

Acts 13:5-16

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[0 : 0 0] So Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas, they have been sent out. We looked at the first four verses only and just looked at that pattern, that model for us of how the Holy Spirit chose people and sent them out.

We saw the church's part and the call was to separate, prepare, and send. And then we saw how the part of the person going was to separate themselves to mark off boundaries.

And I said that those separated to serve, that the further call to serve came in the midst of service. And I was talking with Elvin afterwards and he pointed out how can the call to serve come in the midst of serve?

Don't you have to have a first time call? So what I should have said was the further call to a specific service came in the midst of serving. Because once in Christ, as disciples of Christ, we're all called to serve.

And so as we step into serving, as the Lord gives us opportunity, as we faithfully serve, God then will very often bring then a specific call to serve. Specific calling in our lives comes in the midst of already serving.

[1 : 2 1] So if you want God to direct you or give you a call and you want to know what's the call in my life, well, get involved with the things the Lord. Start serving. And as you're doing that, the Lord will have a way of directing you and at some point putting upon you a specific call that comes in the midst of service.

So, but let's pray. Father, as we look at this text tonight, it's exciting, Lord, to see the Holy Spirit working so powerfully, Lord, through the lives of men who have dedicated themselves unto you, Lord, who have heard the call and responded.

And Lord, sometimes we can get overwhelmed because we think, well, I'm not Paul. I'm not Barnabas. I'm not doing these great and mighty things. But Lord, you're the one doing the great and mighty things, Lord.

It is just our place to be surrendered. So whether we're a Barnabas or a Paul or the person nobody knows about who's still back at the church in Antioch, faithfully praying and serving there, Lord, the joy in the house of the Lord is just being in your presence and doing your will.

And we want to know your will for each of our lives and pray that through tonight that will become more clear as you speak to us. In Jesus' name, amen. So it says at the end there of verse four, well, in verse four, that little section we left off in, it says, So they, Saul and Barnabas, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia.

[2 : 3 9] And from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And we said that you can always find an excuse for delay, but not a reason, right? They didn't act rashly, but they did not delay.

And so we can always find an excuse, an excuse, something, you know, to give us a supposed reason, but it's not a real reason. There's never a reason to delay in what the Lord's calling you to do.

There's preparation, there's prayer, there's waiting on the Lord, but we don't delay in that, we don't drag our feet. And then it says, And when they were departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Cyprus was the home of our dear friend, Barnabas. If you remember in Acts chapter four, when it's talking about how the different people were coming and laying things at the apostles' feet, it says, And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted the son of consolation, or of comfort, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.

So I have for my theme tonight, the struggle is real. The struggle is real. And we're going to see a struggle tonight between, not good versus evil, but between the straight path of the Lord, and that which is always trying to pull us out of that path.

[4 : 0 0] And then the way that those things play out, and the way we respond to them. So they go to Cyprus. As we said last time we got together, there's this specific call, there's this preparation, and then there's like this blank of all of a sudden they're going to Cyprus.

Well, who directed them? Who told them? Well, it just seems like the natural thing to do. Barnabas is like, hey, we can go back to my hometown. Let's start there. We can go stay with my family, or whatever.

And Cyprus isn't such a bad place. You want to go there. So they head back to Cyprus. It's Cyprus today. And if we look at our map, this is about AD 46 to 48, somewhere in there.

So, you know, we're 15 to 16 years into the book of Acts, and Paul and Barnabas head out from their base in Antioch. Jerusalem is not going to be their base.

They will come and go from Antioch. And they head to Cyprus, and then to two notable cities, one on the east side and one on the west within Cyprus.

[5 : 0 4] And this is where the Lord is kind of directing them. I'm sure he is. But it seems through very, what we would consider familiar and natural means.

And so in verse 5, and when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had also John to their minister. So if we look at our island of Cyprus, we can see there on the east side, there's Salamis.

And then they're eventually going to travel the length of the island to Paphos. But they do what's most natural and most comfortable. They go into the synagogue.

