

A SENT MESSENGER



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

The early church followed the Lord's leading to proclaim the gospel wherever He sent them, beginning a missionary movement that has not ceased.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 13–14

+ **SETTING:**

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). His Spirit first descended upon them on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), and it expanded outward from Jerusalem to the areas just beyond. But now, beginning in chapter 13, the gospel was rolling out from Jerusalem to the entire world. Paul was God's chosen instrument to make this happen. Paul would embark on a series of missionary journeys into all areas of the Roman world, spreading the gospel to the Gentiles just as it had already spread among the Jews.

DAY 1

READ:

Acts 13:1-2

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 13:1-2

NOTES

In Acts 13:1-2, Paul and Barnabas were set apart from other men for the work the Lord called them to do. The other leaders in the church at that time included Simeon, also called Niger (Latin for “black”, perhaps due to his dark complexion), Lucius, a man from Cyrene, who could have been a founder of the church at Antioch, and Manaen, possibly an older and wealthy man. It was a diverse group of leaders.

But Barnabas and Saul had a special call for a special work God had planned. They were to take the gospel to the Gentiles, beginning God’s great mission in Christ to bring the outsiders inside.

But God doesn’t just set Paul and Barnabas apart. Each of us has a specific calling upon our lives because we are all different in our uniqueness.

Our call may not be as clear-cut as what Paul and Barnabas received that day, but when the Lord saves us, He sets us apart to follow Him in this world. We are to share the gospel with those around us and serve Him faithfully in our churches as we are able just as those who stayed in Antioch continued to be prophets and teachers.

So some are called to pastoral ministry. Some are called to missionary ministry. All are called to some type of ministry in the body of Christ.

Reviewing the men mentioned as prophets and teachers, what does this teach us about the church body?

DAY 2

READ:

Acts 13:13-41

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 13:15

NOTES

When Paul and Barnabas reached Pisidian Antioch (in modern-day Türkiye), they entered the synagogue, sat, and listened to the reading of the Law and the Prophets. Afterward, the leaders gave them an opportunity to speak. What they said was shocking.

Paul stood up and recounted the history of the Old Testament. Then he showed how Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises to His people. Jesus is David's descendant, prophesied as the one to come as Messiah and Savior (Acts 13:23). Jesus is the revelation of God's word to the Jews (v. 26). Jesus is the dead, buried, and resurrected one to give us the promises of David (vv. 28-34). Jesus is the one through whom sins are forgiven (v. 38). Jesus is the one who justifies those who cannot be justified through obedience to the law (v. 39).

That was not the encouraging word the synagogue leaders expected, but it was the best news this world has ever heard. Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Lord of glory.

And He's yours—all yours.

What can you do to continue to grow more in the knowledge of Jesus?

DAY 3

READ:

Acts 13:42-46

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 13:42

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #1:

GENERAL REVELATION

General revelation refers to God revealing Himself through His creation (Psalm 19) and through the human conscience (Romans 2). Knowledge about God through general revelation is limited because it only communicates general knowledge about God and His character. We can look at the vastness and fine-tuning of the universe and recognize that God is all-powerful and wise, or look inward to our innate sense of right and wrong and know there is a moral lawgiver in the universe. General revelation is not sufficient for understanding how to know God or be saved, but it provides enough knowledge about God for us to be held accountable for suppressing God's truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1–2).

When Paul was done preaching that first day in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, the people urged him to return on the next Sabbath to preach again. The message of grace from Jesus that he shared with them was too much for one Sabbath service. They wanted another sermon. They needed to hear more about Jesus's fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. They needed the gospel preached to them again.

It is an amazing thing to behold such zeal for hearing the gospel. Do you have the same zeal? If not, why not? What about the grace of God in Jesus Christ is boring? There is no better news in all the world. All of history focuses on Jesus and His work. He lived the life you should have lived in total obedience to God's law. And at the end of His perfect life, He offered Himself up as a substitute to die on a cross and bear the punishment you deserve for sin. On the third day, He rose from the grave, defeating all that separates you and God. You are totally free and justified in God's sight now, and your future is everlasting life. Jesus lives now to intercede for you in heaven until the day He comes again to renew and restore this broken world.

