

Barrier Breaking Faith
Missions Go - Journey 1
Acts 13:1-14:28

13:1-3 Holy Spirit led Commissioning of Missionaries

A team of two for the ages, Barnabas and Saul. Out of a leadership team of five in the church in Antioch of Syria, two are raised up to be sent out to do what God has called them to do - take the gospel to the Gentiles. This decision was confirmed by the spiritual practices of worship, prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands. This is the first record of missions planned by a church under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been at work all along, and now moves the church to send missionaries/church planters.

13:4-12 The First Location Tests the Team

The Holy Spirit determined the direction for Barnabas and Saul, much like the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night led the Israelites in the Exodus. The Holy Spirit led them to Barnabas' home island of Cyprus. Known for its copper mines, this island is 140 miles long by 69 miles wide and had a significant Jewish population. Immediately they encounter spiritual opposition, prophet versus false prophet and sorcerer. Saul, now called Paul, stepped forward to address the challenge. Saul would have been his Jewish name or fourth name, and Paul the first of his Roman names. Open opposition led to a powerful defense in response. Grace was extended to an evil man, showing him what true darkness looked like in order to change his heart, as it had Saul previously. The teaching of the word was supported by a powerful demonstration. The effect on the proconsul, or Roman governor, was to belief.

Listen to the story of Chris Carrier. He was kidnapped, shot in the left temple and abandoned to die in the Everglades. He was found six days later and recovered, blinded in one eye. Twenty-two years later he led Mr. McCallister, the man who shot him, and was himself now completely blind, to faith in Jesus Christ. The forgiveness Chris offered provided the "power" that convinced the man to accept Christ. Out of the darkness came light.

COVID has been a darkness that has exposed fault lines and sins of people, churches and a nation. It has led to correction of wrongs in some instances, shown the hearts of others, some full of lies and evil and some full of love and goodness. It has also led to healing and salvation for people. We must practice 1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* The light of the gospel is bigger than the darkness of cultural division.

13:13 Mission Team Loss

John Mark, Barnabas nephew left the team. He was not commissioned and chose to go home. We are not told the reason. It upset Paul and would eventually lead to a disagreement and division between Paul and Barnabas as recorded in 15:36-41. The good news is that this is not the end of John Mark as being useful to the Kingdom of

God. In 2 Timothy 4:11 Timothy is instructed to bring Mark "for he is useful to me in the ministry." John Mark was later identified with being associated with Peter, writing Peter's recollection of the incarnational ministry of Christ. That writing is the gospel of Mark. We must not give up on people, but "restore gently" (Gal. 6:1), and "cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20; 1 Peter 4:8) and watch what God will do.

13:14-41 A Message of Promises Fulfilled

The journey was interrupted, but not stopped. Upon arrival in Pisidian Antioch (in Asia Minor) they are offered an open pulpit in the local synagogue to share a message of encouragement. Speaking from a historical perspective, aligning Jesus with a Jewish genealogical connection as had Peter in ch. 2 and Stephen in ch. 7, he draws them to know that God fulfilled the promises of God to them in Jesus Christ. He then calls them to not ignore his message!!

13:42-52 Jealousy Does not Stamp out Joy

Popularity led to a second invitation to speak. The jealousy of "phariseeism" raised its head. The audience became the enemy. Lies and slander were used, tools of Satan, John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. It was not liberalism, but phariseeism, that put Jesus on the cross. Liberalism has its dangers, and they are not to be ignored, but so does phariseeism as it raises protecting personal or political position over the truth. It would take more than rejection to stop Barnabas and Paul. They practiced Matthew 10:14, "shaking the dust off their feet", and moved on. A detour, but not the end.

14:1-7 Acceptance and Opposition in Iconium

A pattern had been established. Go to the synagogues first to call the Jews to believe. Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.* Unbelieving Jews combined with pagan Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. Paul is now taking the lead. They were able to escape being stoned by leaving to go to Lystra and Derbe. The preaching of the gospel continues (:7).

14:8-20 A Humble Response

We have a non-Herodian response to their popularity. Herod reveled in worshipful admiration and died in his pride (ch. 12). Barnabas and Paul were used in a miraculous way to heal a lame man, and the worldly response was to declare them gods. They stopped the wrongful worship. A near riot is averted, and they go from admiration to opposition again. They were out of sight, but not out of mind of their opposition from Antioch and Iconium who stirred up the people from Lystra. Paul was stoned as the spokesman and left for dead. A bold, but humble man could not be stopped. God raised him up and he was back at it the very next day. What courage and commitment.

14:21-28 Encouragement for New Believers

Strengthening encouragement for new believers is important. Two examples: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Hebrews 6:1. They returned home having completed their work.