

A Passion for God's Will

Acts 13:1-12 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

❖ Introduction

➤ Brief Recap

- Remember... chapter 12... Herod had killed James
- He had imprisoned Peter
- Before the chapter was over... Peter was free
- And Herod had died...
 - He had died because he accepted the glory that belongs to God

➤ Today we see the church growing there in Antioch

- In chapter 11 the church is born in Antioch
 - Some unnamed men shared the story of Jesus there...
 - Many were saved... they needed to be discipled...
 - ◆ So Barnabas came to town to teach them
 - ◆ They grew, so he went and found Saul to help him
- The church in Antioch grew as they were discipled and then naturally shared Jesus with others...

➤ This is Exciting News for Us today

- We may be small... and we are...
- But there are many people in this area...
- And we have been placed by God here in this place and this time
 - We are learning right biblical doctrine...

➤ We can be a modern day story like Antioch

- If we will obey the Lord, God will move in a mighty way in our community...
- I do not say... Let us be like this church in Antioch so we can make a name for ourselves...
 - That only leaves us with an earthly church...
- But I want us to be like Antioch because it was a God glorifying body of believers...

➤ Our biggest Problem:

- Lack of Passion for Jesus... Lack of time spent in His Word and in Prayer...
- Lack of stepping out of our comfort zone to tell that person the story of Jesus...

❖ Another Reason Why I Love Expository Preaching

- **Forces us to look intimately at a chapter we would have overlooked...**
 - There are details in this passage that are worth our time and meditation...
- **If we just preached the big verses, or topics...**
 - We would overlook a key component in church growth...
 - We would miss a key component in finding the will of God
 - We would have overlooked the inner workings of the church...
- **This Church in Antioch**
 - In chapter 11 we see it growing...
 - Here in chapter 13 we see its inner workings...
 - We see how it operated... We see how they sought the Lord.
- **Today we are going to look at how this church:**
 - 1) Sought the Lord
 - 2) Obeyed the Lord
 - 3) Faced Opposition
 - 4) Prevailed
 - All of these specific actions are meant to teach us
 - They are set forward as an example
 - So, do not walk out of here with nothing... if anything you have the simple Word of God

❖ **They Sought The Lord**

- **Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**
- **They Were in the perfect position to hear from God**
 - Often time in the church... we complain about knowing and understanding the will of God
 - We wonder what we ought to do next...
 - What is our next step...
 - These guys were continuously ready to hear from God.
 - Look at their perfect position...
- **They Worshipped and Fasted and Prayed...**
 - Now, here in these verses, we only see that they were worshipping the Lord and fasting...
 - But in verse 3 you see that prayer was a part of their habit of fasting...
 - **Let us look at two of these three first – Because I think we do these two often... Maybe not well**
 - **1) Worshipping** – the word means to perform public religious duties...
 - ◆ That really makes it seem rather cold and methodical...
 - ◆ But in reality, it was not cold or methodical...
 - ◆ They were worshipping God...
 - They were giving their Time, energy, devotion, and their allegiance to God.
 - Their Worship of God was a humble admitting that He was worth their time
 - ◆ **Their Worship did likely consist of certain religious duties or practices**
 - Planned and spontaneous
 - They would likely come together to Read the Word of God
 - It was likely planned out and prepared...
 - They would come together to lift their voices in songs of adoration to God
 - This was likely planned out as well... some of it was probably spontaneous as well
 - They would have come together in prayer...

