

## The Beginning of God's Church, Pt.6

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This is *Part Six* of the current series, *The Beginning of God's Church*. Next Sabbath, we're going to begin a new series. It will kind of be a take-off continuing from this, but more focused on the life of Paul, in that respect, and how God used him, how Christ used him, and doing the things that he had to do, or did do.

So, we're going to continue today by picking up in the context of **Acts 13**, where we left off, beginning in **verse 13**, again, just to refresh where we were. It's amazing all the places that we're going to begin going through, concerning where Paul traveled, what he did, the timing in which he did it. I feel like I know Asia Minor really well right now, Greece and some of those cities around there. I've been following the whole trails up back and forth and where those cities are located. But I find that a map helps out, for me it does, to picture it in my mind, where they were, what they were doing. Everybody's a little different, but I enjoy doing that. I'm going to try to explain it when we begin going through more of that.

But it says here in **verse 13** - **Now when Paul and his party set sail for Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch and Pisidian.** Some of these places too, it takes a while to get used to where they are, because like Antioch, I found out, well, there are two Antiochs; there's Antioch, Syria, and Antioch, Pisidia, which is farther north, but that probably doesn't mean a thing to you, that's fine. But if you're trying to find it on a map it does mean something because it gives you a whole better picture. It's sometimes like, "Well how did he end up there?" So once you start following the flow, to me, it adds that much more to what's taking place.

It says, **But when they departed from Perga they came to Antioch and Pisidia and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.** So this is very early on here again, in the sense of when Paul began to go out and what he began to do. But it took time to get these Churches established, and again, I don't want to get ahead of myself, but this is just kind of the beginning of it, of going into those areas and talking to the different ones and God beginning to raise up the Churches there. **Then after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak out."**

So, generally, that's how they began every time when they went into a different area, Paul did, as far as going to the synagogues and began to teach, because that's where the Jewish people were and any individuals who were proselytes, different ones that had come along and wanted to know more about the Jewish religion, Judaism, if you will. And so he started there. Then as time went along, they began to bump into, or have acquaintances with, those of the gentiles, and then he would generally head in that direction. But it always began, as a whole, with the Jews.

**Verse 16 - Then Paul stood up and motioning with his hand, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an outstretched arm He brought them out of it."** That's amazing here. I think we're almost at that point now of getting into that season of the year, Passover and Unleavened Bread, and it's amazing how fast time seems to fly. It doesn't seem that long ago we were at the Feast. It says, "**Now for forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.** Now, some of these things may not go along with what you're reading and whatever translation you're using, but I thought I'd mention that I'm doing translating as I go through these things. There's translating taking place because so many things have been translated so poorly that there are occasions where there are words that better describe, or a phrase that better describes, what they were actually doing, what they were actually saying, and translations could be so much better.

So generally, when I go through and read these things, it's not from any specific translation. There are different ones that I use, and then search out if there's a problem with what's being said, strive to give a better translation of the actual content. We've gone through that in a big way when translating the books into different languages. There are some things when you try to go from one language to another, that at times, if you don't understand, if you don't grasp the spirit of it, of what's taking place, of what's being said, of what they were doing, that things can get translated very improperly because they do it word by word because they don't know what the spirit of it is. They don't know what was being communicated, what the truth is, in other words. This is one example of that.

**"And with a stretched out arm, He brought them out of it. Now for 40 years, He put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when He had brought down seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment."** So again, always going through the history when he talked to the Jews to bring them up to that point in time, of things about the Messiah, and so forth. **"After that, He gave judges for 450 years and Samuel a prophet. Then afterward they asked for a king, so God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years. Then when he was removed from Him, He raised up to them David as king, whom He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart.'"**

So again here, inspiring stories when you understand how God works, how God molds and fashions and prepares people, because this wasn't just an accident. He just didn't pick a time, by fiat or whatever, and decided to call an individual out here working with a flock of sheep. It didn't work that way. He prepared him long before that, in mind, in thinking, molding and fashioning his life experiences.

We go through all kinds of experiences in our life, especially within the Church, and the same sort of thing because God was preparing him in a unique way, to have a unique relationship with Him, and He does with us as well. So, there are occasions when, we have no idea when God began to work with us, when He began to have a purpose to draw us and to call us. But God does the calling, but so often there are things in advance, or at a particular moment in time, where He determines this is the one He's going

to begin working with, or call, and He gives us those opportunities. Then it's up to us how we respond. So again, these are inspiring when you go through and recognize or understand God's personal involvement in the calling of people, and how He works with us, and the power and the might of God to do such a thing. It's quite astounding, quite humbling indeed. **"...a man after my heart; who will do all my will. From this man's seed according to promise."**

So this is a big thing; this isn't a small thing. You know, this is fitting into a place and a purpose and a plan that has to do with His, eventually, His very son, the only one who's going to be like Him for purpose and meaning, and born of Him, from Him in that respect, in a woman, and there are things there we don't fully grasp and comprehend. We can't. We haven't experienced such a thing. We read about it, we try to appreciate it and try to understand that mind because it says, "The Word was made flesh." So again, incredible! This is an incredibly important thing here because this is the one whom He's chosen, His lineage, from David. **"A man after my heart who will do all my will.' From this man's seed, according to promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior, Joshua, after John had first preached before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."**

Now if you're sitting there and you have this background, you're of Judaism, and you hear this history up to this point in time and then you hear about David, that's great. But now, all of a sudden, throwing in there, that they had no doubts what he was talking about, they knew that he was talking about the Messiah. Because when you mentioned David and his seed, and the things that were to happen as far as prophecy is concerned or prophetic things is concerned, they knew full well that this had to do with the lineage coming from David.

**"So Joshua, after John had first preached before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."** So again, this was no secret what had been going on and this had gone throughout all the regions. A lot of these towns, a lot of these cities we read about, and will read about, these backgrounds and so forth, they were in Jerusalem at the time that Christ was put to death, and they were there for that Holy Day season.

So this was a big thing within that particular region, as far as Jerusalem is concerned, as far as Judah was concerned. And so here is a point in time where this went abroad. People knew about this and these stories that they took with them. So all these people dispersed, especially after Pentecost, and it mentions all these different nations of people by speech, by their language, and all these different areas are mentioned. It covers hundreds and hundreds, in some cases, up to 1,000 miles away, of travel and so forth, to get back to where they were. It's a vast area, when you look at the areas, because it goes all the way, as it were, up to the Black Sea, all of Asia Minor, when you go into Europe, past Istanbul, into Europe, and then come down into Asia there. Incredible regions that they traveled to, and those who came down to, in Judaism, to Jerusalem to keep the Feast at different times. They weren't able to come all the time. That's an incredible journey in itself every year, but there were masses of people there still.

Anyway, little context in some of this to see what was taking place because they knew of some of these things, these stories went back out and people talked about them, especially those who believed what they saw. **“Then as John was finishing his course, verse 25, he said, ‘Who do you think that I am? I am not him, but behold, there comes one after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to unloosen. Men and brethren, sons and descendants of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.’”** He's given them a pretty powerful message. Now, it's not going to have a tremendous impact on anyone except those being drawn. There were those that God was beginning to work with in all these areas where Paul went, because the Church, this is the beginning of the Church, in the gentile world especially, starting with the Jews.

