

ON A ROLL

ACTS 13



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

On a Roll: Acts 13
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Introduction to Acts 13

The cat's out of the bag, and all heaven is breaking loose on earth. The Holy Spirit is on a roll as Acts 13 leads us into the next stage of the ongoing work of Christ.

How selfless and visionary was the church in Antioch! Not only could they see the possibilities for sending out missionaries, they ordained two of their best men for the job. Saul (Paul) and Barnabas didn't waste any time getting to the work. Everywhere they went, the results were the same: The Cat of Christ shredded the devil's domain and set up His Kingdom in believers and churches all over south Asia Minor.

This is a thrilling story, and what began so long ago has been going on for 2,000 years! As gloomy and foreboding as things can appear in our day, the King is still marching on, and His Kingdom is still advancing. Like Paul and Barnabas, we need to have the vision and faith to follow Christ wherever He leads us, taking our place in His ongoing work with courage and joy.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Set Apart, Sent

Pray Psalm 117.1, 2.

Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!
For His merciful kindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD *endures* forever.
Praise the LORD!

Sing Psalm 117.1, 2.

(Lauda Anima: [*Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*](#))

Praise the Lord! All nations, praise Him! Magnify Him, peoples all!
He is great, His steadfast love keeps all who on His favor call!
Evermore His faithfulness will bless His people, great and small!

Read and meditate on Acts 13.1-3.

Preparation

1. To whom and what did the Lord set apart Saul and Barnabas?
2. How did the church in Antioch respond?

Meditation

We note that it pleased the Spirit, Who is on a roll, to bring several teachers to serve the growing congregations in Antioch. We can see the wisdom in this, since the Spirit was about to send two of those teachers for a work elsewhere. How did the Spirit speak to the church in Antioch concerning Saul and Barnabas? We don't know. It's possible the church may have been seeking the Lord about His plan for them. Leaders may have been praying and fasting, seeking the Lord's will, when the Spirit made His intentions known. Perhaps there was an audible voice. More likely, one or more of the leaders were "impressed" by the Spirit and shared their thoughts with the rest.

Since Barnabas had been so helpful in getting the church organized in Antioch, and Saul was a Roman citizen, the leaders may have considered that they were the best choices for the Spirit's mission.

The decision having been made, and all agreed, the congregation engaged in more prayer and fasting, laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them off. In Jerusalem, the Spirit used persecution to jump-start the mission of the Church. In Antioch, He spoke to the congregation during worship. If our worship is focused on God, waiting on Him, listening for His voice, and seeking His will, He may be pleased to launch our church into some new and exciting Kingdom adventure. But if all we're looking for in worship is something for ourselves, we're not likely to hear the Spirit prompting us to greater challenges.

A new stage in the ongoing work of Christ begins, as the church in Antioch sends off a missionary team to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom among Jews and Gentiles in far-off places. This was a risky enterprise. Transportation and communications would be difficult. Opposition was guaranteed. Resources would have to be secured along the way. But when the Spirit calls, we do not balk at risk; we embrace it in the confidence that He Who has called us is faithful, and He will do it (1 Thess. 5.24).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

When the world speaks of equity and diversity, much to their chagrin, they are merely mimicking the early Church. And the Church today should also be mimicking the early Church.

They first started with reaching the original children of God with the Good News of Jesus. Then they expanded to incorporate the Gentiles of all the nations. As Jesus had told them, “Be witnesses to Me...to the end of the earth” (Act 1.8). That sounds pretty inclusive!

The list of prophets and teachers in Antioch (Acts 13.1) is fascinating: Barnabas we have already met; Simeon is new, Lucius of Cyrene (could he have possibly become a Christ-one through the testimony of Simon, who carried the cross for Jesus?); Manaen (a childhood friend of Herod); and Saul. Can you imagine the evenings of sharing amongst these believers about how they came to know and believe and turn to Jesus Christ?

Manaen was brought up with Herod. Herod was an aggressive hater of all things Christian. These two men were brought up in the same environment, no doubt having the same teachers, similar friends and backgrounds. And yet, one made the turn to Christ, the other did not.

It is a mystery and all of grace. The Holy Spirit quickens hearts. Brings dead hearts to life. And then calls us to serve the Lord and live only for Him. How blessed we are. There is no rhyme or reason to it. Only mercy.

