

Acts Week 37

Paul and Barnabas Are Sent to the Gentiles

Antioch was a major city and very important to Christianity, it would be here that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), we learned previously (Acts 9:2) they were called the Way. The city was a main hub for trade and one of the largest cities of the early Roman world.¹ There were several Antioch's in history but two became the focus regarding the spread of the Gospel. Antioch of Syria and Pisidia. We are not always informed in the Scripture which was which.

1 Now in the church that was at Antioch (Pisidia) there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

We find five different men listed here, all good men and seeking to do the Lord's work to which they were called. It is far better to have the Lord call you to serve because when He does you are not going to lack the essentials needed for the task. Paul is one of the Bible's most fascinating people... after Jesus called him out on the road to Damascus and then having been healed there from his blindness he traveled to Arabia. Paul remains in Arabia for approximately three years, Galatians 1:17, then returns to Damascus, early in the year A.D. thirty-seven, then leaves for his safety going up to Jerusalem.

Persecution was growing in Jerusalem so in the last part of A.D. thirty-seven Paul leaves to go back to Tarus. It would be in forty-seven that Barnabus would come to find Paul/Saul and travel to Antioch to teach. Barnabus and Saul take aid to Jerusalem still in forty-seven and then travel back to Antioch with John-Mark. At this point, the Holy Spirit said to separate Barnabus and Saul, **"Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** We must pay attention to what is being written here, we need to listen to and understand the importance of the calling. I have watched men eagerly seek to have a title, pastor, elder, and so on, to be recognized by others for the title but soon become frustrated with the struggle.

The best way to describe the road to such positions is to go only when God calls you to do so, pushing and desiring to be at what so many presume is the top is not made for many and it is not the top.

Paul writes to 1 Timothy 1:5-7; "5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed,

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-at-Antioch.html>

have turned aside to idle talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”²

James 3:1; My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. This fits very well with the old comment, be careful what you wish for. Pastor is not a title for one to brag about, it is a responsibility to care for the flock, to serve as Jesus served, and to display love toward others, it requires sacrifice and humility. Pastors are not to lord over others but to serve others and to teach others to serve. We can only imagine how this must have been for Paul to accept the changes God had called him to make.

Preaching in Cyprus

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John Mark as their assistant.

This would be the beginning of Saul’s first missionary trip, they went down to Seleucia where they would soon travel to Cyprus. John-Mark, (the cousin of Barnabus Colossians 4:10), is traveling with them acting as an assistant.

6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.”

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

It never ceases to amaze me how God gets a person's attention, “Get behind me, Satan,” Saul, Saul why do you persecute Me,” Gabriel comes down to Zachariah to tell him about the birth of his son and in his reluctance to believe Gabriel takes away his ability to talk. Talk about hurt, Zachariah can’t even complain. Here we see the same thing that happened to Saul, as Bar-Jesus is blinded for a time. But look who is now addressing another’s sin, none other than the chief persecutor himself, it must have been because Paul could relate. A sorcerer and a man who should be able to overcome through his magical abilities, was powerless against God.

² What was taking place in Ephesus was improper teachings, debates about meaningless issues, and a lack of knowledge in those who were most likely not called. It was Paul who sought to correct this by having certain men remain and teach, those who were mature in understanding.

At Antioch in Pisidia

13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. **14** But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia,³ and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. **15** And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.”

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: **17** The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. **18** Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. **19** And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

Paul is asked to address the people. This again demonstrates hearts that are searching for truth, pride is set aside so that better teaching may take place.

20 “After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. **21** And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. **22** And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’ **23** From this man’s seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus— **24** after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. **25** And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’

This is humility at its finest, I am not worthy to remove His dust-covered sandals. John did not say this to bring himself down but instead to raise Jesus up. This man is our salvation and I will praise Him always.

26 “Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. **27** For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. **28** And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. **29** Now when they had

³ The ancient world had a number of cities named Antioch. Most of them were founded by Seleucus I who ruled from 305 to 281BC. He was the founder of the Seleucid Empire that ruled from Turkey to Iran. He named the cities after his father Antiochus. As you mentioned, two of these Antioch's are in the New Testament. They are: Antioch of Pisidia - mentioned in Acts 13:14-52; 14:21. Antioch of Syria - the third largest city of the Roman empire. This city was the place where the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26) and the location of the missionary sending church for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28). <https://www.learnthebible.org/two-antiochs.html>

fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’

34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David.’

This is a strange comment, “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” We have looked at the understanding of being buried and facing corruption, the decomposing process of the body. We have read that although David saw corruption, Jesus did not. So then how are we to understand the use of “Sure mercies?” It has to do with the kingly line through Mary, these promises God gave to David would come to be true, he would be king and fight many battles

35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm: ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’

Corruption appears to be on a lot of minds, how is it used here? In the NT that destruction was affected by the decay of the body after death. What is it we can take away from this? It is clear and yet many will miss the point. In it lays the promise of eternal glory... if David and others had thought that death was the end of the story it would not have made a difference what happened after death, their faith secured their hope. But instead of decay God raises the soul of man who will one day be given a new body.

36 “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;⁴ 37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. 38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

1 Corinthians 15:50; Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21; For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place. All are from the dust,

⁴ Our bodies after death, 1 Corinthians 15:42-45; 42 It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. 43 Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. 44 They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

and to dust all return. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

Ecclesiastes 12:7; and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

41 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' " Lately I have had several conversations addressing this issue, that those who are seeking to usher in more sin and perversion have ears that cannot hear nor eyes that cannot see, look here at what Paul writes.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4; But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Blessing and Conflict at Antioch

42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. **43** Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. **45** But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. **46** Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. **47** For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. **50** But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. **51** But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. **52** And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.