

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #56

### COMMENTARY ON: 13:1-12

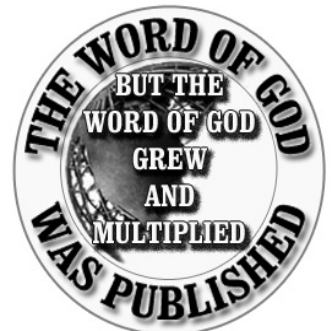
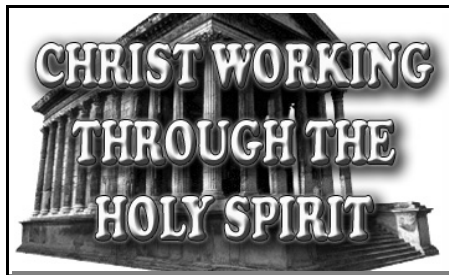
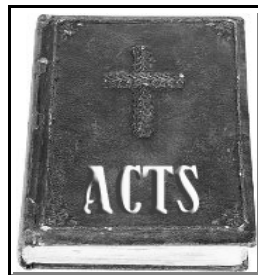
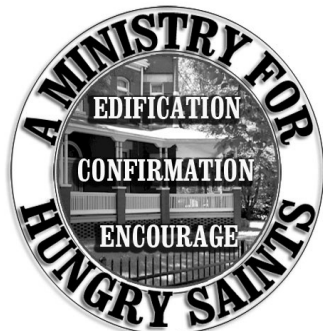
#### THE CALLING OF BARNABAS AND SAUL

We are now exposed to some details related to another church, or gathering of believers. Until Acts 11:22, the only other "church" specified in this book was the church at Jerusalem (2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1,3; 11:22). There were also a number of churches scattered throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, though not mentioned individually (9:31). Now, the Spirit focuses on a particular congregation other than the one in Jerusalem. It proves to be an extraordinary body of believers, and one from which two devoted and informed disciples are called by the Holy Spirit to a particular work. We will also be introduced to the context in which the call was made known, and the manner in which the brethren responded to that call. Once again, we are being exposed to the manner of the Kingdom – the way in which the Lord works, the kind of individuals through whom He works, and the effectiveness of the works that He has ordained, and in which the saved are to walk.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

" . . . 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." (Acts 1:8)

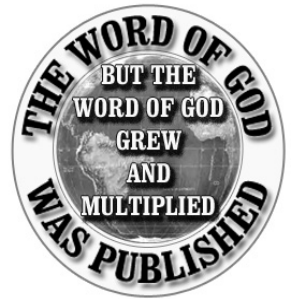


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 56



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.LITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

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# THE CALLING OF BARNABAS and SAUL

<sup>13:1</sup> Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. <sup>3</sup>And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. <sup>4</sup>So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: <sup>7</sup>Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. <sup>9</sup>Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, <sup>10</sup>And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup>Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." (Acts 13:1-12)

## INTRODUCTION

We are now exposed to some details related to another church, or gathering of believers. Until Acts 11:22, the only other "church" specified in this book was the church at Jerusalem (2:47; 5:11;7:38; 8:1,3; 11:22). That was the hub

of activity in the household of faith. This was in strict accord with the testimony of the prophets. Both Isaiah and Micah foretold that the word of the Lord would go forth "from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2). That city was set forth as the one

that would bring "good tidings" (Isa 40:9). Joel prophesied, "for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (Joel 2:32). Zechariah foretold "there shall be a

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*fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness* (Zech 13:1). Again he prophesied, *“that living waters shall go forth out from Jerusalem”* (Zech 14:8).

The centrality of Jerusalem was not the result of human strategies or mere carnal preferences. This city had been cultured for the Messiah, even though many of its inhabitants were not aware of it. Malachi alluded to this when he said, *“Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts”* (Mal 3:1). This was the coming that was also foretold by Zechariah, and fulfilled in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”* (Zech 9:9; Matt 21:4-5). It was during that time that Jesus *“went into the temple of God,”* purging it the second time from the defiling presence of merchandisers (Matt 21:12-15).

All of this, and more, brought a certain spiritual dignity to Jerusalem. This is where Jesus commanded His disciples to begin preaching repentance and remission of sins (Lk 24:47).

There were also a number of churches scattered throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, though not mentioned individually (9:31). Now, the Spirit focuses on a particular congregation other than the one in Jerusalem. It proves to be an extraordinary body of believers, and one from which two devoted and informed disciples are called by the Holy Spirit to a particular work. We will also be introduced to the context in which the call was made known, and the manner in which the brethren responded to that call.

Once again, we are being exposed to the manner of the Kingdom – the way in which the Lord works, the kind of individuals through whom He works, and the effectiveness of the works that He has ordained, and in which the saved are to walk. The Scriptures confirm that God has, in fact, *“ordained”* works in which we are to walk: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10). Some of these *“works”* are general in nature – such as doing *“good unto all men, especially unto them who are the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10). There are special opportunities, also called *“good works,”* in which God can enable us to liberally participate (2 Cor 9:8). There is also the perspective of *“every good work”* in which we can be *“fruitful”* (Col 1:10). **These are the objective for every believer, and none are to be content coming short of them, or be satisfied to live within the narrow circle**

**of their own interests.** *“Good works”* are the expression of a heart that is not self-centered, but is living for the purpose of Another – namely, the One who died and rose again for them (2 Cor 5:15).

In this text we are exposed to an even higher form of *“good work.”* In this case, the work is **defined by God**, and the believer is called into it. The participant is actually carrying out a specific objective that serves Divine interests. It appears to me that this is the primary work of men, not the secondary one. It has to do with serving God, as compared with human interests. **The first and second commandment provide us with a perspective concerning both attitude and living.** Jesus said to an inquiring scribe, *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”* (Mark 12:29-31).

### THE RULE OF THE KINGDOM

The invariable rule of the Kingdom is, **God first, man second** – and there is never a deviation from it. Putting God first does not suggest the deliberate neglect of men. **It does mean that God’s voice is to be perceived as outranking that of man.** The will of God is superior to the will of man. Pleasing God trumps pleasing men. **When there is any kind of conflict between allegiance to God and allegiance to men, allegiance to God is mandated.** The person who defers to men in neglect of God has transgressed the first and great commandment. To place the stress on the second commandment is

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an obvious error, and should require no further elaboration. **When God is loved first and foremost, the proper adjudication of human interests will take place under His direction, for God is the Creator of men.**

Our text is an excellent case in point. Two men of God are called into a work that has to do with bringing advantages to men – true advantages. **Because the church to which the call came loved God first, they will immediately enter into the will of the Lord.** Because the ones who are being called love God first, they will submit without any hesitation.

This is the manner of the

tended to be unique, the sensitivity of the people to the Lord and commitment to Him are not to be ignored.

As we go through this book, the direction of the Lord is becoming increasingly clear, as well as the saints submissiveness to it.

- ⇨ The disciples waiting for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:13-14).
- ⇨ The selection of the one to fill the bishopric vacated by Judas (Acts 1:15-26).
- ⇨ The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 14ff).
- ⇨ The response of Peter and John to

- ⇨ The response of Ananias to the call of God to go to Saul (Acts 9:10-17).
- ⇨ The response of Cornelius to Divine direction (Acts 10:1-8).
- ⇨ The response of Peter to the call to go to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:9-23).
- ⇨ The response of the early church to the report of Peter concerning the events related to Cornelius (Acts 11:18).
- ⇨ The response of Peter to the delivering angel (Acts 12:7-11).

**None of these could have taken place among a lethargic, indifferent, or insensitive people!** It was their faith and commitment to the Lord that enabled them to react as they did. It was their profound love for God that moved them to respond instantly. It was their deep gratitude for the Savior that compelled them to enter joyfully into the work. That is the manner of the Kingdom.

It is a revelation of real spiritual life – life that is being lived *“unto Him which died for them and rose again”* (2 Cor 5:15). Where this kind of life is not apparent, at the very best, the Spirit is being grieved and quenched (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). At the worst, there may be no spiritual life at all, in which case, conversion itself becomes the requirement.

I say these things because it is a source of grief to my spirit that any Scriptural record of faithful and productive people could conflict with the personal views or representations of any professing believers of our time. **No view of, or approach to, matters relating to the Kingdom of God can be at variance with the inspired record of the progress and effectiveness of that Kingdom.**

If Divine power is absent from religion, there is no procedure that can restore it. The power is granted by Divine discretion within the context of fellowship with the Son, into which He has called us (1 Cor 1:9). Any renewal that is attempted must be aimed at restoring that required fellowship.

**Rather than simply pointing out what are conceived to be the errors of the modern church, I am seeking to draw attention to the absence of similarities with the church/churches of Scripture through whom God worked.**

Kingdom. It is not the ideal, but is rather the norm. Wherever men are living by faith and walking in the Spirit, this is the way they react to a Divine summons. If this is not the way they are living, they do not receive a call into Divine service – for even if such a call could hypothetically occur, their hearts would not be tuned to hear it.

All of this sharply contrasts with the “church life” of our time. If you were to attempt to impose this text into our *Christian* culture, you would find it to be a near-total misfit. However, we are being exposed to a genuine church, and to bona fide spiritual life.

**THE AVOIDANCE OF OVER-CRITICALITY**

It is well to make a statement concerning the avoidance of being overly critical of the Christian representation of our day. **Rather than simply pointing out what are conceived to be the errors of the modern church, I am seeking to draw attention to the absence of similarities with the church/churches of Scripture through whom God worked.** While some of the things that took place in this text

the mandate of the religious leaders to cease preaching Christ (Acts 4:19-20).

- ⇨ The response of the church to the reports of threats against the apostles (Acts 4:23-32).
- ⇨ The response of the church to the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:11-12).
- ⇨ The direction of Peter and John to preach in the Temple, from which they had previously been removed and incarcerated (Acts 5:19-20).
- ⇨ Stephen’s boldness before the Jewish council, even though it led to his death (Acts 6:12-55).
- ⇨ Philip’s response to heavenly direction (Acts 8:25-30).
- ⇨ The response of the apostles to the report of the Samaritans receiving the word of God (Acts 8:14).
- ⇨ The response of Saul of Tarsus to the call of Jesus (Acts 9:6-9).

**A PRODUCTIVE CHURCH**

**“<sup>13:1</sup> Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”**

To this point, the book of Acts has referred to a number of **unholy** persons who, by virtue of some sinful deed, have been mentioned: These include the following:

1. *Pilate* - Acts 3:13; 4:27
2. *Annas* the high priest - Acts 4:6
3. *Caiaphas* the high priest - Acts 4:6
4. *John*, kindred of the high priest – Acts 4:6
5. *Alexander*, kindred of the high priest – Acts 4:6
6. *Herod* - Acts 4:27; 12:1,6,11,19,20,21
7. *Ananias* - Acts 5:1,3,5
8. *Sapphira* - Acts 5:1
9. *Saul* of Tarsus (before change) - Acts 7:58; 8:1,3; 9:1,4,9
10. *Simon* the sorcerer - Acts 8:9,13,18, 24

An additional wicked person will be mentioned in this text (Elymus, 13:8). **Just as there are key individuals in the body of Christ, so such are found in those who are dominated by Satan.** These are always opposed to the work of Lord. During the beginning of the church, such men were not frequently confronted. However, as the Gospel began to spread, such individuals increased. This strongly suggests that during the initial establishment of the body of Christ Satan was, in a sense, caught off guard. It is evident that He did not know Jesus would rise from the dead, send His Holy Spirit, and transform and empower believers.

**We have also been introduced to a number of holy people who were not apostles.** Most of them are mentioned for the first time in the book of Acts, and a significant number of them were not apparently present on the day of Pentecost. Here are the ones that are mentioned from Acts 1 through our text (13:1-12).

