

Acts 12:25–13:12

How the Holy Spirit Does Missions: Ordinary Men, Ordinary Means, and Holy Boldness

Saturday, September 3, 2022 ▫ Read Acts 12:25–13:12

Questions from the Scripture text: To where do Barnabas and Saul return in v25? What were they doing (cf. 11:30)? Who comprised the leadership of the church in Antioch, when they get back from Jerusalem (13:1)? What was Simeon called? From where was Lucius? With whom had Manaen been brought up? Whom were they worshipping in v2? What else were they doing? Who spoke to them? What were they to do with whom? For what? What two things do they do after the Spirit says this (v3)? Then what two things do they do to them? Whom does v4 say had sent them out? Where did they go? Then where did they sail? Where do they arrive in v5? What do they do there? Where? Who was their assistant? Through where do they go in v6? To where? What four things does v6 say about the man they find there? Whom was he with (v7)? What sort of man was Sergius Paulus? For whom did he call? To do what? But who does what in v8? What fifth thing is said about him now? Why did he withstand them? Who is called by what new/matching name in v9? With Whom is he filled? What does he first do at the end of v9? Now what four things does Paul call the man in v10? And what question does he ask? What does he say is upon Elymas (v11)? With what effect? Then, what happens, and how quickly? And what does Elymas now go around seeking? Then what does the proconsul do (v12)? What had he seen? But by what was he astonished?

What does the Lord's work look like? Acts 12:25–13:12 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **even to do miraculous, spiritual work, the Lord uses ordinary men and ordinary means.**

The Holy Spirit speaks through ordinary men. Barnabas and Saul return to Jerusalem when they fulfill their ministry, taking John Mark with them. This was the promised trip from 11:30 with the gift from the famine. What's wonderful is that over the course of their teaching time in Antioch, the church has been built up to the point that they can do without them. Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen each have something about them that might have made them unlikely candidates to be prophets and teachers, but it is the Spirit Who makes the difference.

v2 tells us the Holy Spirit spoke, and the question is "how? What does that look like?" The answer comes not only by the fact of their having prophets among them but that "they lay hands, and they sent" in v3 is further summarized as "sent out by the Holy Spirit" in v4. The Holy Spirit speaks through men in Antioch, and He is calling Barnabas and Saul to be men through whom He speaks elsewhere.

The Holy Spirit uses ordinary means. One great mistake that we could make would be to despise ordinary spiritual exercises and graces, and wish instead that the Holy Spirit worked among us more miraculously. But even after the Spirit speaks specific words and gives a specific command, the church leadership continue fasting and praying in v3.

Even at the end of the passage, the miraculous afflicting of Elymas was not what had moved the proconsul to faith, but rather amazing teaching from the Lord. The missionary work in between was largely ordinary, almost tedious. Foot travel to Seleucia. Sailing to Salamis in Cyprus. Preaching in the synagogue, Traveling the length of the island on foot. The same glorious Word that the Lord still uses today was the great means by which the Spirit was working even in that first missionary journey.

The Holy Spirit uses holy boldness. While seeking out Jews to preach the gospel to first (which will be a theme in Paul's ministry, cf. v5), they find a Jew in Paphos who is a false prophet. With him happens to be a man whose second name he shares in common with the apostle from Tarsus. A proconsul had absolute military and judicial authority, locally, so there is some fulfillment here already of 9:15. When Elymas opposes them, Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit to answer.

What does this Spirit-filled speech sound like? "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness!" Though gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, it must not be confused with timidity. The eleventh commandment is not "thou shalt be nice." When men oppose the gospel to turn others away from the faith (v8) by twisting the straight Word of the Lord (v9), the called servant is to minister in the Spirit as a Spirit of boldness. The miracle is stunning (or blinding, if you are Elymas), but it is the boldness not of the rebuke but of the straight, true teaching that the Spirit uses to convert Sergios in v12.

What ordinary men and ordinary means does the Spirit use in your life? How do you seek from God for them to be holy and bold, and how do you encourage it and respond to it when you receive it?