So, just because it says he was sent to the gentiles, yes, he was, but always, as a whole, in every area he went to, he went to the synagogues first because that's where it began, that's how it started. He had both Jews and gentiles he worked with in a very big way. **Verse 27 - "For those who dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not know him, nor even the voice of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled concerning him."** So, pretty blunt, pretty strong language that's being used here, and letting them know everything that the prophets have taught, which they hear every Sabbath talked about, about the Messiah, about God, and so forth, they have fulfilled, because of what they did.

Then he goes on and tells them that part. Now continuing on, **verse 28, "Even though they found no cause for death, they asked Pilate that He be put to death."** So again, incredible story here! **“Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in the tomb. But God raised him from the dead.”** So, there were those there who hadn't heard these things. There were others there that heard parts of these stories, and you know how when a story is passed along you don't really know how much, especially in a case like this, of what might be true, what might be just a story, or who really saw it. And yet he's coming in and telling this in a very powerful way, and saying that, “He is the one God raised from the dead. The one that they fulfilled, of what the prophets did to him, and put him on a tree, nailing him to a tree.”

**“Who was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. Now we declare to you good news: That promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled for us, their children, in that He has raised up Joshua. As also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you.’”** So again here, when you put yourself in some of that kind of environment and think about what he's saying, what they're hearing, and know the message, this is what was given to the early Church to preach over and over and over again; it was about Christ being the Messiah, that He died and was resurrected by God. Powerful! And then as time went along and, in the writings, especially of Paul, more than anyone else, God began to reveal so much more to those Churches on a spiritual plane, to mold and fashion them, things that took a lot of time. Especially when you start a few books like Corinthians and different ones, and you see what Paul was

dealing with because of what people were being called out of and the changes they had to make. It was tough, it wasn't easy.

**Verse 34 - "Now that He raised him from the dead,** speaking of God, raising Christ His son from the dead, **no more to return to corruption,"** in other words, making it very clear here he's no longer physical, he's spirit. He can't die. **"He has said after this manner that; 'I will give you the sure word of holiness.'" That's not even the word of "mercy."** Sometimes it's just so irritating going through some of these things. We've talked about this word for mercy anyway, but that's not even what the word is. It's a word here means "the word of holiness." **"I will give you the sure word of holiness to David."** So again here, some of these things, that's why I mentioned, some things are translated here more perfectly, if you will, because we have been given the blessing of understanding God's purpose and God's plan and there are so many things that sometimes are so out of bounds, so far off that people grapple with it. It hides the truth, actually, an ability to see better.

**Verse 35 - "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.'" So again, making this over and over again here that, "Look at what happened."** He says, **"For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption."** His body decayed, he went back to the dust again. He's letting them know because they had this concept, this idea, things about what was being said here, that this is not about David. Just as it talks about in the beginning of Acts that we read about, even the Church didn't grasp and understand some of these things as well as we finally did, because God has to give it in His time, about what these things are about and why these things are written in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms in the manner that they are, and who's being talked about. Again, it's not about David, it's about Joshua. It's a conversation from God to His son, and vice versa, His son back to Him, over and over again.

So he says here, **"For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption. But He whom God raised up saw no corruption."** So again here, the importance of the three days being in the grave, his body didn't decay, and then it was changed to spirit because He's making it clear here, he'll never see corruption. **Verse 38 - "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins..."** powerful! The ability to actually be forgiven of sins? **"...and by him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified from the Law of Moses."**

So again, to sit there and hear this? But again, unless your mind is being opened up, they're not going to be able to grasp it fully. They'll hear certain things and for most, in time, they're going to begin turning against it, but for those with whom God is working and calling, things begin to click. Awesome how God works and He opens the mind, and you begin to see things, because unless He does, you cannot see it. **"...justified from the things which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses."** So, by the Law and

keeping it on your own ability, and by your own works, God makes it really clear we're not justified, and you cannot be forgiven of sin.

**“Beware therefore, unless what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: ‘Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish, for I will work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to fully declare it to you.’”** I mean, things like this are really awesome! They really are, to understand that he's talking to them about things that they can't grasp and to understand what God was saying here to them, in that respect.

**So when the Jews went out of the synagogue the gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.** So again here, it started with the Jews. There are a few called in most areas, very few as far as Jews are concerned, but it's the gentiles, because that's where he was sent. It's the gentiles because they are the ones that God begins opening their minds to understand what He's saying. You would think, “Surely the Jews could understand what's being said,” because when you start talking about others, and some coming there for curiosity, to hear about a God that they don't really grasp and comprehend, but now when that begins to spread because God opens a mind, that's a powerful thing.

But He's going to call gentiles as a whole. So throughout the story, especially as we start it next Sabbath, there will be those Jews that come along, whom God works with because they have the background. So that's why, when we go through some of this and we go throughout some of the gentile world, as Paul goes to some of these Churches and starts in the synagogue, you're going to find that there are different ones who are Jews because they have an understanding and a background that can be built upon. Look at Saul, the education he had, and how God worked with him so quickly, letting him know right away that he had a purpose to go to the gentiles. All the things that Christ began to teach him for that period of time, that he was in Arabia. Incredible! Some of these stories and what took place. But there was that which could be worked with that was on a physical plane, but when God gives His spirit and you begin to understand those things that are written throughout the Old Testament, tremendously powerful!

That's what Saul experienced and that's what some of these Jews in some of these different areas began to experience, and they were able to be used to continue to teach or to help others as well. Because the gentiles, they're going to have a struggle for a time to overcome certain things and to begin learning about the most basic things, even in the Old Testament, on a spiritual plane, to grasp and comprehend that. **So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.** So over and over again, you see the situation where the Jews weren't so excited about what was being said. But here is this group of gentiles and they want to hear more.

**Verse 43 - Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes...** So again here, they're the ones who are converting to Judaism. They're wanting to learn more, and then they have families who are gentile, because proselyte is a gentile who desires to learn about Judaism and

wants to become a part or whatever. Some others were there visiting and so forth, but as a whole, it's a very gentile world in that respect. **Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the Grace of God.**

They had some Jews that did come along, but not that many. But every area had some and every time there were Jews coming along, as a whole, there were some that were picked out of that, in a very powerful way, that God prepared because they were going to be able to become teachers and continue on with some of this when Paul wasn't there, after their conversion and after their being in the Church for a time. **On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God.** So these went out and started talking to others about what was said; they never heard anything like this. Some of these gentiles, to hear what he said happened in Jerusalem and this Joshua who he's proclaiming, this man's proclaiming is the Messiah? The prophesied Messiah, the Christ? And so, talking about the whole city coming together to hear ...**but when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy.**

So, right away here, this separation begins to take place as to whether you're being drawn by God, called by God or not. And those who weren't, Jews who weren't, this is generally the direction they obviously went, because this is against them. That's the way they take it. They don't like it at all, what's being said. So, when they "saw the multitudes," now here, just a matter of normal, everyday jealousy. They see these come around, and they never got crowds like that. Paul's getting crowds like this, but they never had crowds come in like that. And, "Look what he's saying, look what they're listening to!" So they're having a battle with this.