They are Jews by birth, by nature, by trade. That's what they are. So they go and they begin to preach in the synagogues. And it says there they had also John to their minister.

It means their servant. So they brought Barnabas' nephew. John said, hey, you want to come on this missions trip with us? He's like, yeah, why not? Let's go see what God wants to do. He grew up in a godly home.

[6 : 0 2] It was at his mother's house, if you remember. At the prayer meeting for Peter when he was in prison. And so John Mark gets to go with Uncle Barney and go on this missions trip.

What an opportunity, right? Well, we're going to see how that plays out a little later. But the first thing they do is they do what's, like I said, natural. And so they preached, and we noticed a few things.

They preached where they were familiar. It was a familiar place. You know, Paul could have been like, I'm called to the Gentiles, Barnabas. We don't got time wasting. We shouldn't be wasting our time in the synagogues.

And they, where they were comfortable. It wasn't some new place. They were able to fit right in. They knew the whole system there. And where they were welcome. They welcomed them in, in this instance.

You know, I think sometimes we can get too much inside of our own heads and think, like, God wants me to do something adventurous and out there and outside myself. And most of the time, God wants to just use us in the place that he's placed us.

[7 : 07] Barnabas goes to his hometown. Very possibly could be his home church, his home synagogue. And that's where they start. And the Lord begins to just walk them and train them in this process of becoming what we would call missionaries.

When they'd gone through the isle, they came unto Paphos. They found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus. Or literally meaning the son of Jesus. Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus.

A prudent man who called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. So we're not Roman citizens. We don't live in that time period. What does this mean? So Sergius Paulus, literally Paul.

Paulus means Paul, so little. But his name Sergius means earth-born. So a man who is earth-born, but yet has a desire to hear more things of God. It says that he was the deputy.

That would be the pro-council, the Roman pro-council. So at the time, under the emperor's rule in Rome, you had two different kind of provinces in the way they were ruled.

[8 : 14] You had an area that needed military presence. That was always under the emperor's control. He didn't trust the military's control to anybody else. He didn't want any coups.

And then you had the more stable regions that were within more the central area of Rome, not the frontier nations. The ones that didn't need military presence. And that was under the senate's control.

And they set up what was called pro-consuls, or essentially governors. They were responsible for the law and the taxes. And so this was a very stable place. Paul and Barnabas are heading somewhere that is not on the frontier.

It's not going to be like the Wild West. This is somewhere where it's a well-established society. And the place they've just come to, Paphos, the word means boiling hot. And it was renowned as an immoral place, a hotbed for immorality.

It was said that, I can't remember what temple it was. It might have been to the goddess Venus. I think she was believed to have come out of the waters at this place. But it was said you couldn't go, male or female, to worship at that temple without coming away defiled.

[9 : 23] So it was a very immoral place. This is where these two men now come. But there's this man that's prudent, and that just means that he was very wise, a wise man, that he was very intelligent, and he was seeking something more.

And he hears about Paul and Barnabas. It doesn't tell us how he hears about them. There is, in Cyprus, there is the ruins there, and there's this pillar, and they call it Paul's pillar. And there's a tradition that supposedly before he goes to Sergius Paulus, before he hears about him, supposedly Paul was tied to this post and whipped.

And they take that from another scripture. Paul says, like, three times or over three times was I beaten with stripes, you know, 40 times or 40 lashes.

And so they say, well, this was one at a time. So that's just folklore. But anyway, there's this pillar there that they call Paul's pillar. But for whatever reason, this man has heard about these men and that they're preaching the word.

So it's having an effect. It's having such an effect that the governor hears about it. You know, and I keep praying and thinking, Lord, how do we reach the lost? How do we reach, you know, I'm praying, God, grow the church, bring people.

[10 : 34] And, you know, the church is for edification of the believer. It's not the epicenter of evangelism, that we don't bring in the unevangelized, the unsaved, for the purpose of evangelism when we gather.

That's not what the body's for. The body's for edification. It's to equip. So then we go out and we do that. But as a body, it's like, well, Lord, how do we go out and do that? How do we reach Mount Holly, Belmont, Gastonia, these areas?

