

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0902 – January 11, 2009 – Acts 13:1-3 – The First Missionaries

Question: In the doctrine of giving you have the order give to the Jew first. Why have we never been taught this and could you please elaborate.

I will gladly elaborate. We touched on this out of chapter 11:26-30 where the Gentile disciples in Antioch send money to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem to help relieve the famine situation in Judea. Let me first explain why this has never been taught and then why we should give to the Jew first, why that's a doctrinal principle and not just a historical practice of Paul. The basic reason this is not taught goes back to church history. In the early church by the second century the theology under Origen and Augustine was basically that the Church had replaced Israel, that God was through with the Jews and so there was very little development of the Doctrine of Israel. And during this whole time the Church was confused with the Kingdom and still is in most denominations. It wasn't until the 1830s under John Nelson Darby when the separation of the Church from the Kingdom of Israel really began to be developed. And for the last 200 years scholars have been working on this. All through church history you had Systematic Theology, it went under different titles, elenctic theology, dogmatic theology, institutes, these were just different names for the discipline of what we call today Systematic Theology. Systematic Theology is what God has revealed to us brought together into a logical system. In other words you're trying to show how every revealed truth relates to every other truth. And there are lots of Systematic Theology's available today. In them you will find different headings, they're pretty standard fare; Bibliology, Christology, Hamartiology, Eschatology, etc...all these are subsets of knowledge in a Systematic Theology. One section absent in all Systematic Theology's until the 1970's was Israelology. The reason Israel was not given a distinct heading is because, as I explained before, most of the church accepted the replacement of Israel by the Church

until 1830. So in the 1970's Arnold Fruchtenbaum wrote his thesis at the New York University to correct this aberration in Systematic Theology. It's called *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. So here we have an in-depth analysis and addition to Systematic Theology. One of the areas has to do with the doctrine of giving by the individual and the local church in the mission's realm. And I want to read from his book, page 852-856, I will read at length. This is the why we should give to Jewish missions first. [Extended reading with remarks]. Having read all that. I just call them how I see them. You can disagree but this is how I see it.

A second question, really more of a clarification. Apparently I was unclear about the ancestry of Herod Agrippa so before we finish the scene out I want to show you this slide. Somewhere last week I said Herod Agrippa was the great-great grandson of Herod the Great. That was a slip, he was simply the grandson of Herod the Great. Herod the Great we said was an Idumean and one of the women he married was the Hasmonean princess Mariamne I. She was Jewish. They had a son named Aristobulus and then Aristobulus and one of his wives had the son Herod Agrippa. So he's just a grandson of Herod the Great.

Now we have the last scene, verses 19-25 close out the story, they pick up the major story, we've seen the minor story now of Peter's escape; we've seen that in that minor story, obviously the Christians didn't execute it, they didn't pull it off, good night, when it happened they didn't even know what was going on. In fact, did you notice, Peter, when he was led out by the angel can't believe it's real and when he comes knocking on the door the people who were praying can't believe it's real. So if it's left up to Christians and the resources we have we could never pull it off. That's the theme of this small story. But now the bigger story. The bigger story can't conclude without one last detail. Herod must be taken care of. The curse must fall on Herod Agrippa for he cursed the Jewish remnant. Principle of Gen 12:3.

And so we read in Acts 12:20, **²⁰Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. ²¹On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an address to them. ²²The**

people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!”²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.²⁴ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.

Now this tragic scene of Herod was set in the middle of an economic war. Caesarea is one of the great ports on the Mediterranean, built by the Romans as an eastern cargo place. Out from Palestine came things like dates, wine, grain. This was the production; that production had to go to Europe, to Italy, to Greece, to Lebanon and there were two ports of exit. One port was Caesarea and the other one is up here, what is now Lebanon, Tyre. They both shared business of the exports of the Levant, but what had happened is that Tyre was making a lot of money in transportation and not in agriculture and they got in cross purpose with Herod and so what he did, he just cut off the produce and he was waging an economic war against the city of Tyre and their businessmen. So they come up and they make it good with Blastus, his chamberlain, they bribe him to get into Agrippa, that's verse 20. Now there's nothing wrong, this may startle some of you, but there's nothing wrong in Scripture with offering a bribe; that is never stated to be a sin. What is stated to be a sin in Scripture is the accepting of a bribe. You say that may be quibbling; no it isn't. The Church is given the freedom in times of persecution to bribe the officials to look the other way and we can do so without sinning. That is a built in control, a degree of freedom that Christ has given His Church. It's being used today in Tibet by missionaries who are desperately trying to get Bibles in there. So you come up to some guard and they bribe the guard, and lots of money we give to support these people goes to bribe guards and it's being done as unto the Lord. There's nothing wrong with offering bribes, accepting them, that's the wrong. So they got into Agrippa through bribes.

