

Redeeming Wreckage
God Can Overcome Our Failures
The Empowered Church Series - Part 27

Acts 15:36-16:5

9/2/23-9/3/23

Introduction

- **God's Brilliant Redemption**
 - **A rough past** – helping people understand that they are not the only ones with trauma. The **people around them are broken and hurting too**. We are in it together.
 - **Messy redemption** – **God's redemption rarely is quick, easy or simple**. It's complex.
 - **Extraordinary grace** – God's ability to continue walking with us and loving on us and comforting us and shaping us is incredible.
- **2 Types of Trauma** – **that which we create ourselves and that which happens to us**.
 - **Self-Perpetrators: When we caused the problem** – for a lot of us our checkered past was our own creation.
 - 1 Co 6:9–11 – “...do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
 - **Victims: When the problem found us** – for a lot of us the pain of our past wasn't our doing at all. It was perpetrated upon us. We were the victims.
 - **We can be totally healed from our trauma** – that doesn't mean that we are back to the way that we were. **Healing doesn't mean return to same. Calluses can be helpful. Scars can breed confidence. Restored muscles are stronger.**
 - **Sometimes we hang on to our trauma** for a variety of reasons. It doesn't sound right to us initially but the deeper we look we find that **in our trauma we take comfort because it's a constant reminder to the world that we were wronged**. Sometimes we believe that if we get healthy then people think it didn't matter and let the offender off and don't take our pain seriously. Sometimes we believe that if we appear healthy, people will think we can handle more weight of life and we can't so we remain in our disheveled place. Sometimes we think that getting healthy is impossible so why try? But that is not true. To remain unhealthy when the Lord is trying to lift us up, isn't right. **We may not be able to fix it all but we should be willing to take what freedom the Lord gives us.**
 - **To allow healing doesn't mean:**
 - **To forgive means ignoring boundaries** – boundaries are good & right.
 - **Pretending it didn't happen** – we don't stuff things. We heal.
 - **Saying the offender wasn't wrong** – they might very well be wrong.

Just because God USES it, doesn't mean it was GOOD

- **Recap and Prep** – where we are at in the series
 - **Paul & Barnabas** – history and teamwork
 - **1st Missionary trip** – Cyprus and Turkey – took about a year to finish
 - **When they got home** – they had to **answer for their ministry** and as they told the story they ran into a serious issue of what to do with all the fruitful ministry with the **Gentiles**. Are they legit? Are they like us?
 - **Last week** – Pastor Brian taught us about the **pivotal shift** in the life of the early Christian Church where it officially had to be decided that **Diversity was God’s heart and that the Church was going to include Gentiles as they were**. The Apostle Paul doubles down on **grace and radical inclusion**. The leaders, check with the Holy Spirit and firmly agree.

Lesson

- **A Fresh Plan**
 - **Paul and Barnabas Agree to a 2nd Missionary Journey**
 - **Acts 15:36** – *“And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”*
 - **How long it was since last trip** – Some scholars state that it had been around 5 years¹ since Paul and Barnabas had been on the first missionary journey.
 - **The plan: Go back through the church plants** – in the first year-long missionary journey Paul and Barnabas started a lot of church plants. Those have now had about 4-5 years to grow and it was time to go back through and strengthen them and check in on them.
 - **More than just a ticket to heaven** – This shows us that the Paul never intended to simply be an evangelist. It may have been his obvious gifting but his heart was that of a discipler, a mentor, a pastor. He knew that simply getting saved only covers security, it doesn’t cover relational depth with God, which was the point of getting saved in the first place.
 - **The necessity of discipleship** – and that is why we must always see salvation as the BEGINNING of the process of someone being transformed. To be BORN AGAIN doesn’t make any sense if we remain an embryo. We were born again in order to live and grow afresh. Discipleship is critical for us to become what we were saved to be. It’s this mindset that God seared into my head that accounts for why Bridgeway has the calling and assignment to be a discipleship-based church.² Although I have an appreciation and respect for strict evangelism, I am bent toward creating relationship, which demands discipleship.
- **The Incident**

¹ “It was five years since Paul had preached in Derbe and Lystra;” NDSB, William Barclay

² Other churches will receive other assignments and callings from God that are just as legit. Our job is to do the part that God calls us to do and stay in our lane as He orchestrates the total transformation of a region.