How do we reach the lost as a body and as a church? And I don't know. I don't know. If you look here, the church of Antioch, they sent out two men. They went and did it. How do we reach our Jerusalem and Judea specifically?

And that's just something, you know, you can be praying about that I'm praying about as well. It's like, Lord, how do you want us to interface with the world at large? But these men, whatever they were doing, the governor hears about them.

And so they go. But it tells us here in verse 8 that there was this man there whose name was Bar-Jesus, son of Jesus. But it says Eliamis the sorcerer, or so is his name by interpretation.

[11 : 40] He withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. And this man, Eliamis, literally means wise man, is what they called him.

And sorcerer is magus, where we get magic from. That's like the, literally comes straight out of the Babylonian language. Like the wise men of the east, the Chaldeans.

That's what these men were. And he's deceiving Sergius Paulus. He's there in his presence. He's there as some type of wise man. It's interesting his name, you know, son of Jesus.

It's just this kind of like the enemy puts his clone there. And what we see is that the world's wisdom, as prudent as this man is, as wise as this Sergius Paulus is, that the world's wisdom is not enough to see through the eyes, the lies of the enemy.

That's what we see today. No matter how wise someone of the world is, if they don't have spiritual eyes, they're not spiritually awakened, and they just can't see through the lies of the enemy. We see it all the time with the nonsense that's going on in so many areas of our society.

[12 : 46] We're just like, how can you go along with that? It doesn't even make sense. Well, you know, we need to be welcoming. We need to be inclusive. But your inclusivity is destroying the very fabric of the society that you're a part of.

What happens when it all falls apart? Or, I don't know. Something wonderful. Rainbows and butterflies. But they can't see it. They can't see through that.

And yet Jesus tells us in Matthew 5, verse 6, He said, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. And so even though this man can't see these lies, he has a hunger for righteousness.

And God will always meet that hunger. That no amount of deception of the enemy will keep someone back from being filled with the things of the Lord when they hunger for that, when they desire that.

And so he withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. The word there, turn away, means to distort. To distort. And distort, interesting word, it means to twist out of natural or regular shape as to distort the neck, the limbs, or the body, to distort the features.

[13 : 57] Another meaning, to force or put out of the true posture or direction. To rest from the true meaning. To pervert as to distort passages of Scripture or their meaning.

But I like that first one. To twist out of natural or regular shape. So he's taking something that is complete on its own, that does not need to be messed with, to be changed, and he's twisting.

He's changing it from what it originally was presented as. He has a desire to do this. Why? Because self always turns from the faith to seek to maintain its position.

And that's what this man is doing. He wants his position. And he recognizes that the truth will undercut his position. And we're going to find out why he wants to keep his position here in a moment as we go on.

And then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him.

[14:58] That word, set his eyes on him, is the same word we have when Peter and John go up to pray. And they meet a lame man. And Peter, turning to him, it says, fixes his eyes on him.

And he says to the man, look at me. And he looks at him. It's to intently look at, to gaze at. It's the same word when Peter denies Jesus. And I think it's the young girl, the servant.

It says she looked intently at him. He said, aren't you one of them? You know, it's to examine, to know. And so, Paul has fixed his eyes on him. I don't know what Paul's gaze fixed on you would be like. I wouldn't want it fixed on me.

Seems like quite an intense man. But he's filled with the Holy Spirit. This isn't of his own initiative. And he said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

You better be filled with the Holy Spirit. If you didn't say that to someone. How did he know? How did he know what this man was about? Except the Lord reveal it.

[16:02] Right? Because here's a guy. It says he's doing what? He's trying to turn away the deputy from the faith. I doubt he was standing there and going, you know, blaspheming God. It's probably more subtle than that.

You don't need to listen. That's not what you want to listen to. That's not the Roman way. If you do that, it's going to undercut your position. You can't do that. What? Are you crazy? Do you know what this is?

