**Acts 13:4-12**

**“More Than Conquerors” 03/24/24**

**Recap/Review of Acts 13:1-5 “Set Apart by the Holy Spirit”**

This is the Initiation by the Holy Spirit of the final phase of church outreach as outlined by Jesus in Acts 1:8. “...And to the end of the earth.”

Thus, this is also the initiation of Paul’s first missionary journey, which was kicked off by perhaps the greatest prayer meeting of all-time, and then the subsequent work of the Holy Spirit.

**SLIDE 1 – Map of the first missionary trip**

**Acts 13:1-5**

*“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

*4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.”*

So we see Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manean, Saul, and presumably John Mark engaging in the greatest prayer meeting ever as they sought the Lord’s will regarding their next move. What would the Lord have them do? What can we learn from their experience and actions?

**SLIDE 2**

**Points of Application:**

How did these men who were set apart (The Body of Christ), engage with the Holy Spirit and accomplish God’s amazing purpose?

Mark 12:30 –

“...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

**1. They Worshiped = They offered their Hearts (Acts 13:2)**

**2. They Fasted = They offered their Minds (Acts 13:2)**

**3. They Prayed = They offered their Souls (Acts 13:3)**

**4. They Acted = They offered their Strength (Acts 13:4)**

All God wants is all of us, all we are.

**Today’s Passage:**

**Acts 13:4-12 “More Than Conquerors”**

*“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. 6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.”*

*And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”*

Before we go through the passage verse by verse, let’s slow down and see the strategy the Holy Spirit, a Divine Person (not a nebulous, ethereal force, see v. 2-4) employed in the missionary efforts of the 1st century church:

**SLIDE 3 –** **Missionary Tactics of the Holy Spirit**

1. An “Urban First” Approach (fish where the fish are)

2. Emphasis on Training (equipping the saints for the work...)

3. Use of the Natural Background and Resources of Missionaries (God has provided these things for a reason)

4. Evangelism First, then Teaching (make, baptize, teach disciples)

5. To the Jews First, then Gentiles...(the sequence never varies)

Verse by Verse:

V. 4-5

These men, Barnabas, Saul, and Mark are personally sent to the front lines of a spiritual battle by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who sends.

Seleucia is a fifteen mile walk from Antioch, then on to Cyprus, Barnabas’ homeland and home to many Jews. Dedicated to Licentious worship of Venus. Evil place. Salamis is cosmopolitan, has lots of Jews. This is where they started.

John Mark is Mark, the writer of the Mark’s Gospel. We will talk about him quite a bit more later.

V. 6

They proceed about 100 miles across the island to Paphos, another larger city (fish where the fish are).

They found Bar-Jesus (aka Elymas). Guys like this are often easy to find. They talk a good game, but they are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Bar-Jesus is a false prophet and a magician. If he were here now, he would have many followers and lots of influence. He was sneaky and deceitful, an enemy of the cross masquerading as a man of reason.

Bar-Jesus is not the subject here, though. This is about Proconsul (Deputy) Sergius Paulus.

V. 7

Paulus is a serious, intelligent scholar. Elymas is on his advisory council. He is in the Proconsul’s ear, so to speak. The missionaries meet him, which is God’s plan.

Paulus genuinely wants to hear what Paul and Barnabas have to say. He is sincere. He is curious.

V. 8

Elymas has an agenda. He seeks to turn Paulus from the truth. Why do you suppose? The Devil has sent him to stand against Paul and Barnabas, but he is unwittingly being used by God. We’ll see this in a minute...

V. 9-10

Saul or Paul?

