

Acts 072
Turning Point
Acts 13:1-3
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Let us take our Bibles and open them to Acts 13. When we say we are now studying Acts 13 that is a big deal, because Acts 13 represents a major change, a shift, not just in the Book of Acts, but in the whole history of Israel. Now Christianity is going to leave the borders of Israel and go into Gentile territory. That is something that has not happened thus far in the Book of Acts.

It did not happen in Christ's earthly ministry either—His whole ministry was spent within the borders of Israel. Israel did not send out missionaries. The evangelistic strategy of Israel is "come and see." That is why there is such a focus on the Temple. That is why Jesus is upset when they are doing the money changing in the Temple, because the Temple was supposed to attract the Gentiles to come and learn about the awesomeness of God.

That era is now over, and we are in the Church Age where the church does not have a "come and see" strategy. Instead, the church has a "sending out" strategy. That is why the only prophet that ever did anything outside the borders of Israel was Jonah. He was successful because Nineveh repented; but he was upset that he was successful. Other than Jonah, there are no missionary teams in the Old Testament, or in the life of Christ, leaving the borders of Israel.

But now we are in the Church Age, where the Church is not Israel, but a different man, a new man, as Paul called it. It has a different evangelistic, or missiological, focus. You start to see that focus come into existence in Acts 13. It does not even come into existence for the first 12 chapters of the Book of Acts, so this is huge what is happening in Acts 13.

Luke recorded Christ's words before He ascended back to heaven. The reason Luke recorded them in Acts 1:8 is because it provides a nice outline of the Book of Acts. Jesus said to His 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..."

What?

"...remotest part of the earth."

What is "the remotest part of the earth?" It is Gentile territory. Isaiah 49:6 tells you exactly who the remotest parts of the earth are. It says,

*"He says, 'Is it too small a thing that You should be My servant
To restore the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light for the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'"*

Tell me if this language does not sound familiar. What I am reading is 700 years before the time of Christ. You notice there that he connects the Gentiles with the ends of the earth.

*"I will also make You a light [for the Gentiles]
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

Luke, recording the words of Christ, says, "You are going to be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and then Judea and Samaria, and even to the remote parts of the earth." When you cross reference that last phrase "the remote parts of the earth" with Isaiah 49:6, it is a synonym for Gentile territory outside the borders of Israel. It is a group God always wanted to reach. It is just that the church and the Nation of Israel, for the most part, have not been involved in it.

You read about the Queen of Sheba who came from modern-day Saudi Arabia, during the days of Solomon, to sit at Solomon's feet and learn of his wisdom. That is an example where Israel is reaching a Gentile, but notice it is "come and see." She had to travel 1,300 miles, or something like that, to learn of God. That was Israel's missiological strategy; but that era is now on hold. God is raising up a new man called the Church. We do not have a "come and see" strategy—we have a "go, send" missionary strategy.

To be frank with you, you see these churches today, they are almost monolithic structures. The church that I graduated from when I graduated from seminary in the Dallas area had a huge, magnificent building. We used to call it "Six Flags over Jesus." You walk through there, and it is like going into a mall. There is shopping, there are restaurants, and all this stuff—a giant stadium.

At some point, you ask yourself: these are people that I do not know if they really believe we are not going to be here that long, because the rapture is imminent, amen—to build something like that. Number two, I wonder: did they get confused at some point? They went back into Israel's strategy of "come and see, let us build this big structure and let us attract the masses to Christ," when the whole point of church is not to bring the unsaved world in (as was the Temple with Israel), but it is to build up the saints so they can go out. You are now seeing a different missiological, evangelistic strategy entirely. This is where we are in the Book of Acts—a shift, not only in the Book of Acts, but a shift in God's program as a whole.

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)

The Book of Acts has three sections. They are found right there in Acts 1:8. "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem*"—that is Acts 1-7, which we have already studied. Then He says, "You will be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and then in Judea and Samaria." Judea and Samaria are areas that are more like counties, whereas Jerusalem is a city. Now we are moving out from Jerusalem into a county area (to put it into modern-day vernacular). "You will be my witnesses in Judea and Samaria"—that is what we have studied in Acts 8-12. That is part two of the Book of Acts.