Sample prayer: Lord glorify Yourself by doing almighty work among us through ordinary men and ordinary means. Especially, let Your Word be preached straightforwardly and boldly, and give us to be amazed and to believe, we ask in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH400 "Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me"

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit bit.ly/harpCHAH

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Acts chapter 12 verse 25. Through chapter 13 verse 12. These are the words of God and Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. When they had fulfilled their ministry and they also took with them, John, whose surname was Mark. Now in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain profits and teachers Barnabas Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrenean who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and saw As a ministered to the Lord and fasted the Holy Spirit said, now separates to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them. They sent them away. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Salesia. And from there they sailed Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamas, they preached the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews.

They also had John as their assistant. Now, when they had gone through the island to pass us, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet a Jew, whose name was Bar Jesus, who was with the Pro Console Sergius Paulus and intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God but elements the sorcerer for some his name is translated with stood.

Them seeking to turn the proton. Soul away from the faith then Seoul who is also called Paul filled with the Holy Spirit looked intently at him and said, Oh, full of all deceit, and all fraud. You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness. Will you not see perverting the straight ways of the Lord?

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 round seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the Pro Console believed when he saw, what had been done being astonished at the teaching of the Lord,

So far the reading of Gods inspired and and then tort the practice of titling. Sermons is not one that I particularly like, but when we came here, there were titles in the, when I folder that was being handed out at the time. And so I adjusted to the practice, the titles of the sermons, for much of the rest of the book of Acts could very easily be how the Holy Spirit does missions.

That's the, that's the title that I have uncreatively or maybe non-specifically given for the sermon that we hope to hear by God's help in today's time. And that's because this is the beginning of what we now call Paul's first missionary journey, The the church in Antioch ends up being the main sending church.

Even though the church in Jerusalem, at this time, was still considered the main church. But as we have seen in that initial revival, that came by the preaching of those who came from Cyprus and serene, and then in the ministry of Barnabas whom the church in Jerusalem sent down and then in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas went to Tarsus and got and taught them for a year by all those things.

The Lord had done a marvelous work in Antioch, where, if you will the spiritual condition of the people in Antioch, the curve of that compared to the curve. And now we're speaking a little bit profanely because you can't really see a spiritual condition. We're going however by what the text has given us as evidence and witness and it looks something like the 2020 elections votes and that, that dump truck of votes that Biden got in the middle of the night.

And there's this spiritual acceleration curve of Antioch. And now Antioch is on top and is the sending church for for missions. And so what we have here really is the beginning of the missionary explosion. The gospel has gone from Jerusalem and Judea into Samaria. Cornelius has been the test case for the the church in Jerusalem to accept that the gospel is for Gentiles.

Also, and not Jews. Only the Gentiles can be converted to Christ without being converted to circumcision or converted to Jewishness. And then Antioch has been the providential demonstration of God's intention to redeem a multitude from the nations and the session or perhaps this is just the preachers because they're referred to as the prophets or preachers and teachers profit.

Being someone who speaks forth from God and not always under immediate inspiration. It can just be used if someone who proclaims that which has already been in scripturated but you have this group of preachers and teachers in the church Barnabas who's the only one with kind of an ordinary background Simeon who has called Niger is dark enough to be called the black.

It used to be okay to recognize that God has made us differently and to to see that the man was very very dark by comparison to anybody else that obviously did not prevent him from being a respected and submitted to preacher and teacher in the church in Antioch. Lucius of Cyrene is a very Roman Latin sanding name and he's from a Roman city.

Manaian who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, So he's Jewish, but most of the Jews would put fear quotes on the word Jewish and they would, they would say he's about his Jewish as Herod. So his his having come from the same background as as Herod is quite astonishing.

This is the the Herod who had beheaded John. The baptizer Herod antipasy is not the Herod who just got eaten by worms and exhaled. That was Herod. Agrippa, If you knew one Herod, you might wonder why anybody else would want to, you know, say oh I'm a Herod to but that's it was the Royal reigning family among the Jews.

Anyway, this this guy had grown up with the one who became the better of the baptizer and yet the Lord had saved him out of that, not just saved him out of that, but graced him and gifted him to become a preacher. And to teacher in God's church. And then Saul, it was the worst of all The persecutor of the church, the murderer of the Christians who went from being the most satanic person on earth, the self deceived guy who thought he was righteous in himself.

