

Acts 073
Satanic Conflict
Acts 13:4-12
April 23, 2025
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We are continuing on with our verse-by-verse study through the Book of Acts on Wednesday evenings. You might remember the outline of the book was given by Jesus, actually, as recorded by Luke in Acts 1:8. Jesus, before He ascended back to the Father, said to the disciples,

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth."

There is an outline of Acts:

Structure of the Book of Acts (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)
- Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13-28)
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18-28:31)

Now we are at a big turning point in the Book of Acts, where we are moving into the ministry to the remote places of the earth, which, when you cross-reference that with some things Isaiah said, the remote parts of the earth is Gentile territory outside the borders of Israel. The third section begins with Paul's first missionary journey, which is where we are (Acts 13-14).

Here is an outline for the first missionary journey into southern Galatia:

1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

- I. Paul & Barnabas' appointment (13:1-3)
- II. Cyprus ministry (13:4-12)
- III. Pisidian Antioch ministry (13:13-52)
- IV. Iconium ministry (14:1-7)
- V. Lystra ministry (14:8-20a)
- VI. Derbe ministry (14:20b-21a)
- VII. Return to Antioch (14:21b-28)

The last time I was with you, we covered the appointment, first by the Holy Spirit, and then the recognition of the church that the Holy Spirit was working in these two men, Paul and Barnabas. Hands are laid on them and they are commissioned for that first missionary journey.

When we were studying that, we discovered that the decision was made by a plurality of elders consisting of both prophets and teachers. I had a chance to teach about those individuals. One of them I skipped over. I will just mention him quickly now. His name is Manaen, and you see him in the second part of Acts 13:1. It says,

"...and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

When it talks about this man Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, that is referring to the fact that he was a Jew, brought up in the royal court of Herod Antipas. This indicates that the church, as part of its leadership in Antioch, had some of what we would call royalty. Maybe that is too strong a word—some prestigious people in the church.

There were other people, for example, Niger, who was from Nigeria. It says,

"...Barnabas and Simeon who was called Niger..."

Meaning he was Nigerian—black. You have all different types of people as leaders in the church. Some people black, some people of prestigious pedigree. It shows you what Paul is going to develop later on in Galatians 3:28, that within the body of Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. You see that reflected in the leadership in Antioch.

Now that the leadership has appointed Paul and Barnabas, what starts now is the Cyprus ministry (Acts 13:4-12). This is the first time that the church is leaving the borders of Israel. It is exciting.

- II. Cyprus Ministry (Acts 13:4-12)
 - A. Holy Spirit's call (4a)
 - B. From Seleucia to Cyprus (4b)
 - C. Salamis ministry (5)
 - D. Paphos ministry (6-12)

We have in Acts 13:4-12, the Holy Spirit's call; the journey from Seleucia, near Antioch, to Cyprus by boat. The first place they stop at is a place called Salamis, on the northeastern side of the island. The place that they end up with, where they have their most fruitful ministry and tremendous satanic conflict and spiritual opposition, as we are going to see in Acts 13:6-12, is in Paphos, on the southwestern side of the island. We get information about how they started on the island on one end of the island, and how they ended up on the other end of the island. They started in Salamis, and they have their most prolific ministry in Paphos, and along with it comes a ton of spiritual warfare.

Every time you step out and try to do something for the Lord—I do not care what it is—expect Satan to throw every monkey wrench possible. A lot of times we get discouraged because we get so much pushback on stuff that normal people would not get pushback on. You wonder, "Have I missed God's will?" That is actually a sign that you are in God's will, as we are going to see here with this Paphos ministry.

First of all, notice the Holy Spirit's call. I am in Acts 13:4. It says,

"So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit..."

I love that the church laid hands on them, but the church was ultimately not the sending agency, it was the Holy Spirit. What the church at Antioch was doing was watching who the Holy Spirit had selected for this ministry, and they laid hands accordingly. That is the way a church is supposed to function. A church cannot produce pastors or elders or deacons or anything. The only thing a church can do is see what God is doing in someone's life and recognize those publicly whom God is already working in. I think it is really instructive that it was actually the Holy Spirit that sent these men out.