Then part three says, "You will be my witnesses, even to the remotest parts of the earth"—that is the section that we are moving into now, Acts 13-28, where the church, the gospel, is going to leave the borders of Israel and is going to penetrate Gentile territory. It is the longest section in the Book of Acts; and it is the section that we are entering into now.

It is divided into five parts. Number one—Paul's first missionary journey into southern Galatia (Acts 13-14). That is what we are going to start studying tonight. Number two—the second missionary journey, which is in Acts 15:36-18:22, where Paul goes further than southern Galatia. Then there is a third missionary journey, where Paul basically retraces a lot of the steps he went on during missionary journey number two (Acts 18:23-21:17).

Finally, there is his trip to Rome at the very end, which I call his fourth missionary journey. Most people do not look at it that way, because he went in chains to Rome (because he broke the law, allegedly). He had a right to defend himself as a Roman citizen before Caesar. Paul knew the legal system, and as a Roman citizen he kept demanding a right to be heard before Caesar—he kept insisting on that. He knew exactly what he was doing, because he knew that was his ticket to get the gospel to Rome. That is Acts 21:18 through the end of the book.

Once Paul gets the gospel to Rome, the Book of Acts stops, because the assumption is that once it hits Rome, it is going to go everywhere because of the ancient saying "All roads lead to Rome." That is why it stops when Paul gets to Rome and he is witnessing, under house arrest, to many people for a period of two years.

That is the layout of this next section that we are moving into in the Book of Acts. The only thing I did not comment on was this in Acts 15: the Jerusalem Council, which is sandwiched in between the first and second missionary journeys. All three missionary journeys are going to start from Antioch up north. That is why there has been so much information about the development of the Church at Antioch at the end of Acts 11, because it is going to be the sending church.

Paul is going to leave Antioch; he is going to go off to southern Galatia in his first missionary journey; and he is going to be so successful at winning conversions to Christianity that now, for the first time, you have all these Gentiles—non-Jewish people—that are believers in Jesus or Yeshua. We have had the conversion of Cornelius (Acts

10), but that is “small pickins” compared to this throng of Gentiles that are going to get saved.

By the time Paul gets back to Antioch, the Church has to make a decision. The decision is not "Can a Gentile get saved?" They already knew a Gentile could get saved (Acts 10-11). The issue is, "Do all these Gentiles need to convert to Judaism to become members of the Church?" They are not dealing with a soteriological issue in Acts 15. They are dealing with an ecclesiological issue. Of course, there are long, drawn out details that we will study in Acts 15; but the bottom line to the whole thing is that the church leadership reasoned in Jerusalem that, "You know what? We are not going to make these Gentiles submit to the law of Moses to join the Church."

Once that decision is made, the Church takes a quantum leap forward in terms of development. At that point, it is no longer looked at as an offshoot of Judaism. It is an institution now—the Church, primarily composed of Gentiles with some Jewish converts. There is no need for these Gentiles to submit to the Law of Moses to join the Church. That is a huge ruling sandwiched in between the first and second missionary journeys.

One of the things that is said at the Jerusalem Council is, "We Jews have done a lousy job keeping the Mosaic Law. Look at our history. Do you think these Gentiles are going to do better than we have?" That is why they ruled the way that they did. "We are not going to put a yoke on them that we ourselves could not endure or sustain."

That is a bird's eye view of this major shift that we are moving into now: the ministry to the remotest parts of the earth. You have the first missionary journey; then the second Jerusalem Council. They all met together the first time in Acts 11 to figure out, "Can a Gentile get saved?" The answer is yes. Now they are trying to figure out, "What do you do with Gentile converts? Do they have to come under the Law of Moses to join the Church or not?" The answer is no.

The first missionary journey leads to the Jerusalem Council, and then Paul launches out once again from Antioch into his second missionary journey; comes back, and launches out again from Antioch into the third missionary journey. Then Paul comes back to Jerusalem, and at that point he is put under arrest. He keeps insisting, over and over again, "I have a right to be heard before Caesar." That is how he used a legal tactic to get the gospel to Rome. That is what is recorded at the very end there (Acts 21:18-28:31).