1. *Mary* the mother of Jesus - Acts 1:14
2. *Joseph* called Barsabas, surnamed Justus - Acts 1:23
3. *Mathias* - Acts 1:23
4. *Joses*, surnamed *Barnabas* - Acts 5:36; 9:27; 11:22,25,30; 12:25; 13:1, 2,7
5. *Stephen* - Acts 6:5,8,9; 7:59; 8:2; 11:19
6. *Philip* (deacon) - Acts 6:5; 8:5,6,12,13, 26,29,34,35,37,38,39,40
7. *Prochorus* - Acts 6:5
8. *Nicanor* - Acts 6:5
9. *Timon* - Acts 6:5
10. *Parmenas* - Acts 6:5
11. *Nicolas* - Acts 6:5
12. *Ananias* - Acts 9:10,12,13,17
13. *Aeneas* - Acts 9:33,34
14. *Tabitha* (Dorcas) - Acts 9:36,39,40
15. *Simon* the tanner - Acts 9:48; 10:6, 17,32
16. *Cornelius* - Acts 10:1,3,7,17,21,22,24, 25,30,31
17. *Agabus* - Acts 11:28
18. *Mary*, the mother of John (Mark) - Acts 12:12
19. *Mark* - Acts 12:12,25; 13:5
20. *Rhoda* - Acts 12:13
21. *James* (the Lord’s brother) - Acts 12:17
22. *Simeon* called Niger - Acts 13:1
23. *Lucius* of Cyrene - Acts 13:1
24. *Manaen* - Acts 13:1

**In this, we are being exposed to the Lord working through His body,**

deacons Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas), and prophets and teachers (Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, Saul).

Notice the diversity of the people – not only in **who** they were, but **what they did**. This is the diversity of which Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He likened the church to a “*body*” with different parts, each one working for a common purpose, yet in different ways. *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”* (1 Cor 12:4-7).

These are all dispensed by God (1 Cor 12:18), administered by Jesus (1 Cor 12:5), and managed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4). They are operated through the faith of the individuals possessing them (Rom 12:5; Gal 3:5), and as those who minister them “*hold*” to the Head of the body, Jesus Christ (Col 2:19). These various “*gifts*,” or spiritual aptitudes, are the means through which Jesus ministers to His body, “*which is the church*” (Eph 4:15-16; Col 1:19,24).

These are referred to as “*spiritual gifts*” (1 Cor 12:1; 14:1,12), “*the measure*

**In this, we are being exposed to the Lord working through His body, which is “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”**

which is “*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Eph 1:23). Among those mentioned thus far are, two mothers (Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary the mother of John Mark), two Jewish proselytes (Nicolas and Cornelius), a widow (Dorcas), a tanner (Simon), a young man (John Mark), a young maiden (Rhoda), and a brother of Jesus (James),

of faith,” “*gifts*,” an “*office*” (Rom 12:3), “*gifts*” (Eph 4:8), and “*the gift*” (1 Pet 4:10). Those possessing the gifts are admonished to be “*good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Pet 4:10). We are also reminded that these are a “*measure of faith*,” and provide the spiritual boundaries within which we are to evaluate ourselves (Rom 12:3).

These gifts differ, depending on the work that is being accomplished through any given congregation. An example of this difference is found in several of the epistles. In these texts, there are often different spiritual gifts mentioned. These may not be found in every congregation, as some falsely allege. Differences are determined by the Lord (1 Cor 12:18), and in strict accord with the spiritual status of that congregation, and the degree to which they are participating in the purpose of God. I understand the core, or common gifts, to be specified in Ephesians 4:11: “*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.*” The “*apostles*” have been given to the church through the Scriptures, and **it is their doctrine that forms the substructure of all valid teaching.** Apostles, prophets, and teachers are also mentioned Paul’s writings to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 12:28).

Himself is referred to as “He who supplies the Spirit to you and *works miracles* among you” <sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 3:5).

⇒ **THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.** (4) *Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers* (Eph 4:11).

⇒ **SCATTERED BELIEVERS.** (2) Speaking, and ministering (1 Pet 4:11).

Taking the gifts that are duplicated in the various listings into consideration (apostles–2, prophecy–3, teaching–3, working miracles–2), there are twenty different gifts mentioned.

- ⇒ Prophecy
- ⇒ Ministry
- ⇒ Teaching
- ⇒ Exhorting
- ⇒ Giving
- ⇒ Ruling
- ⇒ Showing mercy
- ⇒ Word of wisdom

highlight their diversity. **It seems to me that if these were not being given by the Lord and administered by the Holy Spirit, they would make for a chaotic condition.** All of them have a common objective – to profit the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:12-16; Col 2:19).

Now, for the first time in Scripture, we will be exposed to a particular congregation, and specific individuals within it, whose spiritual gifts are specified.

### CERTAIN PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

“*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers . . .*” Other versions read, “*prophets and doctors,*” <sup>DOUAY</sup> and “*prophets (inspired interpreters of the will and purposes of God) and teachers,*” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> All other versions read “*prophets and teachers.*”

These are the second and third ranking offices in the body of Christ. All other offices, or spiritual gifts, come “*after*” these. “*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues*” (1 Cor 12:28).

What are “*prophets and teachers,*” and how vital is their role in the body of Christ? **First, if God has placed them in the body, Jesus is administering them, and the Spirit if making them operational, they cannot be incidental.**

⇒ **PROPHET.** From the standpoint of language, a prophet is “one who speaks forth . . . an interpreter or spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks,” <sup>THAYER</sup> “one who speaks for God, proclaiming what God wants to make known,” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and “one who has insight into the Divine will.” <sup>UBS</sup> **Doctrinally,** the person who prophesies is said to speak “*unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*” (1 Cor 14:3). This is a person with spiritual insight and understanding who brings the truth to bear upon the hearts and conscience of men. Their words result in the strengthening of men, moving them forward in the will of God, and encouraging them in the good fight of faith. Their message

**I do not know that this is intended to be a thorough representation of spiritual gifts, but it certainly does highlight their diversity. It seems to me that if these were not being given by the Lord and administered by the Holy Spirit, they would make for a chaotic condition.**

Various specifications of spiritual gifts are found in the following texts. I am mentioning them because our text cites some of the gifts in the church in Antioch: namely prophets and teachers.

⇒ **THE CHURCH IN ROME:** (7) *Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, showing mercy* (Rom 12:3-8).

⇒ **THE CHURCH IN CORINTH:** (13) *Word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking different languages, interpretation of different languages, apostles, teachers, helps, governments,* (1 Cor 12:8-11,28).

⇒ **THE CHURCH IN GALATIA:** (1) *Jesus*

⇒ *Word of knowledge*  
 ⇒ *Faith* (The inclusion of “*faith*” in the listing of spiritual gifts indicates that this refers to a extraordinary measure of faith, and not “*the common faith*” – Tit 1:4).

- ⇒ *Gifts of healing*
- ⇒ *Working of miracles*
- ⇒ *Discerning of spirits*
- ⇒ *Speaking different languages*
- ⇒ *Interpretation of different languages*
- ⇒ *Helps*
- ⇒ *Governments*
- ⇒ *Evangelists*
- ⇒ *Speaking as an oracle of God*
- ⇒ *Pastor-teachers*

I do not know that this is intended to be a thorough representation of spiritual gifts, but it certainly does

is not man-centered, but is God-centered, and thus He works through their word.

⇒ **TEACHER.** From the standpoint of language, a teacher is one who instructs men, delivering holy “doctrine” to them, <sup>THAYER</sup> or the body of teaching that pertains to life and godliness. A teacher is not a mimic, aping what other men have said. This is a person who has expertise in the Scriptures and the things of God, and has been made capable to communicate them to others. Nicodemus referred to Jesus as a “Teacher come down from God” (John 3:2). Paul referred to himself as a “teacher” as well as an apostle (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11).

It is interesting to observe the mentioning of these two gifts that were operating in the church in Antioch. Barnabas and Saul had remained there for “a whole year,” teaching “much people” (Acts 11:26). **Now, as a result of their teaching, several prophets and teachers had risen among them.** Saul and Barnabas are included in the number; Barnabas being mentioned first, and Saul last. They were like spiritual book-ends in this remarkable listing of holy men. You might also view this as the maturation of the church. Three other men are mentioned.

⇒ **SIMEON THAT WAS CALLED NIGER.** We know nothing more of this brother than is stated here. He was one of the prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch.

⇒ **LUCIOUS OF CYRENE.** Cyrene was located in Africa. We assume this is the same person Paul mentioned in Romans 16:21. Nothing more is known of him.

⇒ **MANAEN, BROUGHT UP WITH HEROD.** Manaen is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. The Herod mentioned here was “the tetrarch of Galilee” (Lk 3:1). Manaen was probably a man of rank and education.

The fact that these three men are mentioned in the same breath as Barnabas and Saul is worthy of note.

This by no means suggests they were all equals with Barnabas and Saul. However, they were all members of the same body, and partakers of the same

be used by God for the execution of His purpose, there are certain indications of the type of people for whom He looks.

**Now special privileges will be vouchsafed to this church. It has grown up into Christ, and can now be trusted with an expanded stewardship. The men who were used to stabilize the church Barnabas and Saul, will now be called to another work. The apostles will not need to send new leaders there, for they now have spiritually competent men among them**

“fulness” (Eph 1:23). **The Lord was working through them in accordance with His will, and in the capacity in which He Himself had placed them.**

Now special privileges will be vouchsafed to this church. It has grown up into Christ, and can now be trusted with an expanded stewardship. The men who were used to stabilize the church Barnabas and Saul, will now be called to another work. **The apostles will not need to send new leaders there, for they now have spiritually competent men among them.** We are beholding a real church – one that did not, it appears, require an epistle of correction, like Corinth, Galatia, or five of the seven churches in Asia. There are a few churches in Scripture who were commended. Here are some of them.

- ⇒ Rome – Rom 1:8
- ⇒ Ephesus – Eph 1:15
- ⇒ Philippi – Phil 1:4-5
- ⇒ Colossae – Col 1:4 ; 2:5
- ⇒ Thessalonica – 1 Thess 1:8; 2 Thess 1:3
- ⇒ Smyrna – Rev 2:8
- ⇒ Philadelphia – Rev 3:7

**These were bodies of believers who were living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and were known for their love for the brethren.** It is for this reason that they were known outside the circumference of their immediate influence. While there are no list of qualifications for congregations who will

⇒ “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Psa 37:23).

⇒ “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of **them whose heart is perfect toward Him**” (2 Chron 16:9).

⇒ “For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to **him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word**” (Isa 66:2).

⇒ “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some . . . If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be **a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work**” (2 Tim 2:21).

⇒ “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished unto all good works**” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

These days, it has become fashionable to speak of certain bodies of people shaking the world for Christ – like a great host of “on-fire youth,” who are going to storm the bastions of wickedness and save souls. It all sounds good – at least to the uninitiated in the Kingdom. However, the issue is really not who is going to step up to the plate and do the work of the Lord. God is really not looking for volunteers. Instead, He is looking for people who are walking within the moral and spiritual boundaries He has established. These will be people who have a working knowledge of His Word – a knowledge

that is confirmed by holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). They are a people who do not love the world, and have separated themselves from contaminating influences. **In the employment of individuals selected to work together with God, I do not know that it is possible to substantiate that God will use any other kind of people.**

Our text is speaking of a body of people who were usable. They could discern both the voice and the will of the Lord. They had brethren among them who had something to say, and had been faithful in carrying out the word of the

Lord delivered to them.

It is important that we see these brethren in this light, and that this understanding play a key role in the formation of our concept of the church, which is the body of Christ. **Many churches are noted for little more than their size and community involvement – something that has more of an appeal to the flesh than to those living in the Spirit.** It is wrong – thoroughly wrong – for any person to allow the impressions of overt sight to determine their estimation of the body of Christ or the work of the Lord. As in all critical matters, the Word of God provides the standard of measure.

## AS THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD AND FASTED

***“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”***

Here we are exposed to a

*the Lord and fasting,”* <sup>NET</sup> *“offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“doing service to the Lord and fasting,”* <sup>LITV</sup> and *“officiating to the Master and fasting.”* <sup>INTERLINEAR</sup>

word “ministry.” It speaks of engaging in activity, or work, sorely because of the Lord – i.e. living unto the Lord. This is marvelously set forth in the apostolic exhortation to present our bodies to God as a “living sacrifice.” *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rom 12:1). Here, the word “service” parallels the activities of the Levitical priests of old. It describes a life that is lived “unto Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). A “living sacrifice” was prefigured by the scape goat and the living bird of the Old Covenant. These were each one half of a sacrifice offered to God. The “scape goat” was allowed to live, while the other goat was killed, and its blood offered to the Lord (Lev 16:8,10,26). The living bird was let go into the air, to fly free, while the other bird was killed, and its blood used in a cleansing ceremony (Lev 14:6,7; 14:51-53).

