



Summary

This powerful exploration of Acts 13 takes us deep into the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, revealing a foundational truth that transforms everything: Christianity is fundamentally supernatural. We're reminded that Saul's conversion on the Damascus road wasn't just an intellectual awakening, but a dramatic invasion of the material world by the immaterial presence of God. The passage challenges us to examine whether we merely know about God through words on a page, or whether we actually know God personally through supernatural encounter. As Paul and Barnabas minister in Cyprus, we witness the pattern that would define their entire ministry: going first to the synagogues, constantly moving forward as the Spirit led, allowing their message to speak for itself, and relying completely on the Holy Spirit's power when facing opposition. The confrontation with the sorcerer Elymas becomes a vivid demonstration that spiritual warfare is real and that God's power dramatically exceeds any counterfeit. Most striking is the conversion of Sergius Paulus, where we learn it wasn't the miracle of Elymas being struck blind that saved him, but rather the teaching of the Lord. This reminds us that while signs may attract attention, it's always the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that transforms hearts. We're left with an urgent question: have we allowed the supernatural to invade our lives, or are we still operating in mere religious activity?





Points

Title: The Supernatural Power of the Gospel: Paul's First Missionary Journey

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores Acts 13:4-52, presenting the only fully recorded message of the Apostle Paul in Scripture. The pastor emphasizes that Christianity is fundamentally a belief in the supernatural, not merely intellectual assent or religious ritual. Through Paul and Barnabas's missionary journey to Cyprus and Antioch in Pisidia, we see how the gospel message, empowered by the Holy Spirit, supernaturally transforms lives. The sermon contrasts religious knowledge with personal relationship with God, highlighting that many religious people know about God without truly knowing Him. Paul's message to the synagogue closely mirrors Stephen's earlier sermon, demonstrating how supernatural encounters with God create lasting impact. The sermon concludes with the tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation, noting that those who reject the gospel do so because they love their sin more than the light of Christ.

Key Points:

- - Christianity is fundamentally supernatural; conversion involves the immaterial realm invading the material world
- - Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road was his first awareness that Christianity involves genuine supernatural encounter with God
- - Religious education and theological knowledge alone cannot produce saving faith; only supernatural relationship with Jesus saves
- - Paul and Barnabas established consistent ministry patterns: going to synagogues first, moving from place to place, allowing their ministry to speak for itself, and relying on the Holy Spirit's power
- - The only power in theological presentation comes from how the message has supernaturally affected the messenger personally
- - Paul's message in Acts 13 closely parallels Stephen's message in Acts 7, showing the lasting impact of Spirit-empowered preaching
- - It is not miracles but the teaching of God's Word that brings people to salvation
- - Mission work and church planting require total commitment; those not fully called by the Holy Spirit will not endure
- - The gospel proves Jesus is the Messiah through fulfilled prophecy and His resurrection
- - People reject the gospel not because of intellectual problems but because they love their sin and refuse to come to the light
- - God's sovereignty and human responsibility both operate in salvation, though we cannot fully reconcile them with our finite minds
- - Those who desire to be filled with God's supernatural presence will be filled

Scripture Reference:

- - Acts 13:4-52 (primary passage)
- - Acts 9:1-9 (Saul's conversion)
- - John 7:37-39 (rivers of living water)
- - Romans 1:18-32 (suppressing truth in unrighteousness)



- - Acts 7:51-60 (Stephen's martyrdom)
- - 2 Samuel 7 (God's promise to David)
- - Psalm 16:10 (Messiah will not see corruption)
- - Isaiah 42:6, 49:6 (light to the Gentiles)
- - John 3:16-21 (God's love and why men reject light)

Stories:

- - Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road when a supernatural light blinded him and Jesus spoke to him directly
- - Stephen's martyrdom before Saul's eyes, where Stephen forgave his killers and asked God not to charge them with sin
- - Paul and Barnabas's confrontation with Elymas the sorcerer, who was supernaturally struck blind
- - The conversion of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, who believed based on the teaching rather than the miracle
- - John Mark's departure from the mission at Perga, later causing division between Paul and Barnabas
- - Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, the only fully recorded Pauline message in Scripture
- - The response to Paul's message: some Jews and Gentiles believed while others rejected and persecuted them



