

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

SERIES: A SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS**ACTS CHAPTER 13 - Part 2**

Acts 13:6-52

“MISSIONARIES ON THE MOVE!”

The human author of the Book of Acts is Luke, the “Beloved Physician” as Paul refers to him in Colossians 4:14. In our last visit with Doctor Luke he told us about “The Making of a Missionary” in the first part of chapter 13. The church in the city of Antioch was a good model of a missions-minded church.

From this church in Antioch the first Christian missionaries were sent out. Verse 3 records, *“and they sent them away”* -- meaning Barnabas and Saul, the first two Christian missionaries sent out by the Christian church. This was the beginning of the first of Paul's three missionary journeys and was to last approximately 3 years and cover 12,000 miles.

Actually there were three members in this first missionary team: *“And they had also John as their assistant”* (v.5) and that was John Mark. He had assisted Barnabas and Saul previously. (Acts 12:25) Later, John left the team. (Acts 13:13) Here was a trio, Barnabas, Saul and John Mark, selected by the Holy Spirit; set apart by the church and sent with the gifts, prayers and good wishes of fellow Christians.

This was the beginning of a parade that continues to this hour. Every missionary who ventures forth follows in the train of these three. So with the Comforter with them, the church behind them and the challenge before them they started out. They move from village to village, from city to city -- traveling on foot, by ship, on donkey back, but always moving forward to preach the gospel where Christ was not known: Seleucia, Cyprus, Salmais, Paphos, Perga, Pisidia, etc.

Beginning with verse 16, Luke writes about a magician, a magistrate and a messenger. Let us look at each of them in that order.

I. A GODLESS MAGICIAN. v.6-11

The opposition to the spread of Christianity to date in the Book of Acts has taken on various forms, but it has had one common source: the devil! We have seen:

- Organized religion, that is, Judaism opposing the new church;
- We have seen opposition from within the church in various forms, from the greed of Ananias and Sapphira to the narrow bigotry of some of the Christian Jews;
- We have seen the political power of Herod turned loose on the young church, first killing James and imprisoning Peter;
- Now, at the outset of the first missionary journey, a magician whom Paul calls *“a child of the devil”* (v.10) sets himself against the truth.

When Barnabas and Saul came to Paphos they encountered a false prophet who withstood them. Let us take a brief look at this man:

A. His nationality. v.6

He was a Jew who had turned from Judaism - an apostate Jew. His name was "Bar-Jesus," meaning "*son of Jesus.*" There were many persons named "Jesus." Our Savior was "*Jesus of Nazareth.*" (Matt. 26:71) The father of Bar-Jesus was a man named "Jesus" who lived in the Paphos region.

B. His profession. v.6 & 8

He was a sorcerer - that is a magician and also a false prophet. He was called "Elymas" which means "the sorcerer." It is an Arabic word. He was better known by this name than by his own name Bar-Jesus.

C. His purpose. v.8

"But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." His intention was to oppose the gospel for if the power of God was manifested, his own demonic power would be diminished and he would be exposed for the charlatan that he was.

D. His punishment.v.9-11

Paul and Barnabas, by the authentic power of God, confronted Bar-Jesus *"And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, wilt you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall 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."*

A man whose eyes were open had been closed and a man whose eyes were closed and had them opened!

II. A GOVERNING MAGISTRATE. v.7 - 12

".....the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man." (v.6)

A. His description.

Sergius Paulus was appointed Governor by the Roman Senate and as the official of the Roman government had great authority.

B. His Desire.

He *"called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."* (v.7) Whether he was just naturally inquisitive or had heard snippets of what Barnabas and Saul were preaching, as they passed from town to town, and was genuinely interested in the gospel, is not known. To his credit, he gave them a hearing. He is said to have been "prudent," that is wise, and his wisdom is demonstrated in that he listened to Barnabas and Saul.

The devil does not want people to hear the Word of God. Bar-Jesus was the devil's tool to hinder Sergius Paulus. The devil has many tools with which he tries to keep people from hearing the truth.

C. His decision. v. 12

"Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord." He believed the message for two reasons: because of what he saw and because of what he heard. He saw the power of God demonstrated when Bar-Jesus was stricken blind and he heard a message he had never before heard: the Gospel of the grace of God!