**Here we are exposed to a productive spiritual environment – one in which the Lord calls men into further involvement in His good, and acceptable, and perfect will.**

productive spiritual environment – one in which the Lord calls men into further involvement in His good, and acceptable, and perfect will. That context involves the presentation of the body as a living sacrifice to God – a circumstance in which Jesus Christ Himself is perceived as the preeminent Person, and the will of God is seen as the fundamental activity.

### AS THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD

*“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted . . .”* Other versions read, *“were worshiping the Lord and fasting,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“were doing the Lord's work, and going without food,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“fasting and making supplication to God,”* <sup>MIRD</sup> *“serving*

The word “ministering” is translated from the Greek word *λειτουργούντων* (li-toorg-oon-ton). The root meaning of this word is “to do service, to do a work . . . of the priests and Levites who were busied with the sacred rites in the tabernacle or the temple . . . of Christians serving Christ, whether, by prayer, or by instructing others concerning the way of salvation, or in some other way (Acts 13:2),” <sup>THAYER</sup> “of a Christian's service to God through prayer, teaching, good works, etc.” <sup>FRIEBERG</sup> “serve, worship,” <sup>UBS</sup> “more generally, to serve a master,” <sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> and “perform a (religious) service Heb 10:11; Tit 1:9 v.l. Ac 13:2.” <sup>GINGRICH</sup>

### The Concept of Ministry or Worship

In Christ, the concepts of “service” and “worship” are blended together in the

In the matter of our redemption, Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that was offered, and whose blood was used for cleansing us “from all sin” (1 John 1:7). The resurrected Christ is the living sacrifice that is lived out in the redeemed ones by means of a consecrated and devoted life.

### Foreshadowed in the Levitical

**Priesthood**

This kind of life is foreshadowed in the lives of the Levites, who lived solely for the Lord, having no inheritance in the land of Canaan. Their lives were wrapped up in serving in the tabernacle. As it is written, ***“But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance”*** (Num 18:23-26; Lev 3:12). They were the Lord’s *“inheritance,”* and were the ones chosen to do the Lord’s work: *“The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance”* (Deut 18:1). When it came to the matters pertaining to God, they *“did the service”* of the Lord, (Heb 9:9), and were said to *“execute the service of the Lord”* (Num 8:11). This was wrapped in the daily *“service of the tabernacle”* (Num 18:23).

**New Covenant Worship and Ministry**

In the New Covenant, *“worship”* is not confined to a specific activity – like singing. **It rather speaks of a wholly devoted life that is offered to God in service.** This is the concept delivered in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Some versions accent this when rendering the phrase *“reasonable service.”* *“your spiritual service of worship,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“your spiritual; act of worship,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“your spiritual worship,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“spiritual service,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“the worship it is right for you to give Him,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“This kind of worship is appropriate for you,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“This is truly the way to worship him,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“ your reasonable service (την λογικην λατρειαν υμων).”* *“Your rational (spiritual) service (worship),”* <sup>ROBERTSON</sup> *“This is true worship from you,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“this is the reasonable way for you to worship,”* <sup>ISV</sup> and *“which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**This type of sacrificial life is the foundation upon which edification is accomplished:** to bring the people to a point where their entire lives are a service, or ministry, to the Lord. This is the express teaching of the apostle Paul. In his reference to the *“gifts”* that were given to the church by the ascended and enthroned Christ (Eph 4:8-11), he

expounded them by stating the objective for which they were given: *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph 4:12). All of the members of Christ’s body are prefigured by the various vessels used in the tabernacle service. They were referred to as *“the vessels of the ministry,”* or *“the vessels used in worship.”* <sup>RSV</sup>

**A Serious Error of Our Time**

In our time a serious error has surfaced, and it has been the cause of much disruption among professing believers. It is represented by the words *“praise and worship,”* which are now employed in religious vernacular as though they were actually found in the Bible – which they are not. As it is used in this purely sectarian view, *“praise and worship”* refers to words that are offered to God, particularly in song, as opposed to a LIFE that has been offered to Him, as in Romans 12:1.

ministry to Him: *“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”* (Matt 25:40). **This kind of action reaches its apex in the focused activities of a godly assembly.** It is there that we *“admonish one another”* (Rom 15:14), teach *“one another”* (Col 3:16), *“comfort one another”* (1 Thess 4:18), and *“edify one another”* (1 Thess 5:11). **All of these ministries are, in fact, to the Lord.** They involve the strengthening of His body, which is a part of Himself, *“of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph 5:30).

**It is not possible to minister to the Lord while neglecting His people.** Conversely, it is not possible to minister to His people without it bearing directly upon Him.

**Who Was Ministering, and What Were They Doing?**

**What is missed is the fact that ministry to the Lord is, in fact ministry to His people. This is specifically taught in an apostolic word concerning singing. While this is not the only means of ministering to the family of God,**

**What is missed is the fact that ministry to the Lord is, in fact ministry to His people.** This is specifically taught in an apostolic word concerning singing. While this is not the only means of ministering to the family of God, it does serve to illustrate the objective. *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Col 3:16). Ephesians says it this way, *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Eph 5:19).

Jesus Himself made clear ministering to His people was, in fact, a

It is generally understood that the *“they”* refers to the five prophets and teachers that have been mentioned: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. Because the word translated *“ministered”* carries the implication of a public service being performed (Thayer, Friberg, Robertson, and Calvin), **we understand that they were ministering to the assembly of saints.**

The fact that they were *“fasting”* suggests that this was some form of extended prophesying and teaching. Teaching and prayer, which often are accompanied by fasting (Psa 35:13; Dan 9:3; Matt 17:21; 1 Cor 7:5), were also joined together in apostolic activity. When the early church chose special servants to administer the daily distribution of food, the apostles said, *“But we will give ourselves continually to*

prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). It was a time when they had sacrificed the normalities of life in favor of “meat” that men “know not of.” You may recall that Jesus referred to the time He had spent speaking to the Samaritan woman as one of inner nourishment – nourishment that resulted from **declaring** the truth (John 4:32).

It is therefore my persuasion that as these men were devoting themselves to feeding the flock of God, using the power they had been given **“for edification”** (2 Cor 13:6,10), the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID**

“ . . . the Holy Ghost said . . . ” Other versions read, “the Holy Spirit said,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the Holy Ghost said to them,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “the Holy Spirit said to them,”<sup>MRD</sup> and “the Holy Spirit spoke to them, saying.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

In some way this was revealed

At this point, although Saul had been called to be an apostle, he was not yet fully functioning in that office. Barnabas was the lead person between the two of them, being mentioned first up to this point (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2,7). This being the case, there was no functioning apostle present, yet a directive came to them from the Holy Spirit. **Here is an example of the Lord administering His Headship over the church through the operation of the Holy Spirit** (1 Cor 12:3-11).

**SEPARATE ME BARNABAS AND SAUL**

“ . . . Separate Me Barnabas and Saul . . . ” Other versions read, “Separate to me,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “Set apart for Me,”<sup>NASB</sup> “Let . . . be given to Me,”<sup>BEBE</sup> “Set aside for Me,”<sup>CJB</sup> “I want . . . set apart,”<sup>NJB</sup> “Dedicate,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Appoint for My service,”<sup>IE</sup> “Set apart for Me, now at once,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “Separate now for Me.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Notice the imperative nature of

steps were being directed by the Lord.

I find it exceedingly difficult to imagine this kind of thing happening in the churches with which we are familiar. First, it is difficult to conceive of a congregation where men are present who would respond to such a mandate. However, Barnabas and Saul had already separated themselves from the world. They were already wholly devoted to the Lord, and had proved themselves in a solid year of diligent labor among the assembly in Antioch. They were “prepared unto every good work,” and possessed the qualities for which the Lord looks.

**CALLED TO A SPECIFIC WORK**

“ . . . for the work whereunto I have called them.” Other versions read, “the work to which I have called,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the special work for which they have been marked out by me,”<sup>BEBE</sup> “the work whereunto I have taken them,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “a special job I have for them,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “I have chosen them to do a special work,”<sup>IE</sup> and “for a task to which I have called them.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Here we have a special call to a special work! **We will see throughout the book of Acts that the work of the Lord is not always left strictly to men.** While Philip did go to Samaria apart from any revealed direction (Acts 8:5), he was especially sent to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26,29). Peter went down to the saints in Lydda (Acts 9:32), but was especially sent to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:19–24). Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, where they remained for “a whole year,” assembling with the church there (Acts 11:25-26. However, now they are called by the Holy Spirit to a special work for which they had been adapted, but concerning which they had not given previous thought.

Religious men often speak of strategies through which they hope to do the work of God. However, it seems to me that the stress ought to be place on doing what our hands have already found to do, and developing spiritual sensitivity and readiness for Divine employment. It appears to me that these key factors are too often missing. **It may very well be that the absence of Divine direction is the explanation for failed works and fruitless labors.** At least, that is

**All of this suggests that a quest for those who could be used had already been accomplished. The ranging eyes of the Lord had already found two men whose hearts were perfect toward the Lord, and who were ready for service. They were good men, and therefore their steps were being directed by the Lord.**

directly to them – probably through the prophets. It seems clear that at some point this word was spoken through one of the prophets, in order that all might know. A prophet is noted for speaking as well as for receiving insight, for **insight that is not articulated serves no purpose.** Therefore it is said of the one who prophesies that he speaks “unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor 14:3). In this case, it would be unto exhortation, moving the people to openly fulfill the will of the Lord.

Jesus once told His disciples that it was the nature of the Holy Spirit to speak through men (Matt 13:11). Such words can be classified as words “which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor 2:13).

this word. The Spirit does not ask Barnabas and Saul if they would like to work for Him. He does not sent a word to their peers, inquiring if they thought it well for them to be separated unto the Holy Spirit. There is no free will in this. There is no plea for someone to volunteer. **In this matter, the choice has already been made, and those with understanding are told to formalize the choice of the Holy Spirit.**

All of this suggests that a quest for those who could be used had already been accomplished. The ranging eyes of the Lord had already found two men whose hearts were perfect toward the Lord, and who were ready for service. They were good men, and therefore their

something to ponder. Holy men were concerned about laboring in vain (2 Cor 9:3; Gal 2:2; 1 4:11; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5). A due concern on the part of the Lord's laborers will induce them to look for, and be sensitive to, Divine direction.

#### How Can We Know When the Lord is Directing Us?

As to knowing how a person can be sure God is directing them, there is no canned procedure that can bring such an assurance. **It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to produce this kind of awareness.** Coupled with the knowledge of God, His Word, and the spiritual maturity they foster, the detection of a Divine calling is possible. The only exception to this rule would be some visible manifestation, such as that vouchsafed to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Cornelius, and others.

Under circumstances such as those of our text, when believers are separated to a special work, **the call will come within the context of Divine fellowship and involvement in the work of the Lord.**

As a general rule, I have found the following considerations helpful.

- ⇒ The conscious possession of an spiritual aptitude.
- ⇒ The fervent desire to engage in

**Jesus taught His disciples that spiritual leadership is nothing like the world's leadership. He told them that the Gentile notion of authority and rule would not be found among them They would function according to a higher principle**

focused and holy activity.

- ⇒ The unquestionable opportunity to engage in the activity for which one has an aptitude and desire.

When these three things are experienced simultaneously, it appears to me that a person is being called into the activity. **All of this presupposes fellowship with Christ, holiness, and consistent involvement in the will of God.** Where these factors are missing, no time is to be spent speculating about a call.

#### A Word of Caution

Natural aptitude and an outgoing personality are **not** indications that one is suited for Divine employment. Often people will assess such an individual as someone who should be a preacher, or one who assumes some form of spiritual leadership. However, this is not the criterion that fits a person for the work of the Lord. A person, for example, who is

an excellent business manager and organizer might prove to be a miserable Kingdom worker. Herod was such a person. A person who has a way with words, and can move people with them, might be the worst of all preachers. Hitler was such a person. The man who can lead great bodies of people, and marshal them for a certain cause may be altogether passed over by God. Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were such men.