Scripture

Directly Cited or Read in the Sermon

1. Acts 13:4-14 - Main passage for the sermon
2. Acts 9:3-9 - Saul's conversion on the Damascus road
3. John 7:37-39 - Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles offering living water
4. Romans 1:18-32 - God's wrath against ungodliness
5. Acts 12:12 - Prayer meeting at Mary's house
6. Colossians 4:10 - Mark as Barnabas's relative
7. Mark 14:51 - Young man fleeing naked (possibly Mark)
8. Acts 7:57-60 - Stephen's martyrdom
9. 2 Samuel 7 - God's promise to David (referenced generally)
10. Acts 13:16-41 - Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia
11. Psalm 2 - "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"
12. Isaiah 55 - "Sure mercies of David"
13. Psalm 16:10 - "You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption"
14. Isaiah 42:6 - Light to the Gentiles
15. Isaiah 49:6 - Salvation to the ends of the earth
16. John 3:16-21 - God so loved the world; light and darkness
17. Acts 13:48 - Those appointed to eternal life believed
18. Acts 13:46 - Judged themselves unworthy
19. Acts 13:52 - Disciples filled with joy and the Holy Spirit
20. Acts 15 - Paul and Barnabas's dispute over John Mark (referenced)
21. Acts 17 - Mars Hill sermon (mentioned as partial record)
22. Genesis 3:15 - First messianic promise (referenced)
23. Isaiah 53 - Suffering Servant (referenced)
24. Isaiah 52 - Suffering Servant (referenced)
25. Psalm 22 - Messianic prophecy of crucifixion (referenced)

Themes and Related Verses

Supernatural Nature of Christianity

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 - New creation in Christ
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 - Natural man cannot understand spiritual things

Holy Spirit Baptism and Power

- Acts 1:8 - Power when Holy Spirit comes upon you
- Acts 2:4 - Filled with the Holy Spirit
- Ephesians 5:18 - Be filled with the Spirit



Mission and Evangelism Pattern

- Matthew 10:14 - Shaking dust off feet
- Romans 1:16 - Gospel to the Jew first, then Gentile

God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

- Ephesians 1:4-5 - Chosen before the foundation of the world
- Joshua 24:15 - Choose this day whom you will serve
- 2 Peter 3:9 - God desires all to come to repentance

Justification by Faith

- Romans 3:23-24 - Justified freely by His grace
- Romans 5:1 - Justified by faith, we have peace with God

Gospel Message

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - Christ died, was buried, and rose again



You can, by this book, know all there is to know about God from the book without ever knowing God. And this explains why someone as religious as Saul would have said he was completely surprised by the appearance of the supernatural in his life being as real as everything the material realm had shown him up to that point in his life.

The real advantage those of us who are born again have over even the best educated, most educated theologians is we have allowed the supernatural to invade our lives. We know God personally, those of us who are born again. They only know about God.

The only power of a theological presentation is how the message we have to share has supernaturally affected us.

It was not up to Paul to convince anyone by the craftiness of his presentation. It was only up to Paul to be faithful to the word of God and to trust the supernatural power of the word of God faithfully delivered to accomplish its work of redemption and salvation in those ordained to receive it.

If God was small enough for you to figure out, then that would mean that he was smaller than you. But he's greater than you.

The only reason that anyone ever rejects the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and refuses to be born again is because they have some sin in their life that they refuse to repent of, that they love that sin so much they will not turn away from that sin.

Christianity is purely a supernatural faith. It is not a faith to be lived out by rote or by liturgy or by any of those things. It is an opening of the heart to receive the person of God.



[Discussion Questions](#)



How does the supernatural aspect of Christianity, as seen in Paul's Damascus road experience, differ from mere intellectual knowledge about God, and what does this mean for our personal faith journey?

Paul remembered and essentially repeated Stephen's message 14-17 years later, even though it convinced no one at the time and led to Stephen's death. What does this teach us about the long-term impact of faithful witness, even when immediate results are not visible?

The sermon emphasizes that Paul could not blind anyone or save anyone on his own, but relied entirely on supernatural power. How does this challenge our tendency to rely on our own abilities or persuasive techniques in ministry?

Why do you think the sermon warns against taking people on mission trips or church plants unless they are directly called by the Holy Spirit, and how might this principle apply to other ministry contexts?

Romans 1 describes people who suppress the truth and exchange it for lies, ultimately loving darkness rather than light. What are some modern examples of this pattern, and how can we guard against it in our own lives?

The text states that many Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life by rejecting the gospel, while Gentiles who were appointed to eternal life believed. How do you reconcile God's sovereignty with human responsibility in salvation?

Jesus said that people reject the light because they love their deeds of darkness and refuse to have them exposed. What specific sins or attachments might keep people today from accepting the gospel?

Paul's ministry pattern was to constantly move forward to new places rather than settling in one location. What does this teach us about the nature of gospel advancement and when it might be time to move on from a ministry context?

