

“Missionary Activity”
Acts 13:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, April 26, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we enter into **Chapter 13** we begin a new section in the Book of Acts. The Book is neatly divided along the lines of our Lord's commission in **Chapter 1**.
Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
 - A. Chapters 1-7 concern the preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem.
 - B. Chapters 8-12 tell of the work in Judaea and Samaria
 - C. Beginning with Chapter 13 we have the account of the expansion to the uttermost parts of the earth.
2. This chapter opens with the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas to go to the mission field to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and their ordination service with fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands.
3. We find the church of Antioch as their base of operation. Antioch had started as a new Gentile church. They had excellent teaching under Barnabas and Paul and in a short period they had been strengthened into a powerful church. **Verse 1** tells us that the church was blessed with many able men. Now they are sending out missionaries to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
4. Antioch had also become a very diverse church. It was a Gentile church but the names of their leaders represent several very different groups in the Roman Empire who under normal circumstances would have despised one another. The rich despised the poor, the Romans did not like the Greeks; the Jews didn't like anybody. Christianity removes such hostilities and prejudices.
 - A. Luke describes this diverse group
 - Barnabas was a Jew, a Levite who was from Cyprus
 - Simeon is called Niger – probably a man of black skin.
 - Lucius of Cyrene – Lucius is a Latin name so he was probably a Roman
 - Manaen is a Greek form of a Hebrew name so he was probably a Hellenistic Jew. He had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch which probably made him a man of high station.
 - Paul, of course, was an ex-Pharisee who formerly despised Christians
 - B. This diverse group that normally would have kept their distance from one another now worked in love and harmony in the ministry of Christ.
5. They maintained an emphasis on their devotion to Christ.
Acts 13:2 – “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted”
 - A. “ministered” - *λειτουργέω* - in this context it refers to the performance of religious service. We get our word liturgy from it.

- B. It was while they worshipped and prayed and fasted that God made His will known. God reveals Himself to those that seek Him
6. In these verses we find the sending forth the first of many missionaries into the Gentile world – Paul and Barnabas. In these verses we also find Paul coming to maturity and preeminence. We find the switch from the use of the name Saul to the name Paul and we also find him becoming the leader – more and more from Barnabas and Paul to Paul and Barnabas – **See Acts 12:25; 13:2, 7 – Compare with Verse 13, 43, 46**
- I. Missionaries are sent
- A. Missionaries are commissioned and sent forth by God
- Verse 2** – "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."
- Verse 4** – "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,"
1. In **Verse 2** we read "Separate me Barnabas and Saul"
 - a. Literally it says, "separate for me" – God separates weak men to use for Himself
 - b. In **Verse 3** we read they were sent.
We get our the word missionary from the Latin word misso which means "to send"
 2. This is true for missionaries as well as ministers of the Gospel. They are chosen, equipped, and sent by God
 - a. We see this in **Romans 10**
Romans 10:13-15 – "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"
 - b. Christ commissions and sends forth His ministers. He stirs their hearts and then stirs the hearts of other pastors who then confirm the call.
Matthew Henry – "God only can qualify men for, and incline them to, the work of the ministry. But the competency of that qualification, and the sincerity of that inclination, must not be left to the judgment of every man for himself: the nature of the thing will by no means admit this; but, for the preservation of due order in the church, this must needs be referred and submitted to the judgment of a competent number of those who are themselves in that office and of approved wisdom and experience in it, who, as in all other callings, are presumed the most able judges, and who are empowered to set apart such as they find so qualified and inclined to this work of the ministry"
 3. We falsely have this view today that the only requirement is that an individual decides to go into a particular work.
 - a. Keith Green's song,
"Jesus commands us to go
It should be the exception if you stay"