**Jesus taught His disciples that spiritual leadership is nothing like the world's leadership.** He told them that the Gentile notion of authority and rule would not be found among them They would function according to a higher principle (Mark 10:42-45). Spiritual leadership has to do with serving – with discerning those with spiritual capacities, and, through edification and encouragement, enabling them to fill the role for which God has suited them. That is what Jesus did with His apostles.

## THEY SENT THEM AWAY

***“<sup>3</sup> And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”***

The apparent response of the brethren to whom this word was delivered, was immediate. **Their hearts and minds had been cultured to recognize not only the truth, but the direction Author of it as well.** I have frequently heard self-acclaimed spiritual leaders quote Solomon in their effort to teach the people: *“in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Prov 11:14; 24:6). And again, *“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the*

*multitude of counselors they are established”* (Prov 15:22). **However, that does not apply in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** On one occasion, many counselors advised Paul not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:12). However, Paul ignored their counsel, choosing to go to Jerusalem anyway. When the brethren saw his determination, they wisely said, *“The will of the Lord be done”* (Acts 21:13-14).

The only time counselors have any value is when the will of the Lord is **not** known – and even then, they are required to be godly. Even then, those

who have access to God ought to first make inquiry of Him. There is far too much worldly wisdom being carried about and perpetrated within the professed church. We certainly need no more of it.

The point to be seen here is that these men recognized the validity of the call of the Spirit, and set out immediately to obey it. **It goes without saying that there was no question concerning the abilities or commitment of Barnabas and Saul.** They had demonstrated their devotion to the Lord among the saints, and their comprehension of the will of the Lord was unquestionable.

**AND WHEN THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED**

*“And when they had fasted and prayed . . .”* Other versions read, *“having fasted and prayed,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“after they had fasted and prayed,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“after prayer and going without food,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“completing their fasting and prayer,”*<sup>NAB</sup> *“after more fasting and prayer,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“the congregation fasted and prayed,”*<sup>IE</sup> *“after further fasting and prayer,”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup> and *“Everyone prayed and went without eating for a while longer.”*<sup>CEV</sup>

Some of the versions of Scripture introduce confusion into the text by putting their interpretation into it. One such misrepresentation is that the men in question continued on with the praying and fasting in which they were already engaged (NAB, CEV).

This season of fasting and prayer

through which they prepared themselves for joining in the work by undergirding it and seeking grace to help in the time of need. Others also made a practice of recommending, or committing, people *“to the grace of God”* (Acts 14:26; 15:40).

**More Than A Mere Formality**

The occasion was more than a mere formality, although it was certainly associated with formality. **Consecration, dedication, and separation do have a certain formality embedded in them.** In this the attention of the people is drawn toward the work at hand – a work set in motion by the Lord. The gravity of the situation is seen, and everything associated with the work is identified with the Lord who ordained it. I do not doubt that they asked the Lord to provide everything that was required for the mission of the Spirit to be fulfilled. It is certainly not the manner of the Kingdom

**Consecration, dedication, and separation do have a certain formality embedded in them. In this the attention of the people is drawn toward the work at hand – a work set in motion by the Lord. The gravity of the situation is seen, and everything associated with the work is identified with the Lord who ordained it.**

was in response to the Spirit’s command to *“separate”* Barnabas and Saul to the work to which He had called them. This time was like a line of demarcation in the history of the church. It represented a special initiative toward the Gentile world, and introduces a new thrust in the book of Acts. Through these two men, *“the door of faith”* would be opened to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

I see no reason to doubt the general consensus of godly men who have considered this text to be referring to a special period of time set aside for the separation of Barnabas and Saul to the work for which the Spirit had called them. We do not know the length of the period given to prayer and fasting. I assume that it was not a lengthy period, for the will of the Lord had already been revealed to them. This was the means

to take such provisions for granted. Even our blessed Lord spent the night in prayer before He chose His twelve apostles. As it is written, *“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto him his disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles”* (Luke 6:12-13).

**Prefigured in The Tabernacle**

Of old time, when Moses prepared the Tabernacle for use, he first sanctified all of the vessels that were to be used in its service. *“And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them”* (Lev 8:10). And again, *“And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it,*

*and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them”* (Num 7:1).

Further. God revealed to Moses that He had sanctified Aaron and his sons to minister to Him in the priest’s office: *“And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office”* (Ex 29:44). In a rather elaborate ceremony (Ex 29:1-44), Moses set Aaron and his sons apart to this ministry. During that ceremony Moses was commanded to *“take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him”* (Ex 29:21).

Moses was brought to a keen realization of the gravity of anything or anyone set apart to the service of God. Among the Jews, this recognition was fostered and developed.

- ⇒ High priests were anointed (Num 35:25).
- ⇒ Priests were anointed (Lev 4:3).
- ⇒ Kings were anointed (Judges 9:8; 1 Sam 15:1; 2 Sam 2:4; 1 Kgs 1:39).
- ⇒ Prophets were anointed (1 Kgs 19:16).

In a day of religious professionalism, there appears to be little awareness of the seriousness of being called into Divine service. These days it is not uncommon for men to be set apart by colleges, seminaries, and certificates. This text is in sharp contrast with actions fostered by such an impersonal view of things.

**AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM**

*“ . . . and laid their hands on them . . .”* Other versions read, *“laid hands on them,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“placed their hands on them,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“imposing their hands upon them,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“put their hands on them,”*<sup>TNT</sup> and *“and the laying on of hands.”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

**Sanctity**

There is a certain sanctity and solemnity associated with *“pure religion.”* **These qualities assist in freeing us from the dreaded effects of casualness and normality.** There is something about informality and casualness that tend to erode spiritual sensitivity. If not carefully guarded, they are like doors through which carnality can enter.

We assume that Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul, setting them apart for the work to which the Spirit had called them. In a sense, they were the lesser, for it was Barnabas and Saul who had taught them, and nurtured them in the Lord. Yet here we find an example of a principle Jesus declared: *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last first”* (Mark 10:31). That is a broad principle that is applied to many circumstances. Later Paul will say of the apostles, *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men”* (1 Cor 4:9). Yet, in reality, God has placed them, *“first”* in the church (1 Cor 12:28).

**So it is in our text, that those whom the Spirit had chosen for a special work were set apart by those who were not engaged directly in that mission.** However, you will find no objections being registered by Barnabas and Saul. They do not ask for the church to send for the apostles to set them apart. Saul might well have recalled how he himself had been set apart to the apostleship by *“a certain disciple”* named Ananias (Acts 9:10-18). **Now, in a spiritually formal setting, he is being readied to launch into his apostolic work by the laying on of the hands of certain prophets in Antioch, who were not themselves apostles.**

Timothy was also set apart, receiving a spiritual gift *“by prophecy, and by the laying on hands of the presbytery”* (1 Tim 4:14).

The *“laying on of hands”* is one of the elemental principles of *“the doctrine of Christ”* (Heb 6:2).

⇒ Jesus laid His hands on little children and blessed them (Matt

19:13,15).

- ⇒ Jesus was noted for laying hands on some He healed or raised from the dead (Mk 5:23; Matt 9:18).
- ⇒ Jesus laid His hands on some who were sick and healed them (Mk 6:5).
- ⇒ Paul laid hands on the Publius and healed him (Acts 28:8).
- ⇒ Men were ordained to holy work by the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6; 1 Tim 5:22).
- ⇒ The apostles, on occasion, imparted the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17,19; 19:6).

I have never been satisfied with the standard commentaries on this

laying on of hands has to do with **initiating** a work, not completing it. However, those in whom a work is begun are to *“go on to perfection,”* entering into the work, and growing up into Christ in all things. In this way, they are not lingering in the vestibule where the laying on of hands takes place.

**Formalities Under the Law**

Under the Law, God taught people about holy preparation. At Sinai, the Lord instructed Moses to tell the people to prepare themselves for the giving of the Law by washing their clothes (Ex 19:10). Men were admonished *“do not come near your wives”* <sup>NKJV</sup> (Ex 19:15).

**Before entering into Canaan, when the blessings and cursings of the Law were read to the people, it was a**

**What is it that is common in all of these reports concerning the laying on of hands? It is this: that the benefit realized came from outside of the efforts of the individual themselves. Whether it was the sick, the dead, or the ones set apart for a particular office or work, they were parties who were acted upon.**

subject. They seem to leave us with nothing more than a knowledge of the various occasions during which the laying on of hands took place. I have already mentioned the ones having to do with the time from Jesus forward. What is it that is common in all of these reports concerning the laying on of hands? **It is this: that the benefit realized came from outside of the efforts of the individual themselves.** Whether it was the sick, the dead, or the ones set apart for a particular office or work, they were parties who were **acted upon.**

No person of understanding will affirm that such a procedure has become obsolete – any more than baptism, faith toward God, repentance from dead works, etc. have been rendered out-of-date. **However, spiritual maturity involves personally taking hold of the things of God, not always relying on another party bringing about the needed change.** The

**formal occasion.** Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin stood on Mount Gerizim (Deut 27:12). Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali stood on Mount Ebal (Deut 27:13). While they were there, the Levites solemnly read all of the blessings and cursing *“with a loud voice.”* All of the people were commanded to *“answer, and say Amen”* (Deut 27:14-15). There was certainly nothing casual about that occasion!

During the time of Nehemiah, the solemnity of holy occasions was restored after a long period of captivity. On a specific day, *“the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.”* During that occasion the Levites *“read in the book of the Law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed and worshiped the Lord”*

**This being the case, it appears to me that the approaching “day” is actually the first day of the week, during which we enjoy communion with the body and blood of the Lord, and teach and admonish one another.**

their God’ (Neh 9:1-3).

These occasions will suffice to illustrate how holy and sensitive people approached special words and special occasions. They would first free themselves from the formalities of life, then concentrate on the subject at hand.

#### Under the New Covenant

Under the New Covenant, holy preparations are elevated and intensified. The people are exhorted “*gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet 1:13). When they “*come together,*” they are to see to it that it is “*for the better*” and not “*for the worse*” (1 Cor 11:17). Paul spoke of an assembly, when “*the whole church be come together into one place,*” at which time they would “*all prophesy*” (1 Cor 14:23). In such an environment, no unintelligible utterances were permitted unless they had been interpreted (1 Cor 14:26). He allowed for no carnal disruption (1 Cor 14:34). It was an environment in which things could be revealed to key people (1 Cor 14:30), and where prophets were to speak “*one by one,*” with no more than two or three speaking, while the other prophets

“*judged*” what they said (1 Cor 14:29-31). I do not know how such things could possibly be accomplished in a casual atmosphere.

While no person of faith is inclined to mandate rules or decorum for the assembly of the righteous, it seems to me that it is more than appropriate for people to ready themselves for such occasions. **It is a great disadvantage to venture unprepared into the assembly of the righteous.** This is one of the reasons for the exhortation, “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*” (Heb 10:24-25). There have been a variety of views concerning “*the day approaching*” – which day is that? Some have considered it to be the second coming of Christ. Others have thought it so be the destruction of Jerusalem, which was imminent at the writing the epistle to the Hebrews. Still others consider it to be the day of death or the day of judgment.

However, none of these seem to fit well into the text, and appear to me to be forced interpretations. The reason for the

exhortation is given in verse twenty-six: “*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*” (Heb 10:26). **That is an ongoing jeopardy, as long as we are in the body.** In view of this statement, it seems to me that the point of the exhortation is avail ourselves of the means through which we are brought to spiritual maturity. According apostolic doctrine, this is accomplished through the body of Christ, through which the Head ministers through various members. **This being the case, it appears to me that the approaching “day” is actually the first day of the week, during which we enjoy communion with the body and blood of the Lord** (1 Cor 10:16), and teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16). As that day approaches, it is in order to exhort one another to avail ourselves of the appointed advantages of that day.

