

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



Background Reading

Acts 11:22-24; 27-30; 13:2;
15:25-41; 2 Timothy 4:11

Devotional Reading

Acts 9:26-31



Central Verses

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. ³And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Acts 13:1-3, KJV

"Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. ²One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way."

Acts 13:1-3, NLT

Key Terms

Sorcerer—A person who practices the use of power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits, especially for divining.

Astonished—Feeling or showing great surprise or wonder.

Prudent—Clever and careful in action and judgment.

Contradicting—Implying, causing, or being a condition in which things oppose each other.

Blaspheming—To speak in a way that shows irreverence for God.

Introduction

Paul is recorded to have made three Missionary journeys and then on to Rome. His first Journey was shared with Barnabas. They traveled together through the island of Cyprus and the province of Asia (modern Asia Minor) preaching the gospel. When Paul first came to the believers as a newly converted man, they were afraid of him, because he was the one who was persecuting the Saints. It was Barnabas who bridged the gap between Paul and the other Christians, as he was able to speak on Paul's behalf. Because of his good standing with the believers, the Word said he was "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24); therefore, they warmed up to and received Paul.

Paul had come to the church at Jerusalem, where he was not received so well. It was an uncomfortable time for him because he had forsaken all to be a part of this new church. Barnabas was sent to the church in Jerusalem to encourage the Saints there. Many people were coming to the Lord and joining the church; it was then that Barnabas sought out Paul and brought him to Antioch. While Paul and Barnabas were yet in Antioch, a prophet named Agabus prophesied about a famine, and the church sent Paul and Barnabas to take relief to the brothers living in Judea.

Discussion

The leaders of the church recognized the need to send missionaries to ensure that believers in other cities were thriving. They fasted and prayed, and the Holy Spirit made choice of Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas took his cousin John Mark along with them to serve as a helper, as they traveled through many Gentile areas spreading the gospel.

Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark walked to Seleucia on the coast, then sailed southwest to Salamis on the island of Cyprus, where Barnabas was from. They preached in the Synagogue there and traveled the whole island, apparently without seeing much fruit, until they arrived at the city of Paphos in the southwest.

In this area, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Paul, and desired to hear the Word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Paul, full

of the Holy Spirit, called that devil out and pronounced blindness upon him. Immediately, a mist and darkness fell upon him, and he had to have someone lead him because he was blind. And because of the working of the Holy Spirit, the deputy believed and was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Then Paul and Barnabas, along with their team, left Paphos and went to Perga in Pamphylia. John Mark, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem. They left Perga and went to Antioch, where they preached in the Synagogue. Paul stood and preached about the Children of Israel, how God allowed them to be in bondage, set them free, conquered seven nations, and gave them land and territories. He told them how Jesus came, the ministry He had, how he was tied and later put to death, but arose out of the grave. When he had finished preaching, the Gentiles asked if he would preach the same message to them the following Sunday.

Many of the Jews and proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and they were persuaded to continue in the grace of God. When the next Sabbath day came, the whole city came together to hear the Word of God. When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and spoke against the Word which was spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly to the Jews, telling them they needed to hear from them first. But because they have rejected the Word, he and Barnabas have turned to the Gentiles, for God had commanded them to be a light unto the Gentiles. The Gentiles rejoiced when they heard, but the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city, and stirred up persecutions against Paul and Barnabas, and put them out of the cities on the coast. Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet and left, going to Iconium, where people were filled with the Holy Spirit, and there was much rejoicing.

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and caused much trouble among the brethren. But God confirmed the Word with many miracles. They continued to speak the Word with boldness, but it caused the city to become divided. They spoke of stoning them, so the Men of God fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and all the regions around, and they continued to preach.

While at Lystra, they healed an impotent man who had been cripple from his mother's womb, because he had faith to be healed. When the people saw

this miracle, they began to say that Paul and Barnabas were gods. Paul and Barnabas let them know that they were not gods, but men like them, and that they were only there to preach repentance unto them. The people were so stirred up that again they decided to stone Paul and left him for dead. But he was not dead; God had preserved him, and he was able to get up. They then returned to Antioch and ended their first missionary journey.

Conclusion

Paul and Barnabas did all the good that they could in the cities that they visited, despite the many conflicts they endured, knowing that if you live godly, you will suffer persecution.

Those who are called to be missionaries must remember that God offers His invitation to whosoever believes in him, shall have everlasting life. What if some don't receive Jesus? The missionary must continue his work. Jesus said that He came to His own and they would not receive Him. Sometimes, church people can be your most significant challenges. Those who should know better, are not as easy to receive as the sinners who have never known Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. How did Paul and Barnabas get together?
2. What did they do when they were not received well?
3. Why were the Jews so angry?
4. How did the Gentiles receive the missionaries?

Essential Thought

What God has for you, is for you: but if you refuse to receive it,
God will give it to someone else.