

## Journey 1: A Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Acts 13:4–52

Studies in Acts #17

© 2015 Daniel R. Hyde

“**A**re we there yet?” Parents, we’ve all heard that in the car on trip. Children, you’ve said it! And isn’t this how we think of trips? We leave and we want to get to our destination, but we don’t want the travel in the middle. Is this how we are to read travel narratives in the Bible?

As we turn to Acts 13 tonight, this is the beginning of Paul’s first missionary journey. And what we see overall is that this is not filler for Luke as he uses us a scroll. This is not just a quick narrative to get us to the end of Paul’s ministry. But this is the story of God himself, just as he journeyed with his people through the wilderness as the pillar of cloud and fire. Here in Paul’s first journey, we learn that it is *a ministry of the Holy Spirit*.

1. *A Spirit-Led Journey*
2. *A Spirit-Inspired Ministry*
3. *A Spirit-Given Fidelity*
4. *A Spirit-Given Joy*

### A Spirit-Led Journey

First, this is *a Spirit-led journey*. We read at the beginning: **So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit** (v. 4). From Antioch they journeyed 15 miles south to Seleucia, which was about a single day’s sail, and then 60 miles across the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Cyprus, first to the eastern city of Salamis. They were there at least a couple of weeks as they visited the **synagogues** and Paul typically preached on the Sabbath. Then they

traveled through the whole island of about 90 miles wide, and finally to Paphos on the western side, the Roman capital of the province (vv. 4–12). After at least several weeks of ministry there they sailed 188 miles **to Perga**, the capital of **Pamphylia**. Then they journeyed on the Via Sebaste through the Taurus Mountains to one of sixteen ancient cities called **Antioch in** the region of **Pisidia** (vv. 13–52), which was the most important Roman colony in the province of Galatia.

What do we learn? We talk a lot of the providence of God but we learn here that it's not just the Father and Son who are providential, but also the Holy Spirit. He leads our lives.

## **A Spirit-Inspired Ministry**

Second, this is a *Spirit-inspired ministry*. What did Paul do on his journeys? We read that he preached the Word. And his preaching was the work of the Holy Spirit: **But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit** (v. 9). We see this **in Salamis** as they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews (v. 5). Then we see this **in Pisidian Antioch** as Paul preached in the synagogue after being invited to speak by the rulers of the synagogue (v. 15). Let's look at this sermon in particular.

First, there is an introduction in verses 16–25. Paul traces the history of Israel from the Patriarchs, through David, and finally to Jesus Christ. But notice something: it's not them that he's tracing out. He's tracing the work of God himself. This is a history of God as the subject: God chose Israel (v. 17), he led them out of Egypt (v. 17), he put up with Israel for forty years (v. 18), he destroyed the seven nations, he gave Israel their land (v.

19), he gave Israel judges (v. 20), he gave them a king (v. 21), he removed Saul as king (v. 22), he raised up David (v. 22), and he brought Jesus from the line of David (v. 23). History truly is His-story.

Second, there is the heart of the message in verses 26–37, which focus on the work of Jesus for us. Paul models for us that preaching is to be Christ-centered. This is not a modern fad, but the apostolic example! God sent the message of salvation to Israel (v. 26) but they did not recognize him as the fulfillment of the Old Testament (v. 27). And so they crucified him (v. 28) and buried him (v. 29). Yet God raised him up (v. 30). And so the good news that came to the Patriarchs is now brought to you (v. 32) because Jesus fulfills the Scriptures in his resurrection, for example Psalm 2 (v. 33), Isaiah 55 (v. 34), and Psalm 16 (vv. 35–37).

Third, there is a conclusion in verses 38–41. In Christ, **forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you (v. 38) because by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (v. 39).**

What about the strange account in Paphos of the **magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus (v. 6) also known as Elymas the magician (v. 8)**? This shows us that the miracles of the apostles were all meant to authenticate their message.

What were the sermon's consequences? That leads to our next two points. Some believed; some did not.

## A Spirit-Given Fidelity

In response to Paul's preaching we learn a third point: *A Spirit-given fidelity*. In Salamis we read that **the proconsul believed...for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord** (v. 12).

In Pisidian Antioch **the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath** (v. 42) and **many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God** (v. 43). And that led to **the next Sabbath when almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord** (v. 44). I'll come back to verses 45 and following in the final point, but notice down in verse 47, after Paul says he was leaving the Jews to minister to the Gentiles according to the command of the Lord, we read: **And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region** (vv. 48-49). Here we are confronted with that age-old question: "why do some believe and some don't?" Notice verse 48: **as many as were appointed to eternal life believed**. Perfect passive verb signifying complete action that was performed by God. Faith is a gift of God to receive the work of God planned from all eternity for your soul.

For us, we are to pray. We are to labor. We are to befriend. We are to witness. We are to preach. We are to invite to church. And then we let God sort it out!

## **A Spirit-Given Joy**

But not all believed. In fact, we read that the Jewish leaders **were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him** (v. 45), and again that they **incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district** (v. 50). And so there is a final point: *a Spirit-given joy*. Where is that? The story goes from persecution from joy, and that joy comes from the Holy Spirit: **And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit** (v. 52).

Is this just a monotonous travelogue? Far from it. Biblical history is the story of God's work. And that God is still at work today. Where? Right here in our midst! Amen.