

Lesson 1 - 29 July 2012

The First Missionary Journey Begins

Lesson Scope: Acts 13

Lesson Focus

Before the important new step in today's lesson, the infant church had but a mere handful of congregations, including Antioch in Syria. While Antioch was still becoming established, the Lord was also calling this congregation to serve as a home base for the first of three missionary journeys recorded in the Book of Acts.

Barnabas, a Levite of Cyprus, proved to be very committed to taking the Gospel to people from all walks of life. He also helped his Jewish brethren accept the newly converted Saul, later called Paul. Paul and Barnabas's shared vision and zeal in promoting the Gospel united them as brethren. Though new in the faith, Paul proved to be loyal to the Lord and a great asset to the church as he embarked on this special mission effort.

Jesus calls His disciples to "be witnesses [for Him] ... unto the uttermost part of the earth." Through the Holy Spirit, He calls and empowers the laborers, directs them in their work, and superintends in the circumstances they face.

We should be inspired with the sobering responsibility of representing such a noble cause--the spreading of the Gospel. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" is a Bible command. Do we believe this to the point that we are practicing it at home and abroad? We must also have a burden of how critical it is that we accurately portray, through our lives, what God can do for others.

This lesson applies to everyone; those who are called to serve the Lord on foreign fields are essentially involved in the same work as those who are faithfully serving at home. The location may be different, but the message and burden for the work must be the same.

Although people's race, color, and backgrounds vary, the solution to the sin problem is universal. The apostles preached to both Jews and Gentiles in the same synagogue; both needed deliverance. Each received salvation on the basis of a personal response. Thus we go humbly in our efforts to proclaim the Gospel, yet with a holy boldness that grows out of a desire for everyone to know the truth that makes us free.

Lesson Aim: To present principles for proclaiming the Gospel.

Theme Verse: [Romans 10:14](#). How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Lesson Text

"Sent Forth by the Holy Ghost"

[Acts 13:1-4](#) 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. 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. ³ And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. ⁴ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

"Elymas ... Withstood Them"

[Acts 13:6-10](#) 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: 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. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy

Ghost, set his eyes on him, 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?

"Exhortation for the People"

[Acts 13:14-17](#) ¹⁴ But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. ¹⁵ And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren*, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. ¹⁶ Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. ¹⁷ The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

[Acts 13:33](#) ³³ God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

[Acts 13:38-39](#) ³⁸ Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: ³⁹ And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

[Acts 13:43](#) ⁴³ Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

"The Word ... Was Published"

[Acts 13:45-49](#) ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so hath the

Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

Questions for Study

"Sent Forth by the Holy Ghost"

1. What qualities were important for those involved in this collective outreach work?
2. How should we look at the sacrifice of livelihood, physical comforts, and family relationships sometimes required to serve the Lord elsewhere?

"Elymas ... Withstood Them"

3. What enabled Paul to so boldly rebuke Elymas?
4. How does our commitment to rebuke evil affect our standing with God?

"Exhortation for the People"

5. Why did Paul weave Israel's history into his appeal?
6. In what ways must we keep the salvation message central in our evangelism efforts?

"The Word ... Was Published"

7. What was the underlying cause of the opposition to the Gospel message?
8. List some encouraging results of men giving their hearts to the Lord.

Analyzing the Passage

In Acts 1:8, Jesus outlined three areas of service: local Jewish communities, nearby Samaritan communities, and the whole world beyond. By means of the persecution in Jerusalem, God had brought His people to Antioch. From there they would reach "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Jesus had set the pattern of preaching first in the synagogues by His going first to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In Acts

13:16, two groups are addressed: "men of Israel" and "ye that fear God" (likely proselytes). In Antioch of Pisidia, when their Jewish audience rejected the Gospel preaching (Acts 13:45-48), the apostles shifted their focus to the Gentiles, among whom were many sincere seekers.

The word ordained (Acts 13:48) comes from the same root word as the word addicted in 1 Corinthians 16:15. These people made themselves available to the Gospel message with the result that it led them to faith in Christ.

Principles and Applications

"Sent Forth by the Holy Ghost"

1. God blesses a faithful church with men who are able and willing to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 13:1-2). This means that we also need to continue doing our part. The rising generation must be helped to embrace the faith. We need to maintain a keen awareness of our pilgrim-and-stranger status and a distinct line of separation from the world. We need to continue indoctrinating our youth so they will be "sound in the faith."

2. The Holy Spirit directs believers in the proclaiming of the Gospel (Acts 13:4). It is imperative for us to personally and collectively follow the Spirit's leading. Through this resource we can know which doors to go through and which ones to consider closed. It is not by coincidence that prayer, fasting, and faithful service preceded God's moving the church to send Paul and Barnabas.

Elymas ... Withstood Them"

3. Proclaiming the Gospel sometimes involves giving a forthright rebuke of evil (Acts 13:9-10). Having established firm convictions ourselves and holding ourselves honestly to them will be the guiding factor in whether we are willing to rebuke evil and defend the truth.

"Exhortation for the People"

4. The messenger of God should be eager to use every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 13:15-16). We can use all of our opportunities effectively only if the Gospel

message and its ability to change lives is the constant, recurring theme of our minds. Continually rejoicing in our own salvation will result in spontaneous testimony of God's goodness.

5. Recounting God's past work among His people is part of proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 13:17). Not only reading history but also tracing how God helped our forefathers remain faithful through the issues in their day gives us courage. We can show the world that the God who helped Daniel say no to the king's meat is the same God who can help them say no to temptation.

