**Acts of the Apostles**

**Chapters 9-15**

**Acts 9:1-31 – Conversion & Commissioning of Saul**

**Summary:**

On his way to Damascus to seek out those who believe that Jesus is God's Messiah and to stop the spread of "the Way," Saul of Tarsus is blinded by a life-changing encounter with Jesus. Jesus sends him to Damascus, where he sees again and takes up his call of evangelization in Jesus' name. After his conversion Saul becomes a powerful witness to the gospel and the local Jews plot to kill him. Saul escapes, goes to Jerusalem and is sent to his home town of Tarsus.

**Read: Acts 9:1-22**

***Questions to Ponder:***

Paul’s conversion is one of the most miraculous told in scripture. Do you know anyone who has converted to Christianity? What was their experience?

Is conversion a one-time experience or a daily experience?

Ananias is commissioned to go to Saul of Tarsus and help him receive his sight. Which is harder, sharing the good news locally or in a place where you are not known?

**Acts 9:32-11:18 – Peter’s Ministry Beyond Jerusalem**

**Summary:**

Peter goes to Lydda where he heals Aeneas, a paralyzed man, and raises Dorcas from the dead.

Peter is then called to go to the house of a Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius, to tell him about God's grace revealed in Jesus. To go to Cornelius's house and stay there, Peter must leave behind the scriptural commands of God that require separation of foods and persons into the categories of clean and unclean.

***Listen & Look – Listen to Craig Koester of Luther Seminary teach this passage & Look at the map provided to get a sense of where these events are happening.***

***Questions to Ponder:***

Many of these Acts of the apostles have levels of impact beyond the initial miraculous sign. When Tabitha (Dorcus) is healed her community regains a servant leader who blesses the lives of many.

* As you look around at our church’s ministry or your own ministry with others, what far reaching impact do you see? (think of the students sent to Christikon, the families helped out of homelessness, or the many in our church who regularly bless the lives of their families and this community… & so many more.)

In this section Peter is allowing for the possibility that Gentiles can also be saved. This is a significant shift in how the church operates and the rest of the apostles need some time to process this. 11:18 helps us understand how they are able to make this movement.

* What changes to the life of the church have happened in your lifetime?
  + Which were the most difficult to come to terms with?

**Acts 11:19-12:25 – The Succession of the Twelve**

**Summary:**

After the death of Stephen many Greek-speaking believers flee Jerusalem for Antioch, where they build up a community with many new believers. Barnabas and Saul (Paul) visit this new community in which believers are first called "Christians."

Herod jails Christians, finding that such violent behavior pleases the local crowds. After killing James and imprisoning Peter, Herod himself dies because of his prideful acceptance of the crowds' idolatrous acclamation.

**Important Passages:**

**Acts 11:29-30**  29 The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; 30 this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

**Acts 12:21-24**  21 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the platform, and delivered a public address to them. 22 The people kept shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!" 23 And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. 24 ¶ But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents.

**Acts 13:1-14:26 – Paul’s Mission to the Nations**

**Summary:**

Paul is invited to speak when he and his companions attend a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. His speech, which cites Scripture to support Christian conviction that Jesus is God's Messiah, creates much excitement and interest but also division in the community.

Paul and Barnabas go to Lystra and heal a paralyzed man. The local population, whose language Paul and Barnabas do not know, believes it has been visited by the gods Zeus and Hermes in disguise and tries to worship the two evangelists, who barely succeed in restraining the people.

***Listen & Look – Listen to Craig Koester of Luther Seminary teach this passage & Look at the map provided to get a sense of where these events are happening.***

A diverse group forms this early church. Why, in your estimation, is diversity so hard for us in the Lutheran Church?

Not everyone agrees with Paul’s teaching. In both Jewish and Pagan settings Paul gets run out of town or beaten. Why wouldn’t they accept his message?

**Read Acts 14:27-15:12 – The Jerusalem Council: Report and Reaction to Paul’s Mission**

***Questions to Ponder:***

What is the response of the council of Apostles and church leaders in Jerusalem toward Paul and Barnabas’ teaching among the gentiles?

A division arises between Paul and Barnabas. What is this about?

The story goes on, this is not the last time there will be a dispute in the early church over what it means to be Christian and who should be going out representing the church. The Holy Spirit will continue to work on the church and even surprise them. How are these same struggles present in the church today? How might we be surprised?

All Summary Notes are adapted from www.enterthebible.org