

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XXXI. Heeding God's Precedents To Minister

(Acts 13:14-43)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Christian ministry, be it in the local church or in missionary or evangelistic outreach endeavors, at times can falter simply because of a lack of systematic order, and God is a God of order, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40.
- C. When Paul and Barnabas evangelized in Antioch of Pisidia, the way they ministered was based entirely on orderly precedents they had known either in their backgrounds or in past events in the Jerusalem Church.
- D. Acts 13:14-43 reveals this truth, and we study the passage for our insight, application, and edification:

II. Heeding God's Precedents To Minister, Acts 13:14-43.

- A. Paul and Barnabas arrived at Antioch of Pisidia to begin their ministry, for it was "a Roman Colony," and "Paul visited these cities because they were located at strategic points," Acts 13:14a; *Ibid.*, p. 389. Places that many people contacted for business and government affairs had been the focal point of outreach in the Church as even Antioch of Syria from which Paul and Barnabas had come, it being the third largest city in the ancient Roman Empire (*Ibid.*, p. 383)
- B. In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas began their ministry in the local synagogue where fellow Hebrews met (Acts 13:14b), and this for two reasons: (1) The Gospel was to the Jew first and then to the Greek (Romans 1:16), and Paul and Barnabas accordingly ministered in this order, the precedent of which had begun at Jerusalem on Pentecost. (2) Second, both Paul and Barnabas, being themselves Hebrews, naturally connected with fellow Hebrews linguistically and culturally, so it was natural for them to interact with people of familiar backgrounds first, and through them, to reach out to the associates of such fellow Hebrews.
- C. Paul and Barnabas had likely contacted the synagogue officials before the meeting there began, and since it was common practice for Jews to let visiting Jews address their assembly, Paul and Barnabas were courteously given opportunity to address the congregation, Acts 13:15; *Ibid.*, p. 389.
- D. As Paul spoke, "(h)is address was modelled upon the address of Stephen . . . Paul had heard Stephen's defense and had never escaped the power of it . . . its power and persuasiveness moved him as he delivered his message in the synagogue at Antioch," G. Campbell Morgan, The Acts of the Apostles, 1924, p. 325-326. Indeed, when Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus, the Lord informed Saul that his conscience was bothering him, likely from Stephen's powerful witness before the Sanhedrin at his martyrdom, cf. Acts 26:14.
- E. Accordingly, like Stephen's address before his martyrdom, Paul began his address by reviewing Israel's history, telling of (1) "the anticipation of and preparation for the coming of the Messiah (vv. 16-25), (2) the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (vv. 26-37), and (3) the application and appeal (vv. 38-41)" for the hearers to trust in Christ and not reject Him, *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 389.
- F. Thus, the effect on Paul's listeners was great much like Stephen's address had affected Paul, Acts 13:42-43:
 - 1. As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people present invited them to speak further about the things they had mentioned that day on the next Sabbath Day, Acts 13:42 NIV.
 - 2. When the congregation was officially dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism who were present to hear Paul's address followed him and Barnabas who in turn spoke to them, urging them to continue in the grace of God that is offered in Christ and His salvation, Acts 13:43 NIV.

Lesson: *Throughout the presentation of the Gospel by Paul and Barnabas to the people of Antioch of Pisidia, the apostles relied on precedents in the Early Church and their own experiences in every step they took so that they gave an orderly, effective presentation of the Gospel, resulting in a significant impact among their hearers.*

Application: *(1) In every ministry we perform for the Lord, may we heed the precedents that God has shown us in our past. (2) May we also realize that past experiences are God's training grounds for what He wants us to do in our present ministries, that we recall the past to excel in the present. (3) If opportunities arise for us to minister like it did for Paul to speak in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, may we like Paul who recalled Stephen's impactful address give the best presentation we can offer based on our past experience. (4) If people respond well to our ministry, may we like Paul and Barnabas encourage our hearers to continue in the grace of God.*