Paul was going to say something very similar to the leadership at the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28. He will say,

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (NIV).

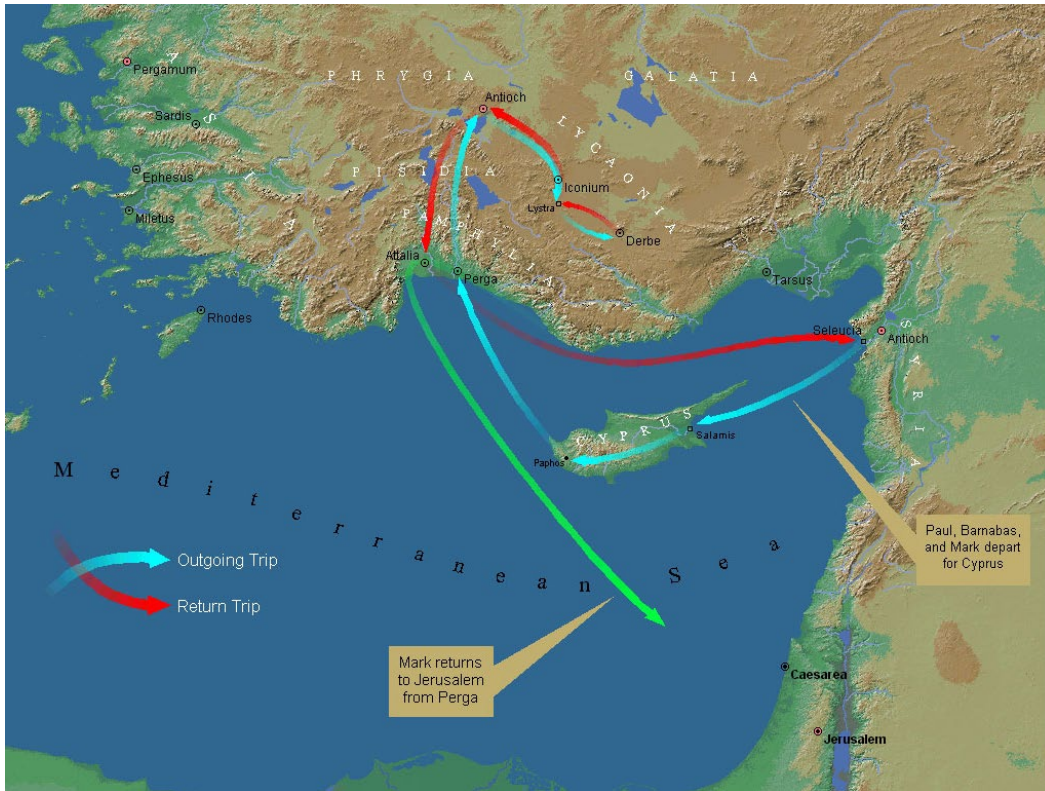
Paul tells these elders, "You are in the position you are in because the Holy Spirit put you there." A board did not put you there; a seminary did not put you there; name recognition did not put you there; connections did not put you there; contacts did not put you there; your education did not put you there. These are all things God can use, but ultimately it is the Holy Spirit that put those elders in place.

You see the same thing with Paul and Barnabas as they are heading off to this island of Cyprus. The second part of Acts 13:4 says, as they traveled from Seleucia to Cyprus,

"...they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

Remember, the sending church is Antioch. Seleucia is about 16 miles west of Antioch, and from there they go to Cyprus. Cyprus is in the Mediterranean Sea. It looks like a little island. When you get there, you are just shocked at how big it is. The dimensions of Cyprus are 150 by 62 miles. That is a big chunk of territory. It is actually the third largest Greek island in the Mediterranean Sea. So, when you travel from Seleucia to Cyprus, you are dealing with a journey of about 130 miles southwest of Antioch, the sending church.

Once again, I bring these things up because this is real geography, and these are real people. The way these events are narrated, it is as if it really happened. It is as if you could find all these places, even modern places, representing those places on Google Maps.



The island of Cyprus was governed by the Roman Senate. There is a lot of discussion in the commentaries about the different governing structures that the island of Cyprus went through over time, but they were governed by the Roman Senate, which means they had a leadership structure in place. There was a guy that governed the whole island who was called the proconsul. We are going to see that the guy is going to get saved through great spiritual warfare.

