

The Gospel Enters Satan's Domain

Acts 13:4-12

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Introduction

In Acts 13:4-12, we have the official record of the gospel breaking into Satan's domain.

- Of course the earth is the Lord's and always has been.
 - He is the creator of all things and rules over all by His sovereign decree and all things work according to the counsel of His own will...
 - Nevertheless, it is a part of His sovereign plan that mankind would fall under the temptation of Satan and be taken captive by him.
 - Therefore, the Bible also tells us...
 - that "the whole world is under the sway of the wicked one;"
 - And that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe."
 - Up until the coming of Jesus, all of the nations except Israel were given to Satan to rule within certain limitations that the Lord set.
- But with the coming of Jesus there was a great change.
 - It had been promised to Abraham that in his seed all of the nations would be blessed...
 - And of course that blessing meant that they would no longer be under the dominion of Satan.
 - The Father promised that He would give the nations to God the Son, after He had come as mediator and made Himself an offering for sin.
 - Not only would He be given authority to judge them at the last day, but also authority to gather His elect out of every nation.
 - That is what He has been doing for 2000 years now, and after that work is complete, the final day of judgement will come.
 - And so it was that as soon as Jesus was raised from the dead,
 - He came to His disciples and declared that **now** all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him—as God-man!
 - And He commanded them to go and make disciples of all the nations!
 - Now it would be possible for them to do this.
 - He promised that He would be with them to give them the power to gather the nations to Him.
 - And from that time the church began to go forth in His name and now each day there are thousands who are taken from Satan and translated in the kingdom of grace.

- Even before His resurrection, Jesus declared that He had bound the strong man (Satan) and had come to spoil his house—to take the nations from his power.
 - Now Satan has been put in chains—limited—so that he cannot keep any of those whom the Father has given to Christ from coming to Him for salvation.
 - The light of the gospel has broken forth to the nations and nothing can stop its advance.

And what we have here in Acts 13:4-12 is the initiation of this great work.

- Much has been done already.
 - The gospel has penetrated the entire region that the Lord had promised to Abraham and his seed.
 - And already, Peter has been used to baptise the first Gentile (non-Jew) without requiring him to first convert to Judaism...
 - and in the wake of that, other Gentiles have been saved.
- But now in Acts 13, the time has come for the gospel to begin to penetrate those regions outside the Promised Land.
 - It has already been introduced in many places by Jewish converts who were scattered there under the persecution of Stephen,
 - but in Acts 13 we have the initiation of focused missionary activity with the aim of reaching not only Jews, but also Gentiles.
 - The church is going forth to storm the gates of Satan's dominion!
 - She is going forth in the name of her risen reigning Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
 - But it cannot be expected that there will be no resistance from Satan.
 - He has not been rendered utterly powerless.
 - The Lord never works that way.
 - When God gave Israel the Promised Land in the time of Joshua, the Israelites had to go in and conquer the land.
 - They had to fight.
 - The Lord did not remove all resistance, but rather gave them the power to overcome the resistance and take the land.
 - And here in Acts 13 we have the Jericho of the New Covenant, the great work of subduing the nations to Christ.
 - This is the first entrance into this great work.
 - It is the first gate of opposition that must be broken down,
 - and the breaking down of this gate signals the breaking down of all other gates in the years and centuries to come until all the elect are brought into Christ's kingdom...
 - And then the end will come and Jesus will return to judge the earth.

And so today we want to look at this great inception of the church's great work of subduing the nations for Christ that we are all engaged in.

- And I want to apply it very broadly to you.
 - I want you to see how it has to do with everything pertaining to the kingdom...
 - the part that each of you have in contributing to foreign missions...
 - the part that each of you has in reaching out here in Halifax...
 - the role that you have in establishing the kingdom in your household...
 - and even the call to see the reign of Christ fully established in your own heart and life!
 - We go forth in Christ's name against every stronghold of Satan and nothing can prevent Christ's kingdom from coming.
 - All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus.
 - And we go forth in His name as His agents conquering and to conquer.
 - So there is much for us to learn here.