#### THEY SENT THEM AWAY

“*. . . they sent them away.*” Other versions read, “*sent them off,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*Sent them on their way,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*let them go,*”<sup>PNT</sup> “*sent them out,*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “*Set them free for this work.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

That is, they sent Barnabas and Saul away to do the work to which the Spirit had called them. **They recognized that these unusual men were not merely leaving them, but were going out to do the work of the Lord.** This work was not defined by them, but by the Holy Spirit. In this case, it was not a burden that had been especially placed upon them, or upon which they had given considerable thought. This mission was a revelation.

## THEY DEPARTED, BEING SENT FORTH BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“<sup>4</sup> *So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*”

The specific directions of the Spirit for this mission are not revealed to us – although they doubtless were the two. In some way Barnabas and Saul knew where to go, and thus they left Antioch, and set out to do the work for which they had been separated.

#### BEING SENT FORTH BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“*So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost . . .*” Other versions read, “*being sent out by the Holy Spirit,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*sent on their mission by the Holy Spirit,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*directed by the Holy Spirit,*”<sup>LIVING</sup> and “*sent at the Holy Spirit’s command.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the body of Christ must not be understated. He is the One through whom the Head of the body directs its members. Thus far in the book of Acts attention has been drawn to His prodigious work.

⇨ Prior to His ascension, Jesus gave commandments to the apostles **through the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:2).

- ⇒ Jesus said the disciples **would receive power after** the Holy Spirit had come upon them (Acts 1:8).
- ⇒ **The Spirit filled** the disciples on the day of Pentecost, enabling them to speak the wonderful works of God in languages they had not learned (Acts 2:4,11).
- ⇒ Those calling upon the name of the Lord were told that, upon their repentance and baptism, they would receive the gift of **the Holy Spirit** (Acts 2:38).
- ⇒ **The Spirit** filled Peter, empowering him to respond powerfully and insightfully to the Jewish council (Acts 4:8).
- ⇒ When the disciples assembled and prayed for power, they were all filled with **the Holy Spirit** and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).
- ⇒ When Peter rebuked Ananias for misrepresenting the gift he had given, he said he had **lied to the Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:3).
- ⇒ When Peter rebuked Sapphira for her role in the deception, he said she had **tempted the Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:9).
- ⇒ Peter declared that God **gives the Holy Spirit** to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).
- ⇒ Those who were chosen to administer the food distribution were required to be **full of the Holy Spirit** and wisdom (Acts 6:3).
- ⇒ Stephen was **full of the Holy Spirit** and faith (Acts 6:5).
- ⇒ Stephen charged the unbelieving Jews with **resisting the Holy Spirit** (Acts 7:51).
- ⇒ When Stephen was dying, he **was full of the Holy Spirit**, and saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55).
- ⇒ Peter and John were sent to Samaria to ensure that the believers **received**

**the Holy Spirit** (Acts 8:15-17).

- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit directed** Philip to join himself to the chariot in which the eunuch was riding (Acts 8:29).
- ⇒ **The Spirit of the Lord** caught Philip away following the baptism of the eunuch (Acts 8:39).
- ⇒ Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus in order that he might be **filled with the Holy Spirit** (Acts 9:17).
- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit comforted** the

church – the one that Jesus is building. **As you can see, the Holy Spirit was prominent in the work from the very beginning.** In view of these things, it is exceedingly difficult to understand why so little sound teaching is being given to the church these days concerning the Holy Spirit. **He is still prominent in spiritual life.** That is precisely why we are warned not to quench or grieve Him (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19).

Ponder what the Spirit of God is represented as doing in those who are in Christ Jesus.

**These are records of the real church – the one that Jesus is building. As you can see, the Holy Spirit was prominent in the work from the very beginning. In view of these things, it is exceedingly difficult to understand why so little sound teaching is being given to the church**

churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31).

- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit directed** Peter to go with the men sent to him by Cornelius (Acts 10:19; 11:12).
- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit fell** on those in Cornelius house while Peter was preaching (Acts 10:44; 11:15).
- ⇒ Peter declared that **the gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:16).
- ⇒ Barnabas is described as a good man, **full of the Holy Spirit** and faith (Acts 11:24).
- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit moved** Agabus to speak of a coming famine (Acts 11:26).
- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit commanded** the brethren in Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had appointed them (Acts 13:2,4).

- ⇒ The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5).
- ⇒ Spiritual mindedness consists of minding the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:1,4).
- ⇒ Is a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Rom 8:9).
- ⇒ We mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit (Rom 8:13).
- ⇒ We are led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18).
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Rom 8:16).
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we do not know what we should pray for (Rom 8:26-27).
- ⇒ We have joy through the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).
- ⇒ We abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).

These are records of the real

- ⇨ The offering up of the Gentiles was sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16).
- ⇨ Collective believers are the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them (1 Cor 3:16).
- ⇨ We are washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit (1 Cor 6:11).
- ⇨ Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).
- ⇨ We say that Jesus is the Lord by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).
- ⇨ Spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-11).
- ⇨ The Holy Spirit has been given to us as an earnest of what is to come (2 Cor 1:22).
- ⇨ Believers are the epistle of Christ, written with the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor 3:3).
- ⇨ Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor 3:17).
- ⇨ We are changed from one stage of glory to another by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).
- ⇨ Spiritual life includes the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).
- ⇨ Because we are His sons, God has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts (Gal 4:6).
- ⇨ Through the Spirit we are waiting for the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5).
- ⇨ The Holy Spirit produces fruit in believers (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9).
- ⇨ It is through the Spirit that we will reap eternal life (Gal 6:8).
- ⇨ The Holy Spirit lusts against the flesh (Gal 5:17).
- ⇨ We have access to the Father by the Spirit (Eph 2:18).
- ⇨ We are built together for a habitation

- of God through the Spirit (Eph 2:22).
- ⇨ We are strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the inner man, so Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:16).
- ⇨ The Holy Spirit is the author of unity (Eph 4:3).
- ⇨ Believers are admonished to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).
- ⇨ The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17).
- ⇨ Prayer and supplication are made in the Spirit (Eph 6:18).
- ⇨ Our fellowship is in the Spirit (Phil 2:1),
- ⇨ Our love for one another is in the Spirit (Col 1:8).
- ⇨ God chooses men to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth (2 Thess 2:13).
- ⇨ The things that have been given to us are kept by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14).
- ⇨ God saves us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5).
- ⇨ We obey the truth through the Spirit (1 Pet 1:22).
- ⇨ We build ourselves up in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20).

**Not A Strange Thing**

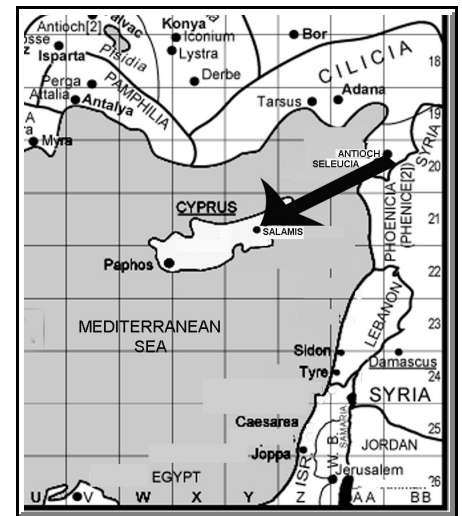
As ought to be abundantly apparent, the history recorded in the book of Acts perfectly accords with the declarations of the prophets, the promises of Jesus, and apostolic doctrine. It should not sound strange when we read of the Holy Spirit calling for people to do a work, and then sending them forth through the instrumentality of men.

**By yielding to the Spirit, the brethren entered into the work of the Lord:** the prophets by setting them apart,

and Barnabas and Saul by submitting to His leadership.

A professed church in which the Holy Spirit is NOT active is really no church at all. I do not know that it can be established that a body of people in whom, over an extended period of time, little or no evidence is found of the Lord's presence can be appropriately called a "church." **The degree of His activity is determined by the faith of the people – and the faith of the people is dependent upon the declaration of the Gospel through, which faith comes (Rom 10:17) and is sustained (Rom 16:26).** The implications of these realities are quite alarming.

**THEY DEPARTED . . . AND SAILED**  
*" . . . departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."*



Seleucia was located close to Antioch, and was a seaport city from which Barnabas and Saul could disembark. **The text indicates that their departure took place within a short period of time, and with no extensive delays.**

In this book, there is a consistent pattern of behavior seen in the responses of believers. **As soon as the will of God was clear, those with faith acted upon that revelation.** The insensitivity, obtuseness, and delays to which contemporary *Christians* have grown accustomed, are not found in this inspired record of God working among His people. Obedience was the norm, and

disobedience was the exception. Eagerness to do the will of God was the standard, and a lack of such avidness

was unusual.

Thus, with holy dispatch,

Barnabas and Saul set out for the island of Cyprus, approximately 150 miles from Antioch.

## THEY PREACHED IN THE SYNAGOGUES

**“<sup>5</sup> 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.”**

As you read this text you sense the presence of holy confidence. These two men do not grope about, attempting to determine what they ought to do. They get to the work of the Lord as soon as they arrive on Cyprus, making no delay.

### SALAMIS

“And when they were at Salamis . . .” Other versions read, “arrived in Salamis,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “reached Salamis,” <sup>NASB</sup> “after landing in Salamis,” <sup>CJB</sup> “being in Salamis,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “when they were come to Salamis,” <sup>DOUAY</sup> “arriving in the city of Salamis,” <sup>NAB</sup> and “having come into Salamis.” <sup>YLT</sup>

This was a city at the east end of

Great. <sup>McClintok-Strong's</sup>

### THEY PREACHED THE WORD OF GOD

“ . . . they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews . . .” Other versions read, “they began to proclaim,” <sup>NASB</sup> “they proclaimed,” <sup>NIV</sup> “They announced,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “began to spread,” <sup>GWN</sup> “they showed,” <sup>TNT</sup> and “they declared.” <sup>YLT</sup>

The Greek word translated “preached” is a significant one: **κατήγγελλον** (kat-ang-gel-lov). The lexical definition of the word is, “to announce, declare, promulgate, make known; to proclaim publicly, publish,” <sup>THAYER</sup> “proclaim (solemnly), announce something (AC 4.2); (2) proclaim, tell about someone,” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and “proclaim, make known, preach; teach, advocate.” <sup>UBS</sup> This word is used several times in Scripture. Here are some samples. The English word derived from this

again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I **preach** unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:3).

⇒ “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him **declare** I unto you” (Acts 17:23).

⇒ “That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should **show** light unto the people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).

⇒ “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is **spoken** of throughout the whole world” (Rom 1:8).

⇒ “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which **preach** the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14).

⇒ “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do **show** the Lord's death till he come” (1 Cor 11:26).

⇒ “Whom we **preach**, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col 1:28).

**As you read this text you sense the presence of holy confidence. These two men do not grope about, attempting to determine what they ought to do. They get to the work of the Lord as soon as they arrive on Cyprus, making no delay.**

Cyprus, and was apparently the sea port receiving the vessel on which Barnabas and Saul sailed. Cyprus was also the native country of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). Certain who had been scattered by “the persecution that arose about Stephen” had also been here, and preached the Word of God, doing so only to the Jews (Acts 11:19-20). History attests that there was a large Jewish constituency on this Island. This was a city of significant size, and was the place where great copper mines were located, and from which copper was sent to Herod the

expression is highlighted.

⇒ “. . . they taught the people, and **preached** through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (Acts 4:2).

⇒ “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is **preached** unto you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38).

⇒ “Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen

The distinction in this word is found in the fact that it deals with the announcement, or proclamation, of existing realities – not something that can be, or ought to be, but IS! This is what might be called objective reality. It is not the proclamation of possibilities or probabilities, but of fixed and unwavering realities.

Barnabas and Saul were busy reporting “the wonderful works of God,” as did the disciples on the day of

Pentecost (Acts 2:11). They did not bring a message of earthly solutions, but one of eternal relevance. Whether men were going to die on the day they heard their message, or live on for another hundred years, the message was still relevant. Whether they were experiencing domestic difficulties, or were experiencing domestic joy and tranquility, the message being delivered was critical, and was to be received.