- **Barnabas and Paul disagree on bringing John Mark**
 - **Acts 15:37-38** – *“Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.”*
 - **Recapping what happened and what might be behind it –**
 - **Who’s John Mark?³** – John Mark was first introduced to us a number of chapters back (12) as the son of the woman who held the home church that Peter was attending when he was thrown into prison. Later we found out that he was Barnabas’ cousin. We most recently know him as the assistant that went on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas but bailed out along the way and went home.
 - **Where’s Pamphylia⁴** - a southern district of Turkey on the coast.
 - **Why John Mark left the mission⁵** – the Bible tells us that John Mark stepped out during their time in the city of Perga,⁶ which is a city in the Pamphylia region. Why he left we don’t know and people have speculated for the last 2,000 years. It irritated Paul but it was for a reason that his cousin, Barnabas at least partially understood. The most common guess is that he became afraid. It was all too much for him at his age and experience. He couldn’t handle it.
 - **Why Paul refused⁷** – Paul refused on one of two grounds: 1.) Emotional - He didn’t want someone who wasn’t fully committed and wanted to punish John Mark for bailing; 2.) Practical - He took the ministry far too seriously and didn’t want the distraction or lack of help to hit again. I’m certain there could be another possible reason but those seem most human to me. Perhaps it was both. I don’t have enough insight into Paul’s personality or demeanor to know.

³ “JOHN MARK Son of Mary (Acts 12:12), cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10), and missionary companion of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5). According to church tradition, John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark. In first-century Palestine, it was common for a man to have two names: a Hebrew name (e.g., “John”), by which he was known to friends and relatives, and a Greek or Roman (Roman Christian) name (e.g., “Mark”), by which he was known in the business world (Barclay, *Introduction*, 151; Acts 12:12, 25). “Mark” appears to have been a common name in the first century. Consequently, it is difficult to know whether the person mentioned in Acts and Colossians is the “Mark” named elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24; 1 Pet 5:13; compare with John Mark in Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col 4:10)...John Mark is first mentioned in connection with his mother, who hosts a gathering of believers at her home (Acts 12:12). Because John Mark’s father is not mentioned, he might have been dead when Acts was written. John Mark accompanies Paul and Barnabas when they return from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25). He then serves as their “helper” during their missionary journey to Cyprus (Acts 13:5 NIV). After the missionaries sail from Cyprus to Perga, John Mark returns to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).” NICNT Commentary, F.F. Bruce

⁴ “Pamphylia lay between the Taurus range and the Mediterranean; it was bordered on the west by Lycia and on the east by Cilicia. At this time (between A.D. 43 and 68) it formed part of the Roman province Pamphylia-Lycia.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

⁵ “Luke does not say why John Mark left Barnabas and Paul at Perga and returned home. He indicates at a later point in his narrative (15:38) that Paul regarded his departure as desertion. Perhaps he was unprepared for the increasing rigors which evangelization in Asia Minor would involve; perhaps he resented the way in which his cousin Barnabas was falling into second place. When the expedition sets out from Syria, Luke speaks of “Barnabas and Saul”; by the time they leave Cyprus, it is “Paul and his company.” It is unlikely that this change of expression is due purely to a change of source.” NICNT, F. F. Bruce

⁶ “the south coast of Asia Minor. Perga stood near the river Cestrus (modern Aksu); one could reach it from the sea, Strabo tells us, by sailing some seven miles up the river. The city (the impressive ruins of which are a tourist attraction today) stands on a flat-topped hill about three miles from the nearest point on the Cestrus, where it presumably had a landing stage and port facilities. Perga, as its name indicates, was a pre-Greek foundation, but it was colonized by Greeks from the late Mycenaean age on, and after the conquests of Alexander the Great it became thoroughly hellenized.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

⁷ “Paul, believing that Mark’s departure from Perga during their former journey was unjustified, and probably reckoning that it revealed some defect of character which made him unsuitable for such work, refused point-blank to take him again.” NICNT

