

Acts 12:24 - 13:5

- **ANSWERED PRAYER...**

- o Death of James...

- Herod the KING - reached out his hand to do EVIL - and executed James [brother of John]
- When Herod saw KILLING James made the JEWS happy...
- He ARRESTED Peter - with the intent to KILL him as well [but it was the Passover]
- So he was put in PRISON - with SIXTEEN guards - to wait for his EXECUTION!

- o Constant Prayer...

- The CHURCH was continually PRAYING for God to save him...
- But chained between TWO guards - Peter was sound ASLEEP...
- An angel appeared [bright] - and struck Peter [still sleep] - finally picking him up...
- And he led Peter out of the PRISON [Peter thought it was a dream]
- When Peter showed up at the house of Mary - knocking at the door...
- The church could NOT believe that he was there [in spite of their prayers]!

- o Death of Herod...

- The next day Herod was FURIOUS when they could NOT find Peter [executed his guards]
- He went down to CAESAREA and met with the people of Tyre and Sidon...
- Dressed to impress [disco ball] - he made a speech - and they proclaimed him a god...
- So an angel STRUCK him - and he died from WORMS!

- **1ST - MISSIONARY CHURCH... vs. 12:24-13:1**

- o 1st - Growing Church... vs. 24-25

- Word of God... vs. 24
 - [Now] the word of God grew and multiplied!
 - But [δὲ] even though there was PERSECUTION...
 - James was DEAD - and Peter had to leave Jerusalem [departed for Antioch] - **Galatians 2:11**
 - Rather than HINDERING the work of the Gospel - instead it ACCELERATED it...
 - The WORD of God [λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ] was [active] continually [imperfect] GROWING...
 - Because the STORY of the book of ACTS continued [it was not stopped]
 - The book did NOT end with the death of James - the work kept going...
 - And because it was GROWING - it was also [passive] continually [imperfect] MULTIPLYING...
 - Referring to the number of DISCIPLES being added to the CHURCH - **Acts 6:7**
 - The CHURCH is NOT limited to a particular leader or personality...
 - Leaders come and go - sometimes they DIE [James] - others move on [Peter]
 - What matters is that the WORD of God [imperfect] continues...
 - Because when the church teaches the WORD - they will see disciples MULTIPLY!
- Back to Antioch... vs. 25
 - Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry.
 - And they also took with them John whose surname was Mark!
 - The story picks up where it left off [before the death of James]
 - Barnabas and Saul leave Jerusalem after delivering the GIFT to the elders...
 - Financial aid to help the church in Judea during the FAMINE - **Acts 11:28**
 - They returned to the church in ANTIOCH - and brought MARK with them...
 - This is the same MARK whose mother MARY hosted the prayer meeting for Peter...

- Suggesting that Barnabas and Saul were likely there when Peter was set free by the ANGEL!
- Healthy Sheep...
 - Barnabas and Saul had been teaching in Antioch for over year - **Acts 11:26**
 - As a result people there had become MATURE in their walk with Jesus...
 - These BOLD believers were stirred to go out and tell OTHERS about Jesus...
 - This MULTIPLICATION of the believers - gave birth to MISSIONS...
 - MISSIONS was the result of the WORD of God being taught in the LOCAL church!
 - If a shepherd NEVER fed his sheep [malnourished] - they would NOT multiply...
 - But if they are well FED sheep – then he will have LOTS of little sheep!
 - If believers are NEVER fed the Word of God – they are spiritually weak [malnourished]
 - And there is little to NO chance they will be BOLD with the GOSPEL...
 - But well FED believers – are going to become MATURE in the Lord...
 - The natural result is they will want to SHARE the Word with others...
 - So a church that teaches the WORD of God – is GOING to send MISSIONARIES!
- o 2nd - Missionary church... vs. 1
 - Jerusalem to Antioch...
 - Now in the church that was at Antioch!
 - With the shift in focus from Jerusalem to Antioch - **Acts 11:21**
 - We come to the SECOND division of the book - the Gospel into the world...
 - The remainder of the book of Acts is now going to follow ONE man – Saul [Paul]
 - As he was sent out from Antioch to complete the work - **Acts 1:8**
 - Paul will go on THREE missionary journeys from Antioch...
 - Making this church IMPORTANT - as it shows us how MISSIONS work!
 - Apostle...
 - The word MISSION never appears in the Bible...
 - The closest word in the Bible to MISSION is APOSTLE [ἀπόστολος] – meaning to be sent out!
 - The picture is that of an ambassador - a representative of God to the world...
 - Sent out to share the Good News - the hope of salvation through Jesus!
 - We might think that we will NEVER be a missionary – never be SENT out...
 - But we are ALL called to be APOSTLES - we are all called to be MISSIONARIES...
 - God SEND us out to tell others - our family - friends - coworkers about Jesus!
 - **II Corinthians 5:20** – “We are ambassadors for Christ.”
- 2ND - RAISED UP... vs. 1
 - o 1st - Diverse Group...
 - The Leadership...
 - There were certain prophets and teachers!
 - The CHURCH [ἐκκλησία] in ANTIOCH was led by FIVE men [prophets and teachers]
 - BARNABAS - a LEVITE who seems to have been the SENIOR pastor of the church...
 - SIMON [ἰσχυρὸς] - who was also called NIGER [black]
 - LUCIUS - whose name means WHITE or BRIGHT from Cyrene [north Africa] - **Acts 11:20**
 - MANAEN - who was from a rich family [brought up in the house of Herod Antipas]
 - SAUL – who had been a Jewish Pharisee till he converted to Christianity...
 - It was very diverse group – because God uses all DIFFERENT kinds of people!
 - There is a common misconception that God only uses the BEST...
 - In order to be used by God we have to have TRAINING [degree]