There again is Seleucia, where they left, and then there is Cyprus. Of course, they took the trip by sailboat. Now we come to the Salamis ministry.

It says in Acts 13:5, *"When they had reached Salamis..."* Salamis is on the northeastern side of the island. It is going to be a brief ministry there; not a lot is said because they are going to move to Paphos, as we are going to see. Salamis is on that part of the island that would be nearest facing the mainland of the Nation of Israel.

What does it say here? What do they do when they hit Salamis? It says, *"...they began to proclaim the word of God..."* which is a good thing to do, because they are looking for converts—evangelism. Whenever you are evangelizing, the more you can get your evangelistic activities to focus on the Scripture, the better the chance you have of an actual conversion. Why would we say that? Because Paul is going to write in Romans 10:17:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

It is the Scripture that converts—the Lord using the Scripture. That is helpful to us because, in evangelism you may not have a chance to open a Bible. It may be lickety-split. The more Scripture that you can commit to memory, the more the Lord can use you in evangelism.

Next you will notice where they go when they preach the Word of God. It says,

"...they began proclaiming the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews..."

This is Paul's pattern. He always goes to the synagogue first, because that is the group that he has common ground with. They have the Hebrew Bible, he has the Hebrew Bible, so he can reason with them. When he moves away from Jewish evangelism and moves into Gentile evangelism, he goes to the Bible that the Gentiles know. He never starts with the Hebrew Bible. He starts with the Bible that they do have, which is general revelation.

Why did he go to the Jews first? Because he would write this in Romans 1:16:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Every single city that Paul goes into, the first place he goes is the synagogue where the Jewish people are. The only exceptions would be places like Philippi, where they did not have a synagogue. Other than that, his first order of business is always to go to the synagogue.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum is of the mindset that this pattern has never stopped, and that is actually what we should be doing today. A lot of people would challenge him on that, but Paul did write it in an epistle which governs the Church Age—to the Jew first.

Typically, what happens with Paul is that he goes to the synagogue, and not only are they not interested in what he is saying, they start arguing with him and in some places kick him out. In other instances they stir up a crowd against him. Then he goes to the Gentiles, and he bears this massive amount of fruit amongst the Gentiles; but he always goes to the Jews first.

That is what he writes in Romans 1:16—that is what he is doing here. Acts 13:5 says,

"When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper."

Who is John? We have already met John, have we not? When Peter got out of prison, he went to the house church of a woman named Mary. She was the mother of someone named John Mark—Mark being his Gentile name, the name he used when he was amongst the Gentiles; John being his Jewish name—John Mark. Of course, John Mark is going to write one of the gospels called the Gospel of Mark. We ran into him for the first time in Acts 12.

"The 'John' mentioned in verse 5 is the same as John Mark of Acts 12:25. He traveled with Barnabas and Saul as their attendant."¹

See what it says there of John Mark: "...and they also had John [Mark] as their helper." Some of your versions say "attendant."

"The Greek word for 'attendant,' 'hypereten,' means the 'under rower' and describes someone who is subordinate to another. John Mark was a helper, a servant to the apostles. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he was the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12)."²

You notice that when John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas, he was not trying to eclipse authority. He was not trying to call the shots, but he was subordinate. He was a helper and a servant to them. That is what the word attendant there means.

How we need more John Marks today in the body of Christ. Sometimes we have a situation in the body of Christ where you have too many chiefs and not enough Indians, and we need Indians as well as we need chiefs. We need people who are not there for their own agenda and purposes, but want to submit to leadership. We like to say here at Sugar Land Bible Church, we are looking for F.A.T. Christians. F.A.T—F, faithful; A, available; T, teachable. Faithful. Available. Teachable. F.A.T. Christians.

To be frank with you, it is hard to find people like that. It is easy to find people who want the spotlight or what have you, but it is hard to find John Marks, and we need them. May we celebrate them; and may the Lord raise up more and more of them.

Something, though, is going to happen with John Mark in Perga. He is going to bail out of the first missionary journey. Once the team hits Perga (Acts 13:13), John Mark is going to leave, and we have no idea why he left. There is a lot of speculation, and I will give you those speculative points when we hit Acts 13:13; but the bottom line is no one really knows.

Acts 13:13 says,

"Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem."

Remember who John Mark is, and what is his relationship to Barnabas? He was Barnabas's cousin. Barnabas is going to say to Paul, "We have to bring John Mark on missionary journey two." Paul is going to say, in Spanish translation, "No way, Jose. We are not bringing that kid on missionary journey two. He bailed out of missionary journey number one." At the end of Acts 15, when they are just getting ready to take off for the second missionary journey, this is going to create a rift between Paul and Barnabas.

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 285.

² Ibid.

The Greek there is very intense. These guys went at each other over this issue, and the intensity was so strong that what you ended up with are two missionary teams instead of one. Barnabas is going to take John Mark and go one direction, and Saul is going to take his team and go the different direction on missionary journey two.

The Book of Acts is going to keep the spotlight on Paul, because the whole point of it is to show how Paul is just like Peter. He does everything Peter does, which would help Theophilus with his doubting issues. Theophilus, of course, is the recipient of the book. You are seeing the whole scenario develop for this tension between Paul and Barnabas, to the point where there is a split and the two cannot even get along; but there is a happy ending to the story.

When Paul writes the prison letters, in one of them, Colossians, he mentions John Mark being with him in prison. Paul was under house arrest for about two years when he finally got to Rome, and apparently the tension between them was resolved, which is always a good thing. I have conflicts with people going way back in my life that have not been formally resolved yet. My prayer is that one day, under God's sovereignty, under His providence, those conflicts could get resolved.

Sometimes men of God do not agree on everything. Sometimes people that love Jesus equally and who are equally filled with the Holy Spirit see things differently and it can cause a rift. In this case, it is not always a bad thing because you are going to have two missionary teams instead of one, which is a good thing.

Even in the midst of interpersonal conflict amongst Christians, which is one of the most difficult things to go through, God can still work. God can even work in such a way that those conflicts get fixed over the course of time. Such is the case with John Mark—keep your eye on him.

Now we leave Salamis and we go to the opposite side of the island, to a place called Paphos. This is where there is going to be great spiritual warfare over a man's mind, the proconsul of the whole island. Because this is governed by a Roman Senate, there is a proconsul there. We are going to meet him, and then we are going to meet the false teacher, causing all the trouble—a man named Elymas Bar Jesus.

Elymas means "wise;" Bar means "son;" and Joshua or Yeshua was just a common Jewish name in those days. That is where the name Jesus comes from. The final part of his name is Jesus in the Greek, and Yeshua in Hebrew. Obviously he is not to be confused with the Son of God. That is basically who this false teacher is in Paphos.

Here is the description in Acts 13:6:

"When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos..."

Keep in mind what I said before: it is a big island. It is not a small island, it is a big island. I am assuming that they went along the way evangelizing, although the text does not specifically say that. Eventually they get to this place called Paphos. This is where they enter intense spiritual warfare.

Who is the troublemaker?

"When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus" (Acts 13:6).

If you look at Acts 13:8, he also has the name Elymas. His full name, as I said before, is Elymas, which means "wise," Bar, which means "son," and then Yeshua, which is a common name.

You will notice that this particular false teacher is Jewish. This is important for us to understand, because a lot of people think that if you are Jewish, then you are automatically right with God. We think that way a lot of times because we know what God is going to do with the Jewish nation yet future. He is going to bring them back into the fold, Paul tells us, just like a natural branch being reconnected to its own tree.

In between, in the meantime, what we have to understand is just because you are Jewish does not make you right with God. What pleases God is a believing Jewish person. We might even call them completed Jews. You have national Israel out there, and the group that pleases God is that believing remnant, a subset within the group.

John the Baptist made a point out of this. He says to the Jews of his ministry,

"And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham'" (Matthew 3:9).

God is not impressed with you Jews, just because you are Jews. What He is impressed with is a believing Jew. That is why Paul says in Romans 2:28-29,

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who was one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

In Romans 9:6 Paul says,

"But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;"

In other words, there is a group of people that Paul calls the true Israel, the Israel of God. That is the group that God is going to fulfill His covenants through one day in the Millennial Kingdom. In the meantime, Jews in the outer circle can cause a lot of trouble. In fact, that is the group that was causing much of the trouble for the early church. They were persecuting the church at Smyrna. Jesus calls the persecutors of the Smyrna Christians, *"those who say they are Jews and are not"* (Revelation 2:9). They are Jews ethnically, but their heart is far from the Lord.

The same thing is said of the church at Philadelphia. In Revelation 3:9, Jesus says to the church at Philadelphia,

""Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet and make them know that I have loved you.""

The unbelieving, natural Jews, early in church history in the New Testament, are called the synagogue of Satan, particularly when they persecute Christians. Of course, this is the great work that God is going to do in the Tribulation period. The Nation of Israel, by contrast, consists of Jews, some believing, some unbelieving. God's whole agenda is to break off the two-thirds, unbelievers; and then to bring the remnant to faith. As he brings them to faith, and brings them to the end of the Tribulation period, He will fulfill His kingdom promises through them.

Zechariah 13:8-9 says,

*"It will come about in all the land,
Declares the Lord,
'That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third part will be left in it.
And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call upon My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, "They are my people,"
And they will say, "The Lord is my God.""*

That is not every Jew on planet earth, that is a third that God is going to bring to faith through the events of the Tribulation period. The two-thirds in unbelief will be broken off.

The prophet Ezekiel predicted the same thing. He said to the Nation of Israel, when Jesus comes at His Second Advent,

*"I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face"
(Ezekiel 20:34-35).*

Why would God do that? Because some are believers, some are not.

*"I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter into the land of Israel. Thus you shall know that I am the Lord"
(Ezekiel 20:37-38).*

There is a whole eschatological program coming where God, in the Tribulation period, is going to separate believing Jews from unbelieving Jews. That is why the Church does not have to go into this time period, because the Church by definition consists of all believers.

You cannot even get into the Church without the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, which connects you to the body of Christ. If that has never happened to you, then you are not part of the Church as far as God is concerned. Since the Church is all believers, there is no need to put the Church into this time period to separate believer from unbeliever.

The Nation of Israel is different in that it is a nation. A Jew is someone who is a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some believe, or will believe, and some are unbelievers. The purpose is to separate the two. I bring this up because a lot of times in our pro-Zionist stance you can get so aggressive in promoting Zionism that sometimes we forget that God is not pleased with every Jew.

I consider myself a Zionist because I believe that the Nation of Israel has a legal and a biblical right to be residing where they are in that land; I will defend them as long as there is breath in my lungs, and I will be very aggressive in that defense, as should you; but the Nation of Israel can do bad things.

People ask me, "Do you agree with everything the Nation of Israel does?" I say, "Not really. God did not either—read the Bible. Read the Old Testament." So, you can have good Jews and bad Jews. You can have believing Jews and unbelieving Jews, just like Gentiles. You can have good Gentiles and bad Gentiles. Just because I see a good Gentile, does not mean I agree with everything the "goyim" or the "ethnos" the Gentiles do. It is the same with Israel.

You are going to have examples of this in the Book of Acts where the problem person is an unbelieving Jew. The same thing is going to happen with a man named Sceva in Acts 19:14. He is going to have seven sons—the seven sons of Sceva. Who is Sceva? A Jewish chief priest. They were doing this—causing trouble for Paul's ministry there in Ephesus.

You have this description of this false teacher who apparently is trapped in magic and the dark side and everything, and who happens to be Jewish. That is not a big problem, because we know that not all Israel is Israel, so to speak.

Acts 13:6 says,

"When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus,"

He is going to oppose the work of God in the proconsul. What is the proconsul's name? Acts 13:7 tells us. This Jewish magician *"...was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence."*

Arnold Fruchtenbaum makes an interesting point of archeology about the island of Cyprus. He says,

"In 1877, [Sergius Paulus'] name was found in an inscription discovered in Soloi on the northern coast of Cyprus, which reads 'Under Paulus the proconsul.' The inscription dates to the year AD 53 or 54."³

That is not too far removed from when these events are transpiring. It is interesting to me that there is even archeological evidence for this Sergius Paulus.

What is this guy doing? It says in Acts 13:7,

"Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."

In other words, he was an unsaved person seeking God, which Calvinism says is impossible. One of the big points in our series on Calvinism, on Sunday mornings, is that people do not seek God. They quote a generic verse to try to prove that, but you have to look at all the verses. Here is a person that is unsaved. He had not believed yet. In fact, he is not going to believe until Acts 13:12. But even as an unbeliever, he is seeking God.

What did Jesus say?

"...it is to your advantage that I go away...but if I go, I will send [the Holy Spirit] to you. And He, when He has come, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:7-9).

He talked about a convicting ministry worldwide, even in the hearts and lives of unbelievers. You see it at work with Sergius Paulus, who is seeking God. He has heard that these preachers have come to his island, and he wants to know what they are saying, what they are talking about. He has a spiritual thirst; he has a spiritual hunger. Unbelievers can seek God, particularly when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit. That is coming up in Paul's speech on Mars Hill later on Acts 17, where Paul will say,

"And He has made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God..." (Acts 17:26-27a).

That is why God set up ethnicities and boundaries at Babel, so people would seek Him, which implies that they have an ability to seek God. Now some do not seek, instead they suppress what is true and their mind becomes darkened; but that is a decision that they are making.

"...if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27b).

This is what this guy is doing—he is seeking God, and Satan does not like it. Here is the spiritual warfare in Acts 13:8:

³ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 286.

"But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith."

There is your spiritual warfare: a man tries to move towards God, and Satan does everything he can to stop it with his demons, using this magician to oppose anything good God wants to do in this guy's life. Jesus told us that would happen. He did it in the Parable of the Sower—which is one of those Matthew 13 parables describing the present age with the kingdom offer off the table in Matthew 12.

What is the world going to be like with the offer of the kingdom unfulfilled? There is an Inter-Advent Age there; it is called a Mystery Age. It is called that because nobody had ever talked about it before up until that point—that is what a mystery is. It is a new truth disclosed in the past, but now revealed. If you read Matthew 13, you will see exactly what the world is going to be like spiritually in between the two comings of Christ now that the Kingdom is postponed.

The Kingdom is a time when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Habakkuk 2:14). But what do you do when the Kingdom offer is rejected by the nation, and the Kingdom is not canceled, but it is postponed? You have this new age of time that we are living in now called the Inter-Advent Age—the Mystery Age. The earth is not going to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord during that time period.

In fact, according to the Parable of the Sower, the gospel is going to be preached and it is going to fall on four kinds of soil which represent the preparation of the human heart. The seed germinates in the soil that has been rightly prepared, and it is only going to bear fruit in one soil. In a few of those soils it will spring up and then die quickly. I think those people who spring up and die quickly are saved, because at least they sprung up. Life begins at conception, so in the same way, spiritual life begins at conception. It will spring up and die off.

There is one batch of soil, one of the four, where people will not only be saved, but they will grow. Why does the seed not germinate in the other batches of soil? Because of the activity of the devil. This time period that we are in now (and we have been in this time period for 2,000 years), is not the Kingdom. In the Kingdom Satan is bound. Right now he is running wild—he is active. Jesus specifically said this about Satanic opposition to evangelism, in this age of time that we are living in, through the Parable of the Sower. He said in Matthew 13:19,

"When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."

When the gospel is proclaimed in this age, Satan will do whatever he has to do to prevent that seed from germinating in a person's life. He will try to distract him. All you have to do is to become a pastor to see this. It is very obvious that it is happening because I see all of you, and I can see when I am getting to a particular point in the sermon, and I see people nodding off. I can see people getting distracted, like their stomach is grumbling, and suddenly they are thinking about where they are going to have lunch. "Oh my

goodness, I need to talk to so and so." I see all the distracted minds; I see the sirens going off. A car pulls through, everybody looks over.

On the surface these are very innocent things, but when you do this long enough, you start to understand it for what it is: it is satanic opposition. Satan and the realm of the demons do not want people to hear what you are saying, because you are giving the Word of God, which has the potential of creating life in them. Satan does not want that. Jesus told us that Satan would try to stop it.

When all of that stuff starts to happen, rather than getting mad at everybody, "Hey, pay attention!" I just start praying. I say, "Lord, help us get through this. Help people's hearts and minds to come back, not to me since I am not important, but to the Word." I know that because I know what the Parable of the Sower says. I have been doing this long enough where I see it in action, and as you get involved in evangelism and teaching, you are going to see the exact same thing.

Satan does not want your message or your life to bear fruit in someone else's heart, and so he will do whatever he has to do to distract—distract you, distract the person—particularly with these phones here. These phones will start going off, and child alerts, and amber alerts. "Oh, my. Someone texted me." It is just the nature of spiritual warfare.

That is what is happening to this man, Sergius Paulus. He wants to hear the truth, but this magician that he is with, energized by Satan and the demons is trying to turn his attention away from what Paul and Barnabas are going to say. As you look at Acts 13:9 you get a description of Paul, the instrument that God is using here. You have an explanation of his name, *"But Saul, who was also known as Paul..."*

Paul had two names: Saul and Paul—Saul, Jewish name; Paul, more of a Gentile Latin name. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says,

"Verse 9a gives an explanation of Saul's name: 'But Saul, who is also called Paul.' Some claim that after being saved, Saul changed his name to Paul, but this is not true. Jews of the Diaspora who were Roman citizens, such as Saul, always had a Jewish name and a Gentile name. Now that he was operating in the Roman world ministering among the Gentiles, Saul's Latin name began to be used. Hence, from this point on, Luke called him 'Saul' only in reference to his past, such as in Acts 22:7 and 26:14. Paul now took the lead, and only in rare exceptions would his name appear after Barnabas'. The exceptions include Acts 14:14; 15:12, and 25."⁴

From this point on, he is not called Saul anymore. He is called Paul, because he is in Gentile territory, so his Gentile name is now being used. It is not going to say anymore, except on rare occasions, Barnabas and Paul, because Barnabas is no longer the leader, Paul is the leader. Luke is going to call him Saul when he is talking about what happened before he was saved. Luke rarely will put Barnabas' name in front of Paul's from this point

⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 286-87.

on, just on rare occasions. From now on, you are not going to see the name Saul except under rare occasions. You are not going to see Barnabas' name in front of Paul, because Paul is now the leader, except on rare occasions. It says, "But Saul, who was also known as Paul..."

If you understand the second part of Acts 13:9, you will understand why Paul won the satanic conflict that is going to be spelled out here. Paul is going to come out on top in a satanic conflict over the soul of Sergius Paulus, in competition with Elymas Bar-Jesus. What was the source of Paul's power? Look at the second part of Acts 13:9:

"But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him."

Now we know why Paul is going to win this—he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

First John 4:4 says,

"...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

Do you want to win or lose in the middle of satanic conflict? We want to win, right? There is the key to winning. We do not get into this through our own power; we are completely and totally relying upon a source of power bigger than ourselves. That is why Saul, who is called Paul, won this round.

He looks at the false teacher and he condemns him. Not everything in Christianity is nice, happy talk. Read Matthew 23, how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees, some of the harshest things you could ever read in the whole Bible right there in Matthew 23. I have had people say, "You should only use uplifting, cheerful language when confronting false teachers." That is not what Saul, who is called Paul, does here. Paul issues severe condemnation against this magician (Acts 13:10). What does he say to him?

"And said, 'You are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?'"

Does this sound like happy talk to you? Paul says four things to this false teacher. Number one, you are full of guile, which means "to catch with bait"—deception. Number two, you are full of villainy, meaning "you are slick." Number three, you are a son of the devil. That is what Jesus said to the Pharisees when He was on the earth in John 8:44 as Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees,

"'You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'"

Saul, who is called Paul, is doing the same thing.

Then he says to him in Acts 13:10,

"...you enemy of righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

Who is Satan at the end of the day? He is a perverter. We call someone today a pervert. What does that even mean? You take what is normal and you twist it. In sexuality we use that term a lot. It does apply to that, but it relates to anybody taking something that the Lord has made straight and twisting it into something that it is not supposed to be.

I hope you have this book on your bookshelf. It is by my professor J. Dwight Pentecost. It is called "Your Adversary the Devil." This is required reading if you are interested in spiritual warfare, which you are in as a Christian. He has a little section called "Satan the Perverter," and he quotes this account. He says,

"We find another example in the experience of Paul. The Apostle was sent to propagate the Gospel of the grace of God throughout the Gentile world. When Paul started on his first missionary journey he went to Paphos. '...they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, 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. But Elymas, the sorcerer, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith' (Acts 13:6-8). Now, what happened? Paul came to a man whose heart was hungry and crying out for a knowledge of God. He introduced this man to the Gospel of the grace of God. But Satan had his minister, who professed to be a minister of righteousness, there to tell this burdened sinner that this was not truth, that it was a lie."⁵

Satan's agent perverted, or corrupted, this man receiving the grace through faith alone. Paul, if you look at his later writings, is really worried about this for the Corinthians. He says in 2 Corinthians 11:3,

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (NKJV).

Adam and Eve had the easiest job description ever. "Do whatever you want," is basically the job description. "Just do not eat from the forbidden tree of knowledge. That is the only thing off limits." Satan took that simple command and made it complicated. He said to the woman, "Has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1). God never said that, Satan made it look like God said that because that is how Satan operates. He takes the simple, he takes the right ways of God, and he makes them crooked. According to J. Dwight Pentecost, Satan is doing that exact same thing with this man that he does not want to get saved—this man, Sergius Paulus.

After Paul condemns this false teacher, he judges him. He issues a judgment (Acts 13:11):

⁵ Pentecost, J. D. (1997). *Your Adversary, the Devil* (p. 69). Kregel.

"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.' And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand."

A mist appears over his eyes and then he goes completely blind where he needs help getting around. This is the same thing that happened to Paul himself when he was Saul. Acts 9:8, on the Damascus Road:

"Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus."

The same verbiage that Saul, now Paul, just brought on this false teacher is something that he himself experienced when he was an unbeliever. The guy goes blind—he goes into darkness. God does this a lot. What is the ninth plague in the Book of Exodus? Darkness. What is the fifth bowl judgment in the Book of Revelation? Darkness. It says,

"Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his king and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds" (Revelation 16:10-11).

Darkness is a prominent judgment of God. To me it is God being sarcastic. "You like darkness? You like being a magician? You like turning people away from the truth? Then I will make you physically dark where you cannot see anything." That is what He did with Pharaoh in Plague number nine. That is what He is going to do with the whole Antichrist's kingdom one day.

The Bible says,

"...and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

God says, "You want darkness that bad? I will give it. I will give you the whole package." Tremendous, divine sarcasm.

How does this whole thing end? Acts 13:12:

"Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord."

He saw these things happen, and he was convicted by the word that they were preaching. We are told all the way back in Acts 13:7 that they went about this island preaching the word.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Obviously, he heard the gospel. There is just one thing the proconsul had to do to get right with God—he had to believe. Does it say, "Believe and walk a mile"? Does it say, "Believe and raise your hand"? Does it say, "Believe and fill out a card" or "Believe and give money"? It is so simple—you just believe, which means to trust in the message.

As you know, and as we have emphasized many times, there are multiple passages conditioning justification on faith alone in Christ alone. Here are three of the main ones: Genesis 15:6, John 3:16, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:30-31. In fact, Lewis Sperry Chafer says,

"...because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only."⁶

| Passages Conditioning Salvation on Faith Alone (<i>Sola Fide</i>) |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genesis 15:6• John 3:16; 5:24; 6:28-29, 47; 16:8-9; 20:30-31• Acts 16:30-31• Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9• Hebrews 11:6 |

Whenever anybody says, "You have to believe, but—" my response is, "Get your 'but' out of the way." It is not "believe but". It is "believe"—"Sola Fide" faith alone. *"And without faith it is impossible to please [God]..."* (Hebrews 11:6). God has conditioned salvation upon believing only.

What looks like a tough conflict ends up in a great victory. This is the first trip of the church outside the borders of Israel, and they succeeded. They beat the devil, because Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, Systematic Theology, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.