



## BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:  
**A2115 ~ Jew and Gentile.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

Have you ever experienced a good holiday and didn't want it to end? You're unwilling to return back to work or the routine of normal life? Well, Paul and Barnabas, the 1<sup>st</sup> missionaries to the Gentiles, could well have had that in reverse! When they returned home to Antioch in Syria, they may have needed a good rest. Despite many hardships on this 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey, they viewed it as a successful one.

At every city they preached in, Paul and Barnabas made disciples for the Lord Jesus. When the time came for them to return home, they travelled back by the same route that they had come and so were able to visit all the newly made disciples. Even though Paul and Barnabas had been expelled from Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra before, they again entered these cities to encourage the new disciples in these places.

It is never enough just to preach the Gospel in a place only once. The new believers needed to be taught and established in their faith. Paul and Barnabas did this, yet warned them that they would have to endure many hardships for their new faith. If they wanted to be heirs with Christ, they would have to suffer for Him as well. And this is the same message in the Bible to those who believe in Jesus today.

In Romans, Chapter 8, it says: “God’s Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God’s children. Since we are his children, we will possess the blessings he keeps for his people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ’s suffering, we will also share his glory.”

New converts may want to protect themselves from any suffering that believing the Gospel might bring to their lives. But Paul makes it quite clear in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Chapter 3: “You know all that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the terrible persecutions I endured! But the Lord rescued me from them all. Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted ... .”

For each group of new believers, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to help set up each new church and nurture it to grow. Of course, the elders were new believers too. Paul and Barnabas trusted that the Holy Spirit would guide and strengthen these new Christians. With prayer and fasting, these leaders were committed to the Lord.

From Perga, Paul and Barnabas travelled to the nearby port city of Attalia and they sailed for Antioch. When they had returned home, the men gave a full report of their year’s journey. They told all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. God can work without preachers, but preachers can’t do anything for God unless God is the one working through them. The Christians at Antioch were very pleased to hear the news. They’d been praying for Paul and Barnabas while away, for without the prayers of the church, this 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey would have been a failure.

The bringing together of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in the new churches was a bit like the early days of marriage. Relatives who had attended the wedding of a young newly married couple found them a few days later in a supermarket disagreeing over which brands of drinks to buy. All their preferences, both big and small, had to be sorted out, and this was necessary in the new church too or else there'd be further problems.

In Acts, Chapter 15, some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem still believed that it was necessary to observe all the Jewish law. They'd heard about the great number of Gentiles turning to Christ in Antioch and the surrounding areas, and worried that these Gentiles would bring 'impurity' into the church.

The Gentile Christians were certainly less 'pure' or religious in their outward behaviour. So the Jewish Christians wanted to protect the new church by making the Gentile Christians obey the Law of Moses. These men travelled to Antioch and the new churches Paul and Barnabas had recently established throughout the region of Galatia, in present-day central Turkey, to teach them the Jewish law to them.

For Gentile Christians to have to keep the Jewish law to be saved was false and incorrect doctrine. A person can only be saved by God's grace through faith, and not by any work of the law. Paul had seen that Peter and Barnabas were having complete fellowship with the Gentile believers until these Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem with their false teaching. Then Peter and Barnabas stopped eating with the Gentiles. Paul could see that this error-filled teaching could cause a great split to happen in the church and for many to leave their new-found Gospel faith. It was at this point that Bible scholars believe Paul wrote the book of Galatians to help the new churches avoid this error.

Paul confronted the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem over what they were teaching. When the men strongly disagreed between themselves, it was decided that they should go to church elders in Jerusalem to settle the issue and determine what requirements should be placed on the Gentile believers. Along the way, Paul and Barnabas told the Christians they met how the Gentiles were turning to Christ in other places, and this brought great joy to all who heard it.

The Jewish Christians who started the false teaching among the Gentile Christians were mainly Pharisees, who was the strictest party to observe the law among the Jews. At the Jerusalem Council, the dispute raged again. Peter stood up and he told the Council how God had commanded him to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his family. At that time, Peter had learnt that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. People are not made pure and righteous because of their work or nationality but by their faith only.

