Holland Park Bible Study –
This week: ACTS 11-15

May 2-8

Just as Jesus had told his disciples, the Holy Spirit was sent, empowering his devoted followers to share the gospel message with people in Jerusalem, Samaria, and … further! This message is not just for those who thought were God's chosen people – the Jews. Peter learned that salvation was for everyone who loved the Lord. And now, as we begin reading together this week in ACTS 11, he tells the others this wonderous news! We read ACTS 11-15 this week.

Some of the persecuted Christians go to Antioch and more non-Jews (your Bible may call them Greeks or Gentiles) embrace salvation through belief in Christ. Barnabas, the "son of encouragement" recruits Pharisee-turned-follower, Saul, to teach them. This is the beginning of Saul's ministry. You will know him better as Paul – evangelist to the Gentiles and the author of much of the New Testament.

In chapter 12, one of Jesus' closest friends, James, is executed by Herod's minions in Jerusalem. Peter is next on the list and imprisoned. But the church prays, and God has other plans, sending an angel to orchestrate Peter's escape.

Meanwhile back in Antioch, in chapter 13, while the church leaders were worshiping, the Holy Spirit tells them to send Paul and Barnabas on what will be known as Paul's first missionary journey. A young man named John Mark travels with them. (Years later, this young man will write the gospel of Mark.) They start with teaching the Jews wherever they went and have success with some - but others will not accept the gospel. So they move on to teach the Gentiles. After the preaching on the island of Cyprus, the missionaries go into Asia Minor into what is modern day Turkey – the ancient province of Galatia. In chapter 14, the first missionary journey continues and the disciples return to their host church in Antioch.

In chapter 15, there is internal conflict in the church that must be resolved. The leaders of the church convene and are led by the Holy Spirit to the correct response. There is great joy throughout the church.

Prayer, worship, evangelism, multiple ethnicities and cultures, conflict, and Holy Spirit guided resolution! This is OUR beginning… the beginning of Christ's church! ACTS is OUR story!

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