That is amazing about Judaism and why rabbis came along in time. Some of their main teachers came along, and they began to move away from that movement. They started doing that very early on by 70 A.D, rabbis and some of the main rabbis in that region were trying to change things in Judaism. They tried to move away from those things that might show that Joshua was the Christ. So if He died on the 14th, well, to them, "Passover doesn't start now until the 15th." Some of these things they changed themselves, timing of things. They did it on purpose to deceive those in Judaism. Because, as you go through some of these stories, you see a lot of people, and what happened in Jerusalem, there were hundreds upon hundreds and even thousands of Jewish people who were called, who came into God's Church. This had a strong rippling effect within the teachers and the leaders of Judaism in a very powerful way. And by 70 A.D., there were those who were already starting to change some things.

It says, **But the Jews saw the multitudes and they were filled with envy and contradicted what was said by Paul; contradicting and speaking evil.** That's what people do when they don't grasp something, they don't see it, or they don't want to, and their minds turn against something, so they've got to find something wrong and twist and distort or whatever, to find fault with someone else because they don't like that message of whatever he's saying. They twisted and distorted things that were being said that

Paul didn't say, to make it even sound worse. That's what they did to Christ, "Are you a king?" See, by Roman law, if you claim to be a king, you're to be put to death. That's what they tried to use against him.

Then on it goes. This comes up with Paul as well, "You're saying that someone else is a king?" Well, you can't do that in the Roman world. You say something against Caesar and there's some other king or something close to that, and sometimes that's what it was. **So when they saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and contradicted what was said by Paul; contradicting and speaking evil. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first. But since you reject it..."** The Jews? He says, "It was necessary to be spoken to you first." Why? "Because you're the synagogue and you're here and you have a background in the Old Testament and the rest don't, so out of necessity, this is where it's beginning." Then God calls some who are Jews and others aren't being called obviously, and they're the ones who turn against it.

**"...to you first, but since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life."** "You won't listen, you don't get it, and you judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life." Let me tell you, these are words that just made them far more mad, far more irritated at what Paul was saying. He was given strength and power, and Barnabas was too, to say these things and it was tough. Tough crowd! **"...of everlasting life. Look, we turned to the gentiles."** So, "We're going to continue on, and those who want to hear and the gentiles do." It wasn't all Jews that did this, but a large percentage, in that respect, because there were those in every area that were Jewish that God did call as well, but primarily gentiles.

So again, to me it's an awesome thing to try to put yourself in a place and time to see what God was doing and the power by which God was doing it; the planning, the work that went into it, working through Paul, Barnabas here, and some of these stories that go together. Again, showing how meticulous God is and how He began to work to raise up different areas and how He did that, how He accomplished that through things that they said; it's a marvel. People being drawn, people who have no background in some cases here, because they weren't all proselytes either, because they shared it with family members who had no real background in Judaism, but they began to be drawn to the message, and they began to believe it. What an awesome thing! No matter what state, a person's mind, if God starts drawing someone and gives them the truth and gives them the opportunity to see something, awesome! Think of The Great White throne, the opportunity people are going to have. "So we go to the gentiles."

**Verse 47 - "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have set you as a light to the gentiles, that you be into salvation unto the ends of the earth.'" Now, when the gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord.** Because there were those who understood enough to know that Jews didn't have anything to do with gentiles, that that religion, basically, taught that you can't have, you can't eat with the gentiles, and on and on it went, the difference between the two. You can't visit with them, in that respect, as far as friendship is concerned. You can't have a relationship. And let's say, you became a proselyte, and then there were restrictions in that, that weren't the same as if you're naturally born a

Jew and taught. So they were excited. How? Why? Because God gave them something in the mind to see and to have that stirred up, that excitement, something they could see a little bit of that inspired them.

**Then as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** That's pretty powerful what it says here. "As many as had been appointed to eternal life." In other words, God was giving them the opportunity. He was calling them. God has to do the calling, and giving us then, within the Church to Christ, to the Body of Christ, and that's what it's talking about to "as many as had been appointed." There's a purpose in why they're being drawn, their minds are being opened up, and Paul's going to be able to work with them, because they'd been appointed. So when we're called, that's what God does. He appoints us to have eternal life. As far as God's concerned, we're going to have it. As soon as we're baptized and have hands laid upon us and receive the impregnation of God's Spirit, we begin, as God gave Herbert Armstrong to explain it in a very powerful way, in embryo, waiting to be born. Awesome!

They didn't even understand those things yet. I mean, this is very early. It takes a lot of time to establish certain things in them and then to begin building. That's why I think about all that we've been given, through time, and through Philadelphia then, what God gave to the Church at that time, above and beyond anything they had back then, far beyond. They did not have what God gave to Herbert Armstrong, and the vast knowledge and the clear picture of these things, bringing it up to this particular time, because God's preparing for something else now, a new age. Awesome! **Then as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** God gave them the ability to believe. You can't believe unless God opens the mind. So when the mind is open and you have the ability to believe, then there comes the next step. Are you going to do it? Are you going to continue to do it? That's what faith is. God gives you the ability to believe and then you choose. It's up to each one of us to choose whether we're going to hold on to what God gives us to believe.

He can't force it upon us to make those choices. It's just the fact that He gives us the ability to see and to believe that we know it, we can see certain things. That's why that to me is such a marvel, of something you never forget if you're called out of the world. If you grow up in the Church you go through something different, a bit of a different process, but if you're called directly out of the world, and all of a sudden you see the Sabbath? All of a sudden you see the Holy Days? You didn't even know there were Holy Days? You didn't even know such a thing existed. "What are Holy Days? What's Unleavened Bread? What's Trumpets? What are all these things?" And all of a sudden you hear it once and you know it? That's the power of God. Incredible!

Then, to make the choice that this is what you're going to live by? That's up to us. Then if we choose to live by that, because God gives it to us and He gives us the power to continue in it because of His Holy Spirit, because we prayed to Him and looked to Him for that help, then we're able to grow in that. Incredible! So simple and so basic when you have God's Spirit. Others can't see it.

**Now the Word of the Lord, verse 49, was being spread throughout all the region, but the Jews incited devout,** just people who considered themselves religious in that respect in Judaism, **and influential women and the foremost men of the city, stirring up persecution against Paul and Barnabas.** So they went after ones who had influence and blah, blah, blah, you know, how it goes, working on them. Then they get stirred up because there's also another power at work there that, oftentimes, we don't think about when we go through some of these things. There's a demonic world always there. They know. They know those with whom God works. They know it. They know someone who's being called. Incredible! And they start doing their broadcasting. They're trying to influence and pull people away and stir things up and whatever havoc they can cause; they work at that constantly. That's just the way they are. They were doing that here as well. They're the ones stirring things up more, it wasn't just the Jews.

The Jews were bad enough because there are jealousies in what they were going through, but there's a spirit world there too that we have to understand and can't discount. To recognize that's a part of it, that they too stir things up even worse. There are some accounts we're going to go into later on that kind of boggle the mind sometimes, how stirred up people really got. It says to a point, in one case there, they didn't even know why they were doing it! They got so stirred up. They don't recognize the world as it is, the spirit world that's out there.

