

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

- A. The importance of Antioch
 1. It was the first place Jewish Christians initiated witness to non-Jews.
 2. It would become the base of operations for Paul's missionary journeys.
 3. It revealed the interdependence of churches as they received spiritual ministry from the church at Jerusalem and provided for the physical needs of the churches in Judea.
- B. The shift from Saul to Paul
 1. The missionary team of Saul and Barnabas grew out of their one year of serving together in Antioch.
 2. Saul started on the first missionary journey with Barnabas as the leader but in a short time he would lead the missionary effort.
 3. He left Antioch as Saul but by the time they left Cyprus he would be called Paul.
 4. Saul the persecutor of Jewish Christians became Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.

FROM ANTIOCH TO CYPRUS, ACTS 12:25-13:12

- A. Barnabas and Saul were divinely appointed to evangelize the Gentiles (12:25-13:3)
 1. They returned to Antioch from Jerusalem with John Mark (12:25), *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.*
 - a. Barnabas and Saul returned from delivering financial aid to Judean elders for needy church members (11:27-30).
 - b. John Mark accompanied them to Antioch.
 - 1) He was a cousin of Barnabas, Colossians 4:10, *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him).*
 - 2) He had participated in ministry in the church at Jerusalem.
 - c. Ties were now strong between the churches in Judea and Antioch which bode well for Paul's new ministry.
 2. A list of leaders of the church at Antioch (13:1), *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.*
 - a. The church at Antioch was strengthened by having prophets and teachers.
 - b. These leaders represented men from a number of backgrounds and shows how God provided those with gifts needed by the local church.
 - 1) Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus, Acts 4:36, *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,*
 - 2) Simeon was a Jew who was probably from Africa, based on his nickname, Niger.
 - 3) Lucius was from Cyrene in North Africa, Acts 11:20, *But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.*
 - 4) Manaen was reared with Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist and oversaw the trial of Jesus.
 - 5) Saul of Tarsus was trained in rabbinical schools and came from a region that was cosmopolitan.
 - c. The way it was written in Greek seems to define Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius as prophets and Manaen and Saul as teachers.
 - d. William Barclay, *There in that little band there is exemplified the unifying influence of Christianity. Men from many lands and many backgrounds had discovered the secret of 'togetherness' because they had discovered the secret of Christ.*

3. Barnabas and Saul were set apart for the work to which Jesus called them (13:2), *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."*
 - a. Directions came from the Lord while these men were seeking God through worship and fasting.
 - 1) Fasting is to be a time when one gives greater focus to spiritual needs instead of the physical.
 - 2) Worship is to focus on the attributes of God, His goodness, His righteousness, His holiness, His faithfulness, His justice, His mercy, His grace not our needs or wants.
 - 3) The best way to sense God's leading is through worship not through pleading. Worship is trust and pleading is fear.
 - b. *set apart*
 - 1) It was used three ways in Saul's life.
 - a) In eternity past, he was separated to God, Galatians 1:15, *But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,*
 - b) At his conversion, he was set apart for the Gospel, Romans 1:1, *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*
 - c) At Antioch, he was separated for a specific service, Act 13:2.
 - 2) We are set apart by God as well, Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
 - c. The Holy Spirit assigned the order of responsibility, Barnabas then Saul.
 - 1) Barnabas was older and well-known for his faithfulness.
 - 2) He was the one with the strongest ties to the church at Jerusalem.
 - 3) He led the work in Antioch and had invited Saul to join him.
 - d. It is not known how the Spirit made the call.
 - 1) It is best not to know so we don't think there is only one way God calls people to His tasks.
 - 2) Spiritual work is initiated and directed by the Holy Spirit.
4. Their calling was affirmed by the church at Antioch and they were sent on their first missionary journey (13:3), *Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*
 - a. The church at Antioch participated in the Holy Spirit's calling Barnabas and Saul by affirming their new task.
 - 1) They fasted and prayed, knowing this was a spiritual work which demands spiritual power.
 - 2) *they laid their hands on them*
 - a) The church was identifying itself with their ministry.
 - b) They were acknowledging God's direction, not only for Barnabas and Saul, but for their church, as well.
 - c) They acknowledged their responsibility to pray for them and help as needed.
 - b. *sent them off*
 - 1) This is not a getting rid of them but participating with them.
 - 2) A key missionary concept is that those who go need those who send.
 - 3) A. T. Robertson, *The words of the call do not specify where Barnabas and Saul are to go nor indeed specifically what the work is. But they are called directly for the new enterprise.*
 - c. This missionary movement has impacted the world from that commissioning service in Antioch to this very today.
 - 1) A. T. Robertson, *It is always a solemn thing to stand by the fountains of historic movements. Here was the genesis of the mission work on a large scale. God was in it, though some Christians were not.*
 - 2) The movement of God will either sweep one up or sweep one away.
 - 3) Missions is the work of God through those who send and those who go.

