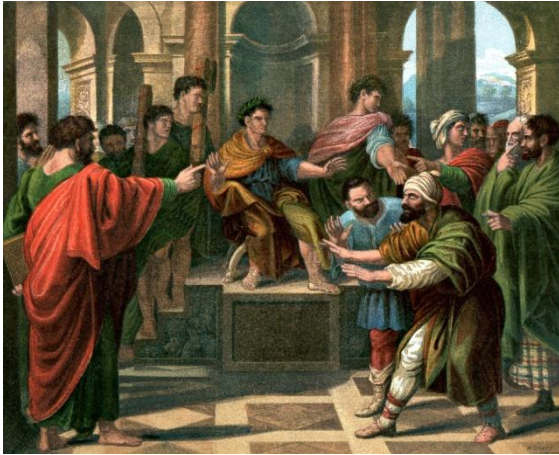


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



THE GOSPEL MEETS OPPOSITION

Scripture Text: Acts 13:1-13

The Antioch church was a healthy, living church. Souls were being saved. Saints were being given spiritual gifts and placed in God's work. In a normal church this is a continuing process. At present there is a great lack of workers. Churches are in great need of pastors. Sunday schools are in need of teachers. Everywhere is work to be done, souls to reach. God will have workers if we put ourselves at His disposal. Consecrate, prepare, pray, expect His call and answer it.

The spiritual gifts of Barnabas and Paul caused them to be chosen. The Holy Spirit did the choosing. The Holy Spirit spoke through prayer. Fasting and prayer were practiced. The Holy Spirit in Paul gave him power against false prophecy and sorcery—a work of the devil. It was God, not Paul, who punished this enemy of the Gospel.

MEMORY VERSE: *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

—Acts 13:2

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—1 Corinthians 12:1-14 Different gifts, same Spirit.

Tue.—1 Corinthians 15:1-20 A secure ministry.

Wed.—2 Corinthians 4 A tried ministry.

Thu.—2 Corinthians 3:1-14 A ministry of glory.

Fri.—Philippians 1:3-17 Defend the Gospel.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14 A Gospel of salvation.

The Holy Spirit Speaks

Acts 13:1-2 Prophets and teachers were in the Antioch church. The Holy Spirit had given the gifts of prophecy and teaching to individuals from various places and backgrounds. Now all were one in Christ. Because of the fact that people met in homes and, therefore, in small groups, a larger number of teachers and prophets were necessary. **As they ministered to the Lord**—served Him in prayer and worship—**and fasted**—did not eat—**the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul.** They were to be set apart for His work. It is a risky thing to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, unless we are prepared to take orders.

Obedience to the Spirit

Acts 13:3-5 First, the church **fasted and prayed** again, this time for one specific purpose. They **laid their hands on** Barnabas and Saul—sanctioning God's action and asking Him to enable them for the work. Barnabas and Saul went as the Spirit led; the brethren did not send them. Their journey took them to Seleucia, Cyprus, and Salamis. They preached in the synagogues. Their preaching was to Jews and Gentiles both. **They had . . . John to their minister**—to help them, to serve. Paul did not rule the church. He was *sent* by the Holy Spirit. The Antioch church did not rule; they were *told* by the Holy Spirit what to do. If we search the Bible through, we cannot find any ruler of the church but the Holy Spirit.

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The Devil Opposes Truth

Acts 13:6-8 At Paphos was a sorcerer and false prophet named Elymas. He was with a man of high position. This man, Sergius Paulus, was sincere and enough interested to ask **to hear the word of God**. To hinder Sergius Paulus from hearing the Gospel and becoming a servant of God, the devil led his servant Elymas to withstand Barnabas and Saul. He tried **to turn away the deputy from the faith**. What a terrible thing to do!

God has set His face against those who work magic and sorcery (**Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6**). Sorcery is still here. It often goes by the name of Christian and calls itself a church, but always it is opposed to God and His Truth. It claims to heal and tell fortunes and reveal secret wisdom by the power of God's Spirit, but really works by the spirits of devils. Sorcery or spiritism is dangerous. **Revelation 21:8** tells the end of sorcerers. Elymas was a false prophet, one who claimed to have a divine commission to speak in God's name. But God says of such that they have a deceitful heart (**Jeremiah 14:14**). Religious teachers not in contact with God and who pervert the Bible are false prophets. They are among us yet today. Judgment and damnation is their lot (**2 Peter 2:1-3**).

Elymas Punished

Acts 13:9-11 Then Saul (or Paul) . . . **filled with the Holy Ghost** steps forward. He does not wait for Barnabas. The Spirit speaking through Paul rebuked Elymas severely. He called Elymas **full of all subtlety and all mischief**—sly and evil motives—**child of the devil**—not God's—**enemy of all righteousness**—destroying the very thing he needed most. This is the tragic but true story of our day. **The hand of the Lord is upon thee**—It was the Lord's act, not that of Paul. **Thou shalt be blind . . . for a season**. His blindness was to be total. He could not even see the sun in its brightness; but it was not to be perpetual, it was only for a time that God deemed sufficient. It would be long enough to prevent his opposition to the Gospel. **And immediately** Elymas was blind. When he became blind, his manner changed. No longer did he try to lead the deputy away from the Truth, but rather sought someone to lead him along the way.

Paul here steps forward as a leader. He has new sureness and strength. The Holy Spirit fitted him for his work. From now on, we read his name first—Paul and Barnabas. Paul's strong nature shows through here. He spoke severely. Another might have spoken as truly but not so firm. He was to meet a cruel world and many enemies of Christ. God could use his nature in the place He put him. The power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised made prophets and teachers. It gave Paul discernment to understand the character of Elymas and to pronounce blindness upon him, and to teach and win the deputy.

The Deputy Believes

Acts 13:12-13 When he saw—the power of God manifest—the kingdom of Satan plainly defeated in his opposition to the Kingdom of God. **Astonished**—the child of the devil, stricken with blindness, the deputy, stricken with astonishment. Surprised and fully convinced, he wanted this, **the doctrine of the Lord**. He believed. The Word of God is a two-edged sword; it smites the sinner with judgment and the sincere inquirer with conviction of the truth. There is always someone to withstand the Gospel. There is always someone who will try to prevent a revival. Wherever God has sown wheat, the devil will sow tares.

Leaving Paphos, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed to Perga. For reasons not stated John left them and returned home. He was young, this life was physically hard, and perhaps he was homesick. Later, he proved to be a good worker (**2 Timothy 4:11**).

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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