

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 31ST, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

### **CALLED & SENT (ACTS 13:1-3)**

#### **"NOW IN THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH..."**

Chapter 13 starts with a look at a healthy church plant in Antioch. Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark were all part of this church, having returned from their relief efforts (Acts 11:27-30). Along with Barnabas and Saul, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen were among the teachers and prophets there.

- This young church had **sound teaching and a heart for missions.**

### **PROPHETS AND TEACHERS IN ANTIOCH**

**Simeon** is believed to be the same African man who helped Jesus carry his cross (Luke 23:26) and whose sons, Alexandria and Rufus, were part of the church in Rome (Mark 15:21; Romans 16:13).

- **Lucius** only appears here in Scripture.
- **Manaen** grew up as either a foster brother or intimate friend of Herod Antipas, but they went completely different directions.

### **MINISTERING TO THE LORD**

Verse 2 says that **"as they were worshipping the Lord and fasting,"** the Holy Spirit spoke to them. Some translations say, "as they ministered to Lord" (KJV).

- Ministering to the Lord means **doing what is pleasing and honoring to Him**—worship (Romans 12:1), praise, prayer, listening, and obeying.

### **ANSWERING THE CALL**

God told the church in Antioch **"to set apart"** (or **"separate to Him"**) Barnabas and Saul.

- In order to separate ourselves to God, we must separate ourselves from other things. When we say **"yes"** to God's call, we will inevitably have to say **"no"** to the things that distract and detract from complete obedience to the call.

### **IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTICE**

God **called the "best"** and the church still **sent them.**

- The church **showed their dependence on God through prayer and fasting.**
- Through the **laying of hands**, the church sent them off (**"to release them from their duties"**).
- They did not know where the call would take them, but **they offered themselves to Lord for whatever (and wherever) he wished.**

### **MIXED RESULTS (ACTS 13:4-12)**

#### **"SO BEING SENT OUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT"**

The church in Antioch released Saul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, but Luke wants his readers to know they were **"being sent out by the Holy Spirit."**

- The difference between someone being sent by their own desires, the church's desires, or by the Holy Spirit is the ministry's eternal effectiveness.

### **FIRST STOP: SELEUCIA**

Seleucia was a port city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, not far from Antioch. From there, they sailed to the island Cyprus, where Barnabas was from (Acts 4:36).

- Jewish customs allowed learned men to speak in the synagogues during the Sabbath meetings, so **both Saul and Barnabas would have been invited to speak.**

#### **"THEY ALSO HAD JOHN AS THEIR ASSISTANT"**

Luke is referring to John Mark, who was a valuable companion to Saul and Barnabas, his cousin, on their first missionary journey, though he would not be invited on the second one because he deserted them while in Perga (Acts 13:13).

- John Mark, who later wrote the Gospel of Mark, grew up in Jerusalem and was a witness to many events of Jesus' life.

### **TRAVELING FROM EAST TO WEST**

Their travels across Cyprus took them from Salamis in the east to Paphos on the west coast, a city well known for its immorality and worship of Venus, the goddess of sexual love.

- It was here in Paphos that the missionaries ran into Elymas the sorcerer (whose real name was Bar-Jesus) and the proconsul, Sergius Paulus.

### **NOT SURPRISED OR SHAKEN BY OPPOSITION**

Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the Word of God while Elymas sought to disrupt their efforts.

- "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 may be no success. **A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives against his kite"** (Spurgeon).

### **"YOU ARE GOING TO BE BLIND"**

Saul, also called Paul, **being filled with the Holy Spirit, was given the ability to rebuke and pronounce the judgment of God upon Elymas.**

- It's interesting that God gave Paul the ability to pronounce a judgment that he too once experienced. However, we never hear about Elymas repenting as Paul did.

### **"THEN, WHEN HE SAW WHAT HAPPENED..."**

In this miraculous scene, Luke wants us to see that **"the proconsul believed, because he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."**

- It was the teaching of the Lord from Paul that the proconsul responded to, not the sudden blindness of Elymas. **The display of God's grace towards humanity, through Jesus, was far more amazing to him.**

### **GOD SENT THE SAVIOR (ACTS 13:13-25)**

#### **"PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS"**

In v. 9, Luke starts referring to Saul **using his Roman name, Paul**, since from this point on his **journeys would take him into more pagan areas.**

- In v. 13, Luke makes another shift, referring to Paul, Barnabas, and Saul as **"Paul and his companions,"** since this is where **Paul's leadership becomes more evident.**

#### **"JOHN LEFT THEM AND WENT BACK TO JERUSALEM"**

There is only speculation as to why John Mark went back home as Paul and his companions made their way to Perga on the mainland.

- Whatever the reason, all we know is that it caused a rift between John Mark and Paul. But the fracture was eventually mended (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24), and in his final letter Paul asked Luke to bring John to him in Rome (2 Timothy 4:11).

#### **"THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE"**

Paul and his companions traveled 135 miles north to Pisidian Antioch in the region of Galatia.

- On the Sabbath day, Paul took advantage of the customary invitation to speak in the synagogue after opening prayers, a reading from the Torah (first five books), and a reading from the prophets.

### **PAUL'S FIRST RECORDED SERMON**

Paul, addressing both ethnic Jews and recent Gentile converts to Judaism, delivered a message that was very similar to the one given by Stephen before he was martyred.

- He covered 450 years of history to show God's hand in choosing the patriarchs, leading them out of Egypt, guiding them in the wilderness, overthrowing Canaan, and giving them land.

#### **"GOD BROUGHT TO ISRAEL THE SAVIOR, JESUS"**

Paul quickly moved on to the time of the judges, the prophet Samuel, and King Saul, and finally landed on David, the son of Jesse, a king after God's heart.

- Paul was showing how **God had a plan throughout history to bring about the Savior** through the decedents of David (Is.11:1) and **the Savior is Jesus.**

#### **"I AM NOT WORTHY"**

Paul uses the examples of **John the Baptist** and the **Jewish rulers** (Acts 13:27-29) to show how **people both received and rejected Jesus.**

- John the Baptist was commissioned to proclaim a baptism of repentance in preparation for the Savior, and that work ended as he acknowledged Jesus as the Savior (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:15-16; John 1:27).

### **JOHN THE BAPTIST'S RESPONSE TO JESUS**

- He saw Jesus as He really was.
- He knew Jesus was the One greater than all others.
- He knew Jesus was more than a teacher.
- He knew Jesus was our Lord God, whom we all must answer to.
- He prepared the way for others to respond to Jesus.

### **WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS?**

- Do we view Jesus' words as suggestions or rules and regulations to follow for a better life?
- Do our lives reflect that Jesus was more than a teacher and a good man? By our actions, are we showing others that He is God and we will all answer to Him?
- **Are we preparing the way for others to come to know Him** (Matthew 28:16-20)?