

word

WITH PS IAN WONG

Even the Gentiles

ACTS 13-16

pulpit schedule

06 Sep - Acts 1-3 (Empowered Witnesses) • *Ben Soh*

13 Sep - Acts 2-4 (Emboldened Covenanters) • *Rev Stefanie Oh*

20 Sep - Outreach & Social Concerns Sunday • *Rev Joseph Chen*

27 Sep - Acts 5-8 (Expectant Martyrs) • *Rev Stefanie Oh*

04 Oct - Acts 9-12 (Expanded Family) • *Ps Ian Wong*



Therefore, remember that formerly you who are **Gentiles** by birth... — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, **excluded from citizenship** in Israel and **foreigners to the covenants** of the promise, **without hope and without God** in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who **once were far away** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:11-13

For he himself is our peace,
who has made the two groups one
and has destroyed the barrier,
the dividing wall of hostility

EPHESIANS 2:14

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and **a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.**

ACTS 11:19-21

**News of this reached the church in Jerusalem,
and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.**

**When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had
done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain
true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good
man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number
of people were brought to the Lord.**

ACTS 11:22-24

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch.

So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people.

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

ACTS 11:25-26

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

ACTS 13:1

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ACTS 13:1

Barnabas	Jewish Levite (Cyprus)
Simeon called Niger	Possibly African
Lucius of Cyrene	Greek Jew (Nth Africa)
Manaen (grew up with Herod)	Connections to royalty
Saul	Ex-Jewish Pharisee

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

While they were worshiping the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and **sent them off**.

ACTS 13:1-3

PAUL'S 1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (ACTS 13-14)



Location	Scripture	What God did
Antioch (Syria)	Acts 13:1–3	The Holy Spirit commissions Barnabas and Saul
Cyprus (Salamis and Paphos)	13:4–12	A Roman proconsul believes after witnessing God's power and hearing His teaching
Pisidian Antioch	13:13–52	Many Gentiles rejoice and believe when Paul announces the gospel is for them
Iconium	14:1–7	A great number of Jews and Greeks believe; God confirms His message through signs and wonders
Lystra	14:8–20	A man is healed; Paul proclaims the living God to a pagan audience
Derbe	14:20–21	Many people become disciples
Return journey	14:21–26	The missionaries strengthen the new churches and appoint elders
Antioch (Syria)	14:27–28	They report that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

ACTS 15:1-2

The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles **had been converted**. This news made all the believers **very glad**. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

ACTS 15:3-5

They were glad that Gentiles had been converted.

But the question was *what were they converted to become?*

Were they saved by Judaism + Jesus? Or just Jesus?

Must they practice Traditions + Grace? Or Grace alone?

This was a **crucial moment** in this new movement of Christianity in the world.

The Pharisees were not wrong. God chose the Jews, and all Gentiles *up til then* became God's people by becoming Jews, adopting their beliefs as well as practices.

Was it to be different now with Jesus, when the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles who did not become Jews first?

How they decided to move forward was very significant. It laid the foundation for how the Church would decide things like this for the ages to come.

What do we do when we disagree fundamentally, when parties are all acting in good faith and "for God"?

Discernment and Decision Making in the Church

1. Listen to what God has been doing

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ACTS 15:3-5

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about **the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles** through them.

ACTS 15:12

Discernment and Decision Making in the Church

1. Listen to what God has been doing
2. Listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us

The apostles and elders met to consider this question.
After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them:
“Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a
choice among you that the Gentiles might hear **from my
lips the message of the gospel and believe**. God, who
knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving
the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

ACTS 15:6-8

“He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Now then, **why do you try to test God** by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?

No! We believe it is **through the grace of our Lord Jesus** that we are saved, just as they are.”

ACTS 15:9-11

But now **apart from the law** the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

This righteousness is **given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.**

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 3:21-24

Discernment and Decision Making in the Church

1. Listen to what God has been doing
2. Listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us
3. Do not make it difficult for others based on our own journey

Peter spoke

Then Paul and Barnabas

And then now James (brother of Jesus) speaks

When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

“After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, **even all the Gentiles** who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ — things known from long ago.”

ACTS 15:13-18

“It is my judgment, therefore, that **we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.**

Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

ACTS 15:19-21

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9. Awareness of social and financial expectations that exclude
10. Valuing church identity above the mission of the church

Discernment and Decision Making in the Church

1. Listen to what God has been doing
2. Listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us
3. Do not make it difficult for others based on our own journey
4. Corporate discernment and decision making

**The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.**

We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul — men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ACTS 15:23-26

Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

ACTS 15:27-29

Discernment and decision making in the Church

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5. Invite the new to journey with the old for the sake of unity

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- 1) food sacrificed to idols (Lev 17:7-9)**
- 2) from blood (Gen 9:4, Lev 17:10-14)**
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Idol Worship (1 and 4)

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Idol Worship (1 and 4)

Barriers to Jewish Fellowship (2 and 3)

ACTS 15:27-29

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- Do we want to grow in discernment and Spirit-led decision making in our lives?
- Are we making room for others to accomodate them so that we may fellowship with them in Jesus Christ?
- What new thing is God doing in our midst today?