**...stirring up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, even casting them out from their region.** Tell you what, people in the Church, back then, they lived through some really hard things. They truly did. They lived through oppression, they lived through persecution, they had government coming after them in ways we have never experienced. Incredible, some of the things they had to go through. **But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.** That's why they were filled with joy because they were filled with God's Spirit! So they were rejoicing in the fact that, "Look, look at what's taking place!" They were excited by things getting stirred up because "Look what's happening!" And here some are being called out of that. That is what gave them the excitement. With all that persecution, with all that was going on, they took incredible excitement in the fact that God was raising up people, calling people, people who were able to see and understand in the midst of those kind of attacks that were taking place.

**Chapter 14:1 - Now it happened in Iconium, that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews.**

And incredible, this is just the start of going into the gentile world. They had gone north, up through the areas where Israel had been, up to the Mediterranean, and then right where the Mediterranean begins to cut off and head to the west there and the land masses were above it, speaking of Asia Minor, Turkey today, those regions up there, right at the corner of that is Antioch. And right across a pretty large bay, I'm gonna call it a bay, is Tarsus. Paul spent a lot of time there, we'll get to some of that later on here, but these are some areas that he spent some time in, but now he's going up into, to the northwest of there, traveling up into the mainland of Turkey, if you will, to this place called Iconium.

So again here, they covered incredible distances and God leading them where to go, what to do, and this is part of what we're going through here in reading, what they experienced. It says here again **...they went together to the synagogue of the Jews and so spoke.** So all these synagogues are up through there, and there are people from these regions again that have been in Jerusalem. A few, not all, had been down there in some of these, in the sense of what took place around Passover and Pentecost, not too long before that. So we're talking about a few years, obviously. **Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews and so spoke. Inasmuch that a large multitude, both of Jews and Greeks, believed.**

So again here, God's working in different areas, starting with the synagogues, starting with the Jews and then the gentiles and then, if there are proselytes there, and they hear and they begin talking to other of their relatives and so forth, this is how it grew. **But the unbelieving Jews incited the gentiles and embittered their minds against the brethren.** So again the same, same routine here, twisting and distorting things that were being said by Paul and Barnabas and stirring people up about what they were saying. **Therefore they stayed there a long time,** so it's not a place you'd necessarily want to stay when you're hearing about all this going on, but to them, different ones were being drawn and called, so that was exciting to them. They looked through all the hardships and all the garbage that was being slung in their direction, in that respect, and worked with those whose minds were being opened up. **Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the Word of His Grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.** So as they did this, in the beginning especially, there were things that they did, through Paul, through Barnabas, some of the others and later on here, of things that were not normal that others couldn't do, and they recognize here, "There's a power at work," and more were called.

**Verse 4 - But the multitude of the city was divided; part sided with the Jews and part with the apostles. Then when a movement was made by both the gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to treat with contempt and stone them.** So again here, this just continued on to where it got to this point here, where they riled people up, those who were against them. **They became aware of it and fled to Lystra and to Derbe, cities of Lycaonia.** So again here, it's a particular region here, so it shows they went into Derbe and that is in the same region here, coming back over a little ways, almost as if we're heading toward the direction of Ephesus. It would help in some cases, especially if you look at where Ephesus was.

To me, it has an excitement when you recognize the vastness of what they were doing and what they were covering. Ephesus becomes one of the primary cities, if you will, that they entered into because it was one of the major cities of the region, of that region of Turkey. And again here, when I talk about Ephesus, I can't help but think about having the opportunity to visit there and seeing this area, especially down from the library. The library which still has stones that are on the second story. It was one of the greatest libraries in the world at that time. You come down just about a few blocks here, a couple blocks,

three blocks or whatever, and all of a sudden, there's stonework all along the side there. That's where the dock was for ships. I mean, incredible!

But there's nothing but dirt out there because of what the Romans did. They stripped the land and had it all silted in, and now it's about eight miles from the Mediterranean. Incredible! Some of the destructiveness of mankind and what mankind was able to do, even back then, and some of the things that took place not long after. Anyway, these are some of the regions they're going into and a lot comes out about Ephesus later on because Paul spent quite a bit of time there. **They became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe**, so again, when things got too bad, they got to a point that they were going to be killed if they didn't get out of there, then they'd go on to another region. It's like God gave them opportunity to be around a place and it's like, "It's time to move on. There are other Churches out here." They had no idea how many places God was going to call people, but they just kept going. As they were unwelcome in one region, generally, they'd go on to another, flee to another. And in all those places, God just kept raising up people, incredible! That's the manner in which God worked with him to keep him moving and continue to open up Churches all the way around through Greece and farther.

**...and the surrounding region. Now they were preaching the good news there. Verse 8 - Now a certain man of Lystra, who was without strength in his feet, was sitting there; a cripple from his mother's womb who had never walked. The same heard Paul speaking, who himself was steadfastly looking upon, and knew, that he had faith to be healed.** Paul saw him and it was given to him, in his mind, "He could be healed." Because God has to do this. People can't just decide when they're going to do something like this and determine they're going to go anoint someone, because these things have happened in the past. But God has to do it; it has to be given in the mind. And so he knew it. He knew that this was what was needed, that he was supposed to do it. It's like saying, "He had the confidence then to follow through." **He said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." So he sprang up and walked.**

Now, in these areas, generally as a whole, because people see them constantly, day by day, and all of a sudden, just like what happened in other areas, like what happened in the areas of Jerusalem and different cities around Judea, and now Paul is doing this in this area, incredible. **And when the people saw what Barnabas had done, they raised their voices, saying in Lycaonian, 'So the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.' So they said Barnabas, they called Zeus and Paul Hermes**, so again, this was so moving to them because of something they saw on a physical plane. They had no answers for it except, "These have to be the gods." These are the gods they're familiar with. So, they gave a name to Paul and they gave a name to Barnabas because he was a part with Paul in all this, **because he was chief speaker.** Speaking of Paul here.

So, they knew that Paul was the primary one who taught, who was teaching. Barnabas traveled with him and did teaching as well. But Paul, they understood right away that he was the chief. He had this particular name as far as Hermes was concerned. **Then the priests of Zeus, whose temple was in front**

**of their city brought oxen and reeds to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.** I mean, this is how far away they were from anything having to do with Judaism. Here they're in such a gentile area, they've been so immersed in it that there are other temples around now, they're getting into areas just like when they got to Ephesus and some of these other areas. They're so steeped in different religions and different beliefs of different gods that things really get stirred up as they continue on. But God's calling people in these regions, making it clear this isn't just for the Jews, it's not just for Israel, it's for the rest of the world in God's time. This is where it began.

**But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the people crying out...** So again here, they didn't want this to take place. They didn't want them doing this, because they realized what they were thinking and what they were getting ready to do. So they tried to stop them as it goes on to say, and saying, "**Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men, with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn, from these things, from these useless things,** even is how he said it, "from these useless things." He's telling them what their religion is, what their beliefs are, "**to the living God,**" not to something that you make. Because they run into this over and over again where there are statues and different things and they're kneeling down and praying to these things, and it's like, "This is the living God you're to turn to." "**...who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them.**" They hadn't heard things like this to this magnitude, to this degree, that there is a God like this? "**Who in past generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways, though indeed he did not leave himself without witness in that he did good to give us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and happiness.**"

So again here saying, "This is the power of God. He's allowed people to do this. He's allowed you to do these things. He's allowed you to have these different gods and so forth. But He's taking care of you even in allowing you this." "But now, now it's different. So you have a choice." That's basically the message here. **But with these things, they could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.** So even in the midst of that, the people were so worked up because of what had happened and someone who was lame all of a sudden walking, someone they all knew of, in that respect, hard to hold back the whole crowd and what they wanted to do.