This is the religion of the Jews. The man died. This is so, you're crazy. What are you doing? Trying to pervert this. But the Holy Spirit gives Paul discernment. There's a few things we can see here where he says to him, O full of all subtlety and all mischief.

That word mischief literally means desiring effeminate comforts is what he's desiring. So he wants comfort.

He wants an easy life. And then it throws in there that idea of effeminism, of being effeminate. And that's our world. Our world is full of people who desire, men who desire effeminate comforts.

[17:09] They have some kind of idea that they should be treated differently because of choosing to live this effeminate lifestyle. And that's this guy. He didn't want anyone messing with his comfort, messing with self.

And so the word there, subtlety, means to deceive. And then that word, mischief, like we said, meaning for his own comfort. So he's deceiving with the desire of maintaining his own comfort.

That's where we get that idea that self will always turn from the faith to maintain its comfort. It does the same thing in my life. Self chooses to turn from the faith because our faith is uncomfortable to self, to our natural born man.

Very uncomfortable because faith demands self, dies. Jesus says, what about that? We have to crucify ourselves. It's not something that's just going to happen on its own. It's something we have to be actively a part of.

And so here, this man, he's not wanting any of this, but Paul turns to him and says, hey, full of mischief, child of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, will not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.

[18:12] Right ways literally means straight. And so he's trying to make crooked that which is straight and already straight. And now behold, Paul says to him, the hand of the Lord is upon you.

Well, that's a good thing. Don't we want God's hand on us? Yes, God's hand's on us. Woo-hoo. Well, it is a good thing and this is God's grace. The hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.

He could have said, hey, you're going to be blind forever, bro. It's over. It's done. Judgment is here. But this is God's grace. For a season you will be blind. God has put his hand upon you because God is merciful and God is gracious.

God could have put his hand on him and squished him, but he put his hand of grace on him. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

So we see the purpose of the penalty to cause him to seek and he went about seeking. God put his hand on him so that he might seek something outside of himself.

[19 : 16] And when the Lord puts his hand on us, it's the same thing. He desires us to seek that which is outside of self. Now, as we are in the Lord and we're in Christ and we're walking with the Lord, he's not going to put his hand on us to strike us blind.

We're not children of the devil. We're not seeking to pervert the right ways of God. But God does put his hand on us, his hand of grace. It's for the same purpose that we might seek something outside of ourself.

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine. We have powerful truth versus powerful deception.

Struggle is real. That's where we're at today. powerful truth versus powerful deception. This guy, Sergius Paulus, says he believed.

There's actually, Sir William Ramsey reports that there are inscriptions bearing Sergius Paulus' name and they've been found on Cyprus confirming that he was a Christian and that his entire family became Christian.

[20 : 22] It was actually, you know, they have found archaeological record. The guy lived, he was a Christian, his family became a Christian. But the Bible is not true. Don't believe it. So a healthy spiritual experience is based upon truth taught and then becomes truth experienced.

So in the deputy, it says when he saw what was done, he believed, being astonished at what? At the doctrine. At the doctrine. What astonished him wasn't so much that Elias was struck blind and that Paul had this power.

What astonished him was the truth of the doctrine, the teaching that Paul explained to him. Astonished him. The truth of that. And then to see that the truth of that is played out in actual life or becomes an experience based upon truth.

And healthy experiences in our lives never start with the experience. They always start with truth. If someone wants you to experience something spiritual or of God but they're not basing it in truth, get rid of it.

It's at best chaff, at worst, a deception. It'll always be based in truth first. And so here, this man believes, yes, just like Jesus said in the Gospels that the signs will follow those that believe but they always follow.

[21 : 42] They're never first. God has an order that he always sticks to and as we go through Acts, you see that over and over. Paul has preached the word. This man is withstanding him. Withstanding the word, the Holy Spirit steps in and says, uh-uh, nothing withstands my word.

moves this man out of the way and then Sergius Paulus says, yes, that is some truth. That is some doctrine. No religion can do that.

Remember, he's in this extremely immoral place. The religion of the day is saying, you can have anything you want. Feed the flesh. Feed self. You can have it all. You can experience whatever you want to experience and yet nothing compared to the experience he just witnessed with what Paul did.