Today there is a trend to make the message more acceptable and palatable to more people by watering it down so that the language will not be offensive. Paul did not offer Sergius Paulus a compromised version of the Gospel. He exposed the trickster Bar-Jesus for who he really was and expounded the Word of God as it really is. The deputy had a choice: Bar-Jesus or Jesus! Tricks or truth! Entertainment or enlightenment! Sorcery or salvation!

The Holy Spirit opened his ears to hear, his eyes to see and his heart to receive the truth and he became the first named recorded convert on Paul's first missionary journey.

III. A GOSPEL MESSENGER. vs. 14-49

"Saul, who is called Paul." (v.9)

A. His person.

Notice the name change from "Saul" to "Paul" in verse 9. The turning point in Paul's career was the moment when he ceased to be Saul, the Pharisee, the persecutor of Christians, and became Paul, the servant of Christ and, as he said, *"the least of the apostles."* (I Cor. 15:9)

The name "Saul" tells another story. It reflects another man – the proud and relentless Jew. On the other hand, "Paul" speaks of love, humility, sacrifice, service and suffering for Christ. Shakespeare asked the question, "What is in a name?" The dual names, "Saul" and "Paul" are good examples of what is in a name.

Notice that heretofore, when the two names appear together, it is *"Barnabas and Saul."* In 13:1 Barnabas is mentioned first of the five teachers in the church at Antioch and Saul is mentioned last. In 13:2 the Holy Spirit said, *"separate to Me Barnabas and Saul..."* and in 13:7 Sergius Paulus sent for *"Barnabas and Saul."*

However, after the conversion of Sergius Paulus, Paul appears to be the leader and we read in 13:13 *"Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos....."*. Hereafter it is almost always *"Paul and Barnabas"*: see vs. 43, 46, 50, etc.

It is not necessary that a person's name be actually changed when that person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus, but that new person should put new meaning into their name!

B. His preaching.

As this missionary team continued to move from town to town we read, *“Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.”* (13:13-14)

Here in the synagogue in Pisidia, Paul preached his first recorded sermon. It is a model missionary sermon. Remember he was preaching in the synagogue.

His approach. 13:16-22

It was grounded in the Scriptures. He traces the history of God's dealings with the Jews as a basis for his message. He reviewed Jewish history for Jewish hearers. He therefore gained their attention.

The history of no other nation is so closely related to the coming of Christ and the message of the Gospel as the history of Israel. He attributes every step in Israel's history to an act of God. Notice he said: *“God chose”; “God exalted”; “God brought out”; “God destroyed”; “God divided”; “God gave”; “God removed”,* etc. He is carefully laying the groundwork for the most important part of his message.

His application. 13:23-37

He preached Christ to them:

His name -- *“God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus....”* (v.23)

His death – *“And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.”* (v.28)

His burial - *“they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.”* (13:29)

His resurrection – *“Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead.”* (v.29,30)

The resurrection of the Savior is an integral part of the gospel message. It was given large importance in the dynamic preaching of the early Christians. Preaching, to be true to the New Testament pattern, must make much of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes that in I Cor. 15:4 and 12-15.

His appeal. 13:38-41

He preached forgiveness through Christ.

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins...” (v.38)

He preached a “whosoever gospel.”

“by Him everyone who believes is justified...” (v.39a)

He preached justification by faith.”

“is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (v.39b)

This sermon is a model to be followed in both public and private soul winning efforts. We must always begin with people where they are and take them to where they need to be. That is, begin with them as sinners and then take them to the Savior! This Paul did and the reaction was twofold: rejection, v.45 and reception, v.48.

SUMMATION

In his sermon to the people in the synagogue Paul said to them, “*we declare to you glad tidings...*” (v.32) Today we have the same wonderful news that Paul proclaimed: Jesus has come! He lived, died for our sins and conquered death! Let us pass it on – speak up and speak out!

The basic condition of mankind has not changed since the days of Paul. Here in Acts chapter 13 we have been looking at events in the past that are not really very different from what happens in our modern society. We have seen a servant of the devil trying to hinder the spread of the Gospel, we have seen a civil servant who needed the Gospel coming to faith in Christ and we have seen faithful servants of God, Paul and Barnabas, preaching the gospel.

The gospel needs to be preached to men and women of high esteem and low estate and they need to be urged to believe it! Let us take courage from this account of the first missionaries and be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel.

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