

Beginning of the Missionary Work of the Church

Acts 13:1-52

Introduction:

Jesus told his disciples to “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:20). That could never happen if the Christians sat at home, or only gathered with each other in the house churches. Our passage takes place about AD 46-47, just a decade and a half after Jesus ascended back into heaven, and the church is mobilizing to share the Gospel. Not everyone can travel. Not everyone is a preacher or evangelist. Yet the whole church can be a part of the missionary outreach of the church. Chapter 13 introduces us to the first commissioned missionaries and tells a little of their work. It is amazing to note that the first missionary minded church was not the Jerusalem church, nor the church of Rome. It was Antioch, and this will be sending base for the church throughout the rest of the Book of Acts. Ask yourself, what makes a church a missionary minded church?

Two Commissioned to Go – Acts 13:1-3

Chapter 13 opens with a list of prophets and teachers in Antioch, men who were leading the early church by listening to the Holy Spirit. Barnabas we have met, as well as Saul. But we have not met Simeon, also called Niger, unless he is the Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26) who carried the cross of Jesus. Lucius of Cyrene is also a stranger to us, and though Manaen intrigues us, as he is a believer in the house of Herod the tetrarch, the foster brother of Herod who killed John the Baptist!

1. What were the prophets and teachers doing when the Holy Spirit spoke to them? Is this an important lesson for us who seek to know the leading of the Holy Spirit?
2. What message did the Holy Spirit give (vs. 2)?
3. In verse 3 we are told they fasted and prayed before laying hands on Saul and Barnabas and sending them off on their mission. Why?

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus – Acts 13:4-12



4. Though commissioned by the Church and sent out with their blessing, who truly is the sending force in a missionary's life? (v. 4)
5. Where did Barnabas and Saul go to preach about Jesus? (v. 5)
6. Who joined Barnabas and Saul when they were ministering on Cyprus? (v. 5)
7. Describe the two very different characters the missionaries encounter in Paphos. (vss. 6-8) Bar-Jesus and Elymas appear to be the same person. Why did he oppose the Gospel?
8. Who stands up to Elymas? (vss. 9-11) Why do you think we see the shift in name from Saul to Paul here of all places?

9. What punishment does Paul call down on Elymas for his false teachings and opposition of the Gospel? (v. 11) Why is this a fitting punishment?
10. This all started with a request by the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, to hear more about the word of God. After he sees the confrontation between Paul and Elymas, how does he respond? (v. 12)

Paul and Barnabas in Antioch Pisidia – Acts 13:13-15

11. Where are we told that the Apostles found a crowd to minister to in Antioch Pisidia? (14) So when did they meet with them? Does this negate worship on the first day of the week (Sunday)?
12. What invitation is given in verse 15 to the Apostles? Who gives it, and why?

Paul's Sermon – Acts 13:16-41

13. In verses 17-19 Paul moves through an important piece of Israel's history. What event is he describing? Why would this be a starting point for his message?
14. In verses 20-23 we quickly move through another period of history. Which is it? Who does Paul focus our attention on? Why?
15. In verses 24-25 we are introduced to a New Testament character. Who is it, and why was he important?
16. Paul points out that the Jews in Jerusalem should have recognized Jesus. How (v. 27)

17. What does verse 28 tell us about the death of Jesus?
18. Paul makes sure the audience knows the tomb (v. 29) was not the end of the story, but tells of the resurrection of Jesus. (v. 30) How do we know Paul is telling the truth, and not making this story up? (v.31)
19. What did God promise to the fathers (v. 32) that was fulfilled in Jesus? What, according to Paul, is the seal that what God promised was completed in Jesus? (v. 33)
20. Paul quotes three Old Testament passages to prove his point. What is the message of each?
 - Psalm 2:7
 - Isaiah 55:3
 - Psalm 16:10
21. What is the point of Paul's argument in verse 36-37?
22. We get to the heart of Paul's message in verses 38-39. What are the key points to the Gospel message given here?
23. In verse 40 Paul does what every good preacher should do – he concludes with a call to action. What should the audience do?

Response to Paul's Sermon – Acts 13:41-52

24. How did the people respond to what Paul said? (vss. 42-43)
25. What word did Paul give to those so eager to hear the news about Jesus? (v. 43)

26. Verse 44 tells us that almost the whole city gathered the next Sabbath to hear Paul and Barnabas. How did the “Jews” respond to this? (v. 45) How did they try to stop the Gospel from reaching their city? (v. 45)
27. Verse 46 gives an important principle of the early church when it came to declaring the Gospel. What was it?
28. The Jewish synagogue was given the chance to accept Jesus as Messiah and Saviour but they rejected the message. By doing this, Paul says, they have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. (v. 46) What is this telling us today?
29. Paul once again finds a scripture to verify his actions. Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:6. What is the message of this verse? (v. 47)
30. How did the Gentiles (non-Jews) respond to this news about Jesus being for them as well? (vss. 48-49)
31. Who do the Jews recruit to drive Paul and Barnabas out of their area? (vs. 50)
32. How do Paul and Barnabas respond to their opposition? (vss. 51-52) Would they be stopped?

Conclusion

A friend invited Anton Rubinstein, the 19th century Russian pianist and composer to go to church with him. He replied, “I will – if you can take me to a church where I will be tempted to achieve the impossible!”¹ What a challenge. I suspect any church Paul was at you would get the feeling they were ready to achieve the impossible – take the Gospel to the whole world! Can that be said about us and our church? That is what the Holy Spirit within challenges us to – achieve the impossible, because all things are possible with God!

¹ Randal Earl Denny, “Epidemic of Joy” (Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City, 1988) p. 15.