**The Gospel addresses the human circumstance as assessed by the Lord Himself, and needs no philosophical elaboration.** The condition is appraised in no uncertain words. Here are some statements of the human situation.

- ⇒ Men are in blind to spiritual realities (Acts 26:18a).
- ⇒ Men are in moral and spiritual darkness (Acts 26:18b).
- ⇒ Men are dominated by the power of Satan (Acts 26:18c).
- ⇒ Men need the forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18d).
- ⇒ Men are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1).
- ⇒ Men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (Eph 4:18).
- ⇒ Men are without God and without hope in the world (Eph 2:12).

**Any ministry to lost men that ignores this situation, or presents some other scenario, is off-center, and will ultimately lead away from Christ.** This is why there is such a thing as preaching, announcing, or proclaiming. That is delivering a word that has been mandated by God. It is a report of the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). The Holy Spirit did not separate Barnabas and Saul to give advice, deliver counsel, or resolve social and domestic dilemmas. They were not marital counselors or financial advisors. **They were sent to proclaim a message that was encapsulated in the Person of Jesus.**

It appears to me that the burden of modern day representations of

*preaching* are largely pragmatic – i.e. dealing with practical matters or affairs rather than facts. Jesus is being presented a solution to temporal circumstances, rather than the Son of God who has accomplished the will of God. Listening to some of the preaching of our day, one senses that the speaker really does not have anything to say – no message to proclaim. **Preachers are rather being presented as diagnosticians who are marketing practical resolutions to every-day problems.** Among them are gurus of marriage, finance, child-rearing, career development, church planting, missions, and the likes. Apart from the difficulties and vicissitudes of life, they really do not have much to say. If the people were actually to avail themselves of the salvation of God, and grow up into Christ, such men would have nothing left to do. Whatever may be said in defense of such activity, this is not the kind of thing that is reported in Scripture. **When holy men of God dealt with problems and difficulties within the church, it was always because they impinged upon one's relationship with God through Christ.** In our day, that relationship is taken for granted, and difficulties are being addressed as though their resolution was an end of themselves. If, in fact, there really was no heaven and no hell, these teachers would not need to change their message. They could continue on without any interruption.

#### The Synagogues

This is the second city that is declared to have had multiple synagogues – the city of Damascus being the other one (Acts 9:2,20). The presence of a multiplicity of synagogues suggests there was a large contingency of Jews in Salamis.

**It is of interest that Jesus, the apostles, and other Divinely called preachers, consistently went into the synagogues to preach** (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; Lk 4:15; 13:10; Acts 9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:1-2,10,17; 18:4,19,26; 19:8). Following Jesus' enthronement in glory, the Gospel consistently went *"to the Jew first"* (Rom 1:16). Following that, there was also a presentation to *"devout"* people, who evidenced some propensity toward God (i.g. Acts 8:27; 10:2; 17:4,17).

My intention is not to codify the approach to preaching the Gospel.

Rather, I only intend to show the manner in which Holy-Spirit-led preaching was carried out – and it is fairly consistent.



#### Current Evangelical Weaknesses

These days, we are faced with evangelical thrusts that come short of the objectives God has revealed. Such things as youth ministries, children's ministries, ministries to those enslaved to various forms of sin, and ministries to the poor and downtrodden, are certainly not wrong. **However, they do have a downside: namely that they tend to be circular in their results.** That is, as new converts are made, old ones drop through the floor of neglect. The end result is that the purported minister never gets to the feeding and nurturing level. This is largely owing to the perpetual influx of those with little or no former commitment to the appropriation of the knowledge of God. **The result is that co-laborers from among the ranks of those who are the focus of the ministry rarely occur.** For this reason, continual calls to believers in other areas are made to come and assist in the work. Some ministries of this kind have continued in this mode for decades, and they are still viewed as a kind of normal and legitimate Kingdom activity.

However, in the book of Acts you will not find this kind of circumstance. **Fellow laborers came from the ranks of the converts, whether in Jerusalem or**

other regions. The first reported laborers came from those who walked with Jesus during His prodigious ministry. The first official servants, appointed over the daily distribution of food, came from the Jerusalem church itself. In our text, those who were sent out were among the brethren in Antioch at that time. John Mark, who also attended Barnabas and Saul, was from the Jerusalem congregation. Barnabas was as well. Timothy was garnered from the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. The church at Jerusalem had “chief men” among them with Paul and Barnabas. Silas was one of them (Acts 15:22). Onesimus and Epaphras, productive laborers for the Lord, came from the Colossian church (Col 4:9,12). **These, and similar, people were not hired by the church, but were produced by it!**

The point here is that a *Christian*

send forth the required workers. It is to be understood that they must have a thorough acquaintance with the Word of God, and possess an understanding of the purpose of God, and of God Himself.

What we are reading in this text is a sterling example of that kind of thing taking place.

**THEY HAD ALSO JOHN AS THEIR MINISTER**

“ . . . and they had also John to their minister.” Other versions read, “as their assistant,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “as their helper,” <sup>NASB</sup> “to assist them,” <sup>NRSV</sup> “as their attendant,” <sup>ASV</sup> “an attendant to assist them,” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “subservant,” <sup>INTERLINEAR</sup>

The word “minister” is translated from a unique Greek word: ὑπηρέτης (hoop-ay-ret-ain). The lexical meaning of

- ⇒ The Garden of Eden.
- ⇒ Noah, and the repopulation of the earth.
- ⇒ The calling of Abraham.
- ⇒ The establishment of the Jewish nation.
- ⇒ The giving of the Law.
- ⇒ The giving of the holy land to Israel.
- ⇒ The ministry of the Prophets.
- ⇒ The ministry of John the Baptist.
- ⇒ The entrance of Jesus into the world, His ministry, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
- ⇒ The calling and commissioning of the apostles.
- ⇒ The initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- ⇒ The establishment of the church.
- ⇒ The inclusion of the Gentiles in the salvation of God.
- ⇒ The calling of Paul the apostle.
- ⇒ The launching of a Gospel initiative into all the world.

Awareness of this manner of Divine workings casts a different light on the manners and customs of people living in that part of the world. While this is not something of which an issue should be made, consider the following. It is possible that many of the unique customs of that part of the world are owing to the impact of Divine workings. Also, I do not know how an intelligent grasp of Jesus as the “Servant” of God (Isa 42:1; 49:6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11) can be obtained within the framework of our culture,

**Mark, the Servant**

As the servant of Barnabas and Saul, John Mark was exposed to the focus and demeanor of godly workers. He witnessed their priorities, the sacrificial nature of their lives, and what is involved in serving the Lord. He was made privy to spiritual maturity, and no doubt felt a tug upward, while beholding the distance that existed between the world and those who are aligned with the God of heaven.

**Specialized ministries that surround the immature with their peers forfeit all of these advantages.** Furthermore, when the objective of any proposed ministry is to entertain, feed worldly interests, and the likes whatever is being served, **it is not the revealed will of God.** I realize this is not a popular view, but it is appropriate to draw our attention to these things.

**The point here is that a Christian work or church that is not producing competent proclaimers and leaders is a kind of spiritual aberration. There may be a lot of people associated with such a group, as well as an impressive outlay of finances for others. However, if competent and informed brethren are not being developed, something is seriously wrong.**

work or church that is not producing competent proclaimers and leaders is a kind of spiritual aberration. There may be a lot of people associated with such a group, as well as an impressive outlay of finances for others. However, if competent and informed brethren are not being developed, something is seriously wrong. The Word of God itself is designed to make the man of God “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:17). **No amount of religious activity can compensate for the lack of such results.**

As I perceive the situation, it is an understanding of these things that compelled the early preachers and teachers to conduct their minister as they did. Should a contemporary situation arise where the Lord opens doors of opportunity to labor in His Kingdom, **it is the business of the church to be ready**

the word is “an under rower, subordinate rower. b. anyone who serves with his hands; a servant,” <sup>THAYER</sup> and “one who acts under orders of another to carry out his will, assistant, helper.” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> As used in Scripture this kind of servant is carrying out the will of another – being employed as a servant of someone with greater authority, insight, and commission than themselves. Such service could range from menial, but necessary tasks, such as transporting goods and possessions, to delivering a word from the one they were serving, and sharing in some of the lesser responsibilities.

In the United States, we are not accustomed to such a role being played by the younger. However, this is a custom that still prevails in the eastern countries. **As a point of interest, that is the part of the world in which every known Divine initiative took place.** Samples include the following.

**A FALSE PROPHET IS ENCOUNTERED**

**“<sup>6</sup> And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:<sup>7</sup> Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.”**

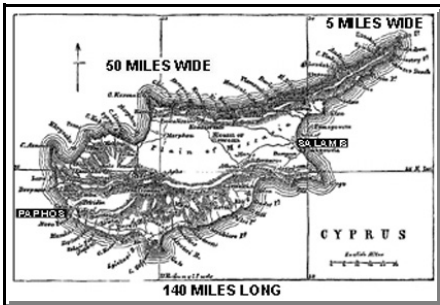
Barnabas and Saul assaulted the Island of Cyprus, blitzing it with the Gospel, and with apparent aggressiveness. They had set out to do the work to which the Holy Spirit Himself had called them, and they were doing it with zeal.

**THROUGH THE ISLE TO PAPHOS**

“And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos . . .” Other versions read, “gone through the whole island as far as Paphos,”<sup>NASB</sup> “traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos,”<sup>NIV</sup> “made their way throughout the whole island. They ended up in Paphos,”<sup>CJB</sup> “They traveled the whole length of the island, and at Paphos,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “they preached from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos.”<sup>LIVING</sup>

This island was 140 miles long, and from 5-50 miles wide, the narrow width being on the east side.

This island was noted for its rich timber and other resources, and was a shipbuilding capital. It was a kind of crossroads for many merchants, which meant that any penetration by the Gospel would yield exponential results. “Its proximity to Asia Minor, Phoenicia, and Egypt, and its numerous havens, made it a general rendezvous for



merchants . . . Among the mineral products were diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones, alum, and asbestos; besides iron, lead, zinc, with a portion of silver, and, above all, copper, the farfamed *oes Cyprium*.”<sup>McCLINTOK STRONG'S</sup>

At that time, there were approximately 100 towns and villages on the island – at least fifty of them being port cities. The text suggest tat Barnabas and Saul began at the east side of the island and worked their way through all of the cities, preaching the Word until they reached the far western port city of Paphos.



“At this time Cyprus was in a state of considerable prosperity; it possessed good roads, especially one running from east to west through the whole length of the island, from Salamis to Paphos, along which Paul and Barnabas traveled; an extensive commerce, and it was the resort of pilgrims to the Paphian shrine from all parts of the world (Fairbairn).”<sup>McCLINTOK STRONG'S</sup>

The aggressiveness and thoroughness of Barnabas and Saul are arresting to consider. As was also characteristic of Paul throughout his life, they threw themselves wholeheartedly into to the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them. This as the grace of God working in them (1 Cor 15:10). From another point of view, it was Jesus Christ Himself living in them (Gal 2:20), just as He did when He walked among men, being seen of them. This is a consistent trait among those who have yielded their bodies to God as a living sacrifice.

**THEY FOUND A CERTAIN SORcerer**

“ . . . they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus . . .” Other versions read, “a certain magician, a Jewish false

prophet,”<sup>NASB</sup> “a certain wonder-worker and false prophet, a Jew,”<sup>BEBE</sup> “a Jewish sorcerer and pseudo-prophet,”<sup>CJB</sup> “a Jewish man. . . an astrologer who claimed to be a prophet,”<sup>GWN</sup> “a Jewish sorcerer, a fake prophet,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “a Jewish man who did tricks of magic,”<sup>IE</sup> “a Jewish occult practitioner and false prophet,”<sup>ISV</sup> and “a certain Jewish wizard or sorcerer, a false prophet.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Sorcery was practiced by the Egyptians (Ex 7:11) and the Chaldeans (Dan 2:2). **It was an occultic practice that employed unlawful means to obtain knowledge.** It was soundly condemned under the Old Covenant (Jer 27:9). Sorcerers are identified as having a part in “the lake the burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). God had declared He will come against sorcerers (Mal 3:5), and that they are forever outside, and excluded from, the city of God (Rev 22:15). This sin is associated with divination, which is “a general term descriptive of the various illusory arts anciently practiced for the discovery of things secret or future.”<sup>McCLINTOK-STRONG'S</sup> This involved a Satanic means of obtaining knowledge and understanding, and was soundly condemned by the Lord. “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee” (Deut 18:10-12).