**Verse 19 - Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there and persuaded the people so that they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead.** So they were so riled up over this, of what had taken place, now the Jews get involved that hated this as well, and they stirred up the people even more because it wasn't a good thing, on their thinking, of what they were saying about these gods. And so, they took them out of the city. I think of one minister one time asked everyone, "When was the last time you were stoned?" All the younger people started laughing, you know, anyway. Sometimes people hear what they want to hear and so the young group heard what they wanted to hear, and I thought that was pretty funny, but I was about to ask the same thing, so that came back to me!

So we haven't had to go through things like that you know; be stoned, drug out of a city, stoned so bad, in such a bad way, hit so many times, so bloodied up. I mean, and then you're lifeless and they drag you out? Next time you think you have it bad, and your trial is hard, whatever it is, I don't care what it is you're going through, it's good to think about things like this and to realize how rich we really are, physically and spiritually in this age today. **However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city.** God gave the strength there to help. It doesn't take away everything. It didn't take away all the bruising and all the cuts and all the blood, and he had to clean that up and so forth, but again, we go through different things. God allows us to experience all kinds of things in life. We're not protected from everything. Sometimes people think we have to be protected from everything. We are in God's hands. You think about him and Barnabas; they were in God's hands! Whatever happens, it's in God's hands! God will take care of it in His way, in His time. And what do we look at? The fact that we're called, the fact that we can see what we see, the fact that we're so awesomely blessed and that whatever happens to us, if it's in God's hands, where else would we want to be?

**The next day, he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.** So obviously a place, there's not going to be a lot happen there, "It's time to move on." It's a pretty easy message to receive, "Not going back into that city." **Verse 21.** Because they were to go much farther. That's what they did. They just kept going farther and farther. Things would be raised up in different areas. At times they would have to flee, on and on it went. **Now when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch...** So now, instead of going further up right away, they go back down. So, they go back up later, they have this base they start working out of as we go along here. But they go back down to Antioch, **strengthening the life of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, saying,** so again here, working with those whom God began to call, going back and building upon some of that, which was what they were doing here. He said, this is part of what was being taught, **"We must through much tribulation, or many tribulations, enter the Kingdom of God."**

This is a verse that God gave to us after the Apostasy because there was always the teaching that we had to go through great tribulation at the end time. It wasn't the fact that everybody who has ever been called has had to go through great tribulation, or much tribulation. And the reality was then, God revealed, made it very clear, we all have to go through difficult times, and that the scriptures about "great tribulation" weren't about a future event, a single event that people were going to have to go through at the end, if you will, just before Christ returns. Because that's what we had looked at. We looked at a period of time that was set aside, it was going to be three and a half years of "great tribulation" within the world and in the Church. And yet that's not what those things are about. For the Church, it's the fact that we all have to go through much tribulation. It was never meant to be easy.

This way of life was never meant to be easy, because the fact that we go through different kinds of hardships are the very things that press this mind into having to come to an answer, especially when something that's difficult has to be answered. God is concerned about the conclusion of the mind and

how we think. That it's far more valuable if we yield to His Spirit, looking to Him, looking to God, to be guided and directed by the power of the Holy Spirit to teach us, to tell us, to help us to see what we need to see and what we need to learn from in any matter we go through, I don't care what it is. And then, in God's time, if we continue in that, in faith, knowing we're in God's hands, He will show us what we need to see and what we need to know. But it will be in His time, because it's in that time, so often, that we have opportunity to grow. Because it's in the mind, this is what God's concerned with, what's in the mind. Are we going to hold fast or are we going to give a limitation to God? "Well, I'll go this far, but this is too much." That's what happened in the Apostasy, "This is too much." A third of the Church just quit because it was too much. "If this is God's Church, how could this happen?" Gave up everything just out of frustration, and you think, "What happened? Lose everything you've ever been taught and told? You're just going to quit about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, things you knew in your mind that you believed? Passover, everything? You're just going to throw it out the window, chuck it? Because of something bad that happened that we had to go through as a Church? We saw all the devastation that took place on a spiritual plane?" Well, God wants to know, "What are you going to do?" Anyway.

So again here, great scripture! **We must through much tribulation**, or as it is, a great many tribulations, **enter the Kingdom of God**. To come to that understanding, this was not meant to be easy. It's hard, especially in the first 6,000 years, because the world fights against it, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." In the carnal world, and especially if the Church, as it was during Philadelphia, was large, large enough to have an impact on the world because of *The Plain Truth*, the telecast, the radio broadcast and so forth, there are going to be plenty of people out there that hate it, that loathe it. And is a person going to stand firm in what they believe, regardless of what other people say or think? Or relatives or whoever, it doesn't matter, because there have been a lot of people quit just over those things alone, because what someone else thinks. Well, what's more important, what they think or what God thinks, what God says, what God gives? And so, we're tried in those things.

**So when they had appointed elders in every Church, and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord, in whom they believed.** So again, enough being given to different ones, beginning to work here with this group, went back to them, worked with them some more, and picked out certain ones, that it was evident of God's spirit there, that could teach and so forth. This is what they're doing here. God is raising up an ability then to work with the Church because Paul isn't always going to be there, Barnabas isn't going to always be there. They had to have people there, to work with them.

**Verse 24 - After they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now, when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.** This has nothing to do with Italy, this is a long way away; this is a town. **From there, they sailed to Antioch**, so again here, this circle again. They'd go up to this region and come back around because it's right on the Mediterranean there, a port city. This is where things began in the sense of going out to the gentiles. So now they're working up a little bit

farther and they have gone up into these different areas, raising up churches and then coming back down again.

**From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been delivered to the Grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the Church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the doors of faith to the gentiles.**

So again here, the excitement of coming back and telling here what is happening in these other areas and how there are all these people that are coming along, with whom God is working. To bring that news back down? Exciting to the Church to see these things take place! **So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.** Now, continuing on to **Chapter 15**, it says, **Now certain ones came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** So they dealt with this for quite a long time, back and forth, because this is quite a ways in, after some of these other things that happened. We've already gone through a part of the story about Peter and so forth and what took place, and now we're going through this story, and there's still some that are holding on. This happens for quite a long time actually, where different ones just had a hard time letting loose of certain things and growing. Some didn't grow. Some began just to do their own thing.

