

The First Missionary Journey Begins

Text: Acts 13:2-13

The Church is now branching out to communities of the Jews in Gentile territory, but the Church is reaching out beyond the ethnicity of the Jew into the communities of the Gentiles as well. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

They go to the port in Seleucia, about 15 miles from Antioch and sail for Cypress.

I. THE MISSION IS HOLY SPIRIT LED

Acts 13:2-4

The early Church understood that without the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, they were helpless. A precedent is made that we wait on God for instructions and empowering. Psalm 123:2: "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us." Luke 24:49: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

II. THE TEAM IS FORMED

Acts 13:5

Paul and Barnabas take a young apprentice with them, John Mark. As I look into my youthful years in the ministry, how thankful I am for the influence of older and mature Christians. Here is a brief summary of some (not by any means all) of the influencers in my own life: My dad taught me the importance of preaching Jesus. Leonard Ravenhill instilled that unless the fullness of the Spirit dominates our ministry, little lasting good will come. J. B. Buffington taught me the Church is the conscience of the community. Raymond Hancock taught me we must "Go on anyway," in spite of the trials. Lee Roberson taught me the primacy of missions. Harold Sightler taught me the ecstatic joy that accompanies Bible preaching. My uncle, C. F. Edwards taught me maintain freedom in preaching, but never let it eclipse into irreverence. R. G. Lee taught me to paint word pictures in preaching, so the congregation may see what we are saying. We can never dismiss the powerful influencers of Spirit-filled ladies in our life (II Timothy 1:5). My mother, by example taught me the power of perpetual prayer. Peggy Pugh drove home the importance of holiness in ministry, as well as dependence the Word of God above all other sources. Mary Ellen Clayton was used of God to arrest my attention about the call of God on my life to come to Houston. Although, I knew Amy Carmichael only by books, she taught me the power of "Calvary love." I am not by any means a "self-made man." I stand on the shoulders of giants!

III. THE BIBLE IS IN THEIR HAND AND HEART

Acts 13:5-7

Notice these important words, "...they preached the Word of God..." (Acts 13:5b). "...And desired to hear the Word of God" (Acts 13:7b). Later Paul said in II Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Preaching the Word is the primary task of the Church, the primary task of the leaders of the Church, the people who are set in this position of authority; and we must not allow anything to deflect us from this, however good the cause, however great the need."

IV. THE SATANIC OPPOSITION

Acts 13:6-8

Sergius Paulus was the deputy of the country, which was comparable to the position of Pontius Pilate as governor. Like a demonic Rasputin in the life of Tsar Nicholas II and Alexandra, this Bar-jesus, known as Elymus, the sorcerer was in the life of Sergius Paulus. As soon as Sergius Paulus showed interest in hearing the Word of God, Elymus began to use his wicked powers to dissuade the deputy from embracing the faith. We find this pattern in the Bible and personal experience, that when we begin to win and disciple people in the faith, the Devil counters with a fight. This is why our dealing with the darkness is often referred to in combat terms. Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

V. THE BOLDNESS OF PAUL

Acts 13:9, 10

Later in this chapter, verse 46a, we find these words: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold..." Paul looked this possessed man square in the eyes and Acts 13:9 says it like this, "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him." There is no need for any Spirit-filled person to stand down in the face of Satanic conflict "...because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4b).

VI. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WAYS OF SATAN

Acts 13:10

- A. Deceitful. "subtly": Greek: *dolos*, meaning one who decoys, tricks, one who baits in craft deceit and guile.
- B. Diseased. "mischief": Greek: *rhaidiourgia*, meaning reckless malignity.
- C. Descent. "child of the devil": "Devil": Greek: *diabolos*, meaning false accuser and slanderer (Revelation 12:10). The name Bar-jesus means "child of the Savior." Paul calls him out, as he is, in truth, the child of Satan.
- D. Depraved. "enemy of all righteousness." "enemy": Greek: *echthros*, hateful, hostile adversary. The Devil is the enemy of all righteousness. There is never a good side of his evil ways (John 10:10).
- E. Distort. "pervert": Greek: *diastrepho*, meaning to distort, corrupt; turn away (II Timothy 3:1-8; II Timothy 4:3,4).

VII. THE OVERCOMING POWER OF GOD

Acts 13:11

Elymas sought to turn away Sergius Paulus' eyes from the truth, however, Elymus' eyes were literally blinded. The Bible reminds us in Jude, verse 9, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." The Lord has the power to turn the tables on the Devil. Mark 6:7 tells us, "And He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits." I John 4:4: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." It should be noted that the blindness that Paul called forth was temporary; giving us the understanding that God was going to still offer grace and salvation to Elymus.

VIII. THE CONVERSION OF SERGIUS PAULUS

Acts 13:12

We witness with our lip (Psalm 107:2) and with our life (Matthew 5:13, 14). In this verse, we see the combination of both. Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the Word of God (Romans 10:17) from Paul and Barnabas and he was convinced of the truth by the miraculous work of Paul with Elymus.

IX. THE SATANIC INTERFERENCE WITHIN THE RANKS

Acts 13:13

John Mark departed before the mission of the first missionary journey was complete. His departure culminated in a falling out between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:39). Although demonic powers cannot possess the Christian (Ephesians 1:14), they can certainly oppress and depress a Christian who is not walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

CONCLUSION:

Let us be battle-ready as we do the work of the Lord and never forget I Peter 5:8; Galatians 6:9; I Corinthians 15:58.

-Pastor Pope-