That is the structure of the Book of Acts. Sometimes that helps a lot, because you can get some piecemeal teaching on the Book of Acts, but seeing the big structure of everything helps you see where we are in the big picture. Here is an outline of Acts 13-14:

- 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)

We have Paul and Barnabas' appointment, first of all by the Holy Spirit, (that is the most important thing); and secondly, the church lays hands on Paul and Barnabas to send them out on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). After that, they are going to come to an island named Cyprus, which is the third largest Greek island in the Mediterranean. (I have been there myself. I was shocked at how big it is.) There is a ministry that will take place on the island of Cyprus; and from there they will leave the island of Cyprus and they will go to another Antioch, in Pisidia.

There are two Antiochs—there is Pisidian Antioch in modern-day Turkey, and Syrian Antioch where they were dispatched from. There is a ministry that they do in Pisidian Antioch; and then we will move into Acts 14, where it is a continued ministry in modern-day Turkey—southern Galatia. There is a ministry that they have in Iconium and Lystra, and then in Derbe; and then they are going to leave Turkey and return back to Antioch (not Pisidian Antioch, but Syrian Antioch). That is the direction that we are moving in.

Let us look at Paul and Barnabas and their appointment by the Holy Spirit and then the church as they are getting ready to be dispatched from Syrian Antioch into southern Galatia. We have two things going on here: a plurality of elders in Antioch, and then the Holy Spirit's calling of Paul and Barnabas for their participation in this first missionary journey.

Notice, first of all, the plurality of the elders. Acts 13:1 says,

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

You see what we would call a plurality of leaders at Antioch—a plurality of elders. As we have talked about before, there are basically three ways within Christendom to govern a church.

Local Church Government

1. Episcopalian / bishop rule—Acts 15:2, 6
2. Congregational rule—Acts 6:1-7
3. Presbyterian / elder rule—Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; 4:14

The first is the Episcopalian bishop model, where one bishop governs multiple assemblies. Then there is the congregational rule model, which tries to argue that the authority should be vested in the congregation. There is the form of church leadership that we hold to, called the Elder rule model. (I put Presbyterian there, but do not confuse that with the Presbyterians, per se. That is the Greek word for "elder"—"presbyteros.")

We believe that the elder rule model—consisting of a plurality of godly men—is the form of church government that has the most biblical support. Acts 20:17:

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church."

You will see similar remarks made in 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17; 5:19; Titus 1:5; and 1 Peter 5:1-4. I am going over these quickly, because we have covered all of this when we ran into elders for the first time at the end of Acts 11. You see the whole concept of elders happening for the first time at the Church of Antioch in Acts 11:30. If you want the teaching that we did on this—why we think the elder rule model has the best New Testament support—I would encourage you to go back and listen to the lesson that we did on Acts 11:30.

Within the plurality of elders there are two kinds: there are prophets and there are teachers. What do we mean by prophets? What do we mean by teachers? Why are we dividing this up between prophets and teachers?

Notice the words of A.T. Robertson in his book, "Word Pictures." He is dealing with the church at Antioch—that is the sending church:

"In the church that was there (κατα την ούσαν ἐκκλησίαν [kata tēn ousan ekklēsiā]). Possibly distributed throughout the church (note 'in the church' 11:26). Now a strong organization there. Luke here begins the second part of Acts with Antioch as the center of operations, no longer Jerusalem. Paul is now the central figure instead of Peter. Jerusalem had hesitated too long to carry out the command of Jesus to take the gospel to the whole world. That glory will now belong to Antioch. Prophets and teachers (προφηται και διδασκαλοι [prophētai kai didaskaloi]). All prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were prophets who were fore-speakers of God, sometimes fore-speakers like Agabus in 11:28. The double use of τε [te] here makes for three prophets (Barnabas, Symeon, Lucius) and then two teachers, Manaen and Saul). Barnabas heads the list (11:22) and Saul comes last."¹

What you have here as you look at Acts 13:1, is a plurality of elders. The first three mentioned are prophets; and the last two are teachers. That is what Robertson is saying.

What do we mean by prophets? Who was a prophet? A prophet was somebody that received direct revelation from God. Of course, at this time you needed that because you do not have a completed New Testament canon. We believe that the church was built on the foundation of Ephesians 2:20, of the apostles and the prophets—Christ Jesus being the cornerstone. When the Lord built the Church, the first stone that He put in this metaphorical Temple is the cornerstone—that is Jesus.

