July 17

Saul and Barnabas

The Call

 Saul and Barnabas did not just decide to take the journeys but the Lord through the Holy Spirit called them to this service – Read: Acts 13:2.

 The first mention of Saul’s name being changed to Paul – Read: Acts 13:9a.

 Paul and Barnabas also had people that hindered their teaching – Read: Acts 13:6-12.

 We, too, maybe groping in darkness trying to find someone to lead us, the Lord is waiting patiently to show us the light and lead us on paths of righteousness.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 13:12

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me, O Lord, to know when you are leading me in witnessing so that I can be successful and not just rambling on my own.

July 18

The First Journey

Pisidian Antioch

 Paul and Barnabas sailed to Perga, and went on up to Antioch in Pisidia where on the first Sabbath Paul spoke – Read: Acts 13:16. Paul here launches into a speech that traces God’s involvement with His people from Moses through the resurrection of Jesus!

 If the people listening received nothing else from Paul’s speech – Read: Acts 13:38-39.

 The Jews became jealous – Read: Acts 13:44-45 – This did not stop Paul and Barnabas – Read: Acts 13:46-48. Here we see the reason why the Gentiles (which includes us) were given the chance to hear the message of salvation.

 The age old rivalry of the Jews opposing the Word of God was here as well but that did not stop Paul and Barnabas in spreading the Gospel. We must not let scoffers and doubters discourage us from witnessing.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 13:49

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me, O Lord, never to be discouraged in your work but keep the faith and rely on you for strength.

July 19

The First Journey

The Rest of the Journey

 Paul and Barnabas continued on to Iconium – Read: Acts 14:1-5. Here we see a city divided, their effectiveness was hindered and a plot was schemed – Read: Acts 13:6. Paul and Barnabas were forced to leave the area and they proceeded on to Lystra.

 In Lystra – Read: Acts 14:8-10. The crowd was impressed but was a bit over the top – Read: Acts 14:11-13. Paul and Barnabas did not want any part of this and tried to explain – Read: Acts 14:14-18.

 The trouble makers arrived – Read: Acts 14:19-20. So it was time to move on!

 Paul and Barnabas preached in Derbe and reached many souls. Then they retraced their steps, encouraging new converts and stopping in a couple of new places then headed back to Antioch in Syria. Read: Acts 14:27.

 We need encouragement and strength that can come from other believers, that’s where the worship service can give us the inspiration we need to face another week in the Lord.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 14:22

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me, O Lord, not just to take but also to give strength and encouragement to others.

July 20

The Meeting

Law vs. Grace

 In Antioch some men from Judea showed up – Read: Acts 15:1. Paul and Barnabas disagreed with this teaching. A delegation was sent to Jerusalem to find out from the apostles and elders to settle the question – Read: Acts 15:5 – there was a discussion – verse 6 and Peter made his points in – verses 7-11. Paul and Barnabas spoke in verse12 – James spoke in Acts 15:13-21.

 It was decided to write a letter to believers – Read: Acts 15:23-29.

 This perhaps could be considered the first church convention and they actually came to a conclusion and did something about it! The letter was taken to Antioch by Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas.

 The people were encouraged by the letter, Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem but Paul and Barnabas stayed on in Antioch.

 It is good for us, too, not to get caught up in the dos and don’ts, but just to follow the example of Christ and remember the Grace of God saves us.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 15:11

PRAYER THOUGHT: Thank-you, O Lord, for your grace it lifts the burden of rules and lets us live more freely in your love.

July 21

Paul and Silas

The Second Journey

 Why Paul and Silas and not Paul and Barnabas – Read: Acts 15:36-41. In Acts 16 we encounter Timothy for the first time, his mother is a believing Jew and his father was Greek. Timothy was circumcised before he left with Paul and Silas, this seems in direct conflict with the letter saying that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be saved, and this was not done for salvation but to make Timothy’s testimony more effective among the Jews in the area.

 Paul and Silas delivered the letter drawn up by the Apostles in Jerusalem to the churches and told them to heed the guidelines – Read: Acts 16:5.

 Paul and Silas made a sweeping pass around Asia because the Holy Spirit would not allow them to go into Asia at this time. Then there was a vision – Read: Acts 16:9.

 They headed toward Macedonia.

 Paul and Silas returned to churches already established which was encouraging to them, but Paul did not go where the Holy Spirit would not allow him to go, he followed the Spirit’s leading. We need to get so in tune with the Holy Spirit that we know when the Spirit is leading and when he is not.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 16:10.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Thank-you O Lord, for the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort and help us. Help me to follow the Spirit’s leading.

July 22

The Second Journey

In Philippi

 The first conversion in Philippi – Read: Acts 16:11-15. All seem to go well at first in Philippi, Lydia and family were converted but then things changed – Read: Acts 16:16-24 – What made the change in this girl awkward to say the least? What happened to Paul and Silas?

 Read: Acts 16:25-30. This was indeed a miracle! After all how often do prison doors fly open and chains come loose and no one leaves? The jailer was about to kill himself but Paul stopped him, the jailer knew he wanted what Paul had and asked how to be saved!

 We need to live a life that demonstrates the love of God so vividly that people want what we have! Here we see a bad situation that was turned out as witnessing opportunity; we too must learn how to see witnessing opportunities and make the best of them.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 16:31

PRAYER THOUGHT: May my belief in you be of saving quality and vivid enough to other people that they want to have what I have in you, O Lord.

July 23

The Second Journey

Movin’ On

 Paul and Silas gave peace and joy to the jailer. They were released the next day from jail, the officials tried to just very quietly usher them out of the area but Paul wanted a proper escort because of the way, they as Roman Citizens had been treated! To keep from any trouble – Read: Acts 16:39. Paul and Silas went for a quick stop at Lydia’s house to encourage the brothers and then moved on to Thessalonica, where things did not go very good – Read: Acts 17:2-9. So once again they had to move on – Read: Acts 17:10-12. The Bereans were a better lot than the Thessalonians and things went well there until – Read: Acts 17:13. The trouble makers showed up and Paul went on to Athens alone leaving Silas and Timothy behind to catch up as soon as they could.

 Sometimes we run into hard-hearted people like the Thessalonians then we must plant the seed of salvation and leave, letting the Holy Spirit nurture the seed. Open-minded people on the other hand receive salvation, although they may research to see if what is taught is true, just as we need to do if we hear something we don’t know about or don’t understand.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 17:3

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me to keep an open mind about my faith and the acceptance of you by others, help me to be patient with others and have self-control in face of disbelief.

July 24

The Second Journey

In Athens

 While Paul was waiting in Athens, for Silas and Timothy to join him, he made his way around the city, seeing many idols. Paul talked in the synagogue, but also in the market place to anyone who would listen about Jesus and the resurrection.

 Paul was a clever speaker – Read: Acts 17:22-23. Paul went on to tell them about the “unknown god”, the real and true God, not an idol.

 Paul won some souls to Christ but not everyone he spoke to, we cannot expect to win to the Lord everyone we speak to either, but don’t give up easily either, sometimes it takes time for people to think things through and to be persuaded by the Holy Spirit.

VERSE FOR TODAY: ACTS 17:32.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Give me, O Lord, the right words to say in witnessing for you, words to encourage those who are willing to be your followers into accepting your gracious gift of salvation.