As he did, the worst things, which is persecute Jesus. He went by the grace of God from the worst person on earth to one of the most humble and most useful, but in a very short space of time. And so the first thing we see about the Holy Spirit does missions is he uses ordinary men or we might even say unlikely men, in order to show that the power and the grace is of God and not of man, no one would set me in front of a group of people and say, this guy is the key to your spiritual well-being.

Because I'm not, I'm an ordinary and unlikely, man. The Lord Himself is the key to your spiritual well-being, and he has made the preaching and teaching of His Word. That means by which he does that. I appreciate that. Some of you think that I'm the best daddy in the world and I am the best daddy in the world for you, because I'm the one that God chose for you and that doesn't mean I'm the best at being your daddy in the world.

But The key for my usefulness to you is that the Holy Spirit uses ordinary and unlikely, many uses unlikely, men as ordinary means. In other words, he uses ordinary men preach One of the things that we might do, when we read something like the Holy Spirit said, now separates to me Barnabas and soul for the work, to which I have called them.

Is we might think that because we do not live in an age in which there is ongoing special revelation or new special revelation. There is ongoing special revelation. The Bible is special revelation. When the Bible is preached properly, that is special revelation because it's the Bible that it's preached and it's Christ to addresses us by means of the Bible, but we live in an age in which there is no new revelation, the promise of the Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit would lead the Apostles into that, which remained was completed, was fulfilled, The Lord Jesus kept His promises, the Holy Spirit fulfilled that part of what was promised about him.

And we might think that because we don't have new special rivallet revelation that somehow we live in an age of less activity of the Holy Spirit. But I want you to notice the ordinary means that the Holy Spirit used, he didn't just appear in a vision. While, you know, they were fishing or at the market, it's as they served the Lord or ministered to the Lord.

So they're engaged in their preaching and teaching ministry. So they're doing Bible study and meditating upon the Word of God and planning sermons and preaching sermons and teaching lessons and so forth. And and the minister to the Lord and fasted the Holy Spirit said not separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work.

Now, he might have spoken audibly to them. And yet, it might just be that they all came to the same conclusion. They knew that the Holy Spirit was calling Barnabas and Seoul to a particular work. And this happens in the church still today. Those ministers, preachers, and teachers and elders who are engaged in

meditation upon the Word of God and communion fellowship with God and prayer.

Remember the purpose of the diacnate being so that the apostles and later, the elders can give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word and who fast before God for the sake of this ministry to which they, they have been called the Lord grants to them to recognize in certain men.

Him, the spirit is maturing in the church. The spirit is calling, then to a particular ministry, it should ordinarily, be the idea of the elders that someone become a candidate under care, for the ministry of the Gospel, not the idea of the candidate, that's not the order in, which we see it.

In the scripture, although it is the primary order in which we see it in our age, which, of course, when those two things are in conflict, you want to, when you want to move in the direction of the way. We see it in the scripture. Now I say the Holy Spirit might have spoken verbally but he might not have because the Holy Spirit uses ordinary means.

Look at verse 3 in comparison to verse 4, which is why this is our memory verse this week, then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them. They sent them away. So, even after they believe that the Holy Spirit is saying this, they continue fasting and praying so that they might rightly act, according to the will of God and not just be given over to their own impulses and desires.

And so that they might seek that the blessing upon the work would be of God and not of themselves. And because what Barnabas and Saul need is not so much, the encouragement of the session or later, as we'll see. At the end of the first missionary journey, the encouragement of a Presbytery.

What Barnabas and Saul need is the attendance of the Holy Spirit and his power, but it is Simeon. Lucius and Menaeon who lay hands? Who, who sorry, who fast? And pray and lay hands-on and send away Barnabas and Salt. And so you see the end of verse 3, they sent away, and the beginning of verse 4.

So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, now who did the sending wasn't the session of the church in Antioch? Or was that the Holy Spirit? And the answer is yes. The Holy Spirit used the session of the church. In Antioch. There are some who read about the Holy Spirit speaking in verse 2 and would assume that the parallel of that in verse 4.

So being sent out by the Holy Spirit would be that like the Holy Spirit, like like maybe not against their will, but overpowering them, thrust them out or that the Holy Spirit, so burdened their souls to go that they had to leave What verse three tells us the mechanism by which the Holy Spirit sent them out.

And it's very ordinary, isn't it? It's a session fasting and praying and laying hands on and sending. That's the Holy Spirit. Sending them away. And so we see how the Holy Spirit works through ordinary means and ordinary men. Using those ordinary means. And as the Holy Spirit who has working in our church, This is the Holy Spirit who is working in our family.

As we attend upon the means that God has given, which is another wonderful reason, not to stray from. Or add to the means that God has appointed because what we want, is the gold and silver and precious stones of what the Holy Spirit does and not the wood. Hey, and stubble that man would add which will be burnt top on the last day.

Who cares if you built a Notre Dame? Cathedral out of straw, if the Lord Jesus is going to set fire to it and all you end up with is a pile of soot. So the Holy Spirit, uses ordinary men. Holy Spirit, uses ordinary means and the Holy Spirit uses.

Holy boldness. The primary means that he uses his preaching being sent out while the Holy Spirit. They went down to Solis here from there. They sell to Cyprus. All right, so they arrive at the place where they're going to minister and what do they do? They preach the Word of God, and the synagogues of the Jews, Barnabas, and Paul have.

And in with the Jews. John Mark, you remember his mother's house, he's a nephew I think of Barnabas. And So his mother's house has been Barnabas's sister's house, that's where they were having the prayer meeting for Peter and then didn't believe it when their parents answered. Just to give you an idea of who that is.

Now, Salames is just a little bit further to the east than Lavadia. It's not called Solomonas today. I can't remember the name of the city, but if you go from Larnaca to Lavagia and then you go about twice that distance east. So where we lived, we're already one-third of the way from Larnaca to Salamas it's on the east end of the island pacifist is on the west end of the island.

And so what they did is they preached from Salamus to Pappas. Now, when they had gone through the island of Pappas, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet a Jew, whose name was Bar, Jesus, son of Jesus, who was with the proconsul? Sergius Paulus and intelligent man this man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the words of God.

So, this Jew who's a false prophet praying upon spiritual people. As false prophets always do people who are in the church should know that if they don't stick to the Word of God, as talk to them. By the pastor teachers, who have been given them just given to them to stabilize them, as, Ephesians 4 describes.

If they Google their theology, or if they go to the Christian bookstore, praise God, they don't exist anymore, but, whatever the equivalent is, you know, look up on Amazon. The, you know, the the tough Christian books for right now or whatever, they're gonna get themselves into trouble, well-meaning, Christians are soft targets.

They need to make use of God's means God's men whom God has appointed to them for their stabilization. Anyway, this this bar Jesus or LMS. The sorcerer almost means sorcerer, but it says that in verse 8, he was going to synagogue and he was leading people astray with his false teaching and maybe he was one of these types who would say, oh, isn't it amazing?

What this genealogy teaches that Paul has been warning. Timothy about in First Timothy 1 where we've been studying lately as well. Anyway, he comes home from synagogue, one day or perhaps Sergius Paulus, goes to synagogue with him maybe as a God, fear or Justin interested Gentile. He can't participate in the fellowship of the synagogue, but he can attend what Cornelius was able to.

And he hears Barnabas and Saul or here's about Barnabas and Saul. And he wants them to come preach to him. The word of God. It's the same sort of work that the Holy Spirit did in Cornelius. Isn't it? Now? That was and probably more supernatural since we know that that occurred a via an angel in a vision and maybe even the Lord Himself in a vision but it's just described as it An angel and what did Cornell, what did the angel?

What did the spirits tell Cornelius to do? Go get a preacher. Who will proclaim the gospel to you? Sergius Paulus is about to be saved by the Holy Spirit. We don't know that at the beginning of the passage Paul and Barnabas, don't know that at the beginning of the passage LMS thinks he can stop it at the beginning of the

passage but it doesn't matter.