- **Who's right?** – Deciding blame seems to be the only way that we can see disagreement. But maturity and wisdom says that it's more complex than that. Who was right here? I guess it depends on why they did what they did and why they thought what they thought. Truly it would be in the Lord's mind only. He has all the pieces. We like to think that someone was operating out of their dysfunction so they must be wrong, right? Yet, if someone isn't emotionally mature to make a right or good decision is that their fault? It gets tricky.
- **Division**
 - **Barnabas and Paul separate in ministry**
 - **Acts 15:39-41** – *“And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”*
 - **A sharp disagreement** – how did it get so out of control?⁸ Why not just agree to disagree and somebody cave for the sake of unity? It's possible that pride was playing a part and that their flesh was ruling the day. It's also possible that a lot hung on whether they got this decision right and it was something to really argue about. It could also be that the Lord was using the disagreement to split them up to minister into different areas and raise up other leaders. We don't know.
 - **When Christians fight⁹** – Here's the reality. Christians fight with each other. I know it sounds terrible. To some of us that are really sensitive, it's scary. To those of us comfortable with conflict, it's just a fact of life and we don't think twice about it. But it's ultimately important that the disagreements and arguments are done in a healthy way, and that simply isn't the case many times. *Just like in marriage, there are going to be fights. The question is not will there be conflict, but do we have the tools and the heart to repair the break?*
 - **How to deal with division in the Body** – When the Body of Christ is at odds, many times the enemy wins.¹⁰ He wants to divide and conquer. Yet, humans disagree, that's normal. So, how do we know if the enemy is winning, or we are just being normal? How do we allow necessary disagreement to make us healthier and when do we defend against division? That is what leadership is called to do. We are called to discern what is really happening, assess

⁸ “It is a pity that the dispute was allowed to generate such bitterness; it might not have done so but for the memory of the incident at Antioch when “even Barnabas,” as Paul says, followed Peter's example in withdrawing from the society of Gentile Christians. After that, it is doubtful if Paul and Barnabas could ever be so happy in their association as they had once been. The old mutual confidence had been damaged and could not be restored...” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

Gal 2:11-14a – “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.” ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel,...

⁹ “The story of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas does not make pleasant reading, but Luke's realism in recording it helps us to remember that the two men, as they themselves said to the people of Lystra, were “human beings with feelings like” any other.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

¹⁰ Romans 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18; 12:25; Gal 5:20; Titus 3:10; Jude 19 – all cite that division in the Body is bad and that those who cause division in the Church are bad. BUT, we need to look at it through context. It depends on what is happening and what the argument is about. Is it about something Church-wide or something personal? Is it something about doctrine, or something about being hurt personally? At the end of the day we need to repair, but whether or not we view someone as an ‘enemy of the Church’ or not, we need to be careful.

motivation, assess impact, assess all of it and with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit we alter what is wrong and bring healing and restoration.

- **Dealing with Church hurt** – church hurt is a real thing. It's when we get hurt in the COMMUNITY of the Church or by the LEADERSHIP of the Church. It is very confusing because it involves so many layers of our psyche. It's not just emotional, it's spiritual, because it involves our spiritual community. When we get hurt by a Church leader, it feels like God did something wrong and it happened with someone we didn't think could do that to us (whether we accurately assessed that or not). It causes us to distance ourselves from God because His people were the ones involved. He is guilty by association. When our spiritual community is disrupted and we don't just lose friends but we are confused in our church environment, it's complicated and hurts deeper.
- **I have caused church hurt** – I have done this. There are people in this community and across the US that are hurt by me. There are some who no longer attend a local church because of what occurred with Bridgeway and through my leadership. It's not a lot but they exist. There are people who are not comfortable walking through those doors because I am not good with them. And yet, I never want that. I never want to be at odds with people. I have been hurt and I have lashed out. I have said some things that may not have been the best, but I can tell you this, I didn't want to harm. I may have operated in my immaturity or my dysfunction, but my heart wasn't bad. Nevertheless I have caused church hurt and God has to clean up my mess.
- **The NEW mission plan** – Barnabas & John Mark will cover the Cyprus island portion of their first trip and Paul & Silas will cover the Turkey (Asia minor/Galatian – central Anatolia) portion of the first trip.
- **Who's Silas?**¹¹ – he showed up last week as a leader in the church, who was an emissary of the Jerusalem leadership, as well as a prophet. In other words he's a big dog and moved in the supernatural.
- **They were sent out by the brothers** – again we don't have rogue missions work. This was an orchestrated, supported and unified ministry with a church homebase.
- **Where's Syria?** – Syria is the nation just north of Israel on a map. At that time Syria was a bigger region than it is today.
- **Where's Cilicia?** – Southeastern coast of modern day Turkey.
- **What does 'strengthening the churches' mean?** – it means they go back through and talk with the leadership, assess the health, share messages of encouragement, remind them of what's important. It means they get the right leadership in place. It means they give them a vision and strategy.