So those who distort, how do we recognize them? Well, we're going to use this man, Eliamis. He deceives to maintain his own comfort.

So those who distort the truth, those who withstand the truth, those who want to take what is straight and plain of the Lord and twist it and bend it, we can identify them. They will always deceive to maintain their comfort.

[22 : 50] Never going to make them uncomfortable. I think when Paul, later in Galatians, he talks about, you know, why are you turning back to the beggarly elements of the world? Taste not. Touch not. You know, why are you going back to these things?

He's like, there's no true worship in them. Those who want you to do that, it's just for their own pride and comfort that they're doing that. They want you to do the hard thing because it makes them feel good about themselves. They want you to come under their religious system so they can feel comfortable about themselves.

And those who distort, they are self-deceived by internal lies. Remember he said, you child of the devil. And what does Jesus say about the devil? Your father, he says to the Pharisees, he says, you of your father, the devil, who spoke lies from the beginning.

He only speaks lies. And so if you are speaking lies, then you are speaking lies to yourself and to others and you're self-deceived. And what's the worst type of deception? Self-deception.

Because you'll never know you're deceived unless there's an outside source revealing that to you. And then those who distort, they call evil good and good evil. And there we see where he says that enemy of all righteousness.

[23 : 57] And so that which is good, you think it's evil and you've become the enemy of it. You're fighting against righteousness, your own good. And they have no rest. He says here, Paul says, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

You just can't stop, can you? You just keep perverting and perverting and perverting. Stop. There's no rest in it. So how did Paul deal with distortion or the twisting of the truth?

He dealt with it in the Spirit. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit. That was the initiating point. That was what caused him to act. He was fully aware.

That's where he fixed his eyes on him. He was fully aware of the situation. He knew it was going on. He knew it was in this man's heart because the Holy Spirit revealed it. He did not ignore it and just go, whatever dude, you do your thing.

I don't really care. I'm just going to preach the gospel over here. He dealt with it. He called it out. He called it out, all right. Oh, full of subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.

[25 : 02] He did call it out. I've never called anybody out like that. Have you? But who called him out? It was the Holy Spirit, right?

Because the Lord knew what that was going to, the effect that was going to be in Sergius Paulus' life. He dealt with it in the Lord and that's where he says, now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you.

Hey, the Lord's going to deal with this. I don't have to. Yes, it's my place by the, prompting the Holy Spirit, fully aware, recognizing what this is. I'm not to ignore it.

God is prompting me to call you out and deal with this but God is the one who's going to deal with you. I can't deal with you but God will. And Paul does that and he does that very well and this man who was under powerful deception no longer is deceived because now it's not just that he's a prudent and wise man, now he has the Holy Spirit because he believes as well.

And then verse 13, we kind of move on from Cyprus. Paul says goodbye to his hometown. It says, now when Paul and his company, and there's a big change here, a big shift in the book of Acts.

[26 : 11] If you look in verse 7, it says that Sergius Paulus called for who? Barnabas and Saul. And now we're referred to as now when Paul and his company.

There's a shift now where Paul has clearly stepped forward in this tandem of him and Barnabas and has become the leader here and his name has shifted too.

And so God's doing a work here in the midst of this. Barnabas is a remarkable man. The amount of times he takes the back seat even when it's, you know, he's the one sent to Antioch to see the work that's happening among the Gentiles and he goes and calls Saul.

He says, hey, come help me. This is too much for me. And now here are the two of them. The Holy Spirit sent both of us out, Paul. Who do you think you are calling the shots now? And here he's recognizing what God is doing and he's taking that back seat.

It's amazing. It's not easy to do. You know, and John, John the Baptist said, you know, he must increase, I must decrease. And I prayed that a lot for like, Lord, I want to be a decreaser in relationships.

[27 : 25] I don't want to be one who feels I have to increase. If you see God doing something in someone's life, man, I want to be like, yes, and not react as these Jews eventually will with envy. And so they loose from there.