On this particular day Herod arrays himself and allows himself to be deified. It's the ultimate idolatry of the State to permit itself to be called a “god” yet that's exactly what happened.

Now you may say that's a nice interesting story, but fortunately for us as Christians somebody else was there in the stadium that day; his name was Josephus. He saw the same thing. Here's the report from his eyes of what we read in Acts 13. “On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being

illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery... A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life;"ⁱ And it goes on to describe that within five days the man died, his body being eaten while he was dying, of worms, in perfect harmony with Luke's account.

Now we have to, as Christians, when we read something like verse 23, we wonder, it sounds almost like the word of God relishes the violent death of people like Herod Agrippa. It's playing up the blood and the guts of it. You read a similar account early in the Book of Acts. Whose violent death is rejoiced in Acts 1? Judas. Remember his body was cut down from a tree and fell about three stories, he landed headlong and his guts just exploded all over the place, his intestines spilled all over the ground, and its blood and guts, its gore. Why does the Bible go into all this gore? Just tell me the guy died. Uh, uh, that's not good enough for these people. This is part of the judgments against Satanic movements in history, all those that lay a hand on God's people will wind up that way; that's what it's saying. It's a foreview of God's fierce wrath unleashed against those opposed to Him and His people. It happened against men like Antiochus Epiphanes IV who was a forerunner of the Antichrist. It happened to Agrippa's grandfather, Herod the Great, and it happened to Agrippa as well. God likes to pick out certain one's who really go after the Jews and make an example of them. Show them as an example of what's coming for all who reject Christ. So Christians down through the years have rejoiced in the violent deaths of the persecutors of the Church.

I realize some of you don't think verse 23 is necessary. No it is necessary, it's justice. The Christian must be assured that justice will win out, that good is absolutely superior to evil. So therefore thank God for the violent death of Herod, it shows who is in charge.

Now the last verses, Acts 12:24 is a major theme of all of Acts, **But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.** Persecution always, always, always results in growth; numerical growth and spiritual depth growth, you can't create growth by marketing gimmicks, it occurs when

the church is persecuted and when the word of God is taught. So the persecutors are killed but the word of God advances.

And verse 25 is a transition verse summing up things before we move into chapter 13. Chapter 13 is a major shift in the Acts of the Holy Spirit. So let's see how Luke sums it up, **And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.** Now, their mission was to take famine relief to the saints at Jerusalem. This could have been placed at the end of chapter 11 but it's better placed here as a sort of grand conclusion before the first missionary journey in chapter 13. And so after they delivered the funds provided by the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers they picked up John, also called Mark, this is John Mark the author of the Gospel of Mark, and they took him back to Antioch. Now we come to Antioch in chapter 13. The First Missionary Journey. And today we just want to work by way of introduction to the first three verses. You say there's not a lot in there, well I beg to differ there's an important bit of information here.

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
(NASB95)

Acts 13:1-3 Now, there were (3PIAI) distributed to the church in Antioch prophets and teachers; Barnabas and Simeon, the one called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian; Manaen, brought up with Herod the tetrarch and Saul. ²While they were praying to the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart (2PAAImp) to me Barnabas and Saul to the work that I have called (1SPerfAI) them." ³After fasting and praying and laying their hands on them, they sent them away (3PAAI).
(Author's Translation)

Acts 13:1-3 Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὖσαν ἐκκλησίαν προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι ὃ τε Βαρναβᾶς καὶ Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ καὶ

Λούκιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος, Μαναὴν τε Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετραάρχου σύντροφος καὶ Σαῦλος. ²Λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς. ³τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν. (NA27)

This is a major shift in the Book of Acts. In chapters 1-12 the key character has been Peter, in chapters 13-28 Paul is the key character. So there's a shift in the main personnel Luke is interested in and that's because Luke is tracing the gospel impact in the Roman Empire. He's not interested in chasing down all the ministries of the other apostles. Thomas for example went to India. John Thomas of our congregation is from India and he can tell you about the impact of the apostle Thomas in India that is still felt today. But Luke's purpose was to inform Theophilus, a government official of the Roman Empire of Christianity's affects on Rome, not India, not Africa, not Asia, men went there but Rome is his interest. Peter and Paul were the main instruments in this region and for this reason many have called the Book, *The Acts of Peter and Paul* but I still prefer *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* because behind the scenes everything is being set up by the Holy Spirit, not Peter and Paul.

Now, let's read verses 1-3. These are great men in the church, so for the parents out there, here are some names you might want to bring back into circulation. **Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**

Let's look at some of the details. Now there were at Antioch. Antioch was one of the great Roman cities, the third largest city in the entire Roman Empire. It was located along the Levantine seaboard up in modern day Syria. The church here was established when Jewish believers went there and preached. They had been forced out of Jerusalem in connection with Stephen's death. When Stephen was martyred Saul went on a rampage destroying the church

and so Jerusalem became a very dangerous place to live. So many of them ran up the coast to Antioch and Cyprus and started preaching the gospel and they had tremendous Gentile response to the gospel in Antioch. Drove of Gentiles were believing in Christ and so Barnabas was sent up by the Jerusalem church to see what was happening and because he had the gift of encouragement and he could really spur the new believers on, nevertheless he did not have the gift of teaching and therefore he went to find Saul, because Saul did have the gift of teaching, Saul was a theological genius, an absolutely masterful communicator. And so Saul came and trained these Gentile believers, twelve hours a week minimum he taught them. The emphasis in Acts is not on experience as is so often made the emphasis by the tongues crowd. The emphasis is on teaching, teaching, teaching. The content of the word of God is absolutely crucial to Christian growth. You simply cannot grow in a church that does not teach the word of God. And yet I hear pastors apologize for bringing up a verse or two. I make no apology for teaching the word and neither would Paul. The apologies should be made by those pastors who do not teach the word of God. That's their job. Jesus said, "If you love Me, feed My sheep." Therefore, I make no apology for the massive amounts of content taught here. That's what you need, that's what we all need, the pure word of God. And so Paul taught and taught and taught the word of God to these believers and as a result you have a tremendous church arise at Antioch. A church that will now become the sending agency of two of the world's greatest missionaries.

Let's see how it happens. Now there were at Antioch in the church that was *there* and we make a grammatical notation here. See the phrase in the church, that's *kata* with the accusative of church. And it's in the distribute sense. In other words the Holy Spirit had distributed believers with two kinds of gifts to the Church at Antioch: prophets and teachers. He had given these gifted people to the church at Antioch. God positions certain individuals in congregations to fulfill certain needs unique to the congregation. So right away we already see the Holy Spirit behind the scenes. He had given them prophets and teachers. These are spiritual gifts. We cannot go into detail this morning on it, but there are such things as spiritual gifts given to the body of Christ. If this morning you are one of those who has trusted in Christ, that means that you have at least one spiritual gift. How do you know your spiritual gift? Well you don't figure it out by taking a psychological examination or a personality profile. I don't know how many of these

spiritual gifts inventories I've filled out, but they were nothing more than psychological profiles. Yet psychological profiles didn't even exist until the 1950's so what did Barnabas and Paul do? Did poor Barnabas and Paul never figure out what their gift was? Nonsense. They discovered their gifts as they followed the Lord, as they matured it became apparent to their consciousness after awhile that, "Hey, you know, I've got an area in which I can serve the Lord here. I've got a capacity to serve Him; in fact I enjoy serving Him in this area, and other people are blessed by it." If you don't know your spiritual gift then just stick around, take in the word of God, soon enough you'll know, it will become apparent because the Lord will make it apparent. There are no shortcuts to discovering these. There are several gifts still operational in the church, some of them were sign gifts given to the early church when it was in the foundational stage. Now that the foundation has been laid we're in the building phase and certain gifts are still given. Maybe you have the gift of helps. Someone has a need and you just naturally fill the need, you long to help these people. Why? Because that's your spiritual gift. Or you have the gift of administration. And these people naturally are able to handle finances and manage church affairs. I'll tell you right now I'm not one of them, I don't have that gift. but I can appreciate those who do. The Lord gives these to the church. And there are other gifts, several other gifts, all important.