¹¹ "Paul now had to find a new travel companion. He had had opportunity, during the recent visit to Antioch of Judas and Silas, to make an assessment of Silas, and in many ways found him to be a kindred spirit. Luke certainly intends his readers to identify the Silas whom Paul chose as his companion with the Silas who, with Judas Barsabbas, had carried the apostolic letter from Jerusalem to Antioch, and there is no good reason to question the identification. Not only did he commend himself to Paul as a congenial colleague; it would be advantageous to have a leading member of the Jerusalem church as his companion. It appears, moreover, from the story of their adventures in Philippi that Silas, like Paul himself, was a Roman citizen (16:37–38); Paul would thus be spared the embarrassment of claiming for himself civic privileges or exemptions which his colleague could not share." NICNT, F. F. Bruce

- **The Ultimate Result of the Fight** – more people were reached for the gospel and new leaders stepped up. Sounds awesome if you weren't part of the original hurt. But the fact of the matter is the kingdom was expanded. God took what was difficult and painful and made it powerful and redeemed.
- **What happened to John Mark?** – he's good. Well, to be honest, he's more than good. Not only did he reconcile with Paul and become a big part of his ministry and beloved, but he connected deeply with the Apostle Peter (who called him his 'son') and went on to write Peter's version of the story of Jesus Christ with a gospel that bears his name to this day: The Gospel of Mark.
 - Col 4:10–11 – "*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him),¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.*"
 - Phm 23–24 – "*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.*"
 - 2 Ti 4:11 – "*Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*"
 - 1 Pe 5:13–14 - "*She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love.*"
- **The persecution of the Christian church** – let's look at that passage...
 - **Ac 8:1** – "*And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*"
 - **All good, right?** – looking back we know that persecution was the reason why Christianity began to spread worldwide. Ultimately millions were saved over the next couple hundred years because of that intense persecution. So, it's all good, right?
 - **Not really** – in each story there was pain, trauma, loss. Those people had to find new homes. They had to heal from horrible memories. Many died, many were tortured, and many were imprisoned in horrifying conditions.
 - **BUT...** - but God was glorified. Many were saved. Leaders were spread out. So...???
- **Divine Appointment**
 - **Paul meets and selects Timothy**
 - **Acts 16:1-3a** – "*Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.² He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him,...*"
 - **Paul & Silas' journey¹²** - This is going to be Paul's 2nd official missionary journey that will take about 3 years to complete. What's most exciting about

¹² "Having passed through Cilicia, Paul and Silas crossed the Taurus range by the pass called the Cilician Gates, and after traversing part of the territory of Antiochus IV, king of Commagene,⁵ they entered the south-eastern region of the province of Galatia. There they visited the cities

this journey is that brings the gospel to Europe for the first time and that's one of the reasons why the gospel is in America today.