I. First, I want you to see how the Lord Jesus provides for you as His agent.

A. First, that He sends you out by His Holy Spirit to establish His kingdom.

- Verse 4 says:
 - **Acts 13:4: So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.**
 - This refers to what we looked at last time in Acts 13:1-3...
- 1. The Holy Spirit clearly and specifically called Barnabas and Saul to do this work.
 - The Lord spoke to the church while they were fasting and through the prophets that were in the presbytery there...
 - And they were given clear directives to send these men out to do this work.
 - The church needed special revelation for this because it was something new and unprecedented.
 - Paul and Barnabas were already ministers and Paul in particular had already been told that he was God's chosen instrument to minister to the Gentiles...
 - But now they needed to be told expressly that the time had come for them to go.
 - It must have been an awesome thing for them to be sent out to do what had not been done before!
 - They were given a clear commission so that there would be no doubt about what they were to do and that God was in it.
 - And you will remember how the church took this call very seriously and laid hands on them with prayer and fasting,

- recognising that they would need the grace of the Lord to be with them all the way or they would accomplish nothing!
2. You are also sent out to do kingdom work by the Holy Spirit.
- a. Indeed, you are given a clear call to the work Christ has for you to do by prophecy!
 - Not by living prophets...
 - But today, God's Spirit speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures which were given to us by prophecy—
 - men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit to record what God's will is for His church until Jesus returns.
 - b. I don't mean that you are to try to read the Bible looking for hidden messages about what city you are to live in or something...
 - There is no indication that Paul and Barnabas were even told that on this occasion.
 - I mean rather that you are told to subdue sin in your life—as we saw last week—to run the race that is set before us with Christ, laying aside every weight and the sin that ensnares us.
 - There is no uncertainty about what you are to do with your pride and your selfishness!
 - what you are to do with your sinful lusts and desires!
 - That you children are to honour and obey your parents!
 - That you wives are to submit to your husbands and to care for your children.
 - That you husbands are to cherish your wives and lay down your life for them,
 - and that you are to lead your household after Jesus, instructing them in the will of God and leading them in the worship of God.
 - Nor is there any doubt that as a church, we are to endeavour to reach the lost in the place God has given us...
 - that we are to gather for worship each Lord's Day and praise His name and receive His word...
 - that we are to remove the wicked from among us and are to provide for those who have needs—encouraging one another and helping one another.
 - The Holy Spirit has clearly revealed these things to us by prophecy.
 - We dare not disregard what we have been clearly told to do!
 - Can you imagine if Paul and Barnabas had been called and had said, "No, I don't think so!"
 - Or if they had said, "yes Lord," and then never actually gotten around to going?

- c. You need to be like them and do what you are called to do for Christ's kingdom!
 - And you need to take it seriously,
 - fasting and praying for grace and strength to do what you have been called to do!
 - It is an awesome thing to be called by the Lord, and you have been!
 - And you need God's help just as Paul and Barnabas did to do the work that you have been given to do for Christ's kingdom.

B. Second, that the Lord has uniquely suited you for the task that He has given you.

1. Paul and Barnabas were so well suited to their work.

a. We looked at this last time...in verses 1-3.

- I pointed out to you how Paul and Barnabas had unique backgrounds and unique gifts that made them perfectly suited to be missionaries to the Gentiles...
 - They were both from Greek cities who understood the culture and the language.
 - They were Jews who were well versed in the scriptures of the Old Testament.
 - They were both gifted teachers and administrators.
 - They were both men of great passion and zeal.
 - And Paul was a man of towering intellect who was one of the most educated men in the world.

TRANS> All this made them very well suited to the work that the Lord gave them to do.

b. And you can be sure that the Lord also equips you for the work He has given you...

- If you are a father and a husband, He will give you all that you need for that calling!
- If He has made you an elder or a deacon, you can be sure that He will provide for you the gifts and graces to do that work...
 - even if you don't feel you have them, He will provide if you look to Him.
- If you are without a spouse at this time, He will give you what you need to serve Him in that capacity.