So in Acts 13:1 we have two gifts mentioned prophets and teachers. Now prophets are men gifted by the Holy Spirit to receive direct revelation from God, they were the mouthpieces of God and could oftentimes foretell future events. This gift was operational for the completion of the NT canon and has since been discontinued. The second gift is the teachers and they could be pastor-teachers or just teachers but these are men gifted by the Holy Spirit to expound the word of God, to explain the word of God to others so they can understand it.

So you had these two gifts mentioned in connection with these five men. But the Greek hints that we can know which are **prophets** and which are **teachers**. There's a unique structure here that is lost in your English translation. In the English we use colons and semicolons to mark of distinct sets in a sentence. In the Greek the equivalent was the particle *te*, that was a dividing line, that marked off a boundary. And what do you find but that Greek construction used among these men's names. So you have the particle *te* then three names; Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius, then the particle *te* again

and two names; Manaen and Saul. That's the structure. Obviously the particles are setting off the first three men as a group and the last two men as a group. And what that means is that the first three are prophets and the last two are teachers. So Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius are prophets and Manaen and Saul are teachers.ⁱⁱ

Alright, let's look at these five men. Barnabas first. Barnabas we've already been introduced to at the end of chapter 4. Barnabas we know was a wealthy man because he had large property holdings out on the island of Cyprus and he sold that property giving the proceeds to the Church. So he's a man of independent means, we would say. He was a man who therefore could go on a missionary enterprise on his own financial resources. He did not have to be supported by a local church. He could support himself on the field. So first he was wealthy. Second he was from the island of Cyprus, what does that mean? Well, where does the first missionary journey go to first? The isle of Cyprus. You see how strategic the Holy Spirit is in this choice? This man knows the people on Cyprus, he's known by the people on Cyprus, he's got contacts on the island and he's independently wealthy. So who better to send over to the island of Cyprus than Barnabas? So the Holy Spirit is not stupid in choosing Barnabas, he's brilliant and he uses the natural background of these people in his strategy to reach the lost.

What else do we know about Barnabas? Well we know he was the cousin of John Mark (Col 4:10). John Mark was introduced in verse 25 and he'll be taken along in verse 5. John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark. And so Barnabas' sister was the mother of Mark. You see it's all in the family here. And throughout the Book of Acts it works out from the family and these people keep running into one another, they'll be in Ephesus or Corinth or Rome and they're all running into one another and you think, "Gee, small world." This happens with believers too. I was in Israel in 2006 walking the streets of Jerusalem and there's Arnold Fruchtenbaum walking along. Two believers, Jew and Gentiles who sat down and ate together in Lubbock, TX a few years earlier and here we bump into each other on the streets of Jerusalem, small world, the Lord orchestrates these things. And that's one of the stories of the Book of Acts.

So Barnabas' sister is Mary, the mother of John Mark. She's the one who had the big house in the wealthy district of Jerusalem. She had the large upper

room where the disciples commonly met. This is where they had the Last Supper. This is where they were praying as they waited for the Holy Spirit in Acts 1. This is where they chose the 12th apostle. This is where they were praying when Peter was in prison last week and he came knocking on Mary's gate. So Mary was wealthy too, just like Barnabas, she had means and she provided the first church building. So think of how wealth was used in the early church. Barnabas used wealth to help the widows in Jerusalem, he used it to fund the first missionary enterprise. His sister Mary used it to provide the first church building. Wealth played a major role in the early church. There's nothing wrong with having wealth.

