

Telling the Story – Acts 13



Mr Meng is 80, and lives in a village in Sichuan province, China. When the province was put under lockdown because of the coronavirus outbreak, he turned to the Bible he had received from the Bible Society. This is his account of his experience. “During this time of isolation, I read the Bible without stopping for ten days, and I could not stop reading about God’s forgiveness and love for me. Now I want to spend the rest of my life reading the Bible!”

Many people around the world have found comfort and encouragement in the Bible during the pandemic. I myself have been helped by reading the Acts of the Apostles whilst preparing this series of meditations. I have been reminded afresh of what an exciting book Acts is. It is worth reading straight through, like a novel, as it is full of adventure stories of the early Christians. They were willing to take great risks in their eagerness to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others.

In Acts 13 we read how Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to undertake a missionary journey, first to Cyprus and then on into what we now know as Turkey. They met with Jews and Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism, and verses 16 – 41 give an outline of a sermon preached by Paul in one of the synagogues they visited. He began by reminding the

Jews of their ancestors' deliverance from Egypt, and went on to show how Jewish history pointed forward to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

It was important for Jews and Jewish converts to hear the stories of God's dealings with His chosen people and to relate those stories to what God was doing in their own day and age. In a similar way, as I read the Acts of the Apostles, I am aware of how these stories of the Early Church are connected to the life of the Church today. It was the missionary efforts of Paul, the other apostles and their friends that led to the spread of the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. There is an unbroken line down through the centuries from their witness in their time to the witness of the world Church in the present day. Their story is our story.

A prayer:

Blessed Lord,	who caused all
holy scriptures to be written for our learning:	help us so to hear them,
read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,	that through
patience and the comfort of your holy word	we may embrace and ever
hold fast	the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. AMEN	

(The Book of Common Prayer)

- Rev John Barnett