I do understand that there is a notion afoot in the Christian community that views all such transgressions as nothing more than imaginations and tricks – like our modern magicians. While some of that may be involved, this is not always the case. It is difficult to conceive of God condemning something that really did not exist. The Lord did speak of communications from the dead, and of their unlawfulness. “And when

they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" (Isa 8:19). **This should not surprise us, for we are expressly taught that there are doctrines that are perpetrated by demons** (1 Tim 4:1).

At any rate, we are here introduced to a man that trafficked in knowledge, but it was not lawful knowledge.

### A Spiritual Invasion

It is evident that Barnabas and Saul had invaded a territory over which the powers of darkness were exercising considerable power. Just as Philip, Peter, and John encountered an aggressive worker of occultic arts, so Barnabas and Saul confront one. In the first instance, the "sorcerer" had bewitched the people of Samaria, exercising great influence (Acts 8:9). Now another of these men, also a false prophet and a Jew, is confronted by Barnabas and Saul. Note that the text says they "found" the sorcerer. That does not mean they were looking for him. Rather, it means that **in the process of their preaching, while they were proclaiming the Word, this man surfaced.**

No person should be surprised that Satan's ministers surface when the truth is being preached. Truth is always a threat to the kingdom of darkness.

### WHICH WAS WITH THE DEPUTY

"... which was with the deputy of the country . . ." Other versions read, "who was with the proconsul,"<sup>NKJV</sup> "who was an attendant of the proconsul,"<sup>NIV</sup> "who was with the ruler,"<sup>BBE</sup> "he had attached himself to the governor,"<sup>CJB</sup> "associated with . . . the governor of the island,"<sup>GWN</sup> "adhered to . . . the proconsul,"<sup>MRD</sup> "which was with . . . the ruler of the country,"<sup>TNT</sup> "always stayed close to . . . the governor,"<sup>IE</sup> "was a friend of the proconsul,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> "an intimate friend of the governor,"<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> "belong to the suite of the proconsul,"<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and "was closely associated with the proconsul."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Some versions suggest that this man imposed himself upon the "deputy"

– "attached himself to."<sup>CJB</sup> Others leave the impression that this was a personal association – "a friend,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "an intimate friend."<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> The word from which "with" is translated is used in a variety of ways: denoting togetherness, inner agreement, close association, and someone who attends another.<sup>THAYER/FRIBERG</sup> In this text, I am assuming the sorcerer was in an official capacity, in some way being an advisor to the "deputy."

The word translated "deputy" denotes a head of government in a Roman senatorial province,<sup>FRIBERG</sup> that is, a province under the control of the Roman Senate.<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> This man was, therefore, the key governmental authority on the island of Paphos.

### SERGIUS PAULUS, A PRUDENT MAN

"... Sergius Paulus, a prudent man . . ." Other versions read, "an intelligent man,"<sup>NKJV</sup> "a man of intelligence,"<sup>NASB</sup> "a man of understanding,"<sup>ASV</sup> "a wise man,"<sup>MRD</sup> "an extremely intelligent man,"<sup>NJB</sup> "a man of keen intelligence,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "an intelligent and sensible man of sound understanding."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

surfacing of this man, together with what is said of him, once again underscores the thrust of those early labors, which were toward devout and thoughtful people.

A good mind is not an end of itself, but it is not to be disdained. It yields optimum benefit when it is focused upon the things of God, **for they have been revealed for thoughtful people.** Paul once told the Philippians, "think on these things" (Phil 4:8). He told young Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them" (1 Tim 4:15). **The people of God must not content themselves with an approach to religion that does not challenge and engage the mind.**

### HE CALLED FOR BARNABAS AND SAUL

"... who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God." Other versions read "summoned,"<sup>NASB</sup> "sent for,"<sup>NIV</sup> "invited,"<sup>NLT</sup> "asked,"<sup>LIVING</sup> and "summoned to him."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The Word translated "called" means "to call to oneself; to bid to come to oneself,"<sup>THAYER</sup> It has an official tone to it, and is not a casual word, like one neighbor inviting another one to come to his house. **It was an official invitation that was not**

**Those who drift away from God do so in their minds. Those in Christ are noted for the way in which they think: "the law of my mind." The one who is living by faith confesses, "with the mind I myself serve the law of God." There is such a thing as being "spiritually minded." We are admonished to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind." In fact, in Christ we are given "a sound mind."**

The lexical meaning of the word translated "prudent" is "intelligent, having understanding, wise, learned,"<sup>THAYER</sup> "having understanding, intelligent, wise,"<sup>FRIBERG</sup> "pertaining to being able to understand and evaluate - 'intelligent, insightful, understanding,'"<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and "intelligent, wise, with good sense."<sup>GINGRICH</sup>

The idea is that this man had a keen and disciplined mind, able to perceive critical matters, and effective in applying his understanding to matters with which he was acquainted. **The**

tendered in a spirit of casualness.

And why did this intelligent ruler call for Barnabas and Saul? You may rest assured, it was not obtain some counsel about the affairs of government. We are told that he "desired to hear the word of God." **Among other things, this confirms that the word of God appeals to those with intelligent and inquiring minds.** If men are to love the Lord with all of their mind (Mk 12:30), then it follows that the Word of God has a fundamental appeal to

the mind. That is, it calls for the involvement of the mind of the people.

Those who drift away from God do so in their minds (Rom 1:28). Those in Christ are noted for the way in which they think: “*the law of my mind*” (Rom 7:23). The one who is living by faith confesses, “*with the mind I myself serve the law of God*” (Rom 7:25). There is such a thing as being “*spiritually minded*” (Rom 8:6). We are admonished to be “*renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (Eph

4:23). In fact, in Christ we are given “*a sound mind*” (2 Tim 1:7).

**There is a form of Christianity being perpetrated these days that has little or no appeal to devout and thoughtful people.** There is too much childishness in such appeals. This is also true of the advancement of rules and procedures. Of course, such regulations are required when men are navigating in unknown waters, and are not sure of themselves.

**Sergius Paulus did not inquire about some methodology that Paul and Barnabas were advancing.** He was not looking for a way to be a better governor. He wanted to hear “*the word of God.*” we do not know how he came to know of Barnabas and Saul. However, we do know the associations he made with them. They were speaking “*the Word of God*” – that is, what the God of heaven had made known. The thing for which they were noted was preaching the Word of God. Oh, that more were like that.

## HE SOUGHT TO TURN HIM FROM THE FAITH

**“*8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.*”**

Those who are dominated by the devil are not indifferent to the proclamation of the Word of the Lord. Whether such individuals surface in an intellectual environment, or one of pleasure or immorality, the Word of God awakens their hostility against the Lord.

their lack of allegiance to the Lord Himself. His mandate is “*preach the Word,*” being “*instant in season, and out of season*” – or being “*persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable*”<sup>NIV</sup> (2 Tim 4:2). The modern church, for the most part, has not done well in this matter. This is largely owing to the changing of its agenda. **When the fundamental aim is to help people, as opposed to serving God, the soul is set adrift on the raging sea of error.** This is

“*wise man.*” He appears to have been noted for intelligent proclamations and insights – yet they were not lawful. **His intelligence was found to be in conflict with the rationale that is made known in the Gospel.**

Now, when Barnabas and Saul are declaring the Word of God to the governor, this man withstands **them.** Other versions read, “*opposing them,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*put himself against them,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*tried to distort the meaning,*”<sup>GWN</sup> “*tried to stop them,*”<sup>NJB</sup> and “*interfered.*”<sup>NLT</sup> To withstand or oppose means to set oneself against the individual, and to do so aggressively. What was declared by Barnabas and Saul contradicted what this “*wise man*” had been saying. Unwilling to consider what they were saying, he opposed it. **He was dominated by the carnal mind, and the Word of God had awakened the hostility of that mind, for he was not subject to the law of God, neither was such a thing even possible** (Rom 8:7).

**He was dominated by the carnal mind, and the Word of God had awakened the hostility of that mind, for he was not subject to the law of God, neither was such a thing even possible.**

The carnal mind is “*enmity against God*” (Rom 8:7). It will break forth against what God has said, and do so aggressively. This is what will happen in our text.

It ought to be noted that any attempt to placate a carnal mind is **nothing more than foolishness.** Those who make such attempts are forced to diminish the importance of and reference to the Word of God. They pretend as though this is done in the interest of influencing people for God. **However, they forget that such approaches confirm**

why Paul strongly affirmed, “*Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah)*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (Gal 1:10).

### HE WITHSTOOD BARNABAS AND SAUL

“*But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them . . .*” The name Barjesus means “*son of Jesus,*” which was a somewhat common name among the Jews (Col 4:11). This was the Greek form of Joshua (Heb 4:8). The name “*Elymas*” means

### SEEKING TO TURN THE DEPUTY FROM THE FAITH

“*. . . seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.*” The Amplified Bible reads, “*seeking to keep the proconsul from accepting the faith.*” Here is a case where the heart of the governor was being drawn to Christ. God was giving him to believe (Phil 1:29), and faith was coming to him through the hearing of the Gospel (Rom 10:17).

Now this wicked man seeks to

divert the attention of Sergius Paulus from the Word of God. **There is a battle here, and the soul of a man is at stake.** How will the men of God deal with this situation? Will they assume the sincerity

of this opponent, and attempt to reason with him on the matter? Indeed, they do not!

Here is a child of the wicked one confronting sons of the Living God. Behold their reaction, and how they deal with such flagrant opposition.

## SAUL CONFRONTS THE FALSE PROPHET

**“<sup>9</sup> Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, <sup>10</sup> And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?<sup>11</sup> And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.”**

The decisiveness and immediacy of this response confirms the seriousness of opposing the truth of God. It also corroborates the statement of Paul to Titus that there are some “whose mouths must be stopped” (Tit 1:11). **This is not a case that requires gentleness, for this man is not opposing himself (2 Tim 2:24-26), but the servants of the Lord – and that is a matter of the greatest gravity.** When arguments are presented to those inclined to the Lord to turn them aside, it is not to be treated lightly as though it was nothing more than a clash of intellects.

### SAUL, FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him . . .” Other versions read, “looked intently at him,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “fixed his gaze upon him,”<sup>NASB</sup> “looked straight at Elymas and said,”<sup>NIV</sup> “fastened his eyes on him,”<sup>ASV</sup> “looking hard at him,”<sup>BBE</sup> “stared straight at the sorcerer,”<sup>CSB</sup> “stared at Elymas,”<sup>GWN</sup> “glared angrily at the sorcerer and said,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “looked him straight in the eye,”<sup>ISV</sup> “gazed steadily at him,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and “looked steadily at [Elymas]”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

While the devil was filling Elymas, the Holy Spirit was filling Paul,

and the battle was set in array. The words that will be spoken have come from the Holy Spirit, and reflect the attitude of the Lord toward those who would impede His Word.

This is the first time in all of the

read “all deceit,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “all kinds of deceit,”<sup>NIV</sup> “all guile,”<sup>ASV</sup> “fraud,”<sup>CJB</sup> “utter fraud,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “master of every form deception and recklessness.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> Here was a man Satan was holding captive (2 Tim 2:26), who was also “controlled

**The decisiveness and immediacy of this response confirms the seriousness of opposing the truth of God. It also corroborates the statement of Paul to Titus that there are some “whose mouths must be stopped.” This is not a case that requires gentleness, for this man is not opposing himself, but the servants of the Lord – and that is a matter of the greatest gravity.**

Bible that the name “Paul” is mentioned. Furthermore, apart from Paul recounting Jesus speaking to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:7,13; 26:14), this is the last time in the Bible he is referred to as “Saul.” Also, with the exceptions of Acts 14:12,14 and 15:12,25, from this point on, where Barnabas and Paul are referenced, Paul is mentioned before Barnabas (13:43,46,50; 15:2,22,35,36).