- b. All of us have a part in the mission endeavor
We must all pray, we must all provide support but obviously we are not all called to go.
 - c. This view stems from our unhealthy individualism.
 - (1) There is the mentality - "I'm as qualified to go as anyone else." This may be true, but not all are sent.
 - (2) This is the same attitude many have towards pastoral authority
 - (3) Notice all of these men were equally qualified – all were prophets and teachers – Paul and Barnabas were sent
 - 4. On the other hand, we must not set an unbiblical barrier. God may be calling one of you to the office of pastor – We need to pray that God would raise up pastors and that many would be sent forth as missionaries.
- B. They are sent under the authority of the church
Acts 13:3 – "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away."
- 1. The church was doing what all churches must do – they were ministering to the Lord. Their hearts were devoted to Him.
 - a. They were ministering to the Lord by serving Him, honoring Him
They were ministering to Him by praying, seeking Him, and fasting as a sign of humiliation and mortification.
 - b. We should see fasting as the norm for believers.
 - c. God honored their faithfulness to Him by directing them and blessing their work both in the church and beyond. God commanded them to send forth Paul and Barnabas
 - 2. Paul and Barnabas was sent forth under the authority of the Church of Antioch
 - a. It was the church that affirmed the call of Paul and Barnabas and they were sent out under the authority of the church.
 - b. God has granted authority to His church
The early church saw took its responsibilities seriously – they prayed diligently and they fasted – and they received a word from God
 - c. Paul and Barnabas were ordained and sent forth.
Being sent by the church they were accountable to the church –
See Acts 14:26-28
 - d. All Christian ministry must be conducted under the authority of the local church.
- II. The second thing we see is that they were sent forth with a particular work
- A. The first work is to preach the gospel
Acts 13:5 – "And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister."

1. God has ordained His Word and primarily the preaching of the Word as the means of transmitting His transforming Word. It is the means of life – of Christian Conversion
Corinthians 1:21 – “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
Romans 10:17 – “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
 2. The deputy was astonished not at just the miracle but the teaching
Acts 13:12 – “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”
 - a. The truth of the Word of God must be applied to the souls of men
 - b. The primary duty of the church is to direct men to their chief need, the only cure. We point men to the problem of sin and preach Christ as the Redeemer and then trust God for His transforming grace.
 - c. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth - Preaching is the chief means to deliver these truths
 3. Even when our missionary work is of a benevolent nature our chief focus must be the Gospel of Christ
- B. The second work of the missionary is to disciple the saints that they might teach others
1. We saw this in **Chapter 11** when the church of Jerusalem sent forth Barnabas as a missionary to Antioch - **See Acts 11:21-23**
 2. It is a great work to see God's people strengthened throughout the world – to see pastors in other countries taught sound doctrine that they might teach others.
2 Timothy 2:2 – “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”
- III. Finally, we see that the missionary is equipped with power to accomplish his work
- A. We are often guilty of forging ahead in our own strength
1. We try to conduct gospel work relying on our own abilities.
This is the danger of men who have natural ability.
We must understand our weakness and helplessness in Gospel work.
 2. To labor in our own strength is to guarantee certain failure
 3. God equips His men for this work
Paul tells Timothy:
1 Timothy 4:14-15 - Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”
Timothy's gift wasn't imparted by the laying on of hands – it was affirmed
- B. Gospel work is a supernatural work. It is beyond us.
1. Although all believers are not called to the mission field, nor are all called to be pastors, all are called to the great Gospel endeavor. All of us are to demonstrate Christ to those around us. Every time Christ healed someone they went forth and told others. All of us go in the power of God

2. The salvation of men's souls is a miracle from God – it is creating light from darkness. It is bringing life from death.
2 Corinthians 4:6 – "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
 3. No man can do such work on his own
Acts 1:8 – "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:"
 4. The Holy Spirit is not a power but a person – He is the third person of the Trinity. He is God. He is the Agent of regeneration, of sanctification, of equipping the saints. He empowers us for service.
 5. Paul and Barnabas were extremely able, yet their power was not their own
 6. In 1 Corinthians Paul explained the source of his power
1 Corinthians 2:3-5 – "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."
- C. This power will sustain us as we face opposition.
All who are involved in the Gospel endeavor should expect opposition
Acts 13:8 – "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."
1. Opposition to God's people can be fierce
 - a. Satan seeks to hinder the work of Christ
 - b. Satan seeks to lead us away from Christ – he tries to distract us
 2. A false prophet by the name of Barjesus began to with stand Paul
His name literally means son of Jesus or son of salvation. More appropriately he was a son of death and son of the devil.
Elymas literally means "wise man" when he was actually a fool.
Men often have high views of themselves.
 3. Look at the mighty power and boldness of Paul
See Verses 9-11
 4. God uses us effectually
Acts 13:12 – "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

Conclusion:

1. This marks only the beginning of the Great mission endeavor. The Gospel would indeed fill the earth.
2. God has sent forth His servants – we need to pray for more faithful laborers.
Matthew 9:37-38 – "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; ³⁸ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."
3. He has sent them forth with a particular mission – to preach the Word with boldness.
4. He has equipped them to face every opposition.
His Gospel cannot and will not be stopped from fulfilling God's perfect plan.
5. God is equipping you to serve Him