

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

ACTS 13:1-12

LESSON: FAITH TO DISCERN— December 10, 2017

INTRODUCTION:

¹While at Caesarea, the people of Tyre and Sidon came to Herod to appeal for peace. When he gave them an oration, the people praised his speech as *"the voice of a god and not of a man."* Failing to give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck Herod and he died. The word of God, however, grew and multiplied. Barnabas and Saul, having completed their ministry to the saints in Judea, returned from Jerusalem to Antioch accompanied by John Mark. At this point in Luke's narrative of the history of the church, the focus turns from the ministry of Peter to the ministry of Paul (**12:20-24**).

The Book of Acts was written by Luke, a disciple who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 16:10). He reports on the actions of the apostles and the work of the Holy Spirit.

²The Gospel of Luke was written with the intention of leading Theophilus, a lost man, to faith in Christ. Luke knew his relationship with Theophilus was an opportunity for helping him to place his faith in Christ. He became intentional by presenting the claims of Christ to him in written form so that Theophilus could have a clear understanding of all he needed to know about Jesus. He mentions him in Acts 1:1. Theophilus did become a follower of Jesus Christ!

³**Chapter 13** marks a major division in the book of Acts. The first twelve chapters have recorded the events concerning the spread of Christianity in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Now we find where the Gospel is now taken — to the uttermost parts of the earth. At least forty cities are mentioned. Up to this point, Jerusalem had been the center of ministry, and Peter had been the key apostle. Now we see everything shifting to Antioch as the new center.

LESSON: I. EXPANDED MINISTRY ACTS 13:1-5

13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. The greatness of the Antioch church is seen in two facts.

1. The Antioch church was God's choice to become the mission and evangelistic center of the world. However, too many of its members (Jews) were too prejudiced and held too many feelings against the rest of the world (Gentiles). And they refused to repent of their traditional, formal approach to God. God had to bypass the Jerusalem church and raise up another church to become the center of His mission upon earth. This meant that some leaders other than the Jewish leaders had to be chosen to launch God's purpose on earth

2. The Antioch church was diverse; a church that reached out to everyone.

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts_12.htm

² <https://www.uu.edu/centers/rglee/fellows/fall98/james.htm>

³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/barnabas-and-paul-commissioned-for-missionary-service/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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- **Barnabas** was a wealthy Cyprian, a man born and reared on the island of Cyprus.
- **Simeon** or **Niger**, the name "**Niger**" means black referring to the complexion of his skin. He was probably from Africa; also a Roman name showing that he moved about in Roman society.
- **Lucius of Cyrene** was probably one of the poor persecuted believers who had fled to Antioch for safety. If so, he was one of the founders of this great church.
- **Manaen** was of the higher class of society, being a foster brother to Herod Antipas. This is the Herod who had tried Jesus and murdered John the Baptist.
- **Saul of Tarsus** was one of the religionists of society mentioned last, as though he was considered least important among the leaders. However, Saul's deep love for the Lord and his driving commitment to the Lord's cause would soon lead God to use Saul beyond imagination. This is Saul of Tarsus, better known as Paul, and this would be Paul's first missionary trip.

The point is: The missionaries were gifted with certain prophets and teachers. These men with their diversity of backgrounds and social standings show just how much the church at Antioch reached out to everyone throughout the community. It reached out to all classes of people; all needs, all nationalities, and races. No one was excluded; everyone was invited to Christ and welcomed into the fellowship and ministry of the church. The church at Antioch was a ministering church, a great outreach church to launch and support the first missionaries to the world.

- **Prophets** were given direct revelation from God by the Holy Spirit.
- **Teachers** were gifted in the interpretation of that revelation. This gift bears the responsibility given by God to understand and communicate the Word of God, to edify believers in the truths of God's Word.

13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. These leaders ministered meaning "worshipped" unto the Lord and fasted. While doing so, the special gift of the Holy Spirit imparts them to separate (set aside for God) Barnabas and Saul for the work He's called them to do. **Note:** God calls those who are faithful where they are.

- These missionaries were called while ministering and fasting. It was because of their faithfulness where they were that God knew He could trust these men to do greater things for Him. They would be the first missionaries to be members of a great church, a church that would reach out to all.
- These missionaries were called not by the church or leaders, but by the Holy Spirit. This calling through the utterance of the Holy Spirit sets Barnabas and Saul apart to never again be lay believers, but give their lives to serving God as full time world-wide evangelists or missionaries.

13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

- These first missionaries were sent and commissioned after the leaders of the church had finished fasting and praying, and laying their hands upon them.

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13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. We see that the Holy Spirit is involved in all of this. They are sent forth by the Holy Ghost. They first had to board a ship at the port and sail to their designated place.

- The first missionaries were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Yes, there was a particular place Barnabas and Saul were sent to--**Cyprus**.
 - **Seleucia** was a seaport of Antioch. They departed from this port.
 - **Cyprus** was the island in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a stopping off place for the commercial fleets of that day. It was known as a resort area being blessed with a warm appealing climate. The population was primarily Greek and Phoenician, but there were a large number of Jews there as well.

13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. So, they have reached Cyprus. **Salamis** was the largest city on the island of Cyprus, and they began to preach the Word of God. The city was the commercial center of Cyprus, boasting an excellent harbor. There were several synagogues there because of the large Jewish population. Preaching the Word of God in those synagogues, they have brought with them John Mark who came with them from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25). John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and was to serve as their minister or attendant, and he later would write the Gospel of Mark!