The cornerstone is what you use to measure all of the other stones in the structure by. After the cornerstone is put in, then you have the foundational stones. Who are the apostles and the prophets? Apostles are ones that saw the resurrected Christ. Prophets are those who receive direct revelation from God before the canon of Scripture was

¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures* (Acts 13:1).

closed. So the Lord built the structure of the Church, which we are still in today, on that foundation, because these are foundational offices, foundational gifts.

We do not believe that there are apostles and prophets today, the way the term is being used. That foundation was laid 2,000 years ago. God is not relaying the foundation today. Rather, what He is doing is building the structure. I would argue that the structure is almost complete. He is about ready to put on the roof, if He has not already.

When someone claims to be an apostle today, they are claiming that they directly saw the resurrected Christ, which you would have to be 2,000 years old to see. When someone claims to be a prophet today, what they are basically saying is they are receiving direct revelation from God. Therefore, they take whatever it is they say and add it to the New Testament—add Revelation 23 to the Bible. You cannot do that, because the Bible is very clear that whoever adds or subtracts from what God has once and for all revealed is under a very serious condemnation, a very serious curse (Jude 1:3, Revelation 22:18-19).

A lot of people in the charismatic movement would violently disagree with what I am saying here. They would argue that these gifts—apostles and prophets—continue on. We do not believe that. We think that there are free gifts in operation, but the foundation for the Church has already been laid through the apostles and prophets. You only lay a foundation once.

Who are these prophets? Remember, Robertson divides it into three prophets and two teachers based on his understanding of the construction of the Greek. That was the significance of the quote I had up earlier. The first prophet mentioned is Barnabas. We have already been introduced to him. The second prophet mentioned is Simeon. Going back to Acts 13:1, it says,

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

Simeon is a Hebrew name. The fact that he is also called Niger means he is probably from Nigeria. He would be an example of a black Hebrew, which shows you that the early church was not what we would call racially discriminatory at all. Here is this very black Hebrew in the leadership there at Antioch.

The third prophet mentioned is Lucius of Cyrene. Where was Cyrene? It is north of Libya. Some have speculated that either Simeon or Lucius is the same guy as Simon of Cyrene. Do you remember Simon of Cyrene? You will read about him in Matthew 27:32. He is the guy that helped Jesus carry the cross when Jesus became exhausted. That is where Simon of Cyrene came from. A lot of people think either Lucius or Simeon, because it mentioned Cyrene, is the same guy as Simon of Cyrene, but there is no real proof of that. It is just speculation—something interesting to think about.

This is where Lucius came from, and it is largely believed that Lucius was one of the founders of the Antioch Church, because Acts 11:20 talks about who the founders of the Antioch church were. Some of them came from this area of Cyrene, where Lucius was from. Acts 11:20 says,

"But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord."

It could very well be that Lucius was one of these founders of the church at Antioch, but those are the three prophets that were amongst the elders, or the leaders, there at the church at Antioch.

According to A.T. Robertson's construction of this, two teachers are listed. What is a teacher? A teacher is not a prophet. The teacher is not receiving direct revelation from God, but rather he is communicating what God has already revealed. In this church today, you know I do not really function as a prophet; I do not receive direct revelation from God on equal par with the Bible. I have my own inner promptings and things that God gives me, but it is not direct revelation from God where I could say, "This is Revelation 23 that we need to add to our Bible."

Rather, my gifts involve understanding the Word of God and being able to communicate it to others. That is what a teacher does. The gift of prophecy is no longer in operation because we have a completed canon; but the gift of teaching is needed because we have to understand what God has said in His Word. We do not believe that new revelation is being given today, but we do have a need to understand what God has said. The gift of teaching is one of those gifts that is very much alive and well. That is the leadership of the church.

One of those teachers was Mannaen and the other one was Saul. Saul is mentioned because he has really given no prophecies of God as of yet. He will later, but he has not given any particular prophecies yet, so he is listed there amongst the teachers. You have the plurality of the elders (Acts 13:1), and the Holy Spirit's calling of two in this group—one a prophet named Barnabas; and two, a teacher named Saul. The Holy Spirit is going to say, "Set these two men aside for the work that I have called them to do." These are the two who are going to leave Antioch and go off on the first missionary journey into southern Galatia.

You can take the Holy Spirit's calling (Acts 13:2-3), and you can divide it into two parts: circumstances (Acts 13:2) and the church's obedience (Acts 13:3). Notice, first of all the circumstances. Take a look at Acts 13:2. It says,

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them.'"