From this point on, the record in the book of Acts will focus on the activities and ministries of Paul.

### THOU CHILD OF THE DEVIL

“And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?”

What a bold and forthright declaration!

⇨ Full of all subtlety. Other versions

by the sinful nature”<sup>NIV</sup> (Rom 8:7). Like the devil did with Eve, he was a master at making the lie attractive. There was no goodness or honesty in him, – not so much as a speck. He was “full of all subtlety,”<sup>NIV</sup> misrepresentation, and deceit.

⇨ **Full of all mischief.** Other versions read “fraud,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “trickery,”<sup>NIV</sup> “villainy,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “evil ways,”<sup>BBE</sup> “all craft,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “schemes,”<sup>GWN</sup> “wrongdoing,”<sup>NET</sup> and “unscrupulousness, and wickedness.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> The word from which “mischief” is translated means “1) ease in doing, faculty 2) levity or easiness in thinking or acting 2a) love of a lazy effeminate life 3) unscrupulous, cunning, mischief.”<sup>THAYER</sup> That is another way or referring to the “broad” way that “leadeth to destruction” (Matt 7:13). Sensing the aggressive nature of faith, Elymas sought to turn the governor to an easier and less difficult way – a way that allowed the flesh more leniency,

and permitted the individual to maintain self interests above those of God. Such ways are still being pressed upon the people!

- ⇒ **Thou child of the devil.** Other versions read “*son of the devil*,”<sup>NKJV</sup> and “*son of Satan*.”<sup>CJB</sup> What a

can be perverted or corrupted. It is rather that they are misrepresented. Peter referred to this kind of action as wresting the Scripture, twisting it to say something it does not. He also adds, that those who so such things will be destroyed because they did so (2 Pet 3:16).

**Notice the authority with which Paul speaks. This is something that proceeds from a profound fellowship with Christ and a staggering scope of spiritual understanding. In his measure, as the Lord Jesus did, Paul was doing the works that he saw God doing.**

staggering description! In the garden of Eden, God spoke to the devil referring to his “*seed*” (Gen 3:15) – Elymas was one of them. Jesus said the tares were “*the children of the wicked one*” (Matt 13:38). He also said to the religious leaders of His day, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*” (John 8:44). John wrote, “*He that sinneth is of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). In this text, Paul recognized one of Satan’s own offspring, and declares plainly that this is the case.

- ⇒ **Thou enemy of all righteousness.** Other versions read, “*enemy of everything that is right*,”<sup>NIV</sup> “*hating all righteousness*,”<sup>BBE</sup> “*enemy of everything good*,”<sup>CJB</sup> “*You hate everything that has God's approval*,”<sup>GWN</sup> and “*enemy of everything that is upright and good*.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> Just as righteousness and unrighteousness cannot mingle, and Christ and Belial cannot be in accord, so a person cannot embrace some of the truth while hating another part.
- ⇒ **Cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.** Other versions read, “*perverting the straight ways of the Lord*,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*make crooked the straight ways of the Lord*,”<sup>NASB</sup> “*turning people from the right ways of the Lord*,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “*twisting the straight paths of the Lord*.”<sup>NAB</sup> It is not that the ways of God themselves

It seems to me that the church of our day could use a good dose of this kind of thinking. There is too much tolerance of corruption, and too little awareness of the seriousness of it.

**THE HAND OF THE LORD IS UPON THEE**

“*And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season . . .*”

Notice the authority with which Paul speaks. **This is something that proceeds from a profound fellowship with Christ and a staggering scope of spiritual understanding.** In his measure, as the Lord Jesus did, Paul was doing the works that he saw God doing (John 5:19).

**I am affirming that Divine power cannot be employed for personal purposes.** That being true, and considering that Paul was, in fact, filled with the Spirit on the occasion, several conclusions are in order.

- ⇒ First, we are being exposed to the Lord’s reaction to the imposition or corrupt and unlawful knowledge and wisdom. Elymas was noted for being a “*wise man*,” for that is the meaning of the name “*Elymas*.”
- ⇒ Second, here is an example of heaven’s view of those who attempt to turn people away from the faith. If you imagine that this has no

relevance in our day, consider the efforts of secular education, various cults, and deceived teachers within the Christian community. Add to that the growing prominence of heathen religions like Islam and Buddhism, and corrupt forms of Christianity, like Mormonism and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. All of these are engaged in a gargantuan effort to turn people the faith. Ponder government rules and regulations that are designed to stifle the quest for and expression of faith.

- ⇒ There is also the matter of the judgment of the Lord, imposed upon sinners. This man will have a condition forced upon him from heaven. Other individuals who experienced the imposition of judgment include Pharaoh, Uzzah, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Ananias, and Sapphira.
- ⇒ Here we have the fulfilment of First Timothy 5:24: “*Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after*” (1 Tim 5:24). Such sins must be judged immediately, for the sake of others – and the offenders must still stand before the Lord on the day of judgment.
- ⇒ A judgment was poured out upon Elymas that matched his spiritual condition. Her was blind within, and now, for a season, he would be blind without.
- ⇒ The fact that this blindness was only for a time suggests that during that period he was being given “*space to repent*” (Rev 2:21). It is also quite possible that the period would confirm that this man had passed beyond the possibility of repentance. Such a condition is mentioned in the Revelation of those who “*repented not*” even though great judgments were poured out upon them (Rev 9:20; 16:9,11).

**A MIST AND DARKNESS FELL ON HIM**

“*And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.*” Other versions read, “*a dark mist*”

fell upon him," <sup>NKJV</sup> "a mist and a darkness fell upon him," <sup>NASB</sup> "mist and darkness overcame him," <sup>NIV</sup> "a dark mist came down upon him," <sup>BBE</sup> "everything quickly became dark," <sup>1B</sup> and "a mist and utter blackness came over his eyes." PHILLIPS

The word "mist" means "dimness," <sup>THAYER</sup> and "darkness" means "blindness." <sup>THAYER</sup> The picture here is that of an immediate obscurement of Elymas'

vision, followed by total blindness. It is as though his vision, over a brief period, faded out, so that the strength of this imposed judgment might register upon him. There are Divine judgments like that. They are toward the individual immediately, yet are carried out in stages – like Herod being smitten by an angel, then dying as worms consumed him from within (Acts 12:23). **I gather that this judgment was also for the sake of the**

**governor, to confirm the truth of what Barnabas and Paul were declaring.** That is, this was a judgment that could be observed, for as soon as his vision had been removed, Elymas sought for someone to lead him about. Note that he did not repent. He did not ask Paul to pray for him as Simon did Peter (Acts 8:24). Of course, Paul did not admonish him to repent of his wickedness either, as Peter did Simon.

## THE DEPUTY BELIEVED

<sup>12</sup> **Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.**

The results that follow confirm that Paul had, in fact, thrown down a bastion of wicked thought, so that it could hold no sway over the governor of the island. **This is an example of the use of spiritual weaponry against the assault of contradicting patterns of thought.** As it is written, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:3-5). In the case of the Corinthians, Paul's employment of these weapons would be against the false teachers at Corinth who were promoting "another Jesus," "another gospel," and "another Spirit" (2 Cor 10:1-2; 11:3).

This kind of judgment is necessary because of the impact of false messages. In the case of Corinth, what the teachers delivered caused the people to drift away from Christ, which in turn produced the moral and spiritual lapses that were taking place there. In the case of Elymas, had he been allowed to continue, the governor would have rejected the Gospel in favor of what Elymas was saying.

**The gravity of erroneous teaching, however innocent it may appear, cannot**

**be overstated.** Where such teachings are found, the Spirit never elicits sympathy for the propagator. This is because their words "spread like cancer," <sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Tim 2:17), "subverting the hearers" (2 Tim 2:14), and overthrowing their faith (2 Tim 2:18). **This is not speaking of the words of those who have an incomplete knowledge, like Apollos, yet have a heart for the truth.** This is rather speaking of competitive doctrines that assign Divine

done," <sup>NKJV</sup> "Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened," <sup>NASB</sup> and "When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed." <sup>NIV</sup>

This confirms that the judgment upon Elymas was apparent, or visible. There was no doubt what had happened to him. Nor, indeed, was there any need to interpret it, for Paul had precisely declared what would happen – and his

**Believing involves the absence of doubt, and the presence of persuasion, and trust. The believing one has been convinced of the truth, and has wholly embraced it. Believing is not an experiment – like trying out a new way of thinking.**

power and effectiveness to messages that God did not give.

For these, and other, reasons, a very apparent judgment has taken place upon Elymas. This has, in effect, confirmed what he was saying was **not** the truth, and that what Paul was saying **was** the truth.

### HE SAW WHAT WAS DONE AND BELIEVED

"Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed . . ." Other versions read, "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been

word came to pass. Now it had been established that Paul was the one who had the message of the Lord, not Elymas.

The word "believed" is not primarily expressive of the activity of the intellect or mind. **Believing takes place within the heart, within the citadel of man's nature.** It is written, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom 10:10). The Amplified Bible reads, "For with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ).

**Believing involves the absence of**

doubt, and the presence of persuasion, and trust. The believing one has been convinced of the truth, and has wholly embraced it. Believing is not an experiment – like trying out a new way of thinking. The one who believes senses that everything rests on the message that has been heard, and thus discards all competing bodies of knowledge, and casts his soul wholly and solely upon the Lord.

#### BEING ASTONISHED AT THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD

“ . . . being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Other versions read, “astonished at the teaching of the Lord,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “amazed at the teaching of the Lord,”<sup>NASB</sup> “full of wonder at the teaching of the Lord,”<sup>NASB</sup> “astounded by the teaching about the Lord,”<sup>BBE</sup> “admiring at the doctrine of the Lord,”<sup>CSB</sup> “being much struck by what he had learnt about the Lord,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “astonished at the power of God’s message,”<sup>NJB</sup> “astonished

and deeply touched at the teaching concerning the Lord and from Him.”  
AMPLIFIED

Notice that Sergius Paulus was not astonished at the miraculous judgment against Elymas, **but at what had been taught concerning the Lord.** It was the doctrine that moved him to believe, not the experience of Elymas.

What we have here is something similar to what occurred during the ministry of Jesus. **What He did confirmed what He had taught.** After hearing what Jesus said, and beholding His authority over demons, they said, “What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him”(Mark 1:27). **The uniqueness of Jesus was not in His authority over demons, but in the message that He brought.** His disciples could cast out demons, but it was the message of the

Lord Jesus Himself that they delivered.

The teaching of Christ that Paul delivered was of such magnitude that upon witnessing the imposed blindness of Elymas, the governor thought of the word that Paul had preached concerning the Lord. **He turned his heart and mind to a consideration of what was said, not what was done.** That word was not about the possibility of miracles, or the probability of social or financial advantages. It was a clear and powerful declamation of the Person of Christ Jesus – and it had captured the heart and attention this political official.

**It is a matter of great concern when the church is not noted for its message – for what it is declaring or affirming!** Let us learn from this text the value of a word that anchors the soul, exposes error, and validates to the soul the marvelous effects of the wonderful works of God, as wrought through Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to the effects of following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Those who do, in fact, live by faith, are effectively led by the Spirit because of their faith. They are sensitized to the will of the Lord, having been given ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.

For them, it is no great thing to forfeit their own will, for faith has convinced them of the superiority and goodness of the will of the Lord. Jesus said, His sheep know His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). And, as the Revelation confirms, they follow Him wherever He goes (Rev

14:4). They perceive Him as their Leader.

These realities are being lived out in our text. Duly noted, this record will encourage our hearts and strengthen our hands in the Lord. Truly, our labor in the Lord is not vain’ (1 Cor 15:58).

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/18/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Fifty-seventh lesson will cover verses 13 through 23 of the thirteenth chapter: “PAUL PREACHES IN ANTIOCH, #1.” At this point in the book of Acts, Paul becomes the prominent laborer in the Kingdom. It will be confirmed that he did, indeed, labor “more abundantly than they all,” the grace of God working in him. Having arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, “Paul and his company” went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Following “the reading of the Law and the prophets,” the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them saying if they had a word of exhortation for the people, to “say on.” Paul then delivered this stirring message – one of the longest of Scriptural record. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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