TRANS> This is something we looked at last week.

- But this week, God's equipping is seen to be even more specific and refined!

2. Not only does the Lord suit us to the general work that we are called to do, but also to the specific tasks that are before us...

a. This was the case with Paul and Barnabas as they began their work.

- 1) The Lord sent John Mark to assist them.
 - He was the cousin of Barnabas and he had come back from Jerusalem with them.
 - His ministry was quite valuable to them because he was an eye-witness of Jesus and His resurrection.
 - This provided an extra encouragement to them.
 - 2) The island of Cyprus was the first place they went...it is an island about the size of Cape Breton.
 - And it so happens that this is where Barnabas was from!
 - It would have been a great help for them on their first mission to already know their way around—and to have contacts.
 - When the Lord gives us a task, He does not give us more than we can bear.
- b. And that is true with you also!
- 1) If you are a mother, He not only gives you the gifts and graces you need to be a mother...
 - but also to be a mother in the place He has put you...
 - perhaps you have children with special needs...
 - perhaps you have a low income—or a high income—both have their challenges...
 - perhaps you have issues with your health or with your husband...
 - All that is known to God, and right now you can serve Him in your calling.
 - You have what you need to honour Him.
 - 2) Of course the same thing applies to every other calling.
 - I don't mean that we never get in over our head—
 - You might go to school in mechanical engineering and realise that you just don't have the ability to handle the upper level courses...
 - But you do have the ability to honour God as a student in those unique circumstances—
 - even honouring Jesus as your King in patiently moving on to do something else.
 - Your unique situation and the challenges that go with it never catch the Lord by surprise.
 - He always prepares you with all that you need to serve Him in His kingdom.
 - Do not doubt that this is true.

C. Third, that He has given you instruction for your service to Him.

- The Lord not only tells us what He wants us to do, He also tells us how He wants us to go about doing it—at least with certain things...
1. Paul and Barnabas's methods of ministry are based upon principles from God's Word.
 - a. Right from the beginning, we find them preaching the Word of God.
 - They might have looked at the way the Greeks did things—for Cyprus was busy with much religion...
 - The city of Paphos was named for the Syrian goddess Paphia, which is the same as Aphrodite.
 - The cults of Artemis, Leto, and Zeus were also on the island.
 - Paul and Barnabas might have tried to fit in better by doing some drama like the Greeks did to communicate their message...
 - or maybe they could have hired out some of the locals to have a worship team with lively music.
 - But instead they relied on simple preaching.
 - This is what Jesus had commanded—that the gospel be preached in every nation.
 - They did not try to alter the method, but rather trusted in the Lord to bless His own appointed method as He deemed best.
 - b. And note also that they went to the synagogues to preach!
 - This actually became an established pattern and was based on the principle that Christ had also given them—to the Jew first.
 - There were Jews in all the places where Paul travelled, and he always followed this pattern.
 - God's Covenant people were the first to hear the good news, and then from there, ministry branched out to the Gentiles.
 - c. The point is, they endeavoured to use the methods of ministry that the Lord had given them.
 - Paul summarises his practice:
 - **1 Cor 2:4-5: And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**
 - **2 Cor 4:1-2: Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**
2. Learn from this that you must also endeavour to do things God's way.

- There are many who distort the gospel in their efforts to market it to unbelievers—we are not to do this—God has told us to preach.
- This applies to other areas too.
 - Parents will read parenting books that are more based on the latest pop psychology than on God’s Word...
 - For example, they will speak against using the rod, or teach that tantrums and other forms of rebellion are a natural phase of development.
 - Women will read all the magazines or follow the advice of others about how to control men—but it is not godly methodology.
 - The Bible says that you are to cultivate a meek and quiet spirit—where you aren’t all anxious and worried about what your husband is doing and trying to control him—because that is pleasing to the Lord.
 - Men will run their business like a pagan instead of according to the timeless principles found in scripture...
 - Not that a business is not to use marketing techniques, but that they are not to use any kind of deception or trickery.
 - For example, the multi-level marketing schemes where instead of selling a product, you try to sell a get rich quick scheme.
- We are the Lord’s agents and we are to follow His methods and do things His way.
 - That is what we will do when we trust Him.
 - That is what Paul and Barnabas did.