- **Where's Derbe?** – South central region of Turkey.
- **Where's Lystra?** – southern countryside of Turkey. Near modern day city of Klistra. It was a market town for the southern region of Galatia.
- **Who's Timothy?**¹³ – this is a special young man. He doesn't know it yet. He got saved through Paul's missionary journey last time and had been growing in Christianity ever since. He came from a predominantly female household as his mom and grandmother were highlighted as solid believers in God (even before they were saved) and that he was baked in Scripture all his life. What no one knows at this time is that he will become so connected to Paul that Paul will refer to him as his spiritual son and ultimately train him to be his successor in ministry. But as of today, he's just a young guy going on his first missionary journey.
- **Jewish mom, Greek father**¹⁴ – this would technically allow Timothy to be considered Jewish, but some Jews rejected that as well since he was half. It depended on the cultural context of the city. It was not common for Jews to marry non-Jews so clearly this was an international cultural situation where it was more normalized.
- **A believer, a disciple** – The first things known about Timothy are his faith. He is not only a believer, he is a follower. It shows the intentionality.
- **Well-spoken of by other believers** – his reputation was good. Others knew that he was a legit and solid believer. What is said about us by those around us?
 - **Where's Iconium?** – the ancient city of Konya in Turkey. A city in the region of Lycaonia, southern Galatia.
- **Paul chooses Timothy to accompany them** – For Paul to select this young man is significant. Already there had been a failure with John Mark and I don't imagine that Paul was ready for another failure. There was something

which had been evangelized by Paul and Barnabas two or three years previously—Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and (probably) Pisidian Antioch.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

“THE narrative of Paul's second missionary journey, which occupied him for about three years, is given in the section of Acts which extends from 15:36 to 18:23. It began from Antioch. Paul first made a tour of the churches of Syria and Cilicia. Then he revisited the churches in the regions of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. There followed a period when he could not see the way ahead clearly. That time of uncertainty ended with the vision at Troas. From Troas, Paul crossed to Neapolis and from there went on to Philippi. From Philippi, he moved on to Thessalonica and Berea. From there, he went to Athens and then on to Corinth, where he spent about eighteen months. From Corinth, he travelled to Jerusalem by way of Ephesus and finally back to Antioch, his starting point. The great step forward is that, with this journey, Paul's activity passed beyond Asia Minor and entered Europe.” NDSB William Barclay

¹³ “a young man named Timothy who with his mother had come to faith in Christ during the previous missionary visit and who had since then made promising progress in the Christian life.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

“Timothy was a young man with a great heritage. He had had a good mother and a good grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Often in the days to come, he was to be Paul's messenger (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:2–6). He was at Rome with Paul when the apostle was in prison (Philippians 1:1, 2:19; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1). Timothy had a very special relationship with Paul. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:17), he called him his beloved son. When he wrote to the Philippians, he said that there was no one whose mind was so much at one with his own (Philippians 2:19–20). It seems very likely that Paul saw in Timothy the successor who would take his place when he had to lay down his work. Happy indeed are those to whom it is given to see the result of their training in others who can take up the burden when they lay it down.” NDSB, William Barclay

¹⁴ “The statement that Timothy's mother (Eunice by name, according to 2 Tim. 1:5) had married a Gentile suggests that there was less rigid social segregation among the Jews of central Asia Minor than among those of Palestine. In Phrygia, says Ramsay, “there can be little doubt that the Jews married into the dominant families”; and the same may well have been true in Lycaonia.” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

about Timothy that indicated that he was good to go. Later we find out in Paul's letters to Timothy that he was timid at times, so it wasn't that he was hardcore and tough. It must have been his dedication to the Lord and willingness to do whatever it takes to serve his God.

- **High Cost of Ministry**

- **Paul has Timothy circumcised**

- **Acts 16:3b** – *“...and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”*
 - **Wait, what???** – what is circumcision? Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin from the penis. It was an outward sign of a covenant/contract of being a Jewish male. Usually it was done at the 8th day of a baby's existence. It was done by a rabbi/priest. Yet, for those who convert to Judaism later in life it can be done at any age. Timothy had a Greek Father and the Greeks didn't circumcise. It's common for a son to be treated like his father in this regard.
 - **Why?**¹⁵ – why is this necessary? This is a significant step and notable simply because the prior passage just told us how Paul and Peter argued for the rejection of seeing circumcision as a necessary step to salvation. So, why do it here? It was all about not hindering ministry opportunities. It had nothing to do with Timothy's holiness. It had to do with his reception by audiences he wanted to minister to. The other reason why we know this to be true is that Paul didn't have Titus circumcised because he ministered to the Greeks.
 - **For the Jews**¹⁶ – The Jews cared. They didn't care about what the Christian movement was doing, they cared about what was laid out in the Old Testament. They would reject anyone who claimed to be Jewish (Timothy came from his mom's Jewish lineage) that wasn't circumcised. So, in order to talk to them and not be unnecessarily hindered, Timothy was circumcised.
 - **A known half-breed** – Already Timothy had one strike against him by having a dad that was Greek. Jews were really focused on lineage, heritage and Jewishness. He didn't need other obstacles.