What men think or man doesn't know the Holy Spirit knows he's about to save it. So we look at this and say, oh what does the Holy Spirit do for those whom he's about to say, oh he sends them preachers and he makes them desire to hear preaching. Now, LMS gets in the way.

He's withstanding them doesn't want them to preach the gospel to them. Then Saul who also is called Paul which is Paulus in. It's the same as Sergius's last name. So his he has kind of an end with Sergius. He's like, oh, surgius, you're Sergius Paulus. Unsolas Paulus. We're like name brothers.

Anyway, that's the occasion upon. Which Saul starts going by his more common Greek name because of what he has in common with the Gentiles to whom the Lord has sent him. It's not God changed his name to Paul when he converted him. I heard that a few times in church growing up, but then I started reading my Bible and I was like well, that wasn't right.

So the guy was stands Paul and I was so tempted to make versus nine and ten the memory verse and they're good memory verses. If I'm going to add them to your list someday, I think verses 3 and 4 were more at the core of how the Holy Spirit does mentions then Saul, who is also called Paul filled with the Holy Spirit looked intently at him and said and you want to say How do men speak and they are full of the Holy Spirit.

How does a spirit-filled man respond to those who stand in the way of the faithful, preaching of the gospel in the church Needless to say, they don't follow the 11th. Commandment thou shalt be nice. This is what spirit-filled speech sounds like in responding to those who have posed the faithful preaching of the gospel in the church.

Oh, full of all deceit and all fraud. You son of the devil. The devil is a liar and the father of it, right? That's just a Bible teaching. Oh, full of all deceit and all fraud. You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, Will you not cease perverting, the straightways of the Lord or making crooked the straightways of the Lord.

So full of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, I don't care how much Bible you use elements because you misuse the Bible that you use using Bible memorizing. Bible using systematic theology from the Bible. None of that means necessarily that someone is teaching and preaching the Word of God. In fact, if they are twisting it just a little bit, it may mean that they are the enemy of all righteousness and our acting as those who are full of old, deceit, and all fraud, and our sons of the devil.

Paul says, 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 darkness fell on him. And he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

So the Holy Spirit, you uses ordinary men. He uses ordinary means and the uses. Holy boldness. Yes, he produces the the fruit of gentleness and that makes the boldness stand out more sparkly when it's necessary, isn't it? It's boldness. That is measured strength from God in righteous. Indignation and denouncement.

Just like gentleness is measured strength, weakness. Doesn't gentleness the weak. Can't do anything. But speak in touch softly gentleness is measured strength. And yet the Lord uses holy boldness as well. And it's boldness not in the denouncement of elements. It's boldness in the teaching and the preaching that the Holy Spirit, used note verse 12.

Then the Pro Console believed when he saw, what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord, he said this boldness in this man, and this power. That attended that it comes from the same place as the boldness in his preaching of Jesus and is attended by the same power as he preaches.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit to attended the preaching with power, say, Sergius Paulus and brought him to faith. So How does the Holy Spirit do missions speaks through ordinary men? He uses ordinary means preaching of the word especially and he uses Holy boldness. And then let's pray that you would do those things.

You know, some through us, our Lord, we thank you for the encouragement that we have from your word today because we are ordinary men who use ordinary means and we have good. Hope that we are using. Even those means that you say in your word you use to bring to faith and to build up and faith and to bring it lasts to glory.

So we pray that you'd bless your means to us. Pray that you would make us bold in our hearts to be convicted of your word. Regardless of what any man says that you would make us to know by experience your power that attends your word as you convince us of Christ and give us to cling to Him.

As you convince us of the Father and give us to know him as our Abba. We pray. Holy Spirit that you would make us bold in speaking. The work particularly as we are stabilized by the right preaching and teaching that you give us from our shepherd teachers. So that we may speak to one another the truth in love and we pray that whatever teaching ministry you call us to whether you call us had to be mothers fathers or husbands or even elders.

Ministers of the gospel that you would give us that holy boldness that comes from the use of ordinary means fasting. Pray meditation upon your word grant to us whole Holy Spirit to know your fellowship in our life and then our eternal life for we ask it in the name of him who poured you out upon us, even our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.