

Acts #26
Paul and Barnabas Sent Out
Acts 13:1-52

We now begin the third and final section of Acts, the period of triumph, during which the Gospel of the grace of God is preached to the Roman world, and local churches are established through the ministry of Paul. We have, as it were, a new beginning of a new ministry from a new spiritual center - **Antioch in Syria.** We have Paul's first missionary journey and his first missionary sermon. **We hear for the first time in Acts that wonderful word "Justified."**

Go with me, as we look at the cities involved.

In Antioch they are called by the Spirit, as seen in Acts 13:1-3, "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. 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. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Keep in mind that the center of operation has moved from Jerusalem and the Jews to Antioch and the Gentiles.

The "prophets" here mean New Testament prophets, and not Old Testament prophets. These men spoke for God, led directly by the Holy Spirit. Today we have the written Word of God, but that does not mean that the office of prophet has been eliminated from the New Testament church, as seen in Ephesians 4:7-12, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

New Testament prophecy is often confused with prediction. Many people think "prophecy" means to predict what will happen in the future. **Actually,** the Bible teaches us in 1 Corinthians 14:3 that New Testament prophesy carries no prediction with it at all, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." **Notice that prediction is not mentioned.**

In other words, the New Testament prophet speaking under the anointing of the Holy Spirit words that edify (builds up) the church, exhorts (calling men to a closer walk with God) the church, and comforts the church.

In Cyprus they were opposed by the devil, as seen in verses 4-12, “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their helper. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 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. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all deceit 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? 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. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

In the parable of the tares Christ promised that, wherever the true children of God were planted, Satan would plant counterfeits. This is what happened at their very first stop. Satan came in the person of an apostate Jew, a false prophet, and a child of the devil. In the power of the Spirit, Paul smote the deceiver with blindness.

In Perga they were deserted by Mark, as seen in verse 13, “Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

Notice that it is no longer “Barnabas and Saul,” but “Paul and his company.” We are not sure why Mark left the party, but Paul considered his act desertion. Was it because Paul had become the leader and Mark’s uncle Barnabas was no longer in command? Was it because of the dangerous, difficult situations that lay ahead? Was it because Mark, a young man, was homesick? Whatever the reason, his deed later caused the two missionaries to part company; although Paul later had to forgive Mark and use his services.

More than one servant of God has failed in his early ministry, only to be successful later.

In Antioch of Pisidia they were received by the Gentiles, as seen in verses 14-52, “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. 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. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, listen. 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. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them, which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 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. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man

declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 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. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against those things, which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 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. 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. 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. And the word of the Lord was published throughout the entire region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.”

Why did Paul go to the Jewish synagogue when the “to the Jew first” program had ended and his special commission was to the Gentiles? The answer is three-fold.

1. Paul realized that while the nation of Israel as such had been rejected, the individuals in that nation had the same invitation to receive the Gospel as any of the Gentiles. The fact that the nation had rejected the offer of the Kingdom did not mean that the individual Israelite was shut out from the Gospel of grace. The Church, the Body of Christ, consists of both Jew and Gentile. The message is the same to both, the requirements are the same, and the privileges are the same, because Romans 10:12-13 tells us, “...there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

2. Moreover, Paul had a special love for his kinsmen according to the flesh. He grieved over their rejection of their Messiah, and was burning with a desire to see as many individuals saved from this nation as possible, as seen in Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Paul wanted to offer the Gospel to his natural brethren first before any other.

3. There is another reason, and that is a ready-made audience. It was the place where he could find a group of people already gathered to hear someone tell them about God.

Paul preached a brand new message, which had never been preached to them before. This was not the message of Peter at Pentecost. To be sure, Peter too had preached the Gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the offer of the Kingdom to the nation of Israel if they would receive Him as Messiah. Peter's message was addressed to the nation, and was definite, as seen in Acts2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This was not Paul's message now. He did not once mention repentance. He has nothing to say about baptism. **He did not exhort them to do the best they could, or to live under the Law as they had.** On the contrary he says, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

The effect was electrifying! This was a new message. The Gentiles did not have to become Jews, did not have to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, but could be "justified" by just believing in Jesus. **This is the simple message of grace, and many people were saved.**

But needless to say, there arose a great problem because of jealousy. Most of our problems are caused by jealousy.

The message today is the same, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved."