

The Ministry of Apostle Paul Series

From Saul the Devout Jew to Paul the Devout Apostle - Cont.

June 16, 2019

Scripture Text: Acts 13:1-12 NKJV **1** *Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2* *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* **3** *Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. 4* *So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5* *And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.*

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

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

VERSE 1 *Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

The Church of Antioch was thriving as people received the testimony of the prophets and teachers. Whenever people hear the word of God and believe with their heart the kingdom increases in power and authority. Men of every status are being transformed by the renewing of their minds.

VERSE 2 *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

In the Old Testament ministering to the Lord:

1. It was restricted to the priesthood.
2. It was tied to the carrying out of their responsibilities to offer sacrifices on behalf of themselves and the people.
3. It was done in recognition of who God is and what He had done for them.
4. It was done in obedience to what God had commanded.
5. It was tied to worship.

In the New Testament ministering to the Lord:

When Jesus completed His fast the devil departed from Him and Angels ministered to Him Matthew 4:11 NKJV.

In the Apostle John's Revelation, the idea of ministering seems to center around a constant recognition of the character and nature of God, from the angelic beings that proclaim His holiness [Revelation 4:8-11], and His work of salvation, who in response bow down before the throne saying "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" [Revelation 5:12-14].

God needs nothing, so there is no need in Him that we could fulfill. However, God desires to have a relationship with us. *He knows that the most satisfying relationship that meets our innermost needs is found in our recognition of who He is and our submission to the plan that He has for us.* We can only come to that relationship through the confession of our sins and recognition of God's saving act of redemption through His Son, Jesus.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to enable us to worship God in Spirit and Truth, as we willingly submit our lives to Him. When our focus is on Him the Holy Spirit is able to speak and work in accordance to the will of God.

VERSE 3 ***Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.***

The purpose of fasting is to take our eyes off the things of this world and instead focus on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God and to ourselves that we are serious about our relationship with Him.

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast.

Anything you can temporarily give up in order to better focus on God can be considered a fast. ([1 Corinth 7:1-5](#)). Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when the fasting is from food.

Extended periods of time without eating are harmful to the body. Fasting is not intended to punish our flesh, but to focus on God.

The believers fasted and prayed with the laying on of hands in acknowledgement of the will and purpose of God. All came to agreement in sending Barnabas and Saul to expand the work of the kingdom. It is always uplifting when God's people come together with fasting and prayer to get clarity concerning the will of God. God does His best work for the church when we bare each other's burdens coupled with prayer and fasting.

In the life of the church, fasting was a common practice by all believers as they followed Jesus. "As *Jesus Christ is, so, are we in this present world.*" I John 4:17 NKJV.

VERSE 4 ***So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.***

When a person is sent by the Holy Spirit, they receive the help that comes from God to accomplish the assignment they are chosen for. He brings power and focus to Christ's presence. The Holy Spirit gives comfort in conflict. He gives authority to speak on behalf of Jesus. He will remind you of the words of the Lord. He will tell you of things to come before they happened. He will give you the discernment of spirits.

We receive our assignment with the understanding that "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 NKJV.

The people who gladly heard and received the word were being saved by the demonstration of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Barnabas and Saul.

VERSE 5 ***And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.***

Salamis was the island's primary port and commercial center. A city with a large enough Jewish population to support multiple synagogues. It was noted that the Temple of Zeus dominated one of the *thriving cities of the Roman Empire.*

They came with a focus on Jesus and how He is woven into the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament as Messiah. The Holy Spirit was affirming His Presence, power and authority in Barnabas and Saul. Along with John, the first leg of the journey gave the pair the opportunity to

hone their missionary and preaching skills. They found themselves engaged in spiritual combat against their formidable adversary, Elymas, also known as Bar Jesus. Let's be clear, doing the will of God is not without the absence of conflict but on the contrary. Most of the time you may find yourselves being tested to the limit. In the mist of Jesus preparation for public ministry during His time of fasting, He was in conflict with the devil (Matthew 4:1-11 NKJV).

VERSE 6 *Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,*

Paphos was about 90 miles from Salamis and a maritime city on the west end of Cyprus, with a harbor. It was the residence of a Roman proconsul. Paphos was noted for the worship and shrine of Venus (Aphrodite).

Their mission and focus were to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ primarily to the Jews in their synagogues.

They didn't aspect to fight against the powers of darkness but God prepared an equipped for any of the devil's smoke screens to thwart to will of God. Jesus had said, *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* Mark 16:17-18 NKJV

I John 4:4 NKJV *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*