What circumstances are we dealing with? What are the circumstances that created this climate where the Holy Spirit spoke amongst the leadership and identified the two people that are going to be the leaders there on missionary journey number one? The first thing you see is the leadership is doing something that is called a ministry to the Lord. It says, *"While they"*—that is the group that we just got finished talking about, this plurality of elders in Acts 13:1—*"while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting..."*

How exactly do you minister to the Lord? That is interesting, is it not? Arnold Fruchtenbaum gives this understanding. He says,

"Verses 2-3 deal with the call of the Holy Spirit, with verse 2 introducing the circumstances: as they ministered to the Lord. The Greek word 'ministered,' 'leitourgounton,' was used in the Septuagint of priests as they functioned in the Tabernacle."²

The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. As the priests were functioning in the Tabernacle that Moses constructed in the wilderness, you will remember the Book of Exodus as they went about their duties. The Septuagint uses that Greek word indicating that they were ministering to the Lord.

"In the New Testament, it appears in only two other places. In Romans 15:27, it was used of aid for Jewish believers in poverty; this kind of charity was considered a way of ministering to the Lord. In Hebrews 10:11, it is mentioned in the context of the Levitical priesthood. The way these leaders ministered to the Lord in Acts 13:2 was by spending time in prayer and intercession."³

It is interesting that when we serve the Lord, the Lord looks at that as we are ministering unto the Lord. We are ministering to people, of course; but we are ministering to Him as well. When we are charitable and generous with time, talent, and treasure, yes, it is a ministry to people, but God takes that as a ministry unto the Lord. When we are involved in deep time and prayer and intercession (prayer—communicating to God; intercession—praying to God on behalf of other people), God takes that as ministering unto the Lord. It is a paradigm shift.

I have really never looked at ministry that way. I have always looked at it as God using us to minister to people. That is certainly the principal component of ministry; but there is a lot more to it than that. As we go about doing what God has called us to do in these different areas, God takes it as if we are ministering to Him. Little old me can actually do something that ministers to the Lord. It is just something that is mind blowing.

I had to read these verses several times just to make sure I really understood what I was reading. To the best of my knowledge, that is what it is saying here. It says,

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting..."

Now fasting is when you deprive yourself of certain things, like food, for a season in order to come into a closer fellowship with the Lord. I have to be honest with you, in the Bible Church movement, we do not really do a lot of fasting. I think we do a lot of feasting (just add an E there in front of the A—feasting, but not fasting). As far as I can tell, fasting is not a command. It is not like God says, "Thus saith the Lord, "You will fast." However, it is a Biblical option.

Obviously, before you undertake a fast, you would want to consult your doctor, your physician, to see if it is healthy, but fasting is all over the Scripture. It is depriving your body of certain things for a season in order to enjoy a greater intimacy with the Lord. Is it

² Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 283.

³ Ibid.

a command that we all have to do it? I do not really see a command, but I see it as a valid option. Maybe it is an option that we should pursue more regularly, but these are the circumstances in Antioch in which the Holy Spirit decided to speak and reveal something.

You see, the Holy Spirit speaking in the second part of Acts 13:2. What did the Holy Spirit say in this climate?

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them.'"

Notice that the Holy Spirit spoke. Was this an audible voice? Was it a vision in the sky? I do not think so. I think the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets. There are three prophets mentioned in Acts 13:1. I think He spoke through at least one of them. Maybe He spoke through two of them; or maybe He spoke through all three of them. It would not make sense to me to have this build up of prophets in Acts 13:1, and then the Holy Spirit bypassing that and speaking an alternative way. I think the Holy Spirit spoke through one or more of these prophets.

You will notice that the Holy Spirit is a person and not a force. The Holy Spirit communicates just like a person would do. Here I am, as a person, trying to communicate with you. My personhood gives me the inkling, the desire, the ability to do that. The Holy Spirit is just the same way—He communicates in a personal way.

The Holy Spirit can be grieved. Did you know that? Ephesians 4:30 says,

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

In order for the Holy Spirit to be grieved He must have emotions. It is as if you are dealing with someone and they totally insult you, or they put you down, or they do something derogatory towards you. The reaction to that is, "Wow, that hurts my feelings." We feel that way because we are people. We are not inanimate objects. The Holy Spirit is the same way. Ephesians 4:30 tells me how I can injure the Holy Spirit's feelings.