- This is why prayer is not listed initially here in verse two to describe what they were doing...
 - Prayer is a part of worship...
 - They were giving their hearts attention and focus on God by worshipping Him...
 - ◆ **Question: Do you worship the Lord when you come to church?**
 - Seriously? Ask yourself this question.
 - It is very possible to come to a place of worship and never worship
 - **Worship should be a very God centric act**
 - It is not man centric...
 - Man may be doing things in a worship setting, but worship is to be directed toward God...
 - **When we come to worship, what happens?**
 - If we sit concerned about how much we like this or that song
 - Or how much we like this or that topic being preached on
 - Or how much we want to speak to this person or that person...
 - Our worship has centered around us...
 - And it is a form of idol worship...
 - **Everybody Worships...**
 - Its just that not everyone worships Jesus as He ought to be worshipped...
 - ◆ **Worship: We do this... We understand this... we understand coming into a worship setting**
 - We have made a habit of this, and we do it weekly usually...
- **Prayer –**
 - ◆ Let's look at prayer... just briefly...
 - ◆ Because really... it was a part of their worshipping of God...
 - ◆ We see it mentioned in the following verse...
 - These guys prayed and laid hands on saul and barnabas and sent them out...
 - ◆ **Prayer is of great significance in the church...**
 - It is our form of communication with God...
 - Now, I believe prayer must go hand and hand with the Word of God...
 - As we read God speaks to us and we are able to pray using the Bible...
 - Or pray as the Bible directs us for certain things...
 - ◆ **Prayer is showing a dependence on God in all things...**
 - Prayer is a humble Act of seeking to know God better
 - ◆ **Danger: Prayer can also become a mindless Act**
 - It can be something we just do to do it, but never truly get close to God in prayer...
 - Prayer conforms a person to godliness...
 - Sometimes we just repeat prayers, or let others do the praying for us...
- **Fasting:**
 - **Mentioned separetly...**
 - Why? Isn't Fasting a part of worshipping God...?
 - Yes, but I think Luke is making the point... their worship wasn't just ho hum...
 - ◆ There was devotion to seeing God move...
 - ◆ Their was a hunger to know God's will...
 - ◆ They were fasting because they were filled with passion for the things of God
 - **Fasting is about Passion**
 - I heard Paul Washer preach on fasting one time...
 - And in 1 min He showed me more about fasting than I had ever heard...
 - And it all made sense... He said Fasting is about Passion...

- Illustration: About your daughter falling sick...
- We Will Fast when we are passionate about the things of God...
 - ◆ About doing the will of God in our own life...

- **These men of Antioch were so Passionate about knowing God's will for their life...**
 - That they fasted...
 - They refrained from eating food because they were so focused upon God's will
 - And concerned with the lost world around them...
- **Honestly: The Church in America in large part gets the worship and prayer part done...**
 - They come and give their hearts to God in prayer and song and bible study...
 - But in large part we are not passion filled to seek God's will in our life...
 - And maybe because we are afraid to hear what He will say...
 - Look at the result of their fasting...

➤ **The Result: They Heard from God**

- the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
- **I am sure, they loved Antioch... They had spent a year teaching them...**
 - They may have settled in a bit... But God is sending them out... So what do they do?

❖ **The Obeyed The Lord**

- ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

➤ **After they made themselves available to hear from God**

- They did what they heard Him say....
- **They Fasted and Prayed some more and sent out Saul and Barnabas**
 - The men of this church did not hold back their Godly men from service...
 - Saul and Barnabas had done what they were called to do...
 - So God had some more plans for them...
- **They left Antioch which is the area of modern day turkey**
 - They went to another town along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea called Selucia...
 - Then they boarded a boat and sailed to a place called Cyprus...
 - ◆ Which is a big island in the Med Sea
 - **Once on this Island the get to work**
 - ◆ They first go to Salamis which is on the eastern side
 - ◆ Eventually they travel west across this island to the other side called Paphos

➤ **They Were Obedient**

- I think many of us do not seek the Lord
- Because we are afraid of what He is going to tell us..
- We want to stop our ears...

➤ **Saul and Barnabas proclaimed the Word of God**

- They were men just like us... Yet, they were obedient to tell people the story about Jesus...
- They would find places of Jewish Worship and go in and explain Jesus to them...
- And, it did not stop there, because we will see there were others that wanted to hear about Jesus

➤ **But... there was a hiccup**

❖ **There Was Opposition**

- ⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

➤ First Thing you should see: There was a leader of the city that wanted to hear the Word of God

➤ Second Thing you should see: Satan didn't want that man to hear

➤ **Typical Spiritual Battle:**

- Paul and Barnabas were not exempt from opposition
- We often like to think that Paul just had this effortless ministry
 - That was not the case... Often time Satan stood in his way... trying to stop his advancement...
 - But nothing can stop the advancement of God...

