

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #241

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Chapter 13

Barnabas and Saul Are Sent from Antioch

1. Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
2. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
3. Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Prophets in those times were traveling preachers who had given their whole lives to listen to what God was saying and taking that word to others. It is interesting to note that Old Testament prophets were used to utter and to write infallible scripture, i.e. men wrote as the Spirit gave utterance or inspiration. 2nd Timothy 2:16 tells us: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...* 2nd Peter 1:19-21 further clarifies this: *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* New Testament prophets were never used to write scripture. Most of the New Testament was written by Apostles. Prophets in the New Testament are primarily used to confirm what the Spirit has already shown for "*As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God*" (Romans 8:14). Guidance for us today is through the infallible Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God. Prophets and other ministries in the Church confirm His already known and revealed will. Thus, according to 1st Corinthians 14:29-30 & 32, the Prophets ministry is to exhort (to stir up), to edify (to build up), to comfort (to bind up), to convict, to confirm, and to reveal. Today's prophet is not to be considered infallible but is to be judged by the Word and by the Spirit.

Teachers, on the other hand, stayed at the local level and taught, in the local church, converts to the faith. The Teacher needs the anointing of the Spirit, who alone is the True Teacher (1st John 2:20, 27-28). Remember that the Great Commission includes, “*Go and teach all Nations*” (Matthew 28:16-20).

This group of men was very mixed and indicated how Christianity had both a universal appeal and also a unifying influence. Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus. Lucius was from North Africa. Simeon was a Jew called Niger, which was a Roman name, indicating that he moved in Roman circles and was most probably black and from Africa. Some believe that Simeon was the Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus’ cross (Luke 23:26). Manaen was a man with an aristocratic or upper class background. Saul was a Roman citizen but a Jew from Tarsus and a trained Rabbi.

Why did the Holy Spirit speak? Or what did they do to make room for the Spirit to speak? They ministered to the Lord (1st Samuel 3:1; 2nd Chronicles 29:11; Ezekiel 44:17-27). They fasted, thus subduing their flesh nature. They prayed. They were obedient. They laid hands on Saul and Barnabas. They sent them forth. In Chapter 14 you will see that Barnabas and Saul are first called Apostles in Acts 14:14, which means “*sent ones*” (Luke 10:1).

Notice that, at this point, Barnabas seems to be the leader of the Church at Antioch and Saul or Paul his assistant. These two men were separated to be missionaries for the Church to the outermost parts of the known world.

Preaching in the Synagogues

4. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Selencia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.
5. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

Saul and Barnabas were in Antioch. They had to travel about 15 miles to get to the seaport town of Antioch to catch a ship. It would be like us traveling to Atlanta to get catch a flight. Note that this is their first missionary journey, and they go first to Cyprus. The isle of Cyprus was where Barnabas was from. Naturally he wanted to share Jesus with his own people. Cyprus was known for its copper mines, its ship building industry, and its perfect climate. It was also called *Makaria*, which means the *Happy Isle*.

They preach in Salamis. Saul or Paul initiates a pattern here that serves him well in his missionary journeys. He always uses the Jewish synagogue as his springboard from which to preach the Gospel in an area. Jews were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. When visitors, especially from Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish religion, came to town, they would invite

the visitor to say something in the synagogue. I am sure they were especially interested in a Pharisee who had been instructed by Gamaliel. Unfortunately, there was not much fruit, apparently, in Salamis, but the missionaries did not give up and moved on.

John in this passage is John Mark, the young son of Mary, a wealthy Christian widow in Jerusalem, whose house became the center of the early church in Jerusalem. John Mark was thought to have been converted by Simon Peter to the faith, who refers to him as Marcus, my son (1st Peter 5:13). He went along with his cousin or uncle, Barnabas, and Saul, as a deacon or assistant.

Controversy with Bar-Jesus

6. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus.
7. Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.
8. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.
9. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him,
10. And said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight way of the Lord?"
11. "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.
12. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.
13. Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

Barnabas and Saul, having produced little fruit in Salamis, went to the other side of the island. There they met the governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus. Even though intelligent, Paulus was very superstitious like the majority of people in that day. Bar-Jesus was a fortune teller and wizard and feared that, if Sergius Paulus was converted to Christianity, he would no longer need Bar-Jesus. Saul, now entering the Biblical record as Paul, recognizes the satanic opposition and the need for Paulus to be delivered

from the power of Bar-Jesus and deals very effectively with both men, converting one and leaving the other inoperable.