6. The message of Jesus as the Saviour is central to the Gospel (Acts 13:32-33). This must always be our central theme. His sinless life places Him above all religious leaders, priests, and prophets who are at the center of other religions. Without Jesus there would be no salvation, no peace, and no hope of eternal life. There would be no Gospel at all.

7. The Gospel is the message of the only way to forgiveness and justification (Acts 13:38-39). "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There really is power in the blood, and we must personally have experienced it in order to share such an important message with others. We have a message for the world that can end all their fruitless searching.

8. The messenger of God must urge people "to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). We understand that sanctification is a process. The keeping power of God is just as great as His saving power, yet He places a measure of responsibility on us to test and prove how serious we are about finding His grace sufficient. The true church not only leads men to Christ but also provides congregations where new Christians can find fellowship and Biblical instruction to help them in the Christian life.

"The Word ... Was Published"

9. Proclaiming the Gospel often incurs opposition (Acts 13:45). Human nature shrinks back and reasons that we should be the "quiet in the land." (Psalm 35:20). But the word quiet means "peaceable," not "silent," as we so often interpret. Our

Anabaptist forefathers were known to live peaceably with their fellow men, yet they were committed to boldly representing truth, come what may.

10. The Gospel brings joy and life to those who believe (Acts 13:48). When we focus on this aspect of salvation, opposition loses some of its sting and may even become a means to a glorious reward.

Important Teachings

1. God blesses a faithful church with men who are able and willing to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 13:1-2).
2. The Holy Spirit directs believers in the proclaiming of the Gospel (Acts 13:4).
3. Proclaiming the Gospel sometimes involves giving a forthright rebuke of evil (Acts 13:9-10).
4. The messenger of God should be eager to use every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 13:15-16).
5. Recounting God's past work among His people is part of proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 13:17).
6. The message of Jesus as the Saviour is central to the Gospel (Acts 13:32-33).
7. The Gospel is the message of the only way to forgiveness and justification (Acts 13:38-39).
8. The messenger of God must urge people "to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).
9. Proclaiming the Gospel often incurs opposition (Acts 13:45).
10. The Gospel brings joy and life to those who believe (Acts 13:48).

Answers to Questions

1. What qualities were important for those involved in this collective outreach work?

They needed to have the Holy Spirit working personally in their lives. They were fulfilling their present responsibilities. Their lives were marked by prayer and fasting. They needed a

good understanding of the Gospel message and a fervent zeal for proclaiming it. They needed to have a burden for the lost.

2. How should we look at the sacrifice of livelihood, physical comforts, and family relationships sometimes required to serve the Lord elsewhere?

If we believe it is not fair to ask our brethren to make such a sacrifice, it is likely an indication that we are not willing to make that sacrifice ourselves. If we would not be willing to make that sacrifice ourselves, we are likely not a source of encouragement to those who are serving. The solution is not to keep from sending them, but to understand that our level of sacrifice at home will determine how effective we are in witnessing for Christ at home and abroad.

3. What enabled Paul to so boldly rebuke Elymas?

His fear of God was greater than his fear of men. He recognized that Elymas's attempt to distract a true seeker was not a personal affront, but rather an affront to God. This constituted a hindrance to truth reaching those who wanted it.

Paul was willing to identify with God and truth regardless of what it cost him and regardless of how the ungodly might react.

4. How does our commitment to rebuke evil affect our standing with God?

God is counting on His people to be salt to the earth. Just as salt without flavor has no use, Christians who refuse to preach the truth because of the conflict that will ensue will not long remain true Christians.

Remaining silent when we should be rebuking evil will weaken our commitment and allow us to fit in with the world more easily. Taking a stand by rebuking evil requires us to check our own lives to be sure that our example is consistent with what we are preaching.

5. Why did Paul weave Israel's history into his appeal?

This was a way to connect with the Jewish audience. It also provided them with an opportunity to repent and confess their need of the Messiah they had just rejected.

For the Gentiles, the plan of salvation unfolded convincingly as they heard how God prepared the way for the Saviour to come. This was a story many had never heard explained. The story of God's providence for one nation had unfolded as an act of providence for every member of the human race.

6. In what ways must we keep the salvation message central in our evangelism efforts?

We must check to see that our own lives are a consistent example of Christ's power.

We must avoid the social-gospel approach, through which material help sidetracks the right focus of preaching Jesus and the cross.

We must avoid placing ourselves or our traditions above the Gospel message itself. See 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. And we must preach the whole Gospel, without apology. It is fair to preach to others all of the demands that the Scriptures place upon us. What Scripture teaches, we dare not hesitate to preach.

7. What was the underlying cause of the opposition to the Gospel message?

The Jewish leaders saw the multitudes of people who were eager for the truth, and it stirred their envy. Just as the Pharisees had envied Jesus, these people desired the attention of the masses for themselves.

8. List some encouraging results of men giving their hearts to the Lord.

Those who give their hearts to the Lord experience a new, abiding kind of joy and peace.

Their testimony inspires other Christians and challenges those who are living in sin.

God receives glory from every soul who turns to Him.

Summarizing the Lesson

We will most successfully convince the world to join us on the rugged, narrow way of the cross as we ourselves are fully surrendered to the demands of Scripture. A faithful life is the

most convincing testimony of all.

Research Guide

In *Doctrines of the Bible*, study pages 70-75 related to the work of the Holy Spirit and pages 449-456 related to Christian service.