

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 30TH–31ST // BOOK OF ACTS

### SENT OUT (ACTS 13:1–5)

#### ANTIOCH

In Chapter 11, we were introduced to the church in Antioch, where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians. Barnabas was sent by the church in Jerusalem.

- Antioch became a central hub from which people were sent out, focusing on the final part of Jesus' commission, to go out to all of the world.

#### FIVE MEN

In Antioch, we are introduced to several men who serve as prophets and teachers. This group is notably diverse, reflecting the people of the church. Despite their differences, they were united by their love for and deep faith in Christ.

- Barnabas is mentioned first because he appears to be the leader of those listed, acting as the "lead pastor" of Antioch.
- Simeon was likely Simon of Cyrene, who helped carry the cross for Jesus.

Lucius of Cyrene and Simeon may have been some of the men who preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch.

- The fourth individual was Manaen, who had strong connections with the highest level of the government. He had grown up as a close friend of Herod Antipas—the same Herod who ordered the execution of John the Baptist.
- Finally, Saul, the last person mentioned, was one of the main teachers alongside Barnabas.

#### WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND FASTING

Unfortunately, when we think of church, we can adopt a consumerist mentality that distracts us from the fundamental call to be actively involved.

- It can be easy to get caught up in the routines of church life and forget that we are the Church. God is inviting us in our role to be active participants.

#### BEING SENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

As they worshiped Jesus, they felt a strong calling to send Barnabas and Saul as some of the first missionaries to the Gentiles.

- Embracing this call, they did not transfer the responsibility to others; they understood that God was specifically calling them. If we feel a burden for something, it often signifies that God is inviting us to step into that calling.

#### THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS

This was situated in the Mediterranean Sea, had a significant Jewish population, and was the home of Barnabas. In Chapter 11, we learn that many Believers traveled there as a result of the persecution that began due to Stephen's martyrdom.

- It is noted that when the Believers arrived, they initially shared the message only with the Jews. However, this time, they would also share it with the Gentiles.

#### BLINDED (ACTS 13:6–12)

##### PAPHOS

Traveling the length of the island from east to west, they arrived in a port city that served as the regional center of the government.

- It was notorious for its immorality, primarily due to worship of the goddess of love, Venus. The indulgence in sexual frivolity increased the spiritual darkness. Such immorality was prevalent throughout the pagan world of the Roman Empire.

#### THE PROCONSUL

He was described as an intelligent man and served as a high-ranking Roman official responsible for the entire province, answering to the Roman Senate.

- Eager to learn about the Word of God, he summoned Barnabas and Saul. This presented an extraordinary, unexpected opportunity to stand before the area's ruler and share the message of Christ.

#### A FALSE PROPHET

Along with the proconsul was his attendant, Bar-Jesus. Elymas was concerned about the influence Barnabas and Saul might have on the proconsul. He inwardly recognized that the power of Christ would render him useless to Sergius Paulus.

- Some people will oppose anything that glorifies God. Satan will try to use that opposition to discourage us and/or lead us away from our faith.

#### SAUL, ALSO CALLED PAUL

Here we see Saul now officially being referred to as Paul. As a Roman citizen and Jew, he would have had two names given at birth—one reflecting his Jewish heritage and the other for his Roman identity.

- In light of the Gentile focus of the ministry God was calling him to, he chose to use the name that would be more familiar to the people he was serving.

#### SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul confronted Elymas, calling out his wickedness. Playing on his name, Bar-Jesus, Paul declared who his real father was. This statement draws a significant line, highlighting the important distinction between Christianity and spirituality.

- The same thing that happened to Paul, temporary blindness, was now happening to Elymas. The question remained: What choice would Elymas make?

#### THE PROCONSUL BELIEVED

The miraculous events surrounding Bar-Jesus were impressive, yet it was the astonishing teachings of the Lord that ultimately led Sergius Paulus to believe.

- We do not need to rely on anything other than the incredible story of God to transform hearts. As we engage with our culture, we should avoid trying to elicit a response by just appealing to feelings or emotions.

#### FOUNDATION (ACTS 13:13–25)

##### JOHN MARK

John Mark was traveling as an assistant to Barnabas and Paul, but for reasons that are never fully explained, he decided to leave and return to Jerusalem. This decision led Paul to distrust John Mark for future journeys.

- It is easy to disqualify someone based on decisions we do not agree with. Yet that does not mean God won't, in His wisdom, qualify them and use them for His purpose. Have we failed somewhere or with someone?

#### WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

After arriving in Pisidian Antioch, located in Galatia, Paul and Barnabas attended the synagogue for services. The synagogue's leaders invited them to share a message of encouragement.

- This invitation ignited Paul's passion to provide exhortation and consolation rooted in the hope and faithfulness of Jesus. Will we be ready to share when asked?

#### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Paul was quick to point out that God's hand has always been in every detail throughout the history of Israel and that His hand was still at work.

- It can be easy to lose sight of this truth and focus on our limited understanding. So Paul reminded them of this profound reality: Even though they did not see where God was at work, He had truly been doing amazing things.

#### MOSES, DAVID, AND JESUS

Paul tailored the message to connect with his listeners based on where they were in their faith. He did this very same thing when he met with the Greek philosophers in Athens.

- Recognizing the importance of finding common ground, he presented the message in a way that they could relate to and engage with.

#### PROBLEMS

- It can be easy to see the issues within the church, which often leads us to form opinions about what the "church" should be and what it should be accomplishing.
- We can often sit in the back seat and try to direct traffic, without being active participants.
- How do we actively participate in what God is doing in and through the Church?

#### SEEKING

- First, this requires us to proclaim who Jesus is, just as John the Baptist did.
- After this, we need to consistently pursue Him through worship, prayer, and fasting.
- Where are we in our walks? Have we grown bored with the practices that connect us with Christ? Have we started running after other things instead?

#### THE CALLED

- If God has placed certain needs on our hearts, He is likely calling us to help address those needs.
- As we minister to these needs, God will continually put people in front of us. Some will desire to hear about the truth of God, while others may be strongly opposed to it. Unfortunately, we cannot decide for them.
- Will we choose to be led by the Holy Spirit this week? Will we make decisions based on His guidance, or will we simply point out problems?