- B. Their first missionary journey (13:4-12)
1. Saul and Barnabas began their new ministry in Cyprus by as their first destination (4), *So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*
 - a. They were sent by the Holy Spirit since spiritual work comes from God not man.
 - b. They headed to Cyprus
 - 1) Their first stop was Seleucia, the port city which was 16 miles from Antioch.
 - 2) They took a ship to Cyprus which was 130 miles away.
 - c. The Holy Spirit seemingly let Barnabas and Saul choose where they would go first.
 - 1) It was Barnabas' home.
 - 2) There were already Christians living there.
 - 3) It was close.
 - 4) Location is not as important as purpose. They were called to the task of evangelism, knowing God would direct them as He saw fit.
 - d. The best place to start is where you are.
 2. At Salamis, they proclaimed the Gospel in the Jewish synagogues (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.*
 - a. Salamis
 - 1) It was the largest city on the eastern side of the island, facing Syria.
 - 2) It was large enough to have a number of synagogues.
 - b. Saul's habit would be to go to a synagogue first when he entered a city.
 - 1) He considered it a priority to first take the Gospel to Jews, Acts 13:46, *And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.*
 - 2) Most synagogues had God-fearers who attended.
 - a) They were Gentiles who were interested in the God of the Jews and who would be acquainted with the Old Testament.
 - b) Their interest in the Gospel could open up more opportunities in the Gentile community.
 - c. John Mark assisted Barnabas and Saul.
 - 1) It was not specified what John Mark did.
 - 2) It could have been assisting in evangelism and instructing new believers.
 - 3) Also, it might have included assisting in baptisms, 1 Corinthians 1:17, *For Christ did not send me (Paul) to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*
 3. They were invited by the proconsul to present their message concerning Jesus (6-7)
 - a. They ministered throughout the island as far as Paphos where they met Bar-Jesus (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.*
 - 1) Paphos is 100 miles southwest of Salamis, the seat of the provincial government.
 - 2) Bar-Jesus
 - a) His name means son of Jesus.
 - b) He was a Jewish false prophet, one who practiced sorcery.
 - c) He was an attendant of Sergius Paulus, Cyprus' government official.
 - b. The Gentile proconsul was in Paphos and wanted to hear Barnabas and Saul's message concerning 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.*
 - 1) Sergius Paulus was the proconsul, the governor of Cyprus appointed by the Romans Senate.
 - 2) He was a man of intelligence; the Greek word emphasizes understanding, wisdom.
 - 3) He summoned Barnabas and Saul to hear what they had to say concerning the word of God.