II. INTENSE CONFLICT ACTS 13:6-12

13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:— Now the missionaries have embarked upon the city of Paphos, located on the western side of the island of Cyprus. **Paphos** was the official capital of the province Cyprus in those days. It was famous for its worship of Venus, the goddess of love or lustful immorality. This was the society from which Barnabas came. It was his home. And it was the first society Paul set out to penetrate with the gospel right after committing his life to world-wide missions. The island had been under Roman rule for about one hundred years when Paul arrived. In this city they found a sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Barjesus.

13:7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. The sorcerer was with the deputy in the country. **Sergius Paulus** was the governor, the deputy, the Roman proconsul of the country. The Roman proconsuls were appointed and controlled by the Roman Senate. Sergius Paulus was the highest ranking official; the man of power on the island. He had heard about the Word of God being preached by these missionaries and wanted to hear it for himself. He was a man seeking truth and he sent for Barnabas and Saul. If believers are not out witnessing, the world will never hear the Word of God's Truth!

13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Luke lets it be made known, the sorcerer's (verse 6) name—Elymas. Elymas is an alternative name for Barjesus whose original Aramaic name means "*Son of Salvation*"; <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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but in fact was a "*magician*" and "*false prophet*." He was a religious priest, a Jew who was teaching the truth of monotheism, that there is only one God. But he was mixing the truth with philosophy, science, astrology, and the magic of eastern religions. As he sensed the governor was accepting the message of Barnabas and Saul, he attempted to sway Sergius Paulus from the faith. He did his best to keep the governor from turning to Christ.

13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. At this point the name Saul is interchanged to Paul. Saul was his Jewish name, and Paul is his Roman or Gentile name. Up to now, he had been ministering primarily to the Jews, and while among them it was only natural to use his Jewish name, Saul. Because of the correlation to the governor's name, and the fact that they are now in distinctly Greek-influenced territory, Saul changes the outward usage of his name as a matter of cultural identification with the people whom he is trying to reach with the gospel. Paul's ministry to the Gentile world was being launched at this very moment. He was standing in the court of a Roman proconsul, not in a Jewish synagogue as the Holy Ghost was leading him to proclaim to a Gentile who needed Christ. From this point on he would become known as Paul, the great minister of the Gentiles. He was filled with the Holy Ghost and he set his eyes on Elymas who did not want the governor to receive the message of Christ. There is an enormous danger in trying to stop someone from accepting Christ.

13:10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?— Paul straight-out rebuked the sorcerer; the false prophet's perversion of the truth. He calls him out...

- "*O full of all subtilty*"— He was full of all craftiness, guile, trickery, deceit, seeking to bait and catch to enslave in error and untruth.
- "*and all mischief*"— He was full of all wickedness, fraud, villainy, and sleight of hand, moving about with ease and working against good; doing all kinds and forms of evil.
- "*child of the devil*" — He was being controlled by the devil; doing and working the will and works of the devil.
- "*enemy of all righteousness*" — He was opposing all that is right and honest and just; opposing all that's pure and moral and clean.

Paul told him to cease taking "*the right ways of the Lord*" and perverting them and making them crooked.

13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

- The judgment comes from the Holy Ghost, not from Paul himself.
- The judgment upon the man was by the hand of the Lord.

Paul says look, the hand of the Lord is upon him and he will be blind. He will not see the sun for a season. So, he's struck with blindness (temporarily for a season). And immediately a mist and a darkness fell on him. Being stricken blind, he now seeks someone to lead him by the hand

13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. Amazed and stunned not only by the power of these missionaries of the Lord over the <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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sorcerer, false prophet, but more so astonished at the doctrine of the Lord the proconsul believed. His belief was genuine and he did become a follower of Jesus.

SUMMARY:

The congregation in Antioch was blessed with a number of prophet-preachers and teachers: Barnabas, Simon, nicknamed Niger, Lucius the Cyrenian, Manaen, an advisor to the ruler Herod, and Saul. One day as they were worshiping God—they were also fasting as they waited for guidance—the Holy Spirit spoke: *“Take Barnabas and Saul and commission them for the work I have called them to do.”* So they commissioned them. In that circle of intensity and obedience, of fasting and praying, they laid hands on their heads and sent them off. Sent off on their new assignment by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went down to Seleucia and caught a ship for Cyprus. The first thing they did when they put in at (*went to*) Salamis was preach God’s Word in the Jewish meeting places. They had John along to help out as needed (**13:1-5**) MSG.

They went across the whole island to the city of Paphos. There they met a Jewish man named Barjesus who did magic. He was a false prophet. He always stayed close to Sergius Paulus, who was the governor and a very smart man. He invited Barnabas and Saul to come visit him, because he wanted to hear the message of God. But the magician Elymas (as Barjesus was called in Greek) spoke against them, trying to stop the governor from believing in Jesus. But Saul (also known as Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, looked hard at Elymas and said, “You son of the devil, full of lies and all kinds of evil tricks! You are an enemy of everything that is right. Will you never stop trying to change the Lord’s truths into lies? Now the Lord will touch you and you will be blind. For a time you will not be able to see anything—not even the light from the sun.” Then everything became dark for Elymas. He walked around lost. He was trying to find someone to lead him by the hand. When the governor saw this, he believed. He was amazed at the teaching about the Lord (**13:6-12**) ERV.