



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

## Study 20: **THE SPIRIT'S CALL TO AN ETERNALLY REWARDABLE TASK** **Acts 13:1-12**

The evangelistic outreach and missionary task of the early Church were directed, controlled and made fruitful by the Holy Ghost. To our heavenly Father, to Christ, our Saviour and Lord, to the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, Helper and Comforter, the preaching of the gospel to the untold, unreached, unsaved is the greatest work He has called us to do on earth. Preaching the gospel to the lost is God's work. As God is greater than man, so is God's work greater than man's work. As the spiritual need of man is eternally greater than his temporal needs, so is labouring to save the souls of men greater than caring only for their earthly needs. Everyone can, indeed, everyone should have a part, a significant part, in this great task of preaching the gospel, saving souls, bringing the lost to Christ and preparing them for eternal fellowship with God in heaven. We may not all be full-time pastors, evangelists and missionaries but we must and ought to go beyond labouring only for perishable, earthly things. While we work to moderately provide for our temporal needs, we also minister to every creature around us or beyond in foreign lands. How much of our time, resources, money, vacation, life do we spend caring for ourselves? Should we spend all only on earthly pursuits? Shouldn't we live for eternity and redirect others to turn from perdition to life eternal in Christ? "**As they ministered to the Lord**" in the local Church in Antioch, "**the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.**" The Holy Ghost has not changed. The harvest field is still ready for harvesters. There is still much work to do. The Holy Ghost is still speaking. If we listen, willing to obey, we shall hear Him speak in every local Church.

### **ASSOCIATED APOSTLES WITH A SACRED MANDATE**

Acts 13:1,2; 9:26-28; 11:22-26,29,30; 12:24,25; 14:14,15; Deuteronomy 10:8; Exodus 6:13,26,27; Hebrews 5:4; 1 Samuel 12:8; Matthew 9:35-38; John 4:34-38; Matthew 20:6,7.

"**Barnabas and Saul**" were among the preachers and teachers in the Antioch Church. Barnabas was an effective, Spirit-filled minister who already had a profitable ministry in the Church, both at Jerusalem and in Antioch (Acts 4:36,37; 9:27; 11:19-24). Saul, too, was already a faithful and effective minister with a fruitful ministry in Damascus, Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 9:22,26-29; 11:25,26,29,30; 12:24,25). These two ministers, Barnabas and Saul, were not ordinary ministers in the Antioch Church. In conversion and character, in consecration and commitment, in courage and conviction, in exposure and experience, in faith and faithfulness, in intercession and interpretation, in revelation and knowledge, these two ministers (called Apostles in Acts 14:14) were far above the other ministers in Antioch. Antioch was an important city. It was considered the third city of the Roman Empire and the Church there could have thought that sending forth Barnabas and Saul would create a vacuum which would never be filled. The Holy Ghost did not send inexperienced, untried ministers to the millions (now billions) of ignorant, darkened souls in the Gentile world. God sent (and still sends, today) experienced, equipped, empowered servants of the Lord. "**As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said ...**" Waiting on the Lord, ministering in acts of devotion, meditation, intercession, offering prayer and praise, setting our affection, love and desires on God, open the door for His revelation. Ministering to the Lord by prayerfully and meditatively seeking His glory while we forget ourselves and our pressing needs gladdens His heart and moves Him to reveal His will, His most urgent will and work to us in clear, unmistakable terms. "**The Holy Ghost said, Separate ME Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.**" Unless we minister unto the Lord, fast to be weaned from deep, personal desires, we shall be in competition with the Holy Ghost, holding back "**Barnabas and Saul**" for the work WE have assigned them. Let the Church minister unto the Lord in prayer and fasting, then hearken unto the Lord as He speaks. "**Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.**" Let go of all and let God have all.

### **APPOINTED AMBASSADORS FOR A SPECIFIC MINISTRY**

Acts 13:3-5; 6:3-6; 14:21-23; 1 Timothy 5:22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 1:3; Acts 20:28; Colossians 4:17; Acts 26:19,20; Galatians 1:15,16; Philippians 2:5-8,19-22; Hebrews 11:24-27.

"**And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**" The two seemingly indispensable ministers were released immediately. "**They fasted and prayed.**" Earlier, "**they ministered and fasted.**" That devotional exercise prepared them to hear from God and be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit. This latter prayer and

fasting, after knowing the will and call of God, purged them of any inordinate affection or unscriptural attachment to God's servants. They loosened the invisible cord that tied them to the posts of the Antioch Church, knowing and acknowledging that **"the Lord hath need of them"** (Matthew 21:3). So, straightway, **"they laid their hands on them, they sent them away"** (Acts 13:3). **"They fasted and prayed."** Fasting and prayer, when done in the right way, with godly motives and total abandonment to God's will, predisposes us to God's revelation, inclines us to God's will, cleanses and purges our hearts of idols in all their forms, sets us free from the world and its slavish dominion. And **"they fasted and prayed"** that God would bless and prosper them in the new and greater assignment. **"They laid their hands on them."** This act of the laying on of the hands of the remaining leaders of the Antioch Church was not to call, qualify or ordain them. They were already called, appointed, qualified, equipped and ordained by God. Paul's call, appointment and ordination were not by man but by God (Galatians 1:1,10-12; Acts 9:15; 26:16-19; 2 Timothy 1:1). By laying hands on them, they identified with them, releasing and supporting the divine call and God's revealed will. **"They sent them away."** **"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia."** They surrendered wholeheartedly to go where the Spirit appointed and the Church acknowledged the divine ownership and authority over them. The Holy Ghost sent them forth as He went with them in great anointing and power.

## **APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY OVER SUBTLE MISCHIEF**

Acts 13:6-12; 2 Timothy 3:8,9; Luke 11:52; Galatians 1:6-12; 2:4,5; 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; 2 Kings 6:12-18; Romans 11:25; 2 Peter 2:12-17; Acts 11:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Luke 4:32-36.

Going through the whole island, they came to Paphos, the capital city of the island. They were confronted by a Jewish false prophet, a sorcerer, whose name was Barjesus. What a name! The name means 'son of Jesus', 'son of Saviour', yet in reality he was a **"child of the devil"**, a son of Satan, an **"enemy of all righteousness"**, sent and set by Satan **"to pervert the right ways of the Lord"**. The deputy of the country, that is, the administrative officer of the island, had called for Barnabas and Saul so he could be instructed in the word of God. The sly and subtle false prophet was with the deputy, closely associated and pretending to know and show the way to God. He was an agent of Satan, assigned to be the deputy's religious adviser to keep him away from God, from salvation, from heaven. He **"withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith"**. **"Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,)"**. This is the first time the name Paul occurs and the last time the Apostle is called Saul. **"Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him."** Paul, full of the Spirit, had the gifts of the Spirit in full operation. By the discerning of spirits, he declared that Barjesus was **"full of all subtilty and all mischief"**. Though he claimed to be a prophet, he was a sorcerer, a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness, appointed and assigned by Satan to deceive and to pervert the right ways of the Lord. By the gift of the word of wisdom, Paul decreed the judgment of blindness rather than casting out the spirit of sorcery. By the gift of faith and the gift of working miracles, he decreed and it was established. The anointing broke the deputy's yoke and released him from spiritual blindness. He heard the word, he believed and turned from his sins, he turned to the Lord and believed unreservedly in Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

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