Another thing about Barnabas, in verse 5 he takes along John Mark. Now why did he take along John Mark? I suggest it's because they're training him, John Mark is an up and coming Bible student and these guys mentored the young up and coming believers. It wasn't Bible teaching alone. When they proved themselves to be zealous and excellent Bible students the teachers personally mentored them, gave them first hand training, an art lost among pastors and teachers today. Pass them on to faithful men who will teach others also. That's John Mark.

Alright, lets move on to the second prophet, Simeon, a Jewish name but with a Latin nickname, Niger. Very interesting nickname, the Latin betrays his movement in and out of Roman circles. He's also listed closely with Lucius of Cyrene. Cyrene is in North Africa. And putting those two factors together we gather that he was a black man which shows you that we have a very cosmopolitan group of believers in Antioch. One of the leading prophets in the church was a black man. And so the early church was not black or white it was red and yellow, black and white, the amalgamation happened very quickly, the Lord had placed a mixture of people together at Antioch. Men from many lands and many backgrounds had discovered a unity among one another because they had a unity in Jesus Christ. The early church perfected the scene we see in heaven where people of every tribe, tongue and nation worship together.

But there's something more here about Simeon because he's closely associated with Lucius of Cyrene. We can't be dogmatic here but *if* both of these men were from Cyrene *then* we have a very interesting story. Turn to Mark 15:21, the scene of Christ carrying His cross. He's endured the beating

at the hands of the Roman soldiers, He goes through the streets, they're spitting on Him and mocking Him, He's weak and He drops the cross. And so verse 21, "They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene...to carry his cross." If this is the Simeon we met in Acts 13:1, the black man, then he is the very man who carried Christ's cross for Him. And if this is correct then it fits very nicely with Gen 9 where Ham's sons are said to serve Shem's son. And here Jesus as a son of Shem is served by Simeon, a son of Ham on His way to crucifixion.

Simeon, it is also noted is the father of two men; "Alexander and Rufus." And if we turn to Rom 16:13 we find another historical connection. As Paul signs off his letter to the Romans he says, "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine." Now that's a strange phrase, "his mother and mine." What does this mean? It doesn't mean that Rufus' mother was literally Paul's mother. It means that she sort of adopted him as his mother when he was in Antioch. She became fond of Paul and when Paul would come back to Antioch he would lodge in her home. See, Paul was basically cut off from all his family relationships. His father had sent him off to Jerusalem to become a great rabbi and when he came home he was a up and coming student in the Christian faith. And his father blew up and kicked him out of the home. So Paul was cut off from all family relationships and Rufus' mother, who was from North Africa, but had moved to Antioch, and every time Paul would visit he would stay in the house of Simeon and his wife. And Paul looked upon her as his own mother.

The third prophet on this list who is undoubtedly from Cyrene is Lucius, we don't know much about Lucius other than he was from Cyrene in North Africa and he traveled to Antioch and began preaching to the Gentiles early on (Acts 11:20). We know nothing else of him. But keep in mind, some of these people we may not know much about but when we get to heaven all these people are going to be there. And you'll get the opportunity to go and talk to these men and then you can get the rest of the story. And I say that to keep you focused on the fact that these people were people just like you and I. They didn't wear golden robes and float around on clouds, these people were real people living out the Christian faith in their time just as we do in our time. Real people with real stories that one day we will meet. And when we do we will have great conversations about how the Lord worked this grace in our lives and that grace.

The fourth man is Manaen, and this is the break, the Greek particle *te* there indicates a break so we move from the first three men who are prophets to the last two men who are teachers. The first of them is Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Now the name Manaen is the shortened form of the Hebrew name Menachem. Maybe you've heard of Menachem Begin, one of the key Jewish men militarily and politically in the modern state of Israel. He was a liberator of the nation of Israel and fought many battles for the freedom of the nation Israel, a war that has not ceased in the Arab mind from 1948. For them it's non-stop war in the goal of exterminating the Jewish people. Well Menachem was the name of this teacher in the early church.

And there's a fantastic note here about Manaen, he had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, you have to pay attention to these notes, the Holy Spirit puts these notes in here for a purpose, He wants us to think about this, He points out this man who was one of the great teachers at Antioch had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Why is this note here? And it's another fascinating story.