➤ **What happened?**

- It was another Jewish person opposing the gospel...
- Paul's own countrymen were in opposition to him...
- **Here it is a man called a magician... His name was Bar-Jesus His name meant Elymas**
 - So He likely tried to trick people
 - He had some false powers... He claimed to have real powers
- **Luke in a derogatory fashion calls him a magician...**
 - He also calls him a false prophet...
 - He taught things that were not true about God...

➤ **In this Instance... the Leader of the city of Paphos and actually the whole island...**

- Wants to hear the Word of God...
- He is like the Mayor... His name was Sergius Paulus
- This man wants to hear the Word of God...
 - How awesome is that... It seems he is the one seeking out Paul and Barnabas
 - To hear what they have to say about God...

➤ **But... Elymas tries to get in the way...**

- He wants to stop what God is trying to do...

➤ **Application:**

- There will almost always be opposition to the things of God...
- Someone being led by Satan... will try to stand in the way of what God is doing...
- Do not be dismayed when this happens...
 - We often like to have a pity party... we like to feel bad about how things are going...
 - Rather we should just keep striving to do the will of God...
 - Let God fight our battles...
- This is exactly what Paul is going to do

❖ The Word of the Lord Prevailed

- ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

➤ **The Opposer of God Falls...**

- **Just like Herod fell down and died when He opposed Peter...**
 - This man is defeated as well...

- **Saul, being filled with the Spirit, told this man what God was doing...**
 - God was about to put his hand on Elymas...
 - And when he did... Elymas would be blind...
- **Now, Paul knew a bit about blindness...**
 - Paul used to oppose God... in a mighty way...
 - And God blinded him and cause it so that he had to be led by others...
- **God's judgment on Elymas was to blind him for a time...**
- **God is so gracious isn't He?**
 - Here we see two ways...
 - One, He judges the false Prophet... and we hope this miracle occurring would lead Him to God
 - Second, He gives the Word to this Proconsul, or Mayor...
 - And they Mayor after seeing what happened to that guy that was trying to advise him
 - Saw and was astonished...
 - And He believed the Word of God...
- **Remember: Satan wants to bend God's ways...**
 - Look again at what Paul told the false prophet..
 - **"You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?"**
 - **His Identity: He is called a son of the devil and enemy of all righteousness**
 - ◆ Any person that twist God's Word is being used by Satan...
 - Not matter how good he looks or smells... He is a false prophet...
 - Paul goes as far to call him and enemy of Righteousness
 - He is saying this guy is against what is right with God
 - **His Character: full of deceit and villainy...**
 - ◆ He was a liar... and a villain... He was the bad guy in the story...
 - ◆ He purposely tried to hinder what these men of God were doing on the island...
 - **His Tactic:**
 - ◆ Making crooked the straight paths of the Lord...
 - ◆ God was using His servants to share the straight and right way of coming to Jesus...
 - Of gaining eternal life...
 - ◆ **Here comes this false prophet...**
 - He was Jewish and came with some religious clout... some respect as a religious person
 - Or a person of knowledge when it comes to God...
 - He tried to twist God's ways...
 - He taught against the gospel... And Paul sees He is trying to twist God's way...
 - **Be Careful for people like this...**
 - ◆ Often they are very hard to spot...
 - ◆ Therefore you must be well versed in the Word of God to oppose the opposers of God.

❖ Invitation

- **Let's Ask God to Work in our heart to do one thing**
 - Stir a passion in us for His glory...
 - For His will in our community, or another state or country...
 - Stir our hearts with a passion so deep that we can not help but fast...
- **We can not concoct a fast... it must be God led... out of a passion for His will...**
 - This only happens when we are truly worshipping and seeking God...
 - **Brief Point on how it completely changed the course of History...**
 - **This time of fasting and seeking God's will**