

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

SENDING OUT (ACTS 13:1-3)

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

Because of the work of a select group of men, Christianity had flourished in a big way in Antioch (modern day Turkey). Luke records that the **gifts of prophecy and teaching** played a major role in their success.

- Barnabas was the pastor of the church in Antioch, but the leadership was also shared with 4 others.

AN INTERESTING GROUP OF PEOPLE

- **Barnabas**: had a heart for the fringe people
- **Simon**: also called Niger which means black. He was an African Jew, and many believe was the man that helped Christ carry His cross.
- **Lucius of Cyrene**: we know little about.
- **Manaen**: a close friend (possibly adopted brother) of Herod Antipas, a tetrarch.
- **Saul**: the apostle Paul of the NT.

THESE 5 WERE CHOSEN TO BE SENT OUT

These men were chosen by God but confirmed by the church to become missionaries to areas that needed the gospel and churches.

- During the process, **they didn't know exactly what lay ahead, but they did know the Great Commission and that God was calling them** to leave.

HOW DID THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO?

The climate of this healthy and vibrant church was **prayer and fasting**. The church didn't revolve around programs, gimmicks, buildings, or budgets, but around communing with God and a drive to reach people.

- **If we would get back to the basics of prayer and fasting, we would see substantial change in the world.**

THEY ALSO UNDERSTOOD AUTHORITY

These missionaries were successful because they understood the authority of scripture and the authority of the church. We learn later that even as they traveled, they placed themselves under the authority of the church in Antioch.

- **If one does not respect the Word and the Church's authority, they will not be used by God.**

NOT SEXY ENOUGH

We have strayed from the basic functions of the church because many modern Christians are bored with the simple instruction to pray, read the Word, go to church, and serve/reach out to the community.

- Ironically, these are the things that change the world.

CYPRUS (ACTS 13:4-5)

SENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO A BEAUTIFUL ISLAND

The 5 men went northwest of Antioch to a city called Seleucia to catch a boat to the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea, which happened to be Barnabas' home.

- Cyprus was important because of the shipping industry of several countries. It was diverse, culturally rich, and beautiful.

MEANWHILE, THE ANTIOCH CHURCH PRAYED

Even though they had lost their most prominent leaders, they prayed for the advancement of the gospel beyond their local church. They were "**Kingdom Minded**"

- Because of the dedication of the Antioch church, within a couple hundred years Antioch had over 100K Christians in its congregations.

CYPRUS MADE SENSE BECAUSE OF BARNABAS

Not only was this a diverse area that needed the gospel, Barnabas knew many people there and could easily attract an audience.

- Because the island was not directly under imperial Roman rule, it was easier for one to talk to the proconsul (governor). The missionaries would start in the synagogue, then move to the Greeks.

THEY HAD A STRATEGY

The missionaries had a plan, though not extremely detailed: They would enter a city, go to the Jews in the synagogue first, and if they weren't receptive, they'd move to the Greek and Roman citizens.

- We learn that **God expects us to prepare and do things well**. We also learn that **we must have margin for Him to work**.

THEY ALSO BROUGHT ALONG AN APPRENTICE

John Mark was the son of a woman named Mary that housed one of the Jerusalem congregations. He was brought along to be an "assistant" to the leaders as they travelled.

- **We need young Christians to be humble and do grunt work as they submit to church authority. We need seasoned Christians to step up and lead well.**

MIXED RESULTS (ACTS 13:6-12)

GOING WEST

The missionaries travelled across the whole island and arrived in Paphos where they encountered a "sorcerer" and "Jewish false prophet" named Bar-Jesus. He was a **magos**, magician, just like Simon (Acts 8).

- Jesus was a common name in Jewish culture. Bar-Jesus' name meant **son of Jesus**.

BAR-JESUS SERVED THE PROCONSUL

This sorcerer served the governor over this area, a man named Sergius Paulus. This proconsul was not a Christian but was considered to be an intelligent man that wanted to hear the Word of God.

- Elymas (corruptor) opposed Sergius hearing the Word because he was evil and it would hinder his profession.

"SAUL—ALSO CALLED PAUL..."

Saul, who now goes by Paul, leaves no wiggle room for Elymas' motives as he calls out the sorcerer by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **If we're full of the Spirit, God will give us "discernment of spirits" and boldness to confront evil, especially when it threatens the advancement of the truth.**

WHY THE NAME CHANGE?

Jews had Greek/Roman versions of their names. Saul proudly bore the name of the 1st Jewish king for the greater part of his life, but when he started ministering exclusively to Gentiles, he took the Roman version of Saul, Paul.

- Paul was "a slave to everyone in order to win more people." Paul **adapted minor things in order to connect**.

STRAIGHTFORWARD!

Paul calls the "son of Jesus" the "son of the devil" as he points out that he is "full of all kinds of deceit and trickery." This wasn't just a man that disagreed with the gospel, but an opposition to it being communicated.

- This is one of several times in the Bible we hear of demonically influenced people being directly rebuked.

THIS ISN'T A GAME

The petty magic that Bar-Jesus used was about to be contrasted by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul looks at him and proclaims that "God's hand is against you" and that he will be made temporarily blind.

- Many people believe the temporary blindness was God being gracious by prompting repentance from the sorcerer.

THE RESPONSE WAS MIXED

There appears to be no repentance from Bar-Jesus, but we do see that Sergius "believed because he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."

- Some scholars argue if this conversion was genuine because baptism isn't mentioned. It is safe to say it was because of Luke's use of the word "believe."

FUNDAMENTALS

- Our faith is a lifestyle that the Bible often refers to as a "marathon." As Christians we don't just hop from experience to experience, but we live steady lives of church attendance, prayer, study, serving, and giving.
- To reach others, we often need to adapt to situations without compromising truth.
- As people that know truth, we should also be quick to identify sin, heresy, and divisiveness.
- The only way to address sin and division is through the gifts of discernment, wisdom, and knowledge along with boldness and compassion that can only come from the Holy Spirit.