The Holy Spirit is inside of us forever. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. When I harbor animosity or use coarse language, or let the sun go down on my anger, or I am not forgiving, the Holy Spirit that is inside of me is emotionally grieved or wounded by that (Ephesians 4).

It is a different way of looking at sin. We look at sin as it is going to hurt us, which it does; but there is another dimension to sin in which we can actually injure the feelings of God, because the Holy Spirit is not a "that" or an "it." The Holy Spirit is a "He" or a "Him." He is a person—He talks, He communicates.

The movie Star Wars uses the Force. The Force is this impersonal source of energy. Unfortunately, a lot of people get their theology from movies like that, but that is not what the Holy Spirit is. He is not a force; He is not an impersonal source of energy that I have to tap into. What He is, is an actual person who has emotions. Jesus called Him "He" or

"Him" in the Upper Room many times (John 14:16-18; John 16:12-13). That is the same pronoun that He used to address any of the disciples—he or him. That is who the Holy Spirit is—a "He" or a "Him" with feelings and the capacity to communicate.

The Holy Spirit is speaking up. He is probably speaking up through one or more of these prophets. There are many references in the Bible to the Holy Spirit wanting to talk. In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul is saying the Spirit is trying to talk right now, when he is writing to Timothy,

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."

The Holy Spirit is the eternally existent second member of the Godhead. He is full deity and also a personage; and He is unique in His personage. The Holy Spirit is not the Father; the Holy Spirit is not the Son. The Holy Spirit is unique in His spirit-ness, just as the Father is unique in his father-ness, and the Son is unique in his son-ness. The Holy Spirit shares the full essence of deity that the Father and the Son have—He is equal in terms of essence of deity, but completely unique in terms of personage. He is not the Son; He is not the Father—He is unique in his spirit-ness.

At this particular time, He is trying to say something. What is He trying to say here?

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2).

The calling is to service. "I am calling these two to service." That is typically what you are going to see in the Bible related to this whole issue of election and calling. The Calvinistic system understands all of that as election unto justification, but when you look at the context of these verses, you will see it typically refers to some sort of election or calling amongst saved people, people that are already saved unto some kind of service.

That is what Paul and Barnabas were being called to here. They were not being called to salvation—they already were saved. They were being called unto a realm of service, which in this case was the first missionary journey.

Acts 20:28 says, concerning leadership of the Church of Ephesus:

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all of the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He bought with His own blood."

Paul is very clear: "You elders in Ephesus are in the position you are in, because God called you to that position. God called you to that role." This is dealing with an election or a calling within saved people. Some are called to fulfill a particular function. The elders at Ephesus were called into that position. Paul and Barnabas are being called out of eldership at Antioch and into activity in the first missionary journey.

When it says to separate Barnabas and Saul, what it means is separate Barnabas from the other prophets. He is one of three prophets. When it says Separate Saul, it says separate Saul from the other teacher. Separate them—put them aside because they have a special calling. That calling relates to the first missionary journey.

Notice the order of names here: Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas is mentioned first; Saul is mentioned second. Fruchtenbaum says,

"At this point, the order of the names is Barnabas and Saul, because Barnabas had preeminence. However, after the first missionary journey, Saul took over the leadership and in most cases, the order is Saul and Barnabas..."⁴

Here it is Barnabas and Saul—Barnabas being the leader—but that is about to switch, because by the time you get into this third missionary journey and towards the end of it, it is very clear that the order will be reversed and Saul will be the leader from that point on, rather than Barnabas. That makes sense in the Book of Acts, because the Book of Acts is not the Acts of the apostles. That is not the focus of the Book of Acts. It is the Acts of two apostles, Peter and Paul. Luke is trying to make the point that Paul is just as legitimate as Peter.

Then the church does what the Holy Spirit said, which is pretty smart, right? Acts 13:3 says,

"Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Now this is interesting because did not the prior verse say they were already fasting and praying? If they were already fasting and praying in Acts 13:2, why did they keep fasting and praying in Acts 13:3? I think they continued to fast and pray because they were trying to confirm what they heard. "Is this really of God or not?" So they continued fasting and praying. When they were content with that, after having received confirmation, they appointed Barnabas and Saul.