TRANS> So you see how the Lord has provided everything we need to do our part in advancing His kingdom...

- He sends us by His Spirit and so will be with us to enable us.
- He gives us all the gifts and graces that we need to serve Him in our callings.
- He gives us the instruction that we need.
- But as I said in the introduction, you must not think that this means you will be able glide along with ease.
 - Satan will not let us break into his domain without putting up a fight.
 - And it is God’s plan for us to struggle against him.

II. So now I want you to consider the stronghold of Satan that we invariably come up against as we break into Satan’s domain.

- A. As soon as Paul and Barnabas get to the capital city of Paphos, they come face to face with Satan’s gatekeeper.
 1. They had been going through the island of Cyprus preaching.
 - We are not told what kind of reception they had.
 - But we are told that as soon as they came to the capital city of Paphos, they met a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-Jesus.

- You can see this in verse 6:
 - **Acts 13:6: Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,**
 - This chap was really miss-named!
 - *Bar-Jesus* means *Son of Jesus*—and the name *Jesus* means *Jehovah is salvation*—
 - but this guy was a sorcerer which basically means that he was not looking to Jehovah for salvation!
 - This guy would be like what we would call a fortune-teller who claimed to be able to prophesy about the future.
 - He would use various rituals to try to evoke the dead and to communicate with ancestral spirits for advice.
 - He might also practice astrology and magic spells.
 - He was looking to all sorts of things instead of Jehovah for salvation and blessing!
 - And being a Jew with the name Bar-Jesus,
 - he certainly *ought* to have known better!
 - He knew that all of his magical arts were strongly condemned by the law of the Lord and made him worthy of death.
 - They are of the devil.
2. But this fellow had worked himself into a high position at Cyprus...
- a. He was an advisor to the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus.
 - That is what verse 7 is getting at when it says he was *with* the proconsul.
 - He was part of his entourage, a counselor to him.
 - It was, in fact, very common for Roman rulers to have this sort of person in their cabinet.
 - Sadly, there are many modern-day rulers who consult such persons today.
 - b. As proconsul, Sergius Paulus had a lot of authority.
 - A proconsul was appointed by the Senate at Rome and was given absolute authority to rule the army and to adjudicate matters that came before the court.
 - So to be an adviser to such a man was to be in a high position.
 - In contrast to such senatorial provinces, there were imperial provinces.
 - These were provinces that were under the direct dominion of Caesar because they were considered hostile.
 - They had armies that were under his direct command and so did not have a proconsul.

- For a long time, historians who were not afraid to question the accuracy of the Scriptures brazenly asserted that Luke had erred in calling Sergius Paulus a proconsul...
 - For it was clear from the records that Cyprus was an imperial province rather than a senatorial province.
 - But as happens so often, archeology proved the historians wrong.
 - A stee-la was uncovered that had been set up during the reign of Claudius (who was emperor when Paul and Barnabas went to Cyprus),
 - and it indicated that early in the reign of Claudius, the island of Cyprus was shifted from the dominion of Caesar to the dominion of the Senate and that the local ruler at that time was given the title “proconsul.”
 - Once again, Luke was vindicated as the most accurate historian of all antiquity.
 - But that is a side point...
 - The main point is that Bar-Jesus the sorcerer had worked his way into a place of authority and influence.
3. And just look at how this sorcerer attempted to use his influence!
- Verse 7 tells us that Sergius Paulus, being an intelligent man, wanted to hear what Paul and Barnabas were preaching.
 - And verse 8 tells you what Bar-Jesus (here called Elymas) did!
 - **Acts 13:8: But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.**
- a. Now you can see why I have called him Satan’s gatekeeper!
- He is Satan’s agent who comes forward to try to keep the gospel from getting in to Satan’s domain!
 - For centuries, Satan had dominion over the nations, but now the time has come for the kingdom of Christ to break into that dominion and win people to the Lord.
 - And of course Satan is going to do all he can to prevent this.
 - And this Elymas the sorcerer has come forward as Satan’s agent.
 - Nothing would please Satan more than to stop this advance on his territory before it goes any further!
- b. Satan’s gate-keepers are found everywhere! Is it not so?
- 1) Very often when someone is about to come to the Lord, some agent of the Devil will come along to try to interfere.
 - Sometimes they come as a well-meaning friend.
 - I have often seen parents try to keep their children from turning to the Lord.

