

Paul's First Missionary Journey

The Life and Ministry of Paul—part 5

July 24, 2016

DAY 1: Teamwork

1. Two weeks ago we saw that the gospel went wild at Antioch. Barnabas needed help teaching and ministering to all the new Christians. He went to Tarsus to bring Paul back.

*Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.
10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

2. What principles from this passage from Ecclesiastes do you think would help Paul and Barnabas as they minister together as a team?

3. Antioch was largely a pagan city. Not only would Paul and Barnabas be trying to help the new Christians grow, but the work would be daunting for three reasons:

a. Religious ignorance. With so many converts coming from a Gentile background instead of a Jewish background, these people had almost no understanding of the scriptures.

b. Cultural depravity. Antioch was a city known for paganism, gambling, corruption, and prostitution.

c. The great number of people coming to the Lord Jesus!

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

4. There were no church buildings, no missionaries, no bibles in the hands of the people, and the New Testament had yet to be written!

Acts 11:26 ...and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

5. Barnabas and Paul were very different personalities. Barnabas was a people-person, an encourager, compassionate and from a rural background. Paul was a Type A, go-getter, driven, highly educated, used to logic and debate and a city boy.

6. Becoming a team is not easy. Think about your own “team” experiences, whether it be in the church, work, sports, or family. Do you face any “team” challenges presently? Finish today’s devotional with a time of prayer for your participation on your team.

DAY 2: Serving in Missions

1. When we come to Christ, we come to Him not just as our Savior but as our Lord. That means He has a call on every aspect of our lives. We belong to Him.
2. Both Jeremiah and Isaiah use the imagery of a potter making clay pots on his spinning turntable. He can mold the clay (us) any way He sees fit. When God puts a call on our lives, it is usually difficult for us to embrace the change.

Isaiah 45:9 "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"

3. The willingness to serve God, as He sees fit, is imperative in following God. Let's pick up Paul's story, again, in Antioch.

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

³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

4. What were the circumstances surrounding God's call on Barnabas and Paul?

5. Imagine you were Paul. For the first time in eight years, you are at the center of a gospel explosion! God is using your life to reach people and help a significant number of new Christians get anchored in the faith. How hard would it be for you to leave that situation? What would be your most difficult adjustments in leaving a thriving ministry and your home church where you've established friends among God's people?

6. Now imagine you are one of the young Christians who have been helped by Barnabas and Paul. What would be your most difficult adjustments in letting Barnabas and Paul go?

7. The matter comes down to letting God be God.

8. Are you open to going wherever God may send you in missions?

9. When steps like this are difficult, the next baby step is to say, "God, make me willing to be willing to go wherever you send me." Maybe this is your prayer, today.

DAY 3: 1st Missionary Journey launches; Mark deserts the team

1. As Barnabas and Saul leave the glowing success of ministry in Antioch, all that begins to fade as they sail westward on the Mediterranean Sea for the island of Cyprus. They go from the hustle and bustle of city life and growing, young churches to the quiet lapping of the waves against the hull of their ship.

2. The year is A.D. 47. It is the first of three missionary journeys Paul will take.

3. Cyprus is the home of Barnabas. They land at the city of Salamis, a commercial center.

4. Luke records that they traveled the “whole island.” Mission trips back then did not involve airfare, hotels, and rental cars. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark (Barnabas’ cousin) had to “hoof it” wherever they went by day, and likely spending most nights “under the stars.”

5. While they are sharing the Lord with one of the Roman officials, a “loony bird” name Elymas, possessed by Satan tries to interrupt the proceedings.

Acts 13:9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,

¹⁰ "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"

¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

6. In this very unusual situation, Paul uses very unusual and forceful language. God also intervenes in the situation in a compelling way!

7. They lead the proconsul to faith in Jesus. After at least a one-hundred-mile journey across the island, they sail north toward the region of Pamphylia (modern day Turkey) along the Mediterranean Sea. The terrain is rocky, and the group likely caught a disease there. Some have speculated it might have been malaria. The trip had become so taxing that young John Mark abandoned the effort.

Acts 13:13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

8. John Mark’s desertion of the team will become an extremely difficult situation for Paul. Have you ever been abandoned by a team member? What was it like? How did it affect you?

DAY 4: Pisidian Antioch; Acts 13 continues

1. Pamphylia is a mountainous region. Paul and Barnabas have been deserted by John Mark. The men are left to travel the rough terrain, carrying their supplies. Just *hiking* that kind of climb is exhausting work, let alone having to carry their provisions. It is likely they are dealing with sickness, along with the disappointment of John Mark returning home.

2. From the city of Perga to Pisidian Antioch is over one hundred miles to the north. (This is a different Antioch from where they left).

3. Paul is given the opportunity to speak. He goes back in time to the time of the Exodus and moves forward through the judges, King Saul and King David. Here are some excerpts from Acts 13:16-51.

Acts 13:23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel.

²⁶ "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷ The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.

²⁸ Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead,

³¹ and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

³² "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. ...

³⁴ The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David."

³⁸ "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

4. What struck you most from Paul's message? _____

5. Paul and Barnabas are invited back for the next Sabbath! Luke records that "almost the whole city" came to hear their message! But opposition arose among some of the Jewish people.

Acts 13:45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

6. Persecution against Paul and Barnabas arises and they are expelled from the region, but a pattern emerges: The gospel spreads while fierce opposition plagues the team.

DAY 5: Iconium and Lystra; Acts 14

1. Then they head east to the city of Iconium. Despite a favorable reception by some of the citizens to the gospel, the Jews, once again, stir up a hornet's nest, including a plot to stone Paul and Barnabas. The plot is uncovered and the team moves to the city of Lystra.

2. At the city of Lystra, fireworks erupt!

Acts 14:8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵ "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you.

We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷ Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

¹⁸ Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

3. Paul and Barnabas use the superstitious moment as a way to share about the real God. What struck you most from their message? (Acts 14:15-17)

Acts 14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

4. The luster of ministry back in Antioch must have seemed like a million years before. This first missionary journey has been one gigantic challenge after another.

5. Imagine you are Paul. It looks like this is the end for you! At some point one of the stones knocks you unconscious. You are drug out of the city. After a time, you regain consciousness while lying in a pool of your own blood. As you rise to your feet what would you do next?

Acts 14:20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

6. Amazingly, Paul walks back into the city!

7. What has stuck with you most about Paul during this first missionary journey?