

Acts of the Apostles  
Week 7 Summary  
Acts 14:1–15:41

Paul and Barnabas continue on their missionary journey and face growing resistance, particularly from the unbelieving Jews who turn the Gentiles against the two apostles. This leads to a plan to kill them, but they become aware of it and flee. We then have a situation which specifies the general notice that their preaching came with the power of the Spirit of signs and wonders. Similar to Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas encounter a lame man from birth and in Jesus' name. The man walks and then we see how far from Jerusalem we are. The people believe that Paul and Barnabas are Zeus and Hermes. Because they believe the gods have come down they set out to offer sacrifices in worship. Paul manages to stop them but then Jews who followed from Antioch stir up this people so they actually manage to stone Paul. They leave Paul believing he is dead. Then they work their way back through the areas where they had made disciples, finally returning to Antioch where they report about their ministry.

We then come to a critical time in the life of the church. After the initial reception by the Jewish people to the gospel, there is generally less reception to it, and even hostility. Now the gospel is also being preached to the Gentiles with success, so that the fear is there will be more Gentile Christians than Jews. So, we have a group insisting that Gentiles must become Jewish before they can be counted as Christians. When those Jews come to Antioch upsetting the joy over what God has done and is doing, Paul and Barnabas along with some others are sent to Jerusalem to get a definitive answer. This leads to the first council of the church to discern the answer together. Peter begins by, again, relating the events of Cornelius and his house hold. There, Peter puts emphasis on the giving of the Holy Spirit in like manner to Pentecost. He also points out that if the church was to decide Gentiles must keep the works of the law, they would be asking Gentiles to accomplish what the Jews themselves couldn't. Paul and Barnabas also add their testimony to what God has been doing for the Gentiles in their ministry journey.

Finally, James (the brother of Jesus, not the brother of John who was put to death) speaks. James had become an important person in the Jerusalem church, seemingly holding the leadership Peter once did. James agrees with Peter's assessment and insists that Gentiles do not need to become Jews, but he does establish some food and moral requirements in order to maintain table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. This is put into a letter and sent to the Gentile churches with Barnabas and Paul as well as representatives from Jerusalem.

Once that is accomplished, Paul and Barnabas are ready for a second missionary trip. However, they fall into sharp disagreement whether or not to take John Mark with them on this trip. Barnabas wants to and Paul does not. So, Barnabas and Mark go one way and Paul and Silas go another. A sad situation, but the ministry is doubled.

*Faithful Presence*  
"Chapter Five"

1. How does Fitch's unpacking of the gospel from page 96–98 match with what we have been learning from Scripture, McKnight, and Wright?
2. How does Fitch's description of proclamation in the dotted circle, if it were practiced, shape our small group ministry?
3. On page 108 Fitch says we must patiently wait the opportunity to proclaim the gospel. What are the implications for us?