- I even know of one young man from Singapore who had to climb out of his window to go to church.
 - And a friend who was ministering in Israel told me about a 14-year-old Muslim whose mother tried to kill him with a knife in the night because he had turned to Jesus Christ.
 - It's usually not so extreme,
 - But very often friends and family will come and mock and argue and do all they can to keep someone from believing.
 - They will tell the person that is coming to life and happiness that they are throwing their life away!
 - It is just so perverted!
- 2) And that is not all...
- You will also meet up with opposition when you try to witness to unbelievers—Satan's agents will try to discourage you...
 - And there will be opposition if you try to institute family worship in your home... or if you are trying to keep the Lord's Day...
 - Or if you are trying clean up your life from excessive drinking—along come your "friends" to tempt you and argue with you and to tell you what a fool you are.
- c. But understand, this is all part of God's plan.
- It is His will for you to be tested to make you strong and to bring glory to His name.
 - It brings more glory to Christ for His kingdom to advance when Satan is trying to oppose you,
 - than for it to advance when there is no resistance.
 - Sometimes, God even allows us to feel Satan's power for years—even centuries—as when Israel was shut up in slavery in Egypt...
 - But then God is all the more gloried when Satan's opposition crumbles before under the mighty hand of the LORD.
 - Then everyone sees that He is the LORD.
 - For over a century, the theory of evolution has stood up as a great barrier to faith,
 - but now that great, proud edifice is crumbling to pieces!
 - One leading scientist who had tried to defend this tottering theory finally gave it up, declaring that it is already finished because of all the light that has come from genetics and other fields.
 - But many will continue to cling to it because it is all they have.

B. But know this: *the authority of Jesus Christ will always prevail in the end!*

1. The chief difference between falsehood and truth is that truth endures.
 - Eventually, lies and deception are uncovered, and those who live the lie are brought to shame...
 - But if you cling to the truth, you will always be vindicated in the end.
 - Authority comes when we cling to Jesus as Lord because He is truth.

2. See here in Acts 13 how Paul, as Christ's agent, is given authority to subdue Satan's gatekeeper so that the gospel can break through.
 - It is a dramatic encounter!
 - a. First we are told that Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit!
 - This tells us that Paul is not acting in any way that is out of accord with God's will.
 - He is very harsh with this man, but that is just what he ought to be in this case!
 - Paul was ordinarily gentle with people—he pled with them and he was patient with them...
 - Too often, God's servants are harsh with Christ's sheep when they should have been gentle.
 - But Elymas was no sheep—he is a wolf!
 - Jesus dealt very severely with false teachers who deliberately stood in the way of the truth, and so does Paul here—as one filled with the Spirit.
 - b. We are told that Paul stares intently at this man—
 - It is a withering stare!
 - Elymas knew what he was doing and Paul looks right through him with this stare.
 - A stare can be more powerful than words at times!
 - c. But Paul also adds powerful words by which he names this man for what he is! Look at verse 10 and consider all the contrasts here...
 - Paul is a prophet filled with the Spirit, but Elymas is full of all fraud and deceit—a prophet not to be trusted.
 - He is not Bar-Jesus (Son of Jehovah saves), but Bar-Diabolos (Son of the Devil).
 - Paul is preaching the gospel of righteousness, but Elymas is the enemy of all righteousness.
 - Just think of this—Paul had come with the precious gospel that tells people how to become right with God...
 - How by trusting in Jesus who died for sin, and by resting in His righteousness, we may be made righteous!