**Now, certain ones came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small controversy...** It has to do with taking a stand. So when something comes along, that's what you have to do, to stand up, to stand for what is right and true that God gives, regardless of what anybody else does. That's what they did. They "had no small controversy," meaning to take a stand **...and disputation with them. They determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. Therefore indeed, being sent on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the gentiles, and they did bring a lot of happiness to all the brethren.**

Again here, they're always excited about what was taking place. **Now when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the Church and the apostles and the elders, even reporting all things that God had done in their midst. But some of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, rose up saying,** so again here, all these different ones. If different ones are called with a different background, they still have those proclivities. The Pharisees were to the ultra-right, and to let go of some of those things? Because to them, physical things, physical routine, physical worship, works, they had a problem with works, what works were. To understand some of the things that God has given to the Church here recently about "works"? They didn't have understanding of those things at all. They were still associating certain things with that which was physical. And to separate from that was a very difficult battle, for a lot of them. Not all made it through it, just as happens in the Church or has happened in the Church.

Think of how hard it was for people to change on a day, Pentecost, from Monday to Sunday. Thousands, hundreds of people, different areas, Church areas that went out because of that. **Now, when they**

**arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the Church and the apostles and the elders and reporting all things that God had done in their midst. But some of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, rose up saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and declare they keep the Law of Moses."** They hadn't quite learned how things work yet. Sometimes it just takes time to grow, especially here; this is the beginning of it all. And what do you build upon? Well, there's a lot of building taking place here at the beginning.

I couldn't help but think this morning after going through, hearing something farther out, trying to get sermons out ahead, because I cannot get started on this book until I get these out ahead quite a way. And I'm even going to have some other sermons being given because I can't do the book because of the time it's taking to do all these things. I can't do this particular book by doing a part and then going back to it a week or two weeks later. It's too hard, there's too much that has to go into it. So, basically, all I have right now is an intro because that tells me where I'm going. That has to be solid in my mind, to know where I'm going, to know the purpose of what's being done there, of the thrust of it, which is different from all the others. Then to focus upon that, and I can't do it unless I have time to spend on it, dedicate to it completely. So, I'd appreciate your prayers in all that, because this is much harder, much more difficult than the past.

So anyway, I'm not sure why I took off on that, but just thinking about things that they've gone through and what they were doing and so forth and the focus and what God was doing at that time when you go back and you think about them, what they were experiencing. I started to tell that story. I could not help but think how blessed we are. They paved the way for us. They went through so much. The early Church, they paved the way. Paul did so much; God used him in such a powerful way, wrote more books than anyone in the Bible. Incredible how much He used him and the truth that's in those books, that without it we wouldn't be where we are. But in order for that to come together and for God to give that through the experiences that he was going through, because so much of it was based on experiences and things that were there, and battles that were going on out there that he was able to write thanks to the Corinthians, to Ephesians, Thessalonians, on and on it goes.

Some of these books then, that have been written, that now we understand on a spiritual plane, they worked for back then and paved the way. Because they had to experience all this. They had to go through all this in order for us to be where we are today. Incredible! And you can't help but think about that. Then think how much easier it's going to be for those in the Millennium and the Great White Throne, for those that do want to respond to God. Because we live in a world, for the past 6,000 years, where the nature of man is to see what mankind is doing, because God hasn't revealed himself to the world. But in the Millennium, everything is being prepared. That's why I love what has been given to the Church, ready for Christ's return. All the truth is there now at this time. After 6,000 years, God has helped us to have more because of where we're at. That's the only reason, because of where we're at, because of what needs to be there to start the Millennium well, properly, powerfully, awesome!

And so we're blessed to help pave the way as well. So everyone God has used in the past 6,000 years to help pave the way, to make it easier for others to follow a path, it's awesome! That's why those in the Great White Throne, we have no comprehension of what the world is going to be like by that time after 1,000 years of Christ and 144,000 ruling on earth. And then to be plunged into that period of time, an incredible resurrection. I can't comprehend it all, but it's good to think about it, to realize how God is doing this.

**Then the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. Now when there had been a lot of disputation, Peter rose up and said to them,** so again here, Peter was the chief apostle to the Jews. Sadly in Jerusalem, they didn't always remember what Peter had to say. They didn't have the respect to God's government and how it worked to the way they needed to, but in time they did grow in that. That's why it takes time to grow. And here's just the beginning of the Church again, being reminded of that.

**“Men and brethren, you know that some time ago God chose out from among us that, by my mouth, the gentiles should hear the words of the good news, even to believe. So God, who knows the hearts, bears witness by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and made no distinction, or difference, between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.”** He's going back and telling about this story here, of what he had given and what God did through him early on here, that we've already read about earlier on. **Verse 10 - "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear?"** In other words, that which is physical, the physical routine of various things, because that isn't how we're saved, it's not by going through the motion of, or the Levitical law, or the sacrificial system, if you will. All these things that were done, or circumcision, and that's what he's saying, “To do all these things, those things aren't spiritual.” He didn't put it in those terms, but that's basically what he's saying. In other words, “Everyone who went before, this didn't help them. This didn't help; they weren't saved by doing those things. This isn't how God is working.”

**He says, "But we believe that through the grace..."** So now he's getting to that which is spiritual. They had to learn this as well through time because they didn't grasp all this in the beginning, what grace is. Because Paul does a lot more, when he starts writing about grace, than what they had in the early Church here. So that's why we go back, we're able to go through those things and be so richly blessed in things when they had to grow in these things, and it took a lot of time. **But we believe that through the grace of our Lord, Joshua the Christ, we should be saved according to the same manner as them. Then all the multitude kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul...**

So, he's reminding them of what had happened earlier on and now, especially here with some of the gentiles, what had taken place early on in the Church in that area there. Not what Paul and Barnabas had been doing, but now it's time for Barnabas and Paul to speak up about what they've been doing. And so, they “kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul” **...telling how many miracles and wonders God**

had worked for them among the gentiles. Then, after they held their peace, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me. Simon has declared how God first visited the gentiles to take out from them a people for His name." So, this had already happened. In other words, "You should know this. You should see this. This is what God has already done. From the very beginning, it started happening."

"Even with this, the words of the prophets agreed just as it is written, 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and I will set it up so that the rest of mankind may seek the eternal, even all the gentiles who are called by my name,'" so it's there. It was, but they didn't know that was there before. You read things in the Old Testament sometimes and God has to, by His Spirit, reveal, "This is what this was about." And then all of a sudden, they could say, "Oh yeah." It's like, "Why couldn't we see that before?" You have to learn that too.

"...says the Lord, who does all these things, known to God from the ages are all his works.' Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those who among the gentiles who are turning to God." Pretty powerful. It's saying, basically here, as we go along here, "Look at what God is doing. God is doing it." "But instead, that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood."

So just basic things of life of how you're to live your life. "For Moses has had throughout many generations, those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath." Then it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, who was also named Barnabas, here we don't just get into cities, now we have two Barnabas.' And Silas, leading men among the brethren." So, this is a letter they wrote to them to be sent.

*The apostles, the elders and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the gentiles in Antioch, Syria, Cilicia:*

*Greetings.*

So this is just the lower region where Paul and Barnabas had been. They've told the story here now, "These are the Churches that have started, this is where God has been calling people." Now they have this that has been agreed upon, if you will, at headquarters that's coming back out to make it clear, "We're all in unity and oneness in what is being said here." This is the first conference, in that respect, to do this since the beginning of everything, and this is basically how it started. So, because they're still going to have different Jews in different regions there who have some of this mindset of the Pharisees, as it's talking about here, and this helps to counteract a lot of that then and bring people into unity and oneness, especially if they see that all the rest of the apostles, "They're all in agreement with us."

***Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you, with words unsettling your lives saying,***

So again, now this is 48, 50 AD, period of time, incredible. This is how long, you know, since 31, not that long into it, but slowly but surely they're growing spiritually, "...unsettling your life saying,"

***'Be circumcised and keep the Law to whom we gave no such directive.'***

But you know, sometimes there are people who are zealous. It's always been that way in the Church, for a certain thing that they see and believe or want or think should be done. And so here, when there's traveling and commerce throughout the region and some Jews come to another area and they start talking because they go to the synagogue, they meet other Jews. And if they're in the Church and they're in this context then, because of those who know each other from the past, and they come into an area and they start talking. They're together with people in the Church and they have this connection with someone from Jerusalem, that could come across as being kind of impressive, "Oh, you're with the apostles? You know Peter, you know James? You know the different ones?" They can talk like this and then they can start teaching their own little thing. This has always existed in God's Church, even as people sometimes have traveled to different areas or do different things, and ministers have done it, and they bring along a little tidbit of something that they think should be going on, that should be happening, and it doesn't come from the ministry. So this is what was taking place.

***Since we have heard that some who went up from us, in other words, "from here in Jerusalem," have troubled you with words unsettling your life saying be circumcised and keep the law to whom we gave no such directive.***

It wasn't from the Church, but especially back then, they didn't have an ability to communicate with each other except by travel. A letter or something is sent along, but that was very rare.

***It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord, Joshua the Christ. Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth, for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit. So then to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than those things necessary.***

So again here, beginning of organizing, if you will, together and more closely in that unit and how they're going to work and trying to have an agreement then amongst themselves, which is the way God's spirit works within the Church, especially within the apostles, the ministry,

***That you abstain from things offered to idols from blood and from things strangled and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from this, you do well.***

***Farewell.***

So a very basic letter saying, "These are the things you're to focus on and not on some of these other things that others have come out and said that you have to do." Or as the Old Testament, and some of those things, are concerned.

**Verse 30 - So when they went off they came to Antioch and when they had gathered the multitude together they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.**

They were encouraged. I think of times and past when things would come out from headquarters, when something would be decided and sent out and it's a matter of unity, whatever it might be. It might be the thing about Pentecost. Once it's decided, then there's that excitement, "This is what we're going to do." And those who see it, they rejoiced in the fact, "Now we're keeping it on the right day."

**Now, Judas and Silas themselves, being prophets, also exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words,** Again, that word, meaning here, that they could preach those things in the Old Testament, giving spiritual understanding. It's a matter of interpretation of what it was about, and to be able to share that with the Church. That's how the word is used. So, they **"exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words, and after they had stayed for a time, they went back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. Then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, to see how they're doing."** So that would be a natural inclination. Here they have started, they've begun, "Let's go back to those areas now."

**Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia.** So whatever reason here, there was a rub. There was something that Paul felt was not right that had been done. There's a problem here, in what they're working to do, and there's a disagreement. So even in the midst of all this, of trying to have a unity and a oneness, human nature's still in there. It's good to see those things; there's human nature. I think of this region, I think of so many different regions, when there's been more than one minister, a lot of times there have been problems, because people have different ideas how they're going to do things. Because it's just human nature, and we all have to fight human nature. **They departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them until the work.** So that didn't go over well with Paul. **Consequently, the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas,** again the one referred to as a prophet who taught also, **and departed, being delivered by the brethren to the Grace of God, and passed through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the Churches.** So again here, this journey they're going to start taking away from the area of Antioch, which is there in Syria, on up into areas of Asia there, Cilicia, as it's called here in this particular case, where they'd worked with some other Churches.

So again here, to me it's an amazing thing here to realize there was a distinction made at this point in time, and there evidently was by God as well, because these were not continued to be worked through

and used as far as the Church was concerned in any large manner. So we don't really know what happened, but this wasn't a good thing because there should have been a unity with Paul. Paul was the chief apostle to all the gentiles and government sometimes is a very difficult thing to learn for people, to understand how God works, and candidly here, just to put it where it should be. Hopefully, I don't know what they learned or when they learned it or if they did, but Barnabas here, having been around him as long as he was, there are things he should have understood in a greater way, as far as the position that Paul had. So anyway, always lessons to be learned from some of these things. I'm going to stop there today.

I'm going to read a little bit of news here, not a whole lot. I'm going to do it quickly because I wasn't planning on doing this, but this week, as one journalist was talking, and someone made the comment: "What happened over in Europe is a huge pivotal part for Europe right now, away from the United States." To me, this is amazing. We're sitting here watching these things come to pass. We're seeing how the attitude of Europe is changing, and this week, it wasn't big, it was huge! It really was, and we need to see that, we need to understand that. There was a time period there, not knowing what was going to take place, thinking about a new administration here in the United States, "Would that speed things up or would it slow it down? Would there be a time here where things are going to be levelled out?" Which they still can be, but I'll tell you what, right now they are stirred up something fierce.

Europe's attitude toward the United States is changing exceedingly fast. They're being crammed together, forced together now, where they won't make those decisions themselves unless pressured, and now they're being pressured. It's like this "clay and iron" and they can't really get it together, but when they're pressed into it? That's where they are right now. Awesome! You know there's so much here, I'm not gonna spend a whole lot of time but I wanted to go through a little bit. I'm going to read one, first of all, it's from *RT*, which is Russian, but still, they're reporting something that's true. It says here, "**EU's Von Der Leyen Calls For Alternative To NATO.**"<sup>1</sup> So, this is true. They realize NATO was not their answer. This is the point where they've come to this now. They've come to the point where they are saying it now, where they might have felt it before, but now they're saying it more directly: "NATO is not our answer." "NATO is not their friend." That's what they're saying. Awesome!

"European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has called for an alternative to NATO, arguing that Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security. Her remarks come amid growing US demands for increased defense spending among members of the US-led military bloc, uncertainty over future support for Ukraine, and fears of a potential shift in Washington's commitment to European security." It says here, "*NATO remains the foundation of our defense, but it's evident that we need a pan-European defense,*" von der Leyen said in a press briefing in Lithuania on Sunday. The strategy for the future of Europe's defense will be presented to EU leaders by mid-March, she said."

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<sup>1</sup> RT/World News (2025 January 9), [EU's von der Leyen calls for alternative to NATO — RT World News](#)

So, again, here are some incredible things here taking place. Another one here. **“Europe's Future At Stake As Munich Security Conference 2025 Gathers.”**<sup>2</sup> “With tensions escalating, the conference will see historic meetings between key players, including Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and the new US Administration’s Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ukraine-Russia Envoy Keith Kellogg. These discussions are poised to shape the future of Europe's security and its role on the global stage. With the defense spending gaps of €500 billion over the next decade, Europe's financial constraint and fragmented defense capabilities will be under intense scrutiny. Cooperation with non-EU partners like the UK or Norway could become more crucial than ever. The conference comes at a moment of reckoning against the backdrop of settlement talks proposed by Trump and Saudi Arabia, where the path to ending the war in Ukraine is uncertain - but the implications are enormous. As leaders such as Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius, and EU foreign affairs chief, Kaja Kallas attend, says Europe must confront a hard truth: Will it be sidelined in these crucial negotiations?”

