

Acts of the Apostles

Week 16 12:25-13:52

Barnabas and Saul Return and Go Out Again (12:25-13:3)

- Paul and Barnabas return with Barnabas' cousin, John Mark, to Antioch from Jerusalem (see Acts 11:29; Colossians 4:10).
- The church in Antioch was led by a group of believers labeled prophets and teachers.
 - o Barnabas was a Christian leader from Jerusalem.
 - o Symeon, a man with a Jewish name, but whose nickname meant "dark complexioned," perhaps indicating that he was a black man.
 - o Lucius from Cyrene was likely one of the founders of the church (see 11:20).
 - o Manaen, a Jewish name meaning "comforter," who was an associate of Herod Antipas. He may have been Luke's source for information about Herod that the other gospels do not include.
 - o Paul, who also went by Saul.
- While the church was worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit gave them a word about Barnabas and Saul (v 2).
 - o The fact that they were fasting, which is associated with prayer, indicates they were seeking a word from the Lord.
 - o Perhaps they were asking the Lord if they should go on a missionary journey, and if so, who?
- In response to the Spirit's word, the church laid hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them out (v 3).
 - o Laying on of hands was a sign of blessing and not a formal ordination as we often think of the term.
 - o The church set the pattern of willingly giving up some of their key leaders for the sake of God's work in another place.

Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus (13:4-12).

- Barnabas and Saul begin their trip in Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea.
 - o There had already been missionary work there (11:19).
 - o Barnabas likely had family there (4:36).
- As will become their pattern, they began preaching first in the synagogues (v 5).
 - o The synagogue would include Jews who desired to do God's will and Gentiles who were interested in Jewish monotheism and ethics.
 - o The John mentioned is John Mark.
- Barnabas and Saul, already identified as prophets, encountered the false prophet, Bar-Jesus (v 6).
 - o As Barnabas and Saul preached before the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, Bar-Jesus (also called Elmas) did his best to dissuade the proconsul from accepting the faith (vv 7-8)
 - o This is the second conflict between an apostle and a sorcerer (see Acts 8:9-24) and recounts Moses's confrontation with the magicians of Pharaoh (Exodus 7-8).

- Paul takes the lead in the confrontation with Bar-Jesus and in the rest of the book of Acts when he calls out the man for opposing God and then curses him with blindness (vv 9-11).
- Bar-Jesus and Paul both share a history of opposing the gospel and being struck blind. In the case of Bar-Jesus, it does not appear his blindness led to his conversion, but it did lead to the conversion of the pro-consul (vv 11-12).
- Once again, the Holy Spirit is the true protagonist in the story (13:2, 4, 9).

Barnabas and Saul in Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52).

- Verse 13 marks two significant moments, John Mark's return to Jerusalem and Luke's transition to using Paul's Roman name.
- The journey from Perga to Antioch of Pisidia was an arduous one over the Taurus Mountains.
- There Paul was invited to share a word with the synagogue reminding us that there was not universal opposition to Paul (v 15), at least, at first.
- Paul gives a speech/sermon that follows the general pattern of other sermons in Acts.
 - o Paul rehearses the history of Israel (vv 17-22).
 - o Paul ends his history lesson with David implicitly calling to mind the Jewish longing for a Messiah from the Davidic line.
 - o Paul then explains how God has brought to Israel, Jesus, a man from David's line, to be the promised savior (v 23).
 - o Paul makes note of John the Baptist's prophecy of Jesus, perhaps indicating they were already aware of John's ministry (v 25).
 - o Paul explains how Jesus's death and resurrection fulfill the promises of God in the scriptures (v 26-37).
 - o Paul quotes Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 55:3 showing how they apply to Jesus and not David (vv 34-37).
 - o Paul explains how forgiveness of sins is found in Jesus and not the law (vv 38-40).
 - o He concludes with a warning from Habakkuk 1:5 that indicates God is doing a new work among the Gentiles (see Habakkuk 1:11-11), and to deny that work is to align oneself with those who mistreated God's prophets in the past.
- The initial reaction is one of curiosity and genuine interest in the "grace of God" (vv 42-44).
- When the whole city shows up to hear a second sermon, the Jewish leaders (the text simply reads "the Jews") were filled with jealousy and began to oppose Paul and Barnabas.
- Paul uses this as an opportunity to chart out his ministry calling to go to the Gentiles after attempting to preach to the Jews.
 - o He quotes Isaiah 49:6 as biblical justification for his ministry.
 - o In reality, he will continue to preach to both Jews and Gentiles.
- As will be the case throughout his ministry, Paul found both success and opposition in his preaching ministry (vv 48-52).

Sources

Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

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