Here Saul becomes Paul. Why? We do not know? Perhaps it is because Paul finally recognized that his calling was to the Gentiles and the Greek name Paul would be more acceptable to the Gentiles who often hated the Jews. Perhaps he recognized that *Paul* meant *little* or *small* or *the worker*, whereas *Saul* meant *requested* or *destroyer*, and his change of name was an act of humility. Some believe that Saul took Sergius Paulus' name because Paulus was his first convert, on his first missionary journey.

Luke ends this passage with *Paul and his party*. Barnabas is no longer the leader, and yet he seems to have taken his new position without any complaint. His passion was to see the Christian Church established whether he was in control or not.

We really don't know why John Mark left. We do know that it was a bitter separation, which eventually caused disunity and separation, between Paul and Barnabas. Perhaps John Mark was afraid of the physical hardships and dangers in the interior of Asia Minor. Perhaps he missed his mother. At any rate, twenty years later reconciliation has taken place and Paul writes to the Colossians from prison in Rome, tells them to receive Mark, if he comes to them. And in 2nd Timothy 4:11 just before his death, Paul writes, "*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.*" Paul initially had a hard time forgiving and was ready to throw Mark overboard, but not so the Lord of Glory who saw in a deserter a great Apostle who would write some of the most important verses in the entire Bible concerning the signs that should follow believers even today.

Paul Preaches on First Sabbath

14. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.
15. And 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, say on."
16. Then Paul stood up and, motioning with his hand, said: "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:
17. "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 uplifted arm he brought them out of it.
18. "Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

19. "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.
20. "After that he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.
21. "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.
22. "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'
23. "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior-Jesus-
24. "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.
25. "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'
26. "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.
27. "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and the their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.
28. "And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.
29. "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.
30. "But God raised Him from the dead.
31. "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.
32. "And we declare to you glad tidings-that promise which was made to the fathers.
33. "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.'
34. "And that he raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption. He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'
35. "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'
36. "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

37. "But He whom God raised up saw no corruption.
38. "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;
39. "And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.
40. "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:
41. "Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you."
42. So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.
43. 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.

Paul and Barnabas preached at Paphos, the capital of the island, and a place steeped in Venus worship. Venus is the goddess of love and you can imagine all the immorality that went on.

Pisidian Antioch is not the Antioch that was the center of the Church. It was 3600 feet above sea level, and the road to this Antioch was over one of the most difficult and most dangerous roads in Asia Minor. Not only were the geographical characteristics extremely difficult to overcome, but it also was a place notorious for robbers and terrorist.

Apparently Paul and Barnabas did not preach in Pamphylia. We learn in Galatians that he probably was sick there. Many have guessed what his throne in the flesh was. The oldest tradition is that Paul suffered debilitating headaches caused by malaria which was very common around Pamphylia and the low coastal area of Asia Minor and had to move on to higher ground.

This passage contains the only full-length sermon by Paul that we have. He begins by outlining the history of the Jews and shows that this history reaches its final point in Christ. He states that the Jews did not recognize and rejected Jesus as the Messiah. But God could not be defeated and won the victory through the resurrection which was fulfillment of prophecies which the average Jew would have known. The coming of Jesus is good news to those who receive, but it is bad news to those who refuse to accept Him because those who refuse to accept Him no longer have any excuse.

Paul Preaches on Second Sabbath

44. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.
45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.
46. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.
47. "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"
48. Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.
49. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.
50. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.
51. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and came to Iconium.
52. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

The one thing that made the Jews the maddest was someone preaching that any of God's promises and privileges could be for uncircumcised Gentiles. Someone once said that the Jews saw the Gentiles as straw that should be burned, but Jesus saw them as a harvest to be reaped by for the Lord.

Prominent women especially loved the Jewish faith because it preached sexual morality in a world that was known for lax sexual morals. Thus the Jews persuaded some of these women to encourage their husbands, who were often men of great influence and position, to take steps against these Christian preachers. Antioch of Pisidia became unsafe and Paul and Barnabas had to leave.

Highway to Heaven
Craig Hayes

If you're not walking,
Start while I'm talking,
Walking up the King's highway.

There's joy in knowing,
With Him I'm going
Walking up the King's highway.

CHORUS

Well it's a highway to heaven,
None can walk up there
But the pure in heart.
Well, it's a highway to heaven,
Walking up the King's highway.

BRIDGE

It's a highway, it's a highway
It's a highway up to heaven,
None can walk up there
But the pure in heart.
Is your heart right, is your walk right;
It's a highway up to heaven.