And we are told, by Peter in fact, to “be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...” (2 Pet. 1.10). And those things were to be diligent to add to our faith: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly kindness (2 Pet. 1.5-7).

And Paul added that we are to “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3.14). And he encouraged us, the set apart and sent, to know that come what may, “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8.28).

There is grace. Then there is our calling. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10).

Now in the Church there is: the remembrance of Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul; and currently serving...you.

For reflection

1. Barnabas and Saul were sent, just as Jesus said we all are (Jn. 20.21). What will it mean for you to be sent by Jesus today?
2. How can you know when the Spirit is directing you in a particular way?
3. What can you do to become more consistent in your witness for the Lord?

What an assemblage was here! In these names we see that the Lord raises up instruments for his work, from various places and stations in life; and zeal for his glory induces men to give up flattering connections and prospects to promote his cause. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 13.1-3

Pray Psalm 118.14-24.

Call upon the Lord to scatter all His foes, embolden and empower His people, and send His Spirit into the world with fresh fire for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Sing Psalm 118.14-24.

(St. George's Windsor: [*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*](#))

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.

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Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!
Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.
Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

2 The Gospel in Cyprus

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3.

(Brother James' Air: *The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*)
I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read Acts 13.1-7; meditate on verses 4-7.

Preparation

1. Who was Bar-Jesus?
2. Who was Sergius Paulus?

Meditation

The Jews had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire prior to the birth of Christ – a Roman attempt to dissipate and defang their rebellious tendencies. We can see how God was at work in this, laying a foundation for the coming of the Gospel. The dispersal of the Jews is one of the many ways God prepared the Roman world for the coming of the Gospel.

Paul preached in synagogues everywhere he went (v. 5), and, while he was frequently opposed by the rulers of those synagogues, a good many of the first Christians were enlisted there. To Barnabas and Saul, it made sense to begin their work in the synagogues, where they used the Old Testament to make the case for Christ.

As in the Old Testament (Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai), certain Jews in Paul's day, scattered about in the Roman world, managed to insinuate themselves into high places among civil authorities. Bar-Jesus might have suggested some advantage to be gained by the magistrate in becoming familiar with this new teaching. Sergius' interest was piqued, and being a thoughtful man (v. 7), he summoned the evangelists to meet with him. Luke tells us specifically that he wanted to hear the word of God (v. 7).

Saul and Barnabas took great care in teaching from the Old Testament – presenting Christ in terms their audience would be familiar with, and, therefore, might more readily understand and receive. But they were prepared to be all things to all people, whatever the situation might require (1 Cor. 9.23). And if that meant silencing a false prophet so an interested inquirer could hear the Good News, then that is what they would do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Here's a heads-up to all who might be preaching a user-friendly, near-Christianity gospel to those around us – a sincere word of advice to pastors: Sometimes unbelievers get hungry to hear the true Word of God!

Sergius Paulus had his very own ear-tickler (2 Tim. 4.3, 4), who was a sorcerer and a false prophet. This satisfied for a while, but because Sergius Paulus was intelligent, eventually he tired of the fake, and desired more.

God in His goodness and mercy sent Saul and Barnabas to provide the true Gospel for him:

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.23).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6.23).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3.16).

“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2.8, 9).

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1.8).

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9.23).

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10).

And with a reinforcing miracle from the truth-teller, by which blindness fell upon the false prophet (Acts 12.11), Sergius Paulus became a believer!

We must make sure that we are speaking the whole truth of God; for it is this Word that people really need and want to hear. Not something that makes them feel good about themselves, or good about us, but the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help us God!

Paul in Cyprus, you and I in our Personal Mission Fields. The whole truth. Period.

For reflection

1. Do you think people today are seeking the truth about life? Explain.
2. Review the Scripture quotes under “God in His goodness...” in the *Treasure* section. What is the Gospel?
3. What kind of “false prophets” are misleading people about truth today?

The island of Cyprus was a senatorial island, which means it was Roman-controlled. As a Roman official, Sergius was a Gentile. Unlike Cornelius (10:2), there is no evidence that Sergius attended the temple or was a God-fearer. This pagan government official was amazed at the power of God and believed the truth. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Acts 13.6-12

Pray Psalm 145.10-21.

Pray that God will increase the witness of His people in churches all around the world. Ask Him to give you an opportunity today to talk about Jesus with someone in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 145.10-21.