Paul and his company loose from Paphos and they came to Perga in Pamphilia and John, departing from them, returned into Jerusalem. So if we go back to our map, they've left Paphos, sorry, and they've come now to what would be called Asia in this area.

So you can see Galatia, Cappadocia, Pamphylia, the regions, but this would be called Asia or Asia Minor. And they come to Perga in Pamphylia.

There you can see, so Perga is the town within the region, Pamphylia. And there, John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. Turn briefly to Acts 15.

This is John Mark, remember, who's going to write the Gospel of Mark. Many people say the Gospel of Peter, right? Because he spent so much time with him. But in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas have just come back to the church in Antioch.

[28 : 44] They've dealt with some things. and now they make this decision in verse 35. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also.

We saw who those were last time, right? Those prophets and teachers. Simeon and Lucius and Mennonene. So they're back there at the church. They're back teaching. And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they do.

Paul, he was done for. You know, he had the travel bug. He had lived that life and he's like, let's just go back through it. Let's just encourage the churches. Barnabas is like, great idea, Paul.

Let's do it. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them who departed from them from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work.

And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and departed being recommended to the brethren unto the grace of God.

[29 : 57] And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. So if you look at the map there, Paul went by land where Barnabas went by sea and went back to Cyprus.

And Paul's contention here is in verse 38. He said, he thought not good to take John Mark with them who departed from them in Pamphylia and went not with them to the work.

So in Paul's mind, it seems like John Mark gave up. He wasn't about to do that again. I don't think Paul had a temper. I don't think he was an angry man. I think he was very intense. I think he held people to the same standard he held himself.

He expected that of other people. I think he thought, hey, if I'm willing to do this, you should be willing to do this. I'm not asking you to do anything that the Lord is not asking me to do and that I've not also done.

John Mark turns back. Why? I don't know. Maybe he didn't like that it was no longer Barnabas and Paul. Maybe he was upset that Uncle Barney was taking a back seat and he left. Maybe this was more than he had bargained for when he ended up at this immoral city of Paphos and saw all that was happening and the intensity of the situation.

[31 : 07] We have the inside scoop here on the Holy Spirit filling Paul and him turning to this guy and saying this. John Mark's just there and all of a sudden Paul turns to this guy and says, you son of the devil!

And John's probably like, oh my word, get me out of here. So he goes home and Paul kind of holds that against him a little bit. But you know, I like this because he's going to write the Gospel of Mark.

I love the Gospel of Mark. It's my favorite Gospel. Luke might become my favorite Gospel soon just because I don't read it as much and I keep going there and seeing different facets like, oh, I don't remember that.

It always seems like Matthew, Mark, and John just seem to be John's so different, Matthew's the first one, and then I like Mark because of the cadence of it. But anyway, so he writes the Gospel of Mark.

God wasn't done with him. I was thinking how the Lord bears with our infirmities. He bears long with our infirmities. And we're told that. We're given glimpses of that in Scripture. Hebrews 4.15, it tells us that we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

[32 : 16] So maybe the Paul in your life is not able to be touched with the feeling of your infirmity. Maybe the Paul in your life is like, what's wrong with you? Get over this.

You know, this doesn't bother me. The Lord wants to deal with this in your life. You know, but our high priest, Jesus says, I know what that's like. It's all right. You know, come to me. We'll take care of that.

Paul isn't Jesus. Never mistake Paul for Jesus. Romans 8.26, it tells us that likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The Spirit specifically helps our infirmities. God does not hold our infirmities against us. We talked a little about that on Sunday where we're going to see where Abraham, as we go into his life, this long, drawn-out period of obedience.

You know, we're told that in Hebrews, Abraham, the father of our faith, believed God. He believed and hoped when hope was against him.

[33 : 23] But here when we see the actual events, it's like this long process of leaving his family slowly. But God sees the faith and he sees his heart. He's like, sorry, I can work with that. I can work with that. Where you look at the way God dealt with the people in Babel and it's just like, he's like, no, we've got to deal with this.