- **A Thriving Church**

- **Paul & Co continued strengthening the churches**

¹⁵ “It was Timothy's mixed parentage that made Paul decide to circumcise him before taking him along as his junior colleague. By Jewish law Timothy was a Jew, because he was the son of a Jewish mother, but because he was uncircumcised he was technically an apostate Jew. If Paul wished to maintain his links with the synagogue, he could not be seen to countenance apostasy. He set his face implacably against any move to circumcise Gentile believers like Titus (Gal. 2:3–5), but Timothy was in a different situation. For Paul, circumcision in itself was a matter of indifference (Gal. 5:6; 6:15); only when it was regarded as a condition of acceptance with God did it involve a lapse from grace and the obligation to keep the whole law of Moses (Gal. 5:3–4). Timothy's circumcision was a minor surgical operation carried out for a practical purpose—his greater usefulness in the ministry of the gospel.” NICNT

¹⁶ “In fact, by accepting Timothy as a Jew, Paul showed just how liberated from Jewish thought he was. Timothy was the son of a mixed marriage. The strict Jews would refuse to accept that as a marriage at all; in fact, if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy or a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, they would regard that Jewish boy or girl as dead—so much so, that sometimes a funeral was actually carried out. By accepting the child of such a marriage as a fellow Jew, Paul showed how definitely he had broken down all national barriers.” NDSB William Barclay

- **Acts 16:4-5** – *“As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.”¹⁷ ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”*
 - **Instituting the new policies** – what new policies? Why should everyone follow those rules (laid down in Jerusalem)? – as we know the Jerusalem council stated what should be said to the Christian Gentiles (non-Jews). They needed to do 3 things: 1.) abstain from food sacrificed to idols (which later Paul adjusts because it wasn’t totally necessary); 2.) abstain from eating meat with blood in it; 3.) abstain from sexual immorality. That went for all Gentiles at this point. It was a starting place.
 - **What are apostles?** – apostles at this point are the key leaders with the most authority in the Christian Church. The technical grouping of apostles were those that walked with Christ and were endowed with authority by Him. Later we started to see that other key influential leaders were called apostles as well (Paul, Barnabas, etc.).
 - **What are elders?** – Elders are the local leaders of the Christian churches. They were the de facto pastors. They were those who were ‘older’ in the faith and more mature who could guide the newbies.
 - **Strong and growing** – what the Church should be. Although everything was so messy and crazy and still being sorted out it was growing and strengthening. It didn’t have all the right policies in place, all the right infrastructure for longevity, but it was vibrant, healthy, and whole. A beautiful time.

Conclusion

- **Real Church is beautiful but complex** – it’s where you thrive, where you grow, where you belong. But it’s a place where you are with PEOPLE, and that means it’s complicated and doesn’t always go as planned.
- **Let’s pray for healing from church hurt**
- **Let’s pray for healing from trauma**

¹⁷ “Now the plural is used: “they handed over the decrees.” This was Silas’s duty, not Paul’s. The decrees indeed had been addressed expressly to the Gentile believers of Antioch and of Syria and Cilicia, not of South Galatia; since, however, the cities now being visited had been evangelized from Antioch, it might have been argued that they were included by implication. But, if the churches in these cities were those to which Paul’s letter to the Galatians had only recently been sent, how would they have reacted to the delivery of directives from Jerusalem by Paul’s fellow-traveler? Paul himself, as we have seen, never invokes the Jerusalem “decrees” when he deals with the practices which they forbid.¹² There are reasons for doubting if this verse is part of the original text of Acts.” NICNT

Acts 15:22-23a, 27 – *“Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,”²³ with the following letter:...*

²⁷ *We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.”*