- Elymas is in opposition to *that!* to *that* of all things!
 - To people being put right with the eternal God!
 - Isn't it incredible what people will oppose?
 - Elymas is also opposite to John the Baptist who came to prepare the way of the Lord...
 - To call people to repentance...to make straight in the desert a highway for the Lord...
 - Paul asks Elymas when he will stop perverting the straight way of the Lord.
 - Why does any one oppose the Lord and His way?
 - I mean, we can be made right with God!
 - How perverted it is to avoid this and to try to keep others from it!
 - Why would *anybody* do this???
 - When it is spelled out so plainly, you can see how foolish it really is!
- d. And now having exposed this man's true character, Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, pronounces the Lord's curse on him!
- It must have been a fearful thing to witness!
 - Verse 11 describes it:
 - **Acts 13:11: "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.**
 - What an appropriate judgement is brought upon this man!
 - Elymas was using all his gifts and power to try to keep Sergius Paulus in darkness,
 - And so the Lord puts Elymas into darkness!
 - The judgement fell upon him even while Paul spoke!
 - The poor man who was supposed to show people the way to go now can't even find his way home.
 - This is reminiscent of what happened to Paul—he surely must have thought of it...
 - When he himself was trying to keep people from the light, he was blinded by the light on the Damascus road and had to be led by the hand.
 - And really, this is the judgement that will come upon all in the day of judgement...

- Those who have lived in the darkness and who have refused to come to the light of God's truth will be cast into the place of outer darkness forever where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - It is so wrong to oppose the light—to oppose righteousness—to oppose the grace of God that saves us from our sins!
 - Of course it is!
 - This is why God does not spare.
3. My brothers and sisters, take heart!
- a. This is another time in the book of Acts when the Lord makes something visible and vivid that is often invisible.
 - He does it to make a clear display for us of how He works.
 - And in this case, He is showing us on no uncertain terms what shall become of Satan and all His opposition!
 - This event really happened, but it is symbolic of what the reigning Christ will continue to do until all things are brought under His feet.
 - He will let Satan flex his muscles—and there are times when He lets him do it for years—
 - When believers are martyred and the opposition remains for a long time...
 - But it will never prevail.
 - Satan and all his agents will eventually be exposed and rendered helpless to stand against Christ's kingdom.
 - b. It will make a huge difference if you will believe this and bow humbly to Christ's authority.
 - I see men who are not walking with the Lord...
 - They are pitiful—they don't even have authority over their own passions!
 - They have no authority in their home.
 - They have no authority in the lives of others—no influence for Christ.
 - But when they turn to the Lord as their own authority,
 - Then they begin to have dominion over their own passions...
 - And over their own household...
 - And they speak powerfully and influentially into the lives of others.
 - You see, they are in their place under the Lord, and so the Lord gives them authority.
 - Men who try to take this authority without submitting to Christ become oppressive—they try to use force and intimidation...

- but when they are under Christ, they have authority that persuades others in the Lord and His truth.
- They speak into the lives of others.

TRANS> And so you see how Satan's strongholds are completely ineffective before Christ's advancing kingdom.

III. And now thirdly, I want you to the happy outcome when Satan is spoiled!

A. At Cyprus, it is that Sergius Paulus believes!

- Look at verse 12:
 - **Acts 13:12: Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.**
- 1. He sees what was done—
 - He sees the authority of Christ expose and trample upon Satan's gatekeeper.
 - What before had seemed to him to be a good and helpful thing, he now sees to be a lying and deceptive thing that has no real power.
 - It is amazing how truth, when it comes to a person, will change his perspective.
 - All of the sudden, you can see things for what they are!
 - What you used to admire you no longer admire.
 - What used to seem full now seems very empty.
 - Do you know that change?
 - Aim to have the deception completely cleared out of your life...
 - It goes very deep.
 - We have been duped so long that we sometimes don't see the true nature of wickedness and deception.
 - We are like a foolish woman who clings to man that continues to abuse her and continues to allow herself to be deceived.
 - We must see what becomes of all that Satan has to offer us.
 - It is a lie that quickly perishes.
 - We need to see clearly, as Sergius Paulus did, how Satan is subdued.