It's like, well, why didn't God give them the same opportunity as he did Abraham? Just like, okay, give them another chance, another chance. Because God saw their heart and he knew, no, no, no. I know their heart.

It's wicked all the time and we've got to stop this. Where with Abraham, he's like, I see the faith and I can deal with a lot of infirmity and a lot of weakness when someone's walking in faith.

Romans 15, 1 and 2 says, we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Who wrote that? Paul.

Paul, who's like, get Mark out of here. I'm not dealing with that. At some point here, he's going to write, we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[34 : 27] Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. That's, what neighbor? Well, the one that's infirm. The one that's weak. You know, how can I edify you, weak and infirm brother?

Yeah. Probably shouldn't tell him that. You're immature, weak and infirm. Come, I shall help you. So, so anyway, now they're heading out.

John Mark has left them. You know, this must have been a little bit of a tense moment with Paul and Barnabas right now. And, and I picture Barnabas just being like, you know what? I'm just going to keep quiet.

We're just going to roll on. And they go to this place, Perga. And, Perga was a coastal harbor city where the ships from Paphos came to the mainland.

So that's why it's so easy for them to go from Paphos to the mainland. You're going to see here that the Holy Spirit guides Paul and Barnabas and Paul through his missionary journeys. It's almost through like this idea of resistance and least resistance.

[35 : 32] There'll be moments the Holy Spirit will step in and say, go here and do this. But a lot of it is just as Paul's living his life and taking the next step and doing the next thing. It's the same thing you and I do. It's the same way we walk by faith.

You just do the next thing God puts in front of you. And you're like, okay, this is the next thing to do. And the Holy Spirit's with you. You take that step. You're not acting in rebellion. And so it's a lot of times through resistance and the lack of resistance.

And so here's the path of least resistance. Let's get on the boat. Let's go to the mainland. And so then they're going to go up to verse 14 to Antioch in Pisidia.

Pisidia. And they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And so this is a different Antioch. This is actually up in the heights of Galatia. Remember, he's going to write a letter to the Galatians. Galatia is the region.

And then this is a town within that region. And so they will go into Antioch of Pisidia. We're going to find out later on in Galatians. He's going to say, hey, when I came to you into Galatia, you bore with me in my infirmity.

[36 : 34] Right? Whatever that was. You know, the weeping of the eyes or whatever it was. Because he says to the Galatians, remember how you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me. Kind of seeming like maybe he had an eye problem.

Interesting, isn't it? John Mark leaves. Maybe because of just his weakness and character. By the time Paul gets to Galatia, he's like, oh, I've got an infirmity and you bore with me in my infirmity.

And then he writes this to the Romans that we should bear with one another in our infirmities. And so Paul's, God's continuing to refine him. But this is about 135 miles inland and it's also much higher.

It's up in the mountains. It's about 3,600 feet above sea level. So a much more acclimate place for someone who's sick.

So Paul, whatever he has, some thought, well, maybe he has malaria or disease he got in the lower coastal plains and now he's gone to the much higher climate. Either way, this is where they're going.

[37 : 34] And then they go into the synagogue again, which is comfortable, normal, and natural for them. And they sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, you men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

Then Paul stood up and beckoning with his hand said, and we'll stop there for tonight. But Paul's going to go through, we're going to look at a few things Paul's going to do here before we get into the next time.

I want to kind of give a running start to that. So, our faith, Christianity, is based upon proclaiming the actual facts of what God has done. The emphasis is actual events.

It's the emphasis of Christianity and of our faith is not the theology and the doctrine. It's the events that happened that bear witness to, like we said, that truth. The truth came, the truth was spoken, the promise of God given, and then it happens, and that's the event.

We bear witness to the actual events which give witness to the truth. It's not, I hope so. It's not like, well, maybe man and woman came from a couple of acorns, or maybe their world is on the back of an elephant.

[38 : 51] Would you have any proof of those events? No. Okay. We do. Sergius Paulus has his name on a piece of historical artifact that he was a Christian in his family.