- That is the wisdom of MEN - a worldly idea that has crept into the church...
- We do NOT see any Bible colleges or seminaries in the Bible...
- God does NOT care if we are DARK or LIGHT - RICH or POOR...
- He is just looking for those who are AVAILABLE - **Isaiah 6:8**

▪ Foolish...

- God chooses the FOOLISH [μωρός] people of the world – **I Corinthians 1:26-28**
- We might be thinking that God could NEVER use us...
- Thinking that we do NOT have the right QUALIFICATIONS!
- What we may not realize is that we just gave ourselves all the RIGHT qualifications...
- We are exactly what God chooses to go and share the message of the cross...
- Because when God uses FOOLISH people – they do NOT give credit to the person...
- They instead stand amazed because they see Jesus working through us!

o 2nd - The Core...

▪ Qualified...

- The first missionaries came from this CORE leadership of the church...
- The church sent out their BEST – because they were prepared!
- If we are BUILDING a house – we would not hire a man who had never used a hammer...
- If we need to FIX our car - we would not hire the guy who has never driven a car!
- In the same way when God build His CHURCH – He uses those with EXPERIENCE...
- Men who KNOW how to share the Gospel - teach the Word of God...
- Who can stand up to trials - and have experience being directed by the Lord!

▪ The Best...

- Many churches hesitate to send out their BEST...
- They fear if they lose their BEST – it may harm the church...
- But that could NOT be farther from the truth – a church MUST send out their BEST...
- Because if they stay – they become COMPLACENT in their walk...
- Everything becomes too familiar – NO need to step out in faith...
- Or worse yet - people become CRITICAL of others...
- Because it is NO longer a work of the Lord - so they become BITTER!
- I knew a senior pastor who was concerned about the other pastors at the church...
- He noticed they were no longer being stretched – they had become apathetic...
- So one day he FIRED them all – and told them all to go and start new churches...
- It caused them to step out in faith – and dozens of NEW churches were started!
- The moment we stop stepping out - we STOP growing in the Lord...
- And run the risk of losing our excitement - falling into an empty routine!

▪ Opportunities...

- If no one ever steps out – the church becomes STAGNANT...
- Everything role is filled – so there are NO opportunities for others to step out...
- It takes someone leaving [missions] for others to be able to step up...
- And when those new people step up – they mature – so they can also be SENT out...
- When a church sends its best – God will use it to start countless others churches!

● 3RD – SENT OUT... vs. 2-3

o 1st - Preparation... vs. 2

- Focused on Jesus...

- As they ministered to the Lord and fasted!
- As they were [present] MINISTERING - to work [ἔργον] for the people [λαός]
- A word commonly used to describe working for [dative] the Lord [κύριος] - **Hebrews 10:11**
- Because the BEST way for them to help the people - was to LISTEN to God...
- Therefore the PASTORS in Antioch were [present] FASTING...
- To remove ALL distractions - so they could HEAR from the Lord!