Now this is not the Herod Agrippa that died in Acts 12; this is Herod Antipas. They were both in the line of Herod the Great but through different wives. Herod the Great had several wives and if he didn't like you he'd just have you knocked off and take another wife which he did on several occasions. Now Herod Antipas was given a tetrarchy, that means he ruled a fourth of the empire that Herod the Great ruled and he ruled during Christ's day over in the area of Transjordan, which is now the state of Jordan, that area. And being a part of the Herodian family he inherited some of the evil of that family. He's the one who Jesus calls in the gospels "The Fox" because that summed up the way this man ruled. He was sly. Now he had a wife, a very vicious wife and they had a daughter, and the daughter was like the mother, both vicious, she followed mama. And mama didn't like the prophets of God and particularly she didn't like John the Baptist because one day John the Baptist called her an adulteress and it really ticked her off, so the day came when her daughter was having a birthday party and daddy said ask whatever you want and I'll get it for you, warning, don't ever do that parents, because this little girl's mother instructed her to ask for the head of John the

Baptist as a birthday present, wrap it up and present it, so she did. And that's how Herod Antipas became the murderer of John the Baptist.

Now what's fascinating about Manaen is this little note about him being brought up with Herod the Fox. And what that means is that Manaen was the same age as the little boy prince. How this happened goes back to how the Roman royalty would select who their children were going to play with in boyhood. Just like today you move into a new town and as parents you discriminate, you let them play with some kids you don't let them play with others, actually a very wise principle, a biblical principle. Well the Roman royalty were very discriminatory and to get their kids playing with the kids they wanted they would build large pavilions to house whole families they wanted their kids to grow up around. And they'd move the grandfathers and grandmothers, the aunts and uncles, the parents and the children and so they were raised together. Little Manaen and little Herod Antipas, they played together, were taught by the same teachers, ate together, day in, day out for the entire upbringing.

Now isn't it interesting that the Holy Spirit injects this note? Two boys raised in the same environment, raised under the same rules, raised under the same education and yet one turns out to be a persecutor of the faith and the other a defender of the faith. And what do we have in the last century? B.F. Skinner come along and tell us that it's all the environment, it's all behaviorism, your upbringing determines everything and so all we have to do to create the society we want is determine the upbringing, control the environment of these little buggers. Yet how does Skinner's behaviorist psychology explain this? Two boys, same environment, same teachers, same everything and yet two radically different individuals. One a violent murderer the other one of the greatest grace oriented teachers the church has ever known.

Now the last one, of course, Saul, who was the theological genius of the five. An absolute genius. Now look at these men, Barnabas is wealthy, he can fund the whole missionary journey out of his pocket, Simeon, a black prophet who possibly carried the cross of Christ, an eyewitness of that event. Manaen who was raised in the royal pavilion, has high contacts in the Roman government. And Saul, the guy who outranks everyone on planet earth in theology. These men listed in verse 1 are not small men. These are men who were in high places, had lots of contact and were well-trained. Now maybe you can see

from this how smart the Holy Spirit is. Sometimes you get the tendency to look out on the Church and say, “What on earth is the Lord doing with this thing called the Church?” Don’t ever say that because while you may not be able to see what He’s up to He does. And here’s a perfect case in point. Looking back we can see the tremendous strategy He’s working here and it should be an encouragement to our lives because if He was working a strategy with them then He’s working a strategy with us. We just have to be spiritually sensitive enough to follow the strategy.

Verses 2 and 3 quickly, While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, now notice they were already doing something in the Christian life. They were not just standing still. Some Christians just sit on the couch waiting for God to direct them. God directs when we are already moving in the Christian life. As one author said, “It is easier to direct a ship that is in motion than one that is standing still.”ⁱⁱⁱ Don’t just sit there, get moving, do something and the Lord will direct. While ministering and fasting, now the ministering in this context is prayer, they were praying and this was going on and on, this was not the 21st century prayer meeting, these people prayed for hours and hours and hours. “Lord, teach us to pray.” That’s what the disciples meant when they asked Jesus. Teach us how it is you can attend to this ministry for so long. Apparently the Lord Jesus prayed for an hour minimum. And along with prayer there was fasting. They probably didn’t know the physiological effects of fasting but we do. What happens physiologically when you eat? All the blood rushes to the digestive tract. Away from where? The brain. You can’t focus intently very long when you’re eating because all the nutrients needed are down in your stomach. So if you have trouble concentrating put your fork down, get a cup of water and get to work. These men fasted and it enabled them to concentrate, concentrate, concentrate for hours on end. Sometimes spiritual things are so important that you just skip eating. I do this fairly often in my study, I’ll just work through lunch because I’m so concentrated on what I’m trying to learn, need to pough through the material. Man does not live on bread alone.

