



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Acts 13-14

The First Missionary Journey

With this journey, the final stage of Jesus' strategic plan (see Acts 1:8) was reached; it continues today—"to the end of the earth." [ESV] One notable aspect of this focus is the shift from Jerusalem to Antioch and the emerging central role that Paul will play as an apostle to the Gentiles. Church plants, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are now the new normal in the strategic plan of Jesus. This first journey focused on Cyprus and Galatia.

Paul and Barnabas Commissioned, Acts 13:1-3

The call of these two leaders was in the context of worship led by the ethnically and racially diverse teachers and prophets of the church at Antioch. The Holy Spirit directed that Paul and Barnabas be sent out and the church obeyed. This event ended the spontaneous nature of ministry to the Gentiles. Now the outreach was planned and directed by God in a strategic and intentional manner. Note the emerging role of the Spirit as the enabling power of the New Covenant community of Jesus. Finally, note that the Spirit's work of calling was in the context of worship (e.g., fasting and prayer) and was followed by the laying on of hands—a formal commissioning by the church for outreach. The church at Antioch had seen the need to reach the world with the Gospel. Their collective hearts were wedded to God. Worship and mission appear side by side as key tasks of the church. As Darrel Bock argues, "We build churches not just to go in for worship but also to go out with God's heart for people."

The Missionary Outreach, 13:4-14:28

- **Cyprus, 13:4-12**—a number of important developments are relevant for the outreach of the church:

- Saul became Paul and emerged as the key leader of the outreach
- The confrontational miracle between Paul and Bar-Jesus, a Jewish false prophet and magician, was a judgment miracle, similar to the miracle of Peter in Acts 5 dealing with Ananias and Sapphira. It demonstrated that Paul had gifts and authority similar to Peter. But the key contrast was that with Peter the judgment miracle was within the church, while with Paul the judgment miracle was divine discipline with someone outside the church.
- The conversion of the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus, demonstrated that even prominent Gentiles will come to faith in Jesus.
- **Pisidian Antioch, 13:13-52**
 - In this city Paul delivered the most developed synagogue message in Acts. Here Paul addressed the Jews (and Gentile proselytes—"God-fearers") about God's promised Messiah. The message rehearsed the history of Israel from its origin to David and then jumped over a thousand years to John the Baptist and Jesus. Several observations:
 - The application in 13:38-41 called for a decisive response to the message. Jesus fulfilled promises made to David long ago!
 - There was a follow-up message in 13:42-47 with the largely negative Jewish reaction. The Jewish leadership incited pious women and leading men to drive Paul and Barnabas to leave the city, which they did (13:50-51).
 - But as vv. 46-47 indicates, Jewish rejection of Jesus will not stop the mission: They will go to the Gentiles. In other words, the ministry of Jesus continued through Paul. It was unstoppable!
 - One final comment: Barnabas not only encouraged Paul; he also enabled him. Barnabas did not feel the need to always be the front man. Encouragers hand over leadership and leaders lead by replicating—the lesson of the relationship of Paul and Barnabas.
- **Iconium, 14:1-7**
 - following the well-known commercial Roman road (aka the Royal Road), Paul and Barnabas came to Iconium, a city resting on a high plateau of 3,370

feet. They preached and many Jews and Gentiles responded. But opposition ensued with the city being divided, with violence the result. They fled to Lystra.

- **Lystra and Derbe, 14:8-20**

- the ministry at Lystra began with the healing of a lame man (note the “stare” and the “loud voice”), which resulted in the citizens hailing Paul and Barnabas as gods—Zeus and Hermes. Several observations:
 - An inscription found outside of Lystra, dated about AD 250, along with a stone altar, was dedicated to Zeus and Hermes.
 - Paul and Barnabas declared that their acclamation was blasphemy, tearing their garments, and giving focus to God’s common grace (vv. 14-17). God's common grace evidenced in His general revelation led to the special revelation about Jesus.
 - Under pressure from the Jews pursuing Paul and Barnabas from Antioch and Iconium, the people stoned Paul and left him for dead. He survived but they moved on to Derbe.
 - A key point was now clear to Paul and Barnabas: In Gentile areas, idolatry will be a powerful force against embracing the Gospel. The way of life produced by idolatry will be difficult to reverse. The pattern was now clear—reception and intense opposition existed side by side.

- **Return to Antioch, 14:21-28**

- Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, encouraging the new church plants to continue in the faith but warning them that tribulation will come (vv. 21-22). They appointed elders for each church, appointments that came with prayer and fasting (v. 23). Upon returning to Antioch, they reported on what the Lord had done, especially the opening of the door to the Gentiles. Follow-up, nurturing and competent, godly leadership are crucial elements in planting churches. But, as the Gentile churches were expanding in growth, there was increasing tension between Jewish and Gentile Christian leaders—the subject of chapter 15.

Use the questions below to reflect on what God is teaching you through this study of Acts:

- “We build churches not just to go in for worship but also to go out with God’s heart for people.” How important is this statement for Steadfast Bible Fellowship church?
- As we read in Acts 13:1-3, God’s Spirit often works in the context of worship. How important is worship to you? Does worship create a greater sensitivity and openness in your heart to God's will and plans for you?
- One of the key themes of the outreach to the Gentiles in Acts is the twin response of reception of the Gospel and opposition to the Gospel. Should we expect the same today?
- Several times in this passage, we see the importance of local church leadership (e.g., the amazing leadership of Barnabas in supporting Paul; the choice of Elders for the various church plants). Why give so much emphasis to local leadership? How important are the elders of Steadfast Bible Fellowship church to you?

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