It says in Acts 13:3,

"Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them..."

The laying on of hands—that is a big deal in the Bible. It is man—a church—recognizing what God is already doing. You see it in many passages like 1 Timothy 4:14. It says, as Paul is writing to Timothy:

"Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through your prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 283.

In other words, Timothy became the pastor-teacher at the church in Ephesus, because the elders recognized what was happening in Timothy's life. They recognized that he had the gift of pastor-teacher. Paul tells him to take that gift and fan it into full flame. When the elders at Ephesus laid hands on Timothy, they were not imparting to him a gift. That is the mistake churches get into, is to think that the laying on of hands is what gives the person a calling. It is completely foreign to the text. That mentality is totally foreign to what we are reading about here.

What the plurality of elders is doing as they are fasting and praying and ministering to the Lord, is allowing the Lord to speak—to tell them what His plans are. In this case, the plan is to set aside Barnabas and Saul. They said, "Okay, that is what the Lord wants, now we are going to lay hands, not to give Saul and Barnabas their calling—they already had it from God—but to recognize the calling.

Churches get this backwards constantly because we want to fit people into an organizational chart. "We have a vacancy; we have to fill it with this guy or that guy. This guy has that going for him, but that guy has that going for him." We are always trying to plug people into our existing organizational hierarchy when the truth of the matter is that is not how you run a church.

First of all, you do not even run the church—God runs the church. Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). What leadership needs to do is recognize what God is already doing in somebody. Once that is discerned, then you lay hands on them and appoint them. God help the church that starts appointing people that God has not called into those particular ministry roles.

For example, when we deal with the selection of elders and deacons, part of the conversation for the elders is about how God is using such and such a person when they have rolled off the board. Is God still working in their life or are they still ministering? Are they here? Or have they taken a mental vacation during their time off the board? If they have taken a mental vacation and a physical vacation, why in the world would you reappoint that person to leadership in a church when God is not working through that person?

You have to lay hands on people and recognize people whom God has already recognized and whom God is using. This moves an elder board away from being just another good old boys club—the "so-and-so has not been on the board for a few years; it is his turn now," mentality.

"What has the Lord been doing in his life for the last two two years? What kind of ministry has he had?" "Do not bother us with those questions. He is part of the club. Let us throw him back on the board." Once you start doing stuff like that, the church loses its power. It cannot be effective in the devil's world with that kind of mindset. You have to lay hands on people that God is already working through.

That is exactly what is happening here with Barnabas and Saul. It is what happened with young Timothy, by the way. This is the confusion about seminaries. A lot of people go to seminary to get a call from God. "If I get this degree or if I get this diploma, then I guess

God is required to use me, right?" When the truth of the matter is, the way it should work is the person should have the calling of God on their life long before they ever entered a seminary and pursued a theological degree.

The purpose of a seminary is to take people that are already called by God and to hone their skills, sharpen them, to allow them to be more effective in ministry. Long before I went to seminary, I was ministering. Some of the things I was saying could have been said better. I made a few errors along the way, not really knowing they were errors; but then you get into seminary and you realize what an error is or is not; what is biblical or what is not. Your skills start to get sharpened. You start to study systematic theology, church history, Greek and Hebrew. As I was going through seminary, I already knew I had the call of God on my life. There was evidence of it. I needed my skills sharpened.

A lot of seminaries think that they can somehow impart God's call on a person, which they cannot do. Neither can an elder board impart God's call on a person. God, when He calls people, does it sovereignly, just like He is doing with Saul and Barnabas. He made a sovereign decision that these two "are going to be My instruments in the third missionary journey." The church discerned the will of God by ministering unto the Lord through perpetual prayer and fasting. They kept doing it, and the message apparently was confirmed; so they laid hands on these two.

Unfortunately for us, God does not always work according to our schedule. "Hey, the terms are up, the vacancies are there. We need to put some people in place." God does not work according to our schedule. God may have a different schedule. A board might discern that the will of the Lord in a certain instance is to wait rather than jam people in a spot because we have a constitution to follow.

I am giving you practical reasons how man's method of doing things sometimes gets in the way of God. Elder boards can get in the way of God; deacon boards can get in the way of God; seminaries can get in the way of God. I have seen it all happen, unfortunately, in different environments that I have been in. We do not want to be like that here at Sugar Land Bible Church. We want to be Spirit-led.

