

## Adult III – 18 August 2013 – Notes on Acts 12:24 – 13:13

### Acts 12 - James Is Martyred, Peter Is Set Free

#### v24-25 The work of God continues without hindrance.

- Herod believed he had the upper hand against God's people, but God showed who was really in charge - Herod is judged, the church is blessed.
- **Fighting against God just doesn't work.**
- **Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem:** Coming back from their relief effort to Jerusalem (Act\_11:30), Barnabas and Saul brought John Mark with them back to the church at Antioch

### Acts 13 - Paul's First Missionary Journey Begins

#### v1 The people at the church in Antioch.

- In **Acts 12:25**, we learn Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark were all at the church in Antioch, having returned from **delivering a gift of support to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30)**. Saul and Barnabas were among the teachers and prophets there.
- **Simeon** (= "harkening") **who was called Niger**: Since Niger means black, he was presumably a black African among the congregation at Antioch.
- **Lucius** = "light: bright: white" perhaps the same one as mentioned in Romans 16:21
- **Manaen** = "comforter": mentioned here had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. His mother was Herod's nurse.

#### v2-3 The Holy Spirit calls Barnabas and Saul and the Church sends them.

- **As they ministered to the Lord:** The call came when they ministered to the Lord. This is the first job of any servant of God, to minister unto the Lord.
- As part of their service to the Lord, **they also fasted**. Why did they fast? It is likely they sensed urgency about something, **a need to seek God in a special way**. What did they seek God about? Judging from the response, it was about the need to spread the gospel to all the earth.
  - **Matthew 6:16-18** <sup>16</sup>Moreover **when you fast**, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. <sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; <sup>18</sup>That you appear not to men to fast, but to your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.
- **The Holy Spirit said:** Presumably, the call came through the ministry of prophets in the church at Antioch, though it could have come simply through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.
- **Separate to Me:** Before Barnabas and Saul can do anything for God, they must first be separated to Him. **It means you must separate from some other things.**
- You can't really say "yes" to God's call on your life until you can say "no" to things that will keep you from that call.



- For the work to which I have called them: God had a specific work He had appointed to Barnabas and Saul to do. Paul would later write in **Eph 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.** God is calling Barnabas and Saul to these good works!
- The calling God had for the life of Paul had already been stated in **Acts 9:15-16** talking to **Ananias: He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.** It was a serious call to a serious ministry.
- **Now separate to Me: God gave a timetable - now.** Before, God had told Paul through Ananias what his calling was, but not that it was now. Now meant there was to be no delay.
- If we assume they were **fasting and praying** about the need of the world for Jesus, we can see how God was answering their prayer - by using them! This is often how God moves, by **sending the people who have it on their hearts to pray.**
- Many want to be **"back seat drivers"** in the ministry. They hope to say, "I'll have the burden and you do the work." But God's typical way of working is to send the people who have the burden to do the work.
- **And laid hands on them:** The laying on of hands was a formal commissioning to this ministry; certainly Barnabas and Saul were "ordained" before this, but now they were entering a different sphere of ministry.
- **They sent them away:** Notice that the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul out. **They were supported and sent by a specific congregation.** As far as we know, this had never happened before in the history of the church.

#### **v4-5** First stop: Seleucia, then Cyprus.

- We are not told why they went to Cyprus first, but we do know Barnabas grew up on that island (**Acts 4:36**).
- **They preached the word of God in the synagogues:** This custom of the "open synagogue" would give Barnabas and Saul many opportunities to preach. The custom of the open synagogue invited any learned man to speak to the congregation on the Sabbath.
- **They also had John as their assistant:** This man, also known as **John Mark**, was mentioned previously in **Acts 12:25**. He is traveling with Barnabas and Saul on this trip.
- This is the same Mark who will later **write the Gospel that bears his name.**
- Mark would have been a valuable companion for Barnabas and Saul. **He grew up in Jerusalem, and was an eyewitness** of many of the events in the life of Jesus and could relate them with special power to Barnabas and Saul, and to others whom they were preaching to.

#### **v6-12** Ministry in Paphos, a city on the west coast of Cyprus.

- **Paphos:** This city was known for its immorality: "Paphos was infamous for its worship of Venus, the goddess of [sexual] love". In Paphos there is a familiar combination: **Immorality connected with spiritual darkness.**
- While ministering in the city (**going into the synagogues and presenting Jesus**), the representative of the Roman government (the proconsul) sought to hear the word of God.
- **All Roman provinces were divided into two classes**, those that required troops and those that did not. The latter were administered by the Senate and ruled by proconsuls; the former were under the administration of the emperor.



- Paul is opposed by a man named **Elymas = "a wise man"**. His real name was Bar-Jesus, which means "son of Jesus," and Luke couldn't bear to call him that! This Elymas attempts to frustrate the missionary efforts of Saul and Barnabas with the local Roman leader.
- **We should not be surprised or shaken by opposition.** "Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives against his kite." (Spurgeon)
- **v9 Saul, who also is called Paul (first time):** It was common for people in that day to have names that were similar, yet different according to the language or culture they were in. Certainly, Saul's given name was Saul, a Jewish name after the first king of Israel. But his Roman name was Paul, sounding similar to "Saul." "Saul's father gave the child a Jewish and a Latin name because he was a Roman citizen with all the rights in the Roman Empire this implied. The child had both names from infancy.
- **v9 Filled with the Holy Ghost . . . rebuked Elymas:** Paul, using spiritual discernment and operating in the gift of faith, rebukes and **pronounces the judgment of God** upon Elymas (you shall be blind).
- As Elymas is struck with blindness, did Paul would remember his own blinding experience with God? (Act\_9:9). Certainly, those who are resisting God are blind spiritually, so God is just giving Elymas a **physical blindness corresponding to his spiritual blindness**. However, we never hear of Elymas repenting, as Paul did.
- **v12 Then the deputy (proconsul) believed:** Paul is acting correctly, because the eternal destiny of Sergius Paulus is at stake. It is a serious sin to **draw anyone else away with you into unbelief, either with your words or your example**.
- **v12 Being astonished at the doctrine/teaching of the Lord:** As amazing as the miracle of Elymas' sudden blindness was, the **good news** the deputy/proconsul heard from Paul was even more amazing. **The doctrines/teaching of God's gracious gift to man in Jesus, through the cross, was the most amazing thing.**

### **v13 From Paphos to Perga.**

- **They came to Perga:** Paul, Barnabas and their companions leave the island of Cyprus, coming to Perga on the mainland of what is today Turkey.
- **John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem:** We don't know exactly why John Mark went home to Jerusalem.
  - Was he homesick for his family?
  - Was he afraid of the tough & dangerous travel through the mountains ahead of them?
  - Was he resentful that the team of his cousin Barnabas and Saul (Act\_12:25) had now become Paul and his party?
  - Was he a pessimist because Paul was suffering from poor health (Gal\_4:13)?
 Whatever the reason, Paul didn't appreciate the fact that John Mark abandoned the missionary journey here.
- **God had to deal with each party involved,** but a great work was still going to be done for the glory of the Lord. Paul would continue to reach the world for Jesus, and John would write one of the gospels