Paul, filled with the spirit, looks intently into Elymas’ eyes (The eyes are the window to the soul – Matthew 6:22-24 is where this saying comes from)

“You son of the devil” Deceit and fraud are the devil’s calling card. Jesus called Him the Father of lies in John chapter 8. Elymas has been whispering lies to Paulus as he has been contemplating the truth that Paul has been sharing. What truth? Paulus was a philosopher, and there are three main questions that philosophers consider. Here’s a quote from Pastor Jeremy Thomas regarding this situation between Paul and Elymas:

*“So every time Paul and Barnabas would go out to teach, this man would go to un-teach, but he was always sneaky and deceitful, he’d never come out into the open and carry on a rational discussion. And this is why we have in the last part of verse 8 the statement, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. The faith is referring to the Christian worldview. This was not some quick pitch, “Will you accept Jesus, He’ll give you a wonderful life, Mr Paulus.” As an intelligent man Sergius Paulus knew all the big philosophical questions. What is Being? How do I know? How should I then live? Those are the three biggies. And being an epistemologically self-conscious individual who knew the answers given by pagan philosophy, Paulus may have asked, “Paul, what’s so different about the Christian position? On the question of what is being? Do you too Paul hold that being is one and continuous, do you hold to the ancient Continuity of Being or do you hold that being is two and discontinuous, the Creator-creature distinction. On the question of How do I know? How do I know what I know is true? Do you too start with reason as autonomous and self-sufficient, or do you start with revelation? And third Paul, how should I then live? What are morals, ethics and law? Does man generate these from his finite resources or does God generate these from His infinite resources?”*

*Paul would have said the answer to question three logically follows from question two. If we make the rules then there’s no ultimate responsibility, if God makes the rules then we live under Him and are responsible to Him. Bar-Jesus and the rest of his entourage had fed Paulus the Satanic philosophy and Paul gave him the Divine philosophy. And there’s not a shade of agreement between these positions. They are antithetical at every point.”*

I’ll stop here and ask you a question. Who or what influences you? Are these influences upholding the straight ways of the Lord, or are they twisting and perverting His Word to suit you and your preferences?

So Paul confronts Elymas’ indirect sneaky and evil counsel with direct words of truth. He calls the sorcerer out very clearly. He even makes a play on words by calling a man named Son of Jesus “Son of the Devil.”

V. 11

Paul places a righteous judgment, an imprecatory curse, on a sorcerer who routinely curses others (that’s what sorcerers do).

What does “imprecatory mean? It means you are damning someone. Anyone who perverts the word of God is subject to damnation, and this is what the Holy Spirit calls on Paul to do.

The curse is perfectly appropriate. Elymas has been blinding people, and now he is literally blinded. He has been reduced from wise, to utterly helpless. He cannot see, and must be led, just as Paul was, however, Paul’s blinding experience was a blessing and not a curse.

As usual, this blinding of Elymas wasn’t about him, it was about God accomplishing His overall purpose which is to draw people to Himself. God will curse anyone who obstructs access to His grace (Deut. 4)

V. 12

Also as usual, God doesn’t do miracles for the sake of it. Miracles always emphasize or provide a testimonial to truth. The result of this miracle is that the proconsul believed the astonishing teaching of Paul.

V. 13

The guys sailed on to Perga, leaving behind only one noted convert. But we know from history that Sergius Paulus’ faith through belief in the word of God was passed on to his family.

Because the final end of this story is that this man had a daughter named Sergia Paula, we’ve got her inscription up in Antioch of Syria, she was named after , and her father, and he evangelized her. Then when she grew up and married Gaius Caristanius Fronto, who was also a Christian and they had a son who was also a believer. So the Words of God passed on by Paul to this man Paulus became a family heritage passed on down from generation to generation. And so we see the gospel making inroads in Roman circles of power. We see again, as always, the power of God defeating the power of Satan.

So what can we take away from all this?

Satan will stand in opposition to God’s Word.

How does He do it? Through people. Always through people.

**Slide 4**

**Today’s Points of Emphasis**

**1. Satan will approach you in person**

**2. Satan will always appeal to your fleshly desire**

**3. Satan will only lie and deceive**

**4. Satan cannot withstand the truth of God’s Word**

**SLIDE 5**

**Today’s Points of Application**

James 4:7

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

**1. Submit to God – John 10:27** “My sheep know My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

**2. Resist the Devil – Ephesians 6:13** “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

BONUS SLIDE

The Armor of God (Ephesians 6)

:Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **11**Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places.* **13**Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

**14**Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15**and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **16**above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. **17**And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...”

In short, this means know, believe, stand on, and proclaim the Truth contained in God’s Word.

The devil cannot withstand this.