In fact, it says in 1 Timothy 5:22, "*do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily*"—do not jam someone into a place that they do not belong, or you are basically taking a square and trying to fit it into a round hole. We have to be really careful about this.

They made this appointment, and now Paul and Barnabas are going out under the authority of the local church. The local church discerned the calling of God on their life, and then the local church laid hands on these two. Now they are going out under the authority of the local church. They are under the authority of the church at Antioch; they are not free agents doing whatever they want.

When these protesters showed up a couple weeks ago, that is your first clue that they are outside the will of God because they say in their website, "We do not receive donations. We are not connected to any local church." In fact, they are against local churches when you look at their website. If they are not under a local church, and they are against local churches, and they do not receive any donations, who in the world are they accountable

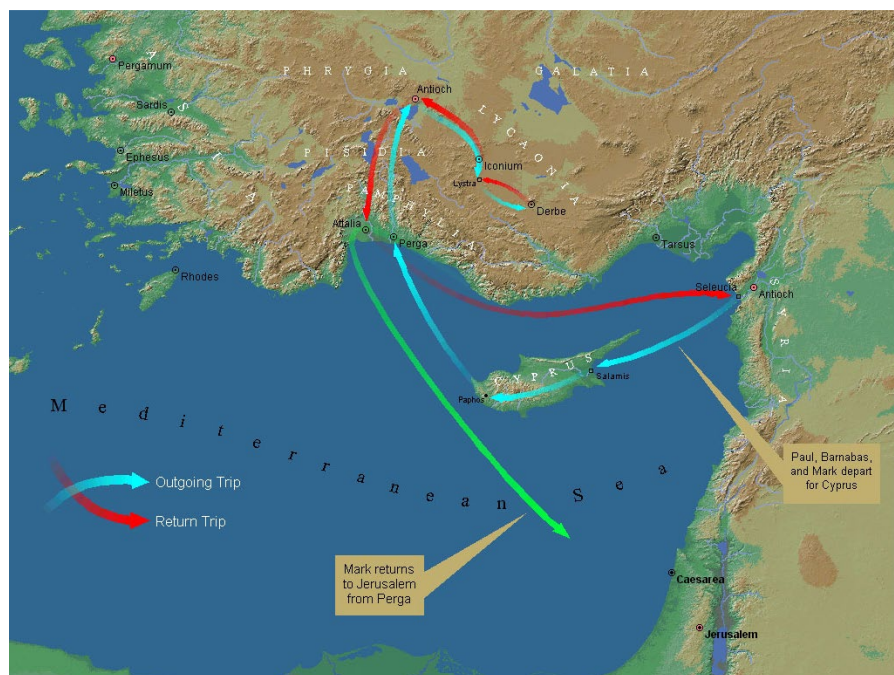
to? The answer is: They are not accountable to anybody—they *"are a law unto themselves"* (Romans 2:14). They are people who do what is *"right in their own eyes"* (Judges 21:25).

If you could go out doing that, Saul and Barnabas of all people could have gone out and done that, but they did not. They waited for the laying on of hands of the church at Antioch, who discerned the will of God. The leadership did in this case, and they went out, not as lone rangers, sole practitioners. They went out under the church at Antioch. This is the methodology and the hierarchy of God.

The end of Acts 13:3 says,

"...they sent them away."

Where did they go? They went on the first missionary journey. They started in Antioch, the sending church. They go to Cyprus first (an island), and then they head to modern-day Turkey. They make it all the way up to Pisidian Antioch (which is different from Syrian Antioch). They go to Iconium and Lystra and Derbe, and then they make an about-face, because Paul was not just interested in evangelism, he was interested in seeing how his churches were doing that had been planted by way of edification.



They go from Derbe to Iconium back to Pisidian Antioch, back to a place called Attalia, that is where John Mark leaves—he bails out. We will explain potential theories why he bailed out (Mark 13:13). Then they go right back to Antioch where they were sent from. Why would they go back to Antioch? Because they are under the authority of Antioch.

They are giving a report to Antioch as to how everything went. Things went pretty well from a conversion standpoint. Now the church has to figure out "What do we do with all

these Gentiles that got saved? Do we put them under the Law of Moses or not?" They have to go to Jerusalem to solve that.