(Brother James' Air: *The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Wand*)

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.

Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.

Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!

Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.

The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we'll bless!

3 The Teaching of the Lord

Pray Psalm 83.1-3.

Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

Sing Psalm 83.1-3.

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

Read Acts 13.8-12; meditate on verses 8-12.

Preparation

1. What was Bar-Jesus (Elymas) trying to do?
2. How did Paul respond?

Meditation

It was the *teaching* that won the proconsul. The blinding of the false prophet was impressive, but it was the teaching that astonished and won the lost man's soul. Saul, who was also called Paul (his Roman name), understood how very serious the Gospel is. He was not pleased – to say the least – that this false prophet was trying to downplay his message or otherwise distract or divert the proconsul from believing.

This is what the devil does, as Paul noted (v. 10). He keeps people from hearing the Gospel. He convinces them that it's not all that important and most likely not true, so why give it a second thought? Eternal destinies are at stake, and the devil delights, through deceit and villainy, in barring people from entering the Kingdom of God.

Hence the ferocity – and that's the right word – with which Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronted and confounded Bar-Jesus (v. 11). We don't know about the lasting impression this might have left on that false prophet. But Sergius was persuaded and believed the Good News.

The progress of the Kingdom is always at the expense of the kingdom of darkness and the lie (1 Jn. 2.8). We can expect the principals of that realm to oppose the Gospel, but we must not cooperate with them or otherwise – by our silence, for example – aid and abet their purposes.

When the Lord opens doors for witness, we must go through them boldly and proclaim Jesus and His Kingdom clearly, and with conviction.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We are called to be Jesus to others. We can do this because “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2.16).

But have we ever been guilty of being Bar-Jesus to others? (Acts 12.8) Has there ever been a time when we intentionally, or not, led someone astray? Or our hypocritical behavior turned someone away from seeking Jesus? They were ever so close to believing, and then, ugh, there we were behaving badly? Or maybe they were new believers, waiting for the seed to land, either on the wayside, or a stony place, or among thorns, or on good ground. And something was done, or not done, that blew the seed off course? (Matt. 13.3-9)

Perhaps it wasn't us who was Bar-Jesus, but a pastor or a friend. There are so many possibilities of who played the role of Elymas the sorcerer in someone's life.

One thing we know for certain, the Holy Spirit does not look favorably on that behavior: "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt.18.6). "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?" (Acts 12.10)

Pleading ignorance doesn't work either: "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this', does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Prov. 24.11, 12)

We must be hypervigilant about our own behavior (Deut. 32.46, 47).

We must keep our hearts with all diligence for out of them spring the issues of life (Prov. 4.23).

We must, with the Holy Spirit's strength and power, obey the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20.1-17).

We must strive to be Jesus to the people in our Personal Mission Field (Jn. 13.35; 14.15; 15.14; 1 Jn. 2.3).

"When the Lord opens doors for witness, we must go through them boldly and proclaim Jesus and His Kingdom clearly, and with conviction."

In Jesus' likeness, not Bar-Jesus'.

For reflection

1. What can you do, throughout the day, to make sure you are being Jesus, and not Bar-Jesus, to the people in your Personal Mission Field?

2. The world, the flesh, and the devil are working overtime to keep people from hearing the Gospel. How should you pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field?

3. Whom can you encourage today to be Jesus to the people in their Personal Mission Field?

The ways of the Lord Jesus are the only right ways to heaven and happiness. There are many who not only wander from these ways themselves, but set others against these ways. They commonly are so hardened, that they will not cease to do evil. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 13.4-13*

Pray Psalm 83.4-18.

Pray for believers around the world who are persecuted for their faith, that they may be comforted, emboldened, and empowered to bear up under their sufferings and speak the truth of Jesus in love. Pray that their tormentors will relent or be removed.

Sing Psalm 84.4-18.

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

"Come, let us wipe them out," they say. "Let Israel's name no more be heard!"

Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.

Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

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Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,
when You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –
all who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,
That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

4 “Let it be known!”

Pray Psalm 69.1-4.

Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to *my* neck.
I sink in deep mire,
Where *there is* no standing;
I have come into deep waters,
Where the floods overflow me.
I am weary with my crying;
My throat is dry;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God.
Those who hate me without a cause
Are more than the hairs of my head;
They are mighty who would destroy me,
Being my enemies wrongfully;
Though I have stolen nothing,
I *still* must restore *it*.