- 4) Barnabas and Saul's messages evidently taught that their messages were the word of God.
 - 5) A. T. Robertson, *Today some men imagine that they display intelligence by refusing the preaching of the word.*
4. Responses to Saul's message (8-12)
- a. The Jewish magician, Bar-Jesus, discredited the message (8), ***But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.***
 - 1) *Elymas*
 - a) Bar-Jesus took that as a nickname.
 - b) It means *magician*, or *expert*.
 - 2) He sought to keep the proconsul from believing in Jesus.
 - a) He was the expert who did not want the proconsul to discredit him by receiving the message from Barnabas and Saul.
 - b) Richard Lenski, *The devil had his advocate at the proconsul's side who was seeking to defeat the messengers of God. The trickster feared that he would lose control and be ousted. Evil men are always in the road to prevent the gospel from saving others.*
 - b. Saul pronounced judgment on Bar-Jesus for his disbelief (9a-10)
 - 1) Saul, now called Paul, is empowered by the Holy Spirit (9a), ***But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit,***
 - a) Saul is now called Paul.
 - 1] He was a Roman citizen and was probably accorded that name at birth, along with his Jewish name.
 - 2] This was the appropriate time to use his Roman name as he ministered in Roman controlled regions.
 - b) Paul was empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak directly to Bar-Jesus
 - 1] *the Holy Spirit* (9b)
 - a] The Holy Spirit chose Paul to combat this attack on the Gospel.
 - b] This was an empowerment for a specific action.
 - c] Paul would have primary leadership of the team from this point on.
 - 2) Paul declared Bar-Jesus guilty (9b-10), ***looked intently at him 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?"***
 - a) Paul called him the son of the devil.
 - 1] Elymas called himself Bar-Jesus which means *son of Jesus* but he was actually the son of the devil.
 - 2] His desire to suppress the Gospel came from his relationship, not to Jesus but to the devil.
 - b) He accused Bar-Jesus of attempting to distort the message of the Lord.
 - 1] *enemy of righteousness*
 - a] Bar-Jesus attacked the message of the Gospel which is true.
 - b] He was only true to his own interests and those of his father, Satan.
 - 2] *full of deceit*
 - a] He sought to deceive others for his own gain.
 - b] He was a fraud.
 - 3] *villainy*
 - a] He was willing to say or do anything to keep control regardless of the harm it could bring.
 - b] He didn't want the proconsul to believe because that would undermine Bar-Jesus' control.
 - 4] *will you not*
 - a] This was a rhetorical question with an obvious answer, *no*.
 - b] Bar-Jesus wanted to discredit the message of God for his benefit.
 - c] Ministry is spiritual warfare

- 3) Punishment was inflicted immediately on Bar-Jesus by God (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.*
 - a) The judgment came directly from God.
 - 1] Bar-Jesus would become blind for a time.
 - 2] This was a judgment for his actions with a temporary punishment.
 - 3] The opportunity would still open to him to turn to the Lord.
 - 4] We serve a gracious God.
 - b) The judgment validated Paul and his message.
 - 1] The primary purpose for a miracle was to confirm the message and the messenger.
 - 2] Since the completion of the New Testament, God’s message and messengers are validated by the Bible.
 - c) Bar-Jesus looked for those who would lead him by the hand.
 - 1] He was shown to be a fraud.
 - 2] Saul, the persecutor of Christians, lost his sight and had to be led by hand into Damascus.
 - 3] Bar-Jesus tried to keep a Gentile from coming to faith, lost his sight and had to be led by hand.
 - 4] The proconsul would look on with eyes of faith.
 - d) Stanley Toussaint, *This is the first of Paul’s recorded miracles and it was performed in conflict with a Jew over giving the gospel to a Gentile.*
- c. The Gentile proconsul believed in Jesus on the basis of what he heard and saw (12), *Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*
 - 1) The proconsul believed in Jesus based on what he saw and heard.
 - a) Belief was all that was necessary for his salvation.
 - b) The Gospel was being proclaimed without any encumbrances.
 - 1] Gentiles do not need to come to Judaism to become Christians.
 - 2] Gentiles just need to come to Jesus.
 - 2) The proconsul was astonished at the teaching concerning Jesus.
 - a) He equated what he saw in the miracle to the doctrine he had received.
 - b) The miracle confirmed the message, a stark contrast to Bar-Jesus’ message which only brought darkness.
 - c) The greatest miracle is when a person passes from death to life.

CONCLUSION

- A. At the beginning of Paul’s first missionary journey, the new emphasis of ministry to Gentiles is seen in the contrasting responses on Cyprus.
- B. The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit is evident as He empowers Saul to overcome forces that wanted to stop the progress of the Gospel.
- C. God is still calling and churches are still sending men and women to share the Gospel around the world.