Paul will, through this next section, the next time we get into this, Paul would desire to show that for each major event in Israel's history, it was God's hand directing and for the express purpose of the Messiah.

So he's going to much quicker move through the events of Israel's history. It follows the pattern of Peter, sermon at Pentecost, and even very much of Stephen's, but he will move much quicker to Jesus.

But the whole point that Paul will try and show is that behind all of these events was God's hand, that God is at work. Just as we saw with our buddy Eliamis the sorcerer, that behind all of these seeming random interactions, the direction God was leading, there was a greater purpose and it was God's hand was directing.

That's a comfort for us, that we can know that God's hand is always behind us and what we're doing. You know, as we're going through this process of redoing our house, let's say building our house, we're not building it, rebuilding it, but bringing it up to speed, there's times where you can think, oh, this seems like a roadblock, how's it going to work out?

[40 : 18] And then I almost stop and I'm like, well, all things work together for my good. God's promised who God will take care of it. I don't know how, I don't know the path or the process, but I know he'll do it.

If you turn over to 2 Kings, real quick, chapter 6, Paul seemed to have an uncanny ability to see behind the scenes. But Paul's life is for us, if you remember when Jesus sends Ananias to him, it's to be an example.

It's for him, to be an example for us. In the 2 Kings, Elisha, if you look up in verse 14, the Syrians have been sent to the town where Elisha is because they want to take out Elisha because Elisha is giving the king of Israel, all kinds of information about the army's movements and activity.

It's like, we've got to take out Elisha. And therefore sent he hither horses and chariots and a great host and they came by night and compassed the city. Verse 15, And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots.

And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

[41 : 47] And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man. And he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

You know, Paul and Barnabas were two guys, two guys, essentially tearing through the countryside. Nothing could stop them. Ripping through the enemy's forces. Satan was putting up roadblocks and they were just blowing them apart.

The gospel was going forth. The truth was going forth. There was more that were with those two men than the enemy could ever bring against them. And it's the same with us. And often it's because our eyes aren't open that we just can't see what God is doing behind the everyday events.

So I guess my encouragement is whatever God is doing that you can't see, ask him to give you eyes to recognize it. Ask him to give you eyes like he did with Paul. Maybe it will result in confronting an Eliamist.

Maybe it will be that God wants you to take a stand and be like, no, we will not twist the straight path of the Lord. I'm going to stand and see what God does. Or maybe it's just that you need to recognize that the Lord's got this.

[42 : 56] What looks like a roadblock, what looks like the host around you. Hey, the Lord's got this. Paul and Barnabas are about to crack open the can of worms here in this region in Galatia, which is going to then lead to a greater opportunity in ministry.

But God, as we saw, walks them through it kind of slowly. They go to Barnabas' hometown, they go into his church. So, I think, I just want to have more of an awareness to look past.

You know, Scripture says we wrestle not against flesh and blood. That's the negative side. This was kind of the positive side. This verse in Kings. That just as we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, when flesh and blood come against us, it seems like it's not them.

They're not the problem. There's something behind that. And so, I think in every interaction we can say, Lord, what is behind this? Is this the enemy that I need to pray through this? Or is this you in your hand?

And I need to have my eyes open to see what you do. So, Father, we thank you just for the opportunity to have our eyes opened, Lord, to see the way that you use these men who surrenders lives, Lord.

[44 : 02] Not perfect by any means, Lord. And Paul would be the first one to say that. He says, I'm the least of all saints. And he says, I'm the chiefest of sinners. But Lord, he could also say, hey, follow me as I follow Christ.

Because that's where I'm going. I'm going to go straight and true. I'm going to follow Jesus. And Lord, I pray that you would give us eyes to see the Eliamuses in our life, those areas, and those people that we need to confront and say, nope, this isn't going to deceive me anymore.

But Lord, to open our eyes to see that you have so much greater plans than what we can see in front of us. To see that the host that you have sent on our behalf, the heavenly host, is greater than anything man could supply.

Thank you, Jesus. And we love you. Pray that you would just bless my brothers and sisters. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.