is preaching the Gospel of Grace.

And yet,

He is putting himself under the Law for the sake of the Jews.

There was a time when Paul rebuked Peter for doing something similar.

Gal 2:11 *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.*

v.12 *For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.*

V.13 *The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that*

even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Peter ate with the Gentiles, but when the Jews came, he withdrew from the Gentiles.

Paul called him a hypocrite.

But wait!

Is Paul doing the same thing?

He is teaching the Gentiles they are not under the Law, yet,

When the Jews came, he put himself under the Law!

What is going on here?

Well, There is another time when Paul said;

And maybe it was in reference to this incident.

I Cor 9:19 *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.*

v.20 *To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;*

v.21 *to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.*

v.22 *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.*

v.23 *I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.*

So what are we learning from this scene?

Maybe it is that we have to sometimes operate in our own convictions.

Look at the outcome of something and ask if it helps or hinders the cause of the Gospel.

Peter hurt the cause of the Gospel by separating himself from the Gentiles, when Jesus said He had sheep of another flock.

Paul either, compromised his faith and buckled or he identified with those who said he was dividing the Jews.

Maybe that is for the Holy Spirit to decide in our own hearts.

But.

Let us examine our own lives, our convictions and take note of how our choices affect the Gospel and does it hinder or help lead people to Christ.