TRANS> But look at what had even more impact than seeing Elymas blinded...

2. Sergius Paulus is *astonished* at the teaching of the Lord!

- a. The word *astonished* comes from a Greek word that means to strike, or to hit, as when we say,
 - "It really struck me when I heard the news."

- And the Greek word is strengthened by the addition of ek as prefix with means “out of” and the whole word means “to strike out of”
 - to be blown away, as we would say!
 - To be given new insight and perspective!

- b. And look at what it was that blew Sergius Paulus away—that astonished him!
 - It was not the blinding of his sorcerer, but the teaching of the Lord, the message that Paul was preaching!
 - It struck him—it rang throughout his person—it blew him away!
 - He could never be the same because now he saw clearly!
 - He saw his need—as a sinner under the wrath and curse of God who had no power to save himself...
 - He knew what the Apostle said about sin was true about him.
 - It was as if he had shone a light right in his heart to expose him and told him all that he had ever done.
 - He knew that he could not deny it.
 - And he saw Jesus Christ—the gracious Son of God who stooped to become a man so that He might die for sin...
 - And whose offering was accepted by the Father.
 - He saw that there was nothing even remotely like this!
 - When someone says that all religions are basically the same, you know that their eyes have not been opened to see who Jesus is and what Jesus did!
 - This isn’t just a religion about being a good boy.
 - This is the Son of God coming to offer Himself for sin riddled people who cannot be saved in any other way.
 - Nothing even remotely compares.
 - It blows you away when you once come to terms with it—
 - You realise that there is no other possible salvation!
 - And you see that it says that Sergius Paulus believed.
 - He could not do otherwise—there was no choice once he saw the light.

- B. The conversion of Sergius Paulus is the beginning of the kingdom of God breaking in among the Gentiles!
 1. It is the beginning of a new world-wide expansion of the kingdom.
 - It is, as I mentioned before, the Jericho of the New Covenant!
 - Jericho was the first stronghold that Israel had to overcome when they began to move into the land of Canaan to take the inheritance that the Lord had promised to them.

- The subjugation of the stronghold at Cyprus is the forerunner of the conquest of the whole earth for Jesus Christ.
 - From that time on, Jesus will lead His church into one nation after another and people from one nation after another will believe.
 - All the powers of Hell cannot keep this from happening.
 - It has gone on now for 2000 years and it is still going on as strong as ever.
 - Maybe not so much in North America, for we are under judgement, but in many other places.
 - What began at Cyprus has continued around the whole world.
2. The account of what happened at Cyprus is a clear display of how the Lord works when the gospel breaks in.
- There is the resistance represented by Elymas
 - There is the breaking down of that resistance represented by his blinding
 - And there is the entry of the gospel represented by the faith of Sergius Paulus who is struck by the message that is preached.
3. What about you?
- Has the teaching of the Lord astonished you?
 - Has it struck you?
 - Has it gripped you so that you see clearly that this is the truth and that you must trust in Jesus and follow Him?
 - Oh, I hope you have.
 - I hope you are not clinging to the darkness and to lies, because if you are, you will be destroyed with those lies.
 - You will be stuck with the darkness you cling to forever...
 - But if you will repent—if you will leave all of that and take hold of the truth and believe the truth,
 - If you will trust in Jesus and take hold of Him,
 - Then you will never be brought to ruin because He will endure forever—
 - He will endure in joyful communion with His Father and you will endure because you will be with Him.
4. What a tremendous thing!
- What grace and peace!
 - What joy!
 - What forgiveness!
 - What assurance and hope!
 - What a kingdom!