Peter said that Christians must not place unnecessary burdens on the Gentile believers, for God had planned to make a people for Himself from among the Gentiles. Barnabas and Paul then spoke of the wonders and miracles that God had performed through them for the Gentiles on their 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey.

At that time, the main leader of the Jerusalem church was James, the younger brother of Jesus. James spoke and confirmed that what Peter said matched the prophecies of the Old Testament. Amos in Chapter 9 of his book foretold God would establish Christ's kingdom, the church, so that both Jews and Gentiles might seek the Lord and find Him.

James made the ruling that it was not necessary for the Gentile believers to obey the entire Jewish law. There's no other requirement for salvation except the one given by God. That is: faith in Jesus Christ. No mere person was to add any additional rules.

Then James requested that the Gentile Christians observe 3 things: 1<sup>st</sup>, not to eat meat offered to idols; 2<sup>nd</sup>, to abstain from any kind of sexual immorality as forbidden by the Jewish law; and 3<sup>rd</sup>, not to eat any meat from which the blood had not been properly drained.

Why did James ask that the Gentile Christians observe these 3 things? It was extremely important that the Jewish and Gentile Christians remained in fellowship with each other. It would be helped if, out of love for their Jewish brothers in Christ, the Gentile Christians refrained from causing any offense in these ways. The love of Christ changes cultural practices to be considerate of others.

James told the Jewish Christians that the Law of Moses would still be read in the synagogues each Saturday and it wouldn't be forgotten. As for obtaining salvation, the law wasn't necessary for either Jew or Gentile. The Council then resolved to send letters to the churches stating what had been decided. They explained that the Holy Spirit had guided them in this outcome and that leading men from the Jerusalem congregation had been picked to take the letters to the churches in the Antioch region.

Is it necessary for us to know all this early church history? Yes, it is. Even today, we need to know about how to deal with culture and customs as Christians, for most nations these days are made up of different ethnic groups that all have their own lifestyle and religion. Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Ethnic groups mustn't be overlooked in evangelistic efforts to bring as many people as possible to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

In some Western countries, many Christians live by the modern lifestyle of individualism. They concentrate on a personal obedience to Christ, as if all that matters to them is it's 'Jesus and me'. But Christianity isn't a solitary belief system. Any reawakening of the faith depends on the renewal of the people of God, who together are the body of Christ, and also the church.

A number of years ago, a Bible college professor was subjected to much persecution. As a Palestinian pastor of a small church in Jerusalem, he was often stopped by Israeli soldiers asking for his identification. Any slowness in responding to such requests could mean being shot. The soldiers were patrolling the streets looking for terrorists and they didn't mind holding up the pastor for hours. He tried and failed in his attempt to love his enemies.

The random daily checks done by the soldiers fed the pastor's fear and anger. As he confessed his failure to God, he realised something significant. The radical love of Christ is not an emotion but a decision. He decided to show love, however reluctantly, by sharing the Gospel message with the soldiers on the streets.

With new resolution, the pastor began to carry copies of a leaflet with him, written in Hebrew and English. The leaflet contained a quote from Isaiah 53 and the words 'Real Love' printed across the top. From then on, every time a soldier stopped him, he handed the soldier his ID card as well as a leaflet. Because the quote came from the Hebrew Scriptures, the soldier usually asked the pastor about it before letting him go.

After several months, the pastor realised his feeling toward the soldiers had changed. He said he was surprised by this but it was part of a process. His old feelings of fear and anger weren't there anymore. He would pass the same streets, see the same soldiers as before, and now find himself praying, "Lord, let them stop me so that I can share Your love with them."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew, Chapter 5, that we are to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us and to pray for those who persecute us. What a difference following the Lord's word made in that pastor's life! Is there someone in your life whom you'd prefer not to have contact with? Pray for them instead, and for yourself too, that you might show Christ's love towards them in the difficult times of life. Just as the early Christians had to learn to get along with each other, we too need to learn how to show others Christian love. We can't manufacture our own self-giving love. We can only share what God has already poured into our hearts.

In 1 John, Chapter 4, verses 7 and 8, it says: *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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