Sing Psalm 69.1-4.

(Greensleeves: [*What Child Is This?*](#))

“Save Me, O God, deep waters rise and threaten to undo Me!
No foothold in the mire I find; the floods must soon subdue Me.
Hear, Lord, My weary cry; My throat is parched, unclear My eye.
Foes long for Me to die and others’ debts are upon Me.”

Read Acts 13.1-41; meditate on verses 13-41.

Preparation

1. In what part of the Scriptures did Paul begin his sermon about Jesus?
2. What did Paul ultimately declare to those who heard him?

Meditation

This is a lengthy section, and, in the interest of space, I intend to survey it rather quickly. Paul and Barnabas – we note that the apostle’s name is now featured first (v. 13) – departed Cyprus and landed on the mainland of what is today Turkey. John bailed, for reasons unknown to us, but unacceptable to Paul (cf. Acts 15.37, 38). In Antioch of Pisidia, we find our team again in the synagogue, politely waiting to be invited to speak (vv. 14, 15).

Paul was ready. He began by commending their fear of God (v. 16). Building on what they already believed (vv. 17-22), he worked toward a brief explanation concerning Jesus (vv. 23-25). Then, more back-and-fill: He returned to their story line (vv. 26ff.) and connected Jesus to Abraham and the prophets, saying that the Jews in Jerusalem had missed the point of the Old Testament because they “did not know Him” (v. 27).

Next come the historical facts of the Gospel – John the Baptist, Jesus’ death and resurrection, His post-resurrection appearances. Then the Good News: What you’ve been waiting for and hoping for and longing for – restoration with God – has arrived! And it’s available through Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, seated with God on high, and calling all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel for the forgiveness of sins

(vv. 26-39).

Then Paul issued a warning, straight out of the prophets: Listen up! Though you may not be able to believe what I'm saying, believe it anyway (vv. 40, 41). Paul was a master communicator. We always proclaim the Good News to people, and all people inhabit a story or worldview that makes sense to them for the moment. Our task is to show that Jesus is the culmination of all their hopes, the only One Who can make sense out of their lives and bring them lasting peace and joy. But we need to do this from within the Scriptures, speaking God's Word to people who probably have little or no regard for it.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Our task is to show that Jesus is the culmination of all their hopes, the only One Who can make sense out of their lives and bring them lasting peace and joy. But we need to do this from within the Scriptures, speaking God's Word to people who probably have little or no regard for it.

And how do we do this?

How can we be prepared to speak from the Scriptures in a credible manner?

How will we know what the Scriptures say so we can easily speak these Words of truth?

Study. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2.15 KJV).

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119.11).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3.16).

“Every word of God is pure...” (Prov. 30.5).

If we are daily reading the word of God, studying it, meditating on it, praying it into our hearts and lives, it becomes a part of us. It is the way we view all of life. It is what comes out of our mouths when we speak.

It is a comfort to note that in Paul's sermon he said, “As it is written in the second Psalm” (Acts 13.33). Then he continued, and added a quote from God, “Therefore He also says in another Psalm...” (Acts 13.35). The verse is then stated but without naming the actual address of the Psalm.

“Paul was a master communicator.” And when Paul spoke, Scripture flowed. But it seems even Paul didn't remember the exact chapter and verse all the time.

We should never be put off from speaking the truth of Scripture for fear that we might not be able to remember exactly where every word emanated from. The Holy Spirit will give us the words to say (Lk. 12.12). We just need to be ready and willing to say them. Without fear and trepidation. Just like Paul.

“Let it be known!”

For reflection

1. Why is it so important that we spend daily time reading, meditating on, and studying the Word of God?
2. What can happen if we fail to pursue this discipline faithfully?
3. How can believers encourage one another in daily study of Scripture?

The great concern of convinced sinners is, to be justified, to be acquitted from all their guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight, for if any is left charged upon the sinner, he is undone. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. Matthew Henry (1662, 1714), Commentary on Acts 13.38-41

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Pray Psalm 69.13-36.

Pray that God would free you from any lingering sins, that He would grant you mercy and grace for all your needs today, and that He would grant you a greater measure of salvation than you have ever known.

Sing Psalm 69.13-36.

(Greensleeves: [*What Child Is This?*](#))

O Lord, we make our prayer to You; receive our words, O Savior!

