

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 13:4-28:31

1. Christ's Shift In Ministry Methodology To Disciple People In Special Need

(Acts 13:4-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Very often, believers find themselves wondering how they are to function in discipling a particular person or group of people with unusual backgrounds or outlooks or attitudes toward the truths of God.
- B. In reality, just as the Apostle Paul revealed in Colossians 4:3-4, even he, the greatest of missionaries in Church History, stood in need of prayer by fellow believers that God might open doors of opportunity for him to evangelize, and provide him the right words and power to make known the truth as he ought.
- C. Soon after Barnabas and Saul had been sent on their first missionary journey, they encountered a special situation that required a different ministry approach, and the Holy Spirit led and empowered them into that different approach for blessing. We view that shift to see our need to trust God in all ministry efforts:

II. Christ's Shift In Ministry Methodology To Disciple People In Special Need, Acts 13:4-12.

- A. Being sent out by the Church at Antioch by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3, 4a), Barnabas and Saul went down to the seacoast town, Seleucia and they sailed from there to Cyprus, Acts 13:4b; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., map 13. This destination was fitting: Barnabas' home had been on Cyprus (Acts 4:36), and he as a Levite (Acts 4:36) would have many contacts for ministering in synagogues, cf. Acts 13:5.
- B. However, Luke, the author of Acts, skipped the details of these many synagogue ministry efforts to focus on a unique ministry event that occurred at Paphos in southwestern Cyprus, Acts 13:6a; *Ibid.*, map 13.
- C. While at Paphos, Barnabas and Saul encountered a special situation requiring an equally special response, so God sovereignly adjusted Barnabas and Saul's methods to make them effective there, Acts 13:6b-12:
 1. In Paphos, Barnabas and Saul encountered a Jew named Bar-jesus, a man who had known the Hebrew Scriptures, but who had rebelled against its truths to become not only a false prophet, but a sorcerer who dabbled in the occult as a child of Satan, Acts 13:6b, 10b; Bible Knowledge Commentary, N. T., p. 388; G. Campbell Morgan, The Acts of the Apostles, 1924, p. 316-321.
 2. This sorcerer was a spiritual guide to the island's secular ruler, Sergius Paulus, an "intelligent" man who hungered for fulfillment by insight into the supernatural, Acts 13:7a NIV.
 3. Hearing of Barnabas and Saul, Sergius Paulus called for them, desiring to hear God's Word, 13:7b.
 4. This spiritually thirsty secular ruler's interest in the true Gospel was then challenged by Bar-jesus, whose Greek name was Elymas: Elymas sought to discredit the Gospel of Christ to turn Sergius Paulus from it in order to retain his influence as the ruler's spiritual guide, Acts 13:8; *Ibid.*, Morgan, p. 320.
 5. Under these conditions, a new approach was demanded to offset the harm that Elymas with his Hebrew background and Satanic influence would produce to the evangelizing of Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:9-12):
 - a. First, God here shifted the leadership of the missionary team from Jewish Levite, Barnabas, to Saul, a man from cosmopolitan Tarsus who was better equipped to relate to Gentile Sergius Paulus, 13:9.
 - b. As "Saul" was his Jewish name and "Paul" the Gentile one, both being given at birth, Paul began to use his Gentile name, "Paul", to minister to Gentile Sergius Paulus, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Acts 13:9a.
 - c. The Holy Spirit then equipped Paul to replace Barnabas in taking the leading role, and he responded to Elymas, verbally condemning him to expose his error to Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:9b-10; 13:2.
 - d. Paul then struck Elymas with temporary blindness to demonstrate the truthfulness of his critique of Elymas to Sergius Paulus that the latter man might discern his need to believe in Christ, Acts 13:11.
 - e. Consequently, beholding Elymas' blindness that supported Paul's critique of his sorcerer's evil, Sergius Paulus trusted in Christ, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord, Acts 13:12!

Lesson: *Due to the spiritually rebellious and occultic impact Elymas had on the ignorant but spiritually hungry Sergius Paulus, God shifted the missionary team's function, giving Paul preeminence as better equipped to relate to Gentiles, and power to expose Elymas' evil to Sergius Paulus that he might believe.*

Application: *May we trust God to lead and empower so the right folk do the right things in the ministry.*