- I admit that when I wake up in the morning - I check my cell phone...
- It follows me throughout the whole day - a CONSTANT distraction!
- God is NOT silent - He is always looking to talk to His people...
- The problem is we are so BUSY - it becomes hard to LISTEN...
- If we are having a hard time hearing from the Lord - we might need to FAST...
- Remove the DISTRACTIONS - sit quietly - and listen for the voice of our Master!
- Flexible...
 - The Holy Spirit said: Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul!
 - As they were FASTING and SEEKING the Lord...
 - The Holy Spirit SAID - set apart [imperative] Barnabas and Saul...
 - He called them to LEAVE the CHURCH - and do a NEW work...
 - There was NO argument - the leaders were FLEXIBLE...
 - They did NOT come with their own ideas – they were open to whatever God wanted to do!
 - It is easy to get COMFORTABLE – and refuse to be open to anything NEW...
 - But in order to be used by God – we must be FLEXIBLE...
 - Our identity is NOT in what we have DONE - or where we are SERVING...
 - Our IDENTITY is simply in Christ – and we need to OPEN in what He wants to do!
- No fear...
 - When God called us to start a church in the mountains - I had my doubts...
 - My background is in computer science - not agriculture...
 - Relating to farmers is NOT something I had ever done before!
 - One of the hardest things to do in life - is to take a step of FAITH...
 - We often hesitate because - we think we might FAIL - we might NOT be able to do it...
 - Or we hesitate because - what if we are WRONG and this is NOT what God wants...
 - But with God NOTHING is impossible - it is NOT about our ability...
 - And we will NEVER go wrong if we take a step of FAITH - God will direct our steps!
- o 2nd - Called out... vs. 2
 - Holy Spirit...
 - For the work to which I have called them!
 - The WORK the Spirit called [perfect] Barnabas and Saul to – was to be MISSIONARIES...
 - We are NOT told how the Spirit SPOKE [prophecy or through a Bible verse]
 - The Holy Spirit can speak in LOTS of ways – the key is EVERYONE heard...
 - And becoming a MISSIONARY was NOT their idea – it came from God!
 - People have LOTS of ideas of what they want to do...
 - But the question we always have to ask is – is it OUR idea or GODS idea...
 - If we do something that is OUR idea – we are on our own...
 - But if it is GODS idea – He will be the one who does all the work!
 - Not easy...

- It is important to hear the Spirit – because things will NOT always be easy!
- I know a lot of MISSIONARIES – in a lot of different countries...
- And they all have one thing in common – serving God is NOT easy...
- People are SINNERS – and they are more than willing to prove that to us...
- When someone has been pouring their life into a community for years...
- And ONLY a handful of people are showing up – it can be discouraging!
- When times get tough – if we are NOT convinced God has called us – we WILL give up...
- It is too EASY to think – maybe I made a MISTAKE – and go back home...
- But if we have the confidence God called us – then we can ENDURE!

o 3rd - The choice... vs. 3

- Then having fasted and prayed - and laid hands on them - they sent them away!
- When the leaders finished FASTING and PRAYING [aorist]
- They put their hands on Barnabas and Saul to SEND [ἀπολύω] them...
- They could have said NO - they did not have to answer the call...
- They leaders did NOT make them go - it was their CHOICE!
- God uses us to reach the lost – but NOT because He needs us - **Romans 10:14**
- He uses us because He LOVES us – and wants us to be a part of His work...
- But if we do NOT share the Gospel with someone – God will just use someone else...
- The question is do we CHOSE to be blessed - take part in the work God is doing!
- **Esther 4:14** - “If you keep quiet... deliverance... will arise from some other place.” [NLT]

● 4th - PREACH THE WORD... vs. 4-5

o 1st – The destination... vs. 4

- Being sent out by the Holy Spirit.
- They went down to Seleucia - and from there they sailed to Cyprus!
- Therefore [οὖν] - having INDEED [μέν] been sent out [passive] by the Holy Spirit...
- Barnabas and Saul traveled to SELEUCIA [port city 25km from Antioch]
- And from there they sailed to the Island of Cyprus!
- The common view of missions is leaving the COUNTRY – to travel to a FAR off land...
- Yet Barnabas and Saul NEVER left their country – NEVER left the Roman Empire...
- Their FIRST missionary journey was only about 100 kilometers – Bacolod to Himamaylan!
- It does NOT matter where God calls a MISSIONARY - God is not about GEOGRAPHY....
- We do NOT become a missionary when we cross a manmade boundary...
- We become a MISSIONARY when the Holy Spirit calls us out!

o 2nd - Power of Salvation... vs. 5

- When they arrived in Salamis they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.
- They also had John as their assistant!
- When Barnabas and Saul arrived at the city of Salamis [salt] – eastern port city of Cyprus...
- John Mark also came with them as their assistant [under rower]
- Together they continually [imperfect] preached the WORD of God [λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ]
- What BEGAN in Jerusalem - and spread to ANTIOCH - was CONTINUING to GROW...
- Because MISSIONS is all about the GOSPEL – people NEED Jesus!
- If we give people food to eat - give them clothes – but NOT the Gospel...
- ALL we have succeeded in doing is send them to hell full and clothed!
- The greatest NEED people have is for the Gospel - for salvation from sin...
- Orphanages - schools - and humanitarian aid are all GOOD and needed things...

- They are ONLY meant to be the tools that open the door to share Jesus!