Let lovingkindness see us through, and answer us with favor!

Lord, lift us above the mire; deliv'rance is our one desire!

Let not the floods conspire to swallow us forever!

Let heav'n and earth now praise You, Lord, the seas and all their creatures,
for You will save us by Your Word and build Your City's features.

There we will with Jesus dwell and know His blessings full and well.

His glorious Name we'll tell to every man and creature!

5 Good-bye, Hello

Pray Psalm 148.1-4.

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!
Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all you stars of light!
Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,
And you waters above the heavens!

Sing Psalm 148.1-4.

(Hendon: [Take My Life and Let It Be](#))

Praise the Lord, from heaven praise! To the heights His goodness raise!
Angels, all you heav'nly hosts, let of Him be all your boasts,
let of Him be all your boasts!

Praise Him, sun, moon, shining lights, brilliant stars that light the nights!
Praise Him, heav'ns for all His love, and you waters far above,
and you waters far above!

Read Acts 13.1-48; meditate on verses 42-48.

Preparation

1. What did certain Jews do when they saw the multitudes?
2. To what did Paul and Barnabas turn?

Meditation

The Spirit of God was on a roll, reaping a harvest among Jews and Gentiles as Paul and his team proclaimed the Good News of Jesus (vv. 42, 43). Those who had come to believe in Antioch of Pisidia, and were continuing in the grace of God, must have talked with their neighbors, because the next week the whole town showed up for preaching (v. 44). Now the religious leaders had a problem (v. 45). Previously they'd looked at Paul as a nice "shot in the arm" for their little congregation. Now he was stealing all the sheep,

Oppose. Contradict. Defame. The opponents to God's truth haven't changed much, and we don't have to sweat them today any more than Paul did in his day. The Spirit, Who is in charge of this ongoing work of Christ, will show us where to go next in seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God.

Paul says "Good-bye!" to the Jews who opposed the Gospel, but, of course, he's not giving up on them. Not now, not ever (Rom. 9.1-5). But the focus of his ministry will change as he says "Hello" to the Gentiles and aims more consistently at reaching them with the Good News.

Nothing can stop the spread of the Good News. Not, as we've seen, buffoonish kings, not scheming false prophets, not intelligent magistrates. Not jealous religious leaders, either. Nothing. Try to stamp it out here, it spreads like a splashed oil fire to there and there and there. The power of the Gospel accompanies the preaching of Jesus. When Jesus is set forth against the backdrop of any unbelieving worldview, and as the

hope of the world and fulfillment of all our aspirations, people will believe.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

When the Jewish religious leaders saw the multitudes of people that were flocking to hear the word of God, “they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 13.45). “The green-eyed monster”, that Shakespeare wrote about, showed up.

The Bible is equally explicit about it: “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones” (Prov. 14.30). “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things, come from within and defile a man” (Mk. 7.21-23).

Envy and jealousy led these people to contradict the truth, blaspheme God, and outright oppose the Gospel. An exciting moment for the burgeoning Church was disrupted by the religious leaders.

Paul and Barnabas did not sit idly by and let them continue. They were not meek and mild in the face of evil opposition. No. They got out their best words, given them by the Holy Spirit, and let them have a double dose of the truth! “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13.46). Ouch!

The Gentiles must have greatly appreciated that Paul and Barnabas went to bat for them. They did not allow the sinful disposition of the opposition to keep them from hearing the words they longed to hear about Jesus. And consequently, when they heard this Good News, “they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13.48).

We must be diligent, like Paul and Barnabas, in the face of opposition, to preach the word boldly. People’s lives depend upon it. We must face down the green-eyed monsters of this world, whether they emerge from within the Church or without.

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim.4.2).

“People will believe.”

For reflection

1. What fears can keep us from fulfilling our calling as witnesses for the Lord? How can we overcome those fears?
2. Paul and Barnabas did not waste time arguing with those who opposed them. They simply moved on to more fruitful fields. Is there a principle here for working our Personal Mission Fields?
3. How should you prepare now for any witnessing opportunities you may have today?

*What light, what power, what a treasure does this gospel bring with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual, Romans 8:30. As many as were disposed to eternal life, as many as had concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God has treasured up that life, and who is the only Way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 13.42-52**

Pray Psalm 148.11-14.