And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Now, the Holy Spirit did this in a verbal way, evidently through one of the three prophets, Barnabas, Simeon or Lucius, we're not told but God speaks to the prophets. This is divine guidance and while this verbal revelation occurred in the early church you can't make this the norm for all time, he guides in different ways today so don't expect this in your own life. This, incidentally, is a very definite proof of the personality of **the Holy Spirit**. Every once in a while you run into binitarians, people who believe the Father and the Son are people but the Holy Spirit is just a force or influence. Now tell me when an influence said words like this. Obviously the Holy Spirit is not just an influence in our lives, He's a person who speaks, He's the revealer of the word of God.^{iv}

And so here we have His personal selection of the first two missionaries, Barnabas and Saul. One is a prophet, the other is a teacher, He selected one from each group. And notice, did these two people select themselves? Did they do the modern song and dance, "I want to go to Argentina and be a missionary?" No, these men waited patiently on the Lord and when He made the choice the choice He made were two top notch believers, they had years of training, and they were unsettled knowing that apart from Christ there was no salvation, and having had years of teaching, tons of content, coupling all this together with the fact they're going to Cyprus and Barnabas was a native, they were sent out with the message of the so great salvation. The two most advanced believers at Antioch were chosen by God the Spirit. Now you think that training might be important? It might not be important to you but it's important to God the Holy Spirit. When He wants to get some work done He does not send out some new believer or some idiot. He sends out mature believers, men who've spent years and years faithfully training in the word of God. Training, training, training, then they are hand picked for this mission trip.

Alright, let's move to verse 3, **Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them**, that is the church, the church went through this procedure, they laid hands on them, that was a formal commissioning, they didn't pour oil all over their heads, this was a dry ceremony where they authorized them to be represent the Church of Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were merely an extension of the ministry of that local church. This was not a para-church organization. And with that said a note about para-church missions' agencies. Missions is to be an extension of the local church, not an

independent organization. I've talked with para-Church organizations and there are a lot of problems you run into when you separate missions from the Church. For one, and what I see as the greatest problem is that when a missionary goes out there and establishes a local church but he himself is not from a church what connections to other local churches does the new church have? So you have this severing of the body of Christ. You don't find para-Church in the NT because of that very problem. All you've done is connected a local church to your organization. So I'm not for it, I know there are reasons historically why it happened, the church dropped the ball, they weren't sending missionaries out, but if you are a church that recognizes the importance of missions then start training your own and sending them out, have them establish another church that's connected to your church. That's what Paul and Barnabas did. Every church Paul and Barnabas established was anchored back to Antioch and Antioch was anchored back to Jerusalem, there are close ties. Today we don't have any ties. And it's a tragedy, the church is split into a 1,000 different groups, and it's just a big mess.

Alright, so chapter 13 here is not bankruptcy, it's a tremendous success because now for the first time the Church is responding positively to the stimuli of the Holy Spirit. They make the first extensive evangelistic journey into property that is in no sense Jewish, they're going out into the Gentile world and they're going with the sending agency and blessing of the Church.

ⁱ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1996, c1987). *The works of Josephus : Complete and unabridged*.

Includes index. (Ant 19.346-347). Peabody: Hendrickson.

ⁱⁱ An alternative explanation is that the particle *te* is used for stylistic purposes in Luke's writings. This is a possibility. Perhaps the best view is that all five had the gift of prophet and teacher but the first three had a greater measure of the gift of prophecy and the last two had a greater measure of the gift of teacher.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003).

^{iv} William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995), Ac 13:2.

[Back To The Top](#)