The proconsul Sergius Paulus believed not because of the miracle of Elymas being blinded, but because of the teaching of the Lord. What does this reveal about the primary role of God's Word versus signs and wonders in bringing people to faith?

If God was small enough for us to fully understand and reconcile all theological tensions, He would be smaller than us. How does embracing mystery and paradox in Scripture actually strengthen rather than weaken our faith?



Small Group Guide: The Supernatural Power of the Gospel



Acts 13:4-52

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Ice Breaker

When did you first become aware that Christianity is a belief in the supernatural? Share briefly about a moment when God's presence became real to you beyond just intellectual knowledge.

Key Takeaways

1. Christianity is Supernatural, Not Just Intellectual

- *Saul of Tarsus knew everything about God intellectually, yet didn't know God personally until his Damascus Road encounter*
- *You can know all there is to know about God from the book without ever knowing God*
- *The difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally is supernatural*

2. Ministry Patterns from Paul and Barnabas

- *They went to synagogues first (familiar territory)*
- *They constantly moved forward, not lingering*
- *They allowed their ministry to speak for itself*
- *They called upon the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with opposition*
- *They knew only Jesus saves—they couldn't save anyone themselves*

3. The Power is in the Word, Not the Miracle

- *Sergius Paulus believed because of the teaching of the Lord, not just the miracle (Acts 13:12)*
- *The Holy Spirit works supernaturally through the faithful teaching of God's Word*
- *Our responsibility is to be faithful to deliver God's Word; God's sovereignty accomplishes the work*

4. Why People Reject the Gospel

- *John 3:19-20: "Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil"*
- *Those who reject salvation judge themselves unworthy by refusing to repent of sin they love*



- *It's not about intellectual arguments—it's about the condition of the heart*
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Acts 13:4-12.** What stands out to you about how Paul and Barnabas conducted their ministry? What can we learn from their approach?
2. **Why do you think Luke emphasized in verse 12 that Sergius Paulus believed because of the "teaching" rather than just the miracle?** What does this tell us about the power of God's Word?
3. **Compare Stephen's message in Acts 7 with Paul's message in Acts 13:16-41.** What similarities do you notice? Why would Paul repeat a message that got Stephen killed?

Personal Reflection

4. **The sermon stated: "If God was small enough for you to figure out, then that would mean that he was smaller than you."** How does this perspective help you when wrestling with difficult theological concepts like God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
5. **Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:9) to deal with opposition.** When have you experienced a fresh filling or empowerment of the Holy Spirit for a specific situation? What was that like?
6. **John Mark turned back during this journey (Acts 13:13).** Have you ever started something for God but didn't finish? What happened, and what did you learn from it?

Application

7. **The sermon emphasized that Christianity is supernatural, not just intellectual.** How would you describe the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally to someone who asked?
8. **Paul and Barnabas "shook the dust from their feet" when rejected (Acts 13:51).** How do we balance persistence in sharing the gospel with knowing when to move on?
9. **Acts 13:48 says "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."** How does understanding God's sovereignty in salvation affect:
 - The way you share your faith?
 - How you pray for lost loved ones?
 - Your confidence in evangelism?



10. **Read John 3:16-21 together.** According to Jesus, what is the real reason people reject the gospel? How should this understanding shape our approach to evangelism?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice:

1. Examine Your Own Faith

- Take time this week to honestly assess: Do I have a supernatural relationship with Jesus, or just intellectual knowledge about Him?
- Journal about moments when God's supernatural presence has been real in your life

2. Fresh Filling of the Holy Spirit

- Like Paul in Acts 13:9, ask God for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit
- Identify an area where you need supernatural power (witnessing, overcoming sin, dealing with opposition)
- Pray daily for the Holy Spirit's empowerment in that specific area

3. Share Your Story

- Paul's message was powerful because Stephen's supernatural impact on him was undeniable
- Write out your testimony focusing on the supernatural change Jesus made in your life
- Share it with at least one person this week

4. Pray for the Lost

- Make a list of 3-5 people you know who need Jesus
- Pray specifically that the Holy Spirit would convict them of sin and draw them to salvation
- Ask God for an opportunity to share the gospel with them

5. Study the Gospel Message

- Read through Paul's message in Acts 13:16-41 daily this week
 - Notice how he used Scripture to point to Jesus
 - Practice explaining the gospel using Old Testament promises and their fulfillment in Christ
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Memory Verse

Acts 13:38-39 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Closing Reflection

The sermon ended with an invitation to salvation. Take a moment to:

- Pray for anyone in your group who may not have a personal relationship with Jesus
 - Pray for family members and friends who need to be born again
 - Thank God for the supernatural work He has done in your life
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to make you bold witnesses for Christ this week
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Next Steps

Before Next Meeting:

- Read Acts 14 in preparation for continuing the study
 - Complete your chosen practical application
 - Be ready to share what God taught you through this passage
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Closing Prayer

Close by praying for:

- Supernatural encounters with God for each group member
 - Lost loved ones to come to saving faith
 - Boldness to share the gospel
 - Fresh filling of the Holy Spirit for the week ahead
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"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." - Acts 13:52



Daily Devotional

5-Day Devotional: The Supernatural Power of the Gospel

Day 1: When the Immaterial Invades the Material

Reading: Acts 9:1-9

Devotional: Saul's Damascus road experience forever changed how he understood faith. No longer was religion merely rituals and rules—it became a supernatural encounter with the living Christ. Like Saul, many of us know about God without truly knowing Him personally. We can master theology, attend services faithfully, and maintain religious appearances while our hearts remain untouched by divine presence. The question confronting us today is simple yet profound: Has the supernatural invaded your material world? Have you moved beyond knowing about Jesus to knowing Jesus? True Christianity begins when we allow the immaterial God to transform our material lives. Don't settle for secondhand religion. Seek a personal, life-altering encounter with Christ that leaves you forever changed, just as it did for Saul.

Day 2: Thirsting for the Living Water

Reading: John 7:37-39

Devotional: Jesus stood during the holiest moment of the Feast of Tabernacles and offered what no religious ceremony could provide—living water to satisfy the deepest spiritual thirst. Notice that Jesus didn't offer additional religious activities or stricter adherence to the law. He offered Himself. Many people today are spiritually parched, trying to quench their soul's thirst with everything except Jesus. They pursue success, relationships, experiences, or even religious busyness, yet the emptiness remains. The supernatural gift Jesus offers is the Holy Spirit—freely given, graciously provided, apart from our good works. Are you still trying to satisfy your spiritual thirst through your own efforts? Stop striving and start drinking. Come to Jesus today and receive the rivers of living water that flow from a Spirit-filled life.

Day 3: Called and Empowered for Mission

Reading: Acts 13:1-4

Devotional: The Holy Spirit's calling of Paul and Barnabas reveals a crucial principle: God equips those He calls. Notice they were sent out "by the Holy Spirit"—not by human ambition, committee decision, or personal desire for adventure. Supernatural ministry requires supernatural empowerment. Too often, we attempt God's work in human strength, wondering why we experience burnout and frustration. The pattern established here is clear: worship, fasting, listening, and obedience. Before Paul and Barnabas went anywhere, they ministered to the Lord. Their mission flowed from intimacy with God, not from strategic planning alone. What is God calling you to do? Before



you rush into activity, spend time in His presence. Listen for His voice. Allow Him to fill you afresh with His Spirit. Only then will your service bear supernatural fruit.

Day 4: The Power of the Word, Not the Miracle

Reading: Acts 13:6-12

Devotional: When Sergius Paulus witnessed Paul strike Elymas blind, he was astonished—but Scripture tells us he believed because of "the teaching of the Lord," not merely the miracle. This distinction is critical. Miracles may capture attention, but only the Word transforms hearts. Paul knew from personal experience that spiritual blindness can lead to spiritual sight. His own three-day blindness had given him time to reflect on how Jesus fulfilled every messianic prophecy he'd studied. The gospel's power lies not in spectacular displays but in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through Scripture. Are you depending on experiences to sustain your faith, or are you grounded in God's Word? Miracles fade, feelings fluctuate, but God's Word remains forever settled in heaven. Build your life on the unchanging truth of Scripture.

Day 5: Light Rejected, Light Received

Reading: John 3:16-21

Devotional: Jesus explained why some embrace salvation while others reject it: people love darkness because their deeds are evil. This isn't about intellectual inability to understand the gospel—it's about moral unwillingness to surrender cherished sin. The light exposes what we'd rather keep hidden. Everyone who desired to be filled with God's supernatural presence was filled, but those who clung to darkness judged themselves unworthy. Here's the beautiful truth: no sin is too great for God's grace. Paul participated in murdering Christians, yet God saved and used him powerfully. The only sin that keeps anyone from salvation is the refusal to repent and come to the light. Is there something you're holding onto that keeps you from fully surrendering to Christ? Whatever it is, it's not worth missing eternal life. Come to the light today. Let Jesus expose, cleanse, and transform every area of your life.