What about the gospel thrills you today?

DAY 4

READ:

Acts 13:42-46

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 13:45

NOTES

The Jews in Antioch grew jealous of Paul and Barnabas because they were attracting crowds the religious leaders once attracted. Paul and Barnabas's message was new and edgy but was founded upon what was old and familiar. The Jews looked upon it with contempt. Instead of listening to what Paul and Barnabas were saying, they made a judgment in their heart of their motives and condemned them.

That kind of attitude is a potential danger within all of us. How often have you grown jealous of others because they got the attention you desired? There are times when others will be in the spotlight, and the devil wants us to grow jealous of them, and our flesh all too easily complies. But why are we so jealous? What do we care about crowds? Why can't we let it go?

This becomes all the uglier when those of whom we are jealous are not boastful or proud. Paul and Barnabas were not there of their own accord. They were not trying to attract a crowd for their own ego. They were sharing the gospel. The jealousy of the Jews was far worse than the kind of jealousy that rages through the world every day. They were jealous because these new folks were gaining the ears of their people through the Word of God.

In their jealousy, they were not opposing only Paul and Barnabas. They were opposing God.

Why is jealousy such a powerful emotion?

DAY 5

READ:

Acts 14:21-23

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 14:22

NOTES

We don't like suffering. No one does. But there is no way to avoid suffering in this world. Adam and Eve ruined our chance at perfection, and everyone since has endured the hardships of life.

But just because suffering is an ever-present reality doesn't mean we must face it as the world faces it. Christians have a hope during suffering that allows us to look it square in the eye and not lose hope because Jesus has done something about it.

The gospel of Jesus tells us that the worst this world can do is no match for the best God can do. The world may kill us, but because of Jesus, death now only ushers us straight into God's presence. Our greatest enemies have been slain already. Our greatest fears have been overcome by grace and mercy. Since the resurrection is true, it means that no matter what happens in this life, it will all be okay in the end. Everything sad will one day disappear.

We should never discount the terrible cost of suffering, but we must also never forget the wonderful grace of God for the Christian in the face of suffering. Yes, life is hard, but there is glory out ahead. Take heart. Jesus has overcome the world.

How does the gospel give you hope during suffering?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"History reveals that times of suffering for the Church have also been times of looking upward."¹

—A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: Missionaries are sent to go wherever the Lord calls them (Acts 13:1-3).

God calls the church to be a diverse group of people who are called to share the good news of Jesus to more diverse people.

? From Day 1: **Reviewing the men mentioned as prophets and teachers, what does this teach us about the church body?**

The Holy Spirit will call those who are already faithfully worshiping and ministering to continue to grow His kingdom.

? **What can we learn from Saul and Barnabas's obedience to listen to God's call?**

POINT 2: Missionaries are sent to preach to whomever will listen (Acts 13:13-15,42-46).

When God calls you to go and share the gospel, whether people respond favorably or poorly, it is all in His hands.

? **How is the gospel a word of encouragement to us today?**

No matter who rejects the gospel, we are called to continue to preach to those who will listen.

? **Why is it hard to persevere in sharing the gospel when many reject it, and how do we endure?**

POINT 3: Missionaries are sent to strengthen the church however they can (Acts 14:21-23).

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Luke's main point is to emphasize that mission is inaugurated by God himself."²

—I. Howard Marshall
(1934–2015)

KEY DOCTRINE #1: GENERAL REVELATION

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Where do you mostly see God's general revelation?

Missions exist to spread the gospel and to strengthen the church, encouraging the body to endure trials.



How can we help believers to persevere in trials?

MY RESPONSE

Because God sent Jesus to us to provide our salvation, we send, support, and consider being missionaries to serve those who have never heard the gospel.

- **HEAD:** How does having a missionary mindset change the way you approach your life?
- **HEART:** What prevents you from more ministry?
- **HANDS:** What are the next steps you need to take to get more involved in mission work?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Let us remember, then, first of all, that we are required to suffer many tribulations; but let us also remember to add in mitigation that by them we are brought to the kingdom of God.”³

—J. I. Packer (1926–2020)