This is BBC, **“Zelensky Calls For Creation Of ‘An Army Of Europe.’”**<sup>3</sup> “Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has called for the creation of an “army of Europe” to guard against Russia as he suggested the US may no longer come to the continent's aid.” So he's throwing this out there. This question, this doubt, “Will they really come to our aid? Will NATO? Will they really step in?” And even this thing in Greenland has stirred up things because people have gone nuts. “Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, he also said that the Ukraine would ‘never accept deals made behind our backs without our involvement’ after US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to start peace talks. In a speech on Friday in which he attacked European democracies, US Vice President JD Vance warned that Europe needed to ‘step up in a big way’ on defense. Zelensky said, ‘I really believe the time has come - the armed forces of Europe must be created.’”

Now, he's saying this openly, but others are saying this as well. Macron is saying it, different ones have been saying this for a while, and now it's picking up some momentum, and it's all because of the United States. They don't feel they can rely upon us at all when it comes to NATO. “He said: ‘Yesterday, here in Munich, the US vice president made it clear [that] decades of the old relationship between Europe and America are ending. From now on, things will be different, and Europe needs to adjust to that. Many, many leaders have talked about Europe that needs its own military. An army, an army of Europe.’”

“The concept of a European army is something that has been proposed by other leaders, including Francis Emanuel Macron, who has long backed the bloc's own military to reduce its reliance on the US. Zelensky said: ‘A few days ago, President Trump told me about his conversation with Putin. Not once did he mention that America needs Europe at the table - that says a lot.’” Now, it does, and he's really miffed,

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<sup>2</sup> EuroNews Live (2025, January 13 &16), [Munich Security Conference 2025 updates: 'Talk less, do more,' Finnish president tells Europe | Euronews](#)

<sup>3</sup> Jordan, Dearbail (2025, January 16), [Volodymyr Zelensky calls for creation of 'army of Europe' to face Russian threats | BBC News | BBC YouTube Video](#)

because it's like he's being overridden totally, and some in Europe don't like that either because they see that they're not being talked to about all this.

I want to read one more here about what Vance had to say. The article says, “**JD Vance Leaves Europe Aghast After Claiming Largest Threat To Continent ‘Comes From Within.’**”<sup>4</sup> You tell that to a nation, “Your greatest threat is within yourself”? It doesn't go over really well. But there's truth in certain things, but still, it's pushing them away. Not necessarily diplomatic by any measure, but they're not trying to be. You know, it doesn't matter what side it is, what they're trying to do. It's all messed up. Things are so bad that no one can resolve these things, period. It's going to end up the way it's going to end up because God's going to allow it to happen in His timing, and it shows the mess that the world is really in. And it's horrible.

“JD Vance stunned Europe with his shocking speech at the Munich Security Conference this afternoon. The US vice-president ripped into European establishment over its ‘retreat’ from key values and what he described as its restriction of free speech and content moderation. He also accused leaders of ‘running in fear of your own voters.’” Now I don't know if you know what he's saying, but basically, he's saying, “You need to listen to the Right and what they're saying.” That's what Musk has been doing over there. That's what they're doing over there, and they're pushing things more, that are in that particular area right now, even in Germany. This doesn't go over well in Europe. “Vance claimed that to many Americans, Europe looks ‘more like old, entrenched interest hiding behind ugly Soviet-era words like misinformation and disinformation.’ At one point, he said, ‘If American democracy can survive 10 years of climate activist Greta Thunberg “scolding it,” then Europe can survive a few months of Elon Musk.’ Vance also told the conference that he fears the ‘threats from within.’” So Musk was over there basically backing the far-right German party; that's what he was recently doing. So again here, some of that stuff is, for Europe, pretty extreme. They don't all go together.

“...Europe rather than Russia and China, because of the ‘retreat from some of the most fundamental values.’ He claimed this includes free speech in Europe and called on all countries to live by ‘democratic values,’ and said there is no issue more ‘urgent’ than mass migration. The vice-president's remarks were particularly eye-catching considering the Trump administration has just opened negotiations with Russia to end the Ukraine war. The US has already hinted that Vladimir Putin will be able to get pretty much everything he wants in any peace deal - including formally taking occupied Ukraine land - three years after he invaded the beleaguered country.”

Now I hope we understand how horrible that is sounding to the Europeans, that, “You're going to just give it up? You're going to make an agreement without any of our input, without NATO's input? Ukraine is one thing, but all of Europe? You're not asking for input from any of us as to how we want things to go in Europe, and why, and what our concerns are?” This is not a small thing, and to have someone come in

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<sup>4</sup> Nicholson, Kate (2025 January 14), [JD Vance Leaves Europe Aghast After Blistering Attack | HuffPost UK Politics](#)

to tell you how to do it? It's the way this government has always worked with other nations in the world. "We know what's best for you." That's why they're sick of it, and we should be able to understand that. And this is why they're going to start pulling back. This is the reason for their hatred, and what they're going to do is because of a hatred that's building up inside of them in a very powerful way. These are not small things that are taking place right now. Anyway.

"The move has sparked comparisons to World War II appeasement and concerns Russia will just try to seize more land in the future. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius later slammed Vance for his words, telling the conference it was wrong to describe Europe as 'authoritarians.'" This is their perception of everything they're hearing. And that's basically what they're being told, in part. "...and that the intervention was 'not acceptable.' Pistorius said: 'Democracy does not mean a vociferous minority would automatically be right. They cannot decide what truth is, and democracy must be able to defend itself against extremists who try to destroy it.'"

They're having their own internal problems. And in Europe, it's different than us having our internal problems. Though I've heard people talk about "things are so bad here, leading up to elections and so forth," some made comments about, "Could the US even have a civil war?" Now, those things are way out there, but you know in Europe, it's not so crazy. It might seem a lot crazier to us over here, but to see the kind of divisions and extremism on both sides? It's not a good thing. Over there? Their history is they do things about it; someone will do something about it. That's just the way they are. "He continued: 'I would like to explicitly contradict and oppose the impression that vice president Vance suggested here, that our democracies oppress and silence minorities. We not only know against whom we defend our countries but what we defend them for - for democracy, for freedom of opinion, for the rule of law, and the dignity of each and everyone.' "The Liberal Democrats' Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Calum Miller, said: 'Britain will not take lectures about political freedoms from the acolyte of a president who tried to undermine American democracy and now praises Putin.'"

Now, we may see this in a different light, but this is how they see it, and that's what we need to understand. Their perception of what's taking place here and how strong this is to them is really stirring things up to where I really never thought we'd see this day, to come this far. The only reason I did, or we would, is because we know what's going to happen, that they have to go so far that 10 nations finally come together and say, "Yes, we will do it." They are our number one threat, not Russia. Isn't that an amazing thing? That this is what we're watching come together here? So, for those who may be thinking it's going to be 10 years away, don't let that hit you. That's something we need to have in our minds, that we're willing to go on 10, 20, whatever it is, but to understand this could be right around the corner as well, and you need to be on your toes spiritually, truly.