

Review

Barnabas and Saul - who is now being referred to as Paul (Acts 13:9) - have been sent out by the church on their first missionary journey. They have traveled all across the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean, and led the proconsul of the Roman province to Christ.

Now, they leave the island and sail northwest to the southwestern coast of modern-day Turkey.

13:13 Paul And His Companions

Paul and his companions arrived in Pamphylia's chief city of Perga. Notice how the text has changed? Ever since Barnabas had called him to help with the church in Antioch, the narrative has been saying, "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2; 13:7). But in verse nine of this chapter, Paul spoke forth powerfully, being filled by the Holy Spirit. He rebuked the magician Barjesus, and pronounced a curse of temporary blindness on him. And suddenly, Dr. Luke is saying, "Paul and his companions." From here on out, it won't be "Barnabas and Saul." It will be "Paul and Barnabas."

John Left

When the Holy Spirit had set apart Barnabas and Saul for this mission trip (Acts 13:2), they had decided to take Barnabas' cousin John Mark along with them as their helper (Acts 13:5).

But now, it seems that John Mark is burned out. Or afraid. Or homesick. Whatever reasoning John Mark had, when he went back home to Jerusalem, Paul looked at it as desertion (Acts 15:38).

13:14-15 An Invitation

Even though their helper had deserted them, they continued on with the work of preaching the gospel. They weren't going to be discouraged just because not everyone they started with stuck around. Can you imagine them returning to Antioch and telling the church, "Well, we witnessed to everybody in Cyprus, but when John Mark bailed out, the wind just kinda went out of our sails. We got discouraged and decided to

end the ministry there"?

This reminds me of the lyrics to the old hymn "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus": "Though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back, no turning back."

And it's a good thing they didn't turn back, because when they continued north inland and came to Pisidian Antioch, an amazing preaching opportunity was presented to them.

Following their routine of going to the local synagogue, an offer was extended to them by the synagogue officials to preach an impromptu message.

13:16-41 Paul's Word Of Exhortation

Paul stood up and preached a sermon to the Jews, as well as the God-fearing Gentiles who also attended the synagogue.

His message started with reviewing the Jews' history. He began with the time of their slavery in Egypt, the 40 years of wilderness wandering, and their inheritance of the Promised Land.

He then covered their leaders from the judges to King David, and reminded them of the promise of the Messiah, who would come from the line of David.

The coming of Jesus the Messiah had been announced by John the Baptist. But the leadership rejected Jesus, and ultimately had Him put to death.

Paul told them of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, validating with several Old Testament Scriptures (Psa. 2:7; 16:10, etc.) that this had been God's plan all along.

And then he laid it on the line: forgiveness of sins is available to those who believe in Christ. And those who scoff will perish in flames.

13:42 Speak To Us Again

The people's interest was piqued. They wanted to hear more of this. They begged Paul and Barnabas to come back the following Sabbath to speak more about this.

13:43 Continue In The Grace Of God

One of the things I really enjoy in life is fellowshiping with folks after church. Not necessarily the rush of ten or twenty conversations immediately following a message, but the longer, more involved fellowship that happens after most people have cleared out. Or better yet, going to lunch with folks afterwards, and really getting to dig into some real fellowship about real topics while we're digging into chips and salsa!

After the synagogue meeting, a lot of folks followed Paul and Barnabas, not wanting to wait a whole week to hear these things again. And they were rewarded: these two apostles urged them to continue in the grace of God.

What does it mean, "to continue in the grace of God"?

It means to walk with Him as you learn more and more about His unconditional love for you. God's goodness and mercy and desire to bless you. To avoid falling into the trap that says, "God only loves you when you're well-behaved. When you're walking the straight and narrow." Saints, believe me, I can tell you from first-hand experience that we need to know about the grace of God when we're in the depths of sin and despair. It's the only way we can stand (Rom. 5:2). Never forget that...

Rom. 5:20 ...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more

13:44 Assembled To Hear The Word

Because of Paul's message in the synagogue, there had been quite a stir in the city of Pisidian Antioch that week. The next Sabbath day, just about everyone in town gathered to hear.

But notice that they weren't gathered to hear Paul. Luke says that...

Acts 13:44 ...nearly the whole city assembled to hear the Word of the Lord.

Saints, the messenger is nobody. It is the Message that's important. It doesn't matter who's speaking the words, so long as the man is speaking the Word.

13:45-47 Opposition From The Jews

But there WERE men who wanted crowds to listen to THEM. And when Paul's preaching of the Word caused the assemblage of so many people, they were filled with jealousy.

They started contradicting what Paul was preaching. It may sound rather obvious, but this is often what the opponents of the gospel will do: they will oppose the gospel. And opposing the gospel is one way to commit blasphemy (Acts 13:45).

This action prompted a response from Paul and Barnabas that would send shock waves all through the rest of earth's history: "Since you Jews don't think you should receive eternal life, we'll just start offering it to the Gentiles!"

Of course, the groundwork for this had been laid earlier by the Lord. Simon Peter's vision (Acts 10) and Gentiles being saved in Antioch (Acts 11) were both divine moves of God. And now Paul and Barnabas are going to follow the standard that the gospel goes to the Jews first, but if they reject it, they will simply go to the Gentiles.

As Paul would later write to the Romans,

Rom. 1:16 ...I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

To the Jews, Paul and Barnabas quoted Isaiah 49:6, saying that the ministry of Jesus being light to the Gentiles was passed to them. While He was in the world, he had been the light of the world (John 9:5), and now it was their responsibility (Matt. 5:14-16).

13:48-49 Appointed To Eternal Life

For centuries, the Gentiles had known that the Jews considered them as nothing but fuel for the fires of hell. Imagine now hearing Jews rebuking their own people, and saying, "We've got a message of salvation, forgiveness of sin. And we're about to offer it to the Gentiles."

It is understandable then, that they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of God. Again, notice where the glory is going: not to Paul, not to Barnabas. It's going to the Word of the Lord.

There is a phrase in verse 48 that is difficult for some people to

digest. Notice it doesn't say, "The people who believed were appointed to eternal life." It says that those who were appointed to eternal life believed. This reminds us that our destinies are planned out. They are foreknown and foreordained by God.

Rom. 8:29-30 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

13:50-51 Politics In Pisidian

We should never expect the preaching of the gospel to go unhindered and without opposition. In this case, there were political games being played behind the scenes. The Jews incited prominent women and leading men of the city to instigate a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drive them out of the city.

But these two apostles simply followed the instruction of Jesus to the twelve apostles:

Mark 6:11 "Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."

Often, I encounter Christians who give up too easily, throwing up their hands in surrender too quickly. But other times, we stubbornly talk too long. We stay in a place, witnessing to a person, or trying to minister to a group that God just hasn't ordained, or is no longer blessing.

Paul and Barnabas didn't mourn the lost ministry in Pisidian Antioch. They simply shook the dust off their feet and moved on to Iconium and continued preaching the gospel, like they were called to do.

May God grant us the courage to stay when opposed, the wisdom to know when to leave, and the fervor to continue preaching His Word, regardless of where He places us.