Pray for the missions efforts of your church. Pray for missionaries around the world, that God would give them strength and boldness in bearing witness to Jesus, and that many might come to know and serve Him

through their work.

Sing Psalm 148.11-14.

(Hendon: [*Take My Life and Let It Be*](#))

Kings of earth and peoples all, young men, maidens, on Him call!

Old men, children, princes, kings, bring to God your offerings.

Bring to God your offerings.

For His people He has raised His salvation: God be praised!

All whom Jesus Christ brings near praise their Savior, ever dear,

praise their Savior, ever dear!

6 Increase: Word, Persecution, Joy

Pray Psalm 90.1, 2.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.

Sing Psalm 90.1, 2.

(Landas: [*My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*](#))

Lord, You have been our dwelling place from generations gone.
Before the mountains came to be, before the earth was born,
before the worlds, and long before men on the earth first trod,
from everlasting long ago, O God, You are our God!

Read Acts 13.1-52; meditate on verses 49-52.

Preparation

1. What increased because of the witness of Paul and Barnabas?
2. How did the disciples respond to increased opposition?

Meditation

Paul and Barnabas moved on, following the leading of the Spirit, but the Spirit remained to fill the believers with joy (vv. 50, 52). The ongoing work of Christ is the Spirit's work. He leads. He empowers for witness. He convicts and converts. He sanctifies the faithful. He builds the Church. And He does all this all at once and in every place!

The Word was spreading rapidly (v. 49) because the people who "got it" really did. They were excited, freed from the burden of their sins, secure in the hope of eternal life, and flourishing in the grace of the Lord. People who know such experiences can't help but talk about them to others, and this is how the Word of the Lord spreads, as we've seen (Acts 8).

But as the Word increases, so do opposition and persecution. Big deal! That didn't stop Paul and Barnabas, and it shouldn't stop us, either. The joy of salvation is a *real* and *permanent* joy, not one dictated by agreeable circumstances. We should expect opposition and persecution, and know how to deal with these by resting in the strength and promises of the Lord, Who has overcome the world (Jn. 16.33), and by continuing in the ongoing work of Christ.

The ongoing work of Christ continues because it is the *Spirit's* work, and not merely ours. We see how the Spirit uses faithful people, armed with the Gospel and filled with holy joy, to lead others to the Lord and His Kingdom. Pray that we will be faithful, joyful, courageous, and consistent followers of Christ in everything we do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

These religious folks were the complete antithesis of what God's people are called to do. Maybe they misread the instruction book?

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133.1).

They caught the good and pleasant part all right but missed the dwelling together in unity. They instead stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raising up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and causing division among those who claimed belief in God (Acts 13.50). Oops.

Is there any Scripture that you are misreading? Any of the instruction book of the Bible that you have misconstrued?

When we read the Word, and choose to ignore the things we don't like, we are doing what these religious leaders did.

We are called to "stir up the gift of God which is in you...For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1.6, 7).

We are called to be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13.52)

We are called to cast out sin from our lives (Ez. 14.6; I Jn. 1.9, 10); not our fellow believers.

There's a lot of activity going on in these verses (Acts 13.49-52). The spreading of the Word and the opposition to it. Spreading the Good News, and the antithesis of it. Rejoicing in the Spirit.

The same battle rages on today. "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. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand..." (Eph.6.12,13). We must not misread or misunderstand our calling.

So "...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..." (Josh. 24.15).

For reflection

1. Why is it so important that we believe the Scriptures and do what they teach?
2. The Gospel sometimes can be divisive. But we must not be. What's the difference?
3. What does it mean to rest in the strength and promises of the Lord in the face of persecution or opposition?

The Greek has, "But the disciples," so that we may understand that although the Jews persecuted the faith, the disciples on the contrary were endowed with spiritual joy. The Venerable Bede (672-735), Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles 13.52

Pray Psalm 90.12-17.

Commit your work today to the Lord, for the progress of His Word and joy throughout your Personal Mission Field, beginning in your home. Ask Him to fill you with gladness as you bear witness to Him in word and deed.

Sing Psalm 90.12-17.

(Landas: [*My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*](#))

So teach us all our days to note that wisdom may be ours.
Return, O Lord, have pity on those servants who are Yours.
Each morning let Your love appear that we for joy may sing.
And make us glad for every day You us affliction bring.

Now let Your work to us appear; our children show Your might.
And let Your favor rest on us; show mercy in Your sight.

On a Roll: Acts 13

The work that You have given us, confirm, and to us show,
That we Your chosen path may walk and in Your precepts go.

7 The Good News

Pray Psalm 2.7, 8.

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.”

Sing Psalm 2.7, 8.

(Agincourt: *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

Read Acts 13.1-52; meditate on verses 32, 33.

Preparation

1. What did Paul declare to the people who heard him?
2. What was the focus of His message?

Meditation

Our chapter ends in the middle of Paul’s first missionary journey. He and Barnabas were continually on the move, not always by their own choice. Everywhere they went they proclaimed “glad tidings” (v. 32). Which begs the question: What are these glad tidings? Or, what is the Good News? Or, what is the Gospel?

From Paul’s remarks we can discern the following outline: The Gospel is grounded in “that promise” God made to the fathers of Israel. That promise was one of blessing, influence, and the power to bless all peoples with the knowledge of God and His glory (Gen. 12.1-3). It boils down to a simple phrase, repeated throughout the Scriptures: “I will be your God, and you will be My people.” Jesus came as the embodiment of that promise, doing good and speaking truth about a new Kingdom and a divine economy that He had come to bring near. His resurrection is the guarantee that God would fulfill that promise by drawing people into His blessings through faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The “glad tidings” are that fear, uncertainty, death, and the lie need no longer control our lives. Life and truth and abiding joy can be ours because Jesus has risen from the dead. Eternal life with God – the sure and personal knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (Jn. 17.3) and all that entails for daily living – is now available through Jesus to all who repent and believe the Good News.

God has done what He promised, and Jesus is the proof of purchase we need to be redeemed, revived, and restored to our proper relationship with God. The Good News is that we are the heirs of a great salvation in which all the promises of God are “Yes!” and “Amen!” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1.20).

Tell the world!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Glad tidings.

The Good News began with the angel Gabriel appearing to Zacharias to tell him that he would father a son

who would be the forerunner of the Savior. “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth...And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before Him...” (Lk.1.14, 16, 17) Your son’s name will be John.

The next glad tidings came to the virgin Mary when Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” (Lk. 1.28) Your Son’s name will be JESUS.

Then a glad tidings came to the baby John, still in his mother’s womb, as he heard the greeting of Mary when she visited Elizabeth, his mother. She explained that when they heard the voice of Mary, “the babe leaped in my womb for joy” (Lk. 1.44).

Mary came next with her own glad tidings, “my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Lk. 1.47).

Zacharias then spoke this glad tidings, when he said that God would “perform the mercy promised to our fathers...to remember His holy covenant...to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk. 1.72, 79).

The angel of the Lord delivered the next glad tidings to the shepherds when he said, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2.10).

Finally, the quintessential glad tidings came from the mouth of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3.16). “Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!”” (Ps. 40.16)

Gabriel, Mary, Elizabeth, John, Zacharias, an angel of the Lord, Jesus, and Paul. All joy-bringers. And now that we, too, have received this promised good news, we are told to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only...” (Jms. 1.22).

So let us be glad-tidings tellers too! “Yes” and “Amen”! (2 Cor. 1.20).

For reflection

1. What about the Gospel especially makes you glad?
2. Why do you think Christians are so reluctant to proclaim the Good News of Jesus?
3. In what ways do you see the Spirit continuing the ongoing work of Jesus in your Personal Mission Field?

Christ was to serve all generations. May we look to Him who is declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, that by faith in him we may walk with God, and serve our generation according to his will; and when death comes, may we fall asleep in him, with a joyful hope of a blessed resurrection. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 13.32-37

Pray Psalm 2.8-12.

Pray for a new, richer, and more expansive understanding of the Gospel, and pray the same for Christians everywhere. Pray that God would revive His people and send us into the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Sing Psalm 2.9-12.

(Agincourt: *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

On a Roll: Acts 13

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

On a Roll: Acts 13

For reflection or discussion

1. What worldviews are competing with the Gospel for people's attention these days? Why is it important we understand something about these worldviews?
2. What is the Good News about Jesus that we as witness are sent to proclaim?
3. Why is it normal to expect opposition to the Gospel when we proclaim it? Should this cause us to be silent about the Gospel? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the Christians you know are as passionate about the Gospel as Paul was? Are you?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 13?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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