

Acts 13:1-4

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[0 : 00] Acts 13. So I guess we call our theme or our message today would be called out, sent out. We'll just read the first four verses and then kind of just go into a bunch of what's happening here.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius, Cyrene, and Menaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul.

And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me, Barnabas, and Saul for the work wherein to have called them. When they fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia. From thence they sailed to Cyprus. And then we will continue on with where the map is of next week, where they've gone.

If you remember, if we back up at the end of chapter 12, Peter has just been released from prison by prayer. It's amazing. And in that last verse, verse 25 says, And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they'd fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

[1 : 16] So we find out, tagged on, that Barnabas and Saul are still in Jerusalem. So Barnabas takes his nephew, his sister's son, John Mark, with him and Paul as they go on this journey.

That means, where would Barnabas have been staying? Probably at his sister's house. Or at least, like we said, if they knew that Peter was taken prisoner, they would have all been there praying. And so they return to Antioch, and they take John Mark.

John Mark doesn't know what he's in store for. He thinks he's just going to go and, you know, serve with these men in the church at Antioch. Seems like a big step for him leaving Jerusalem.

And he's got a few more steps, and we'll look at that eventually. But anyway, in verse 1, it says, At Antioch, there's a bunch happening here, a bunch is going on. And it says that there was at the church, there's certain prophets and teachers, and it lists them, their names.

Well, the word prophet means one who speaks forth by divine inspiration, an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things.

[2 : 28] And it can have, within it, obviously, it can mean a foreteller, one who tells things to come. But ultimately, it's one who is speaking forth things that would otherwise not be known, except that this prophet, this person, is being given those insights.

So he's speaking forth by divine inspiration. He's an interpreter of oracles or other hidden things. And so that's why we say that there's still prophets today. There are those, I suppose, that are still foretelling, and the Lord does that.

It's never, you know, we see like this guy Agabus when he came, or we're going to see later on, much later in Acts, when he comes and he binds himself, and he says, he takes Paul's girdle and binds himself, and he says, he whose girdle this is will go to Jerusalem bound.

It's very flamboyant and very like out there. I think the Lord today, when he speaks forth foretelling, things to come, I think it's just in the everyday, you know, he'll give someone a word, and just speak to someone, and it ends up coming true, and we're all kind of surprised, like, wow, when I spoke that, I wasn't really realizing what I was saying.

But then there's also that which is divine inspiration, the one that's speaking forth, foretelling. That's what we count on every time we open the word to teach it, that not the person, it's the spirit, that God is going to speak forth through his vessel.

[3 : 49] So these prophets and teachers. Teacher is an instructor, or a master, or a teacher. Whenever you see in the New Testament, in the Gospels, where they say master, and the disciples do, or some of the other people come to Jesus, they'll say master, it's teacher.

It's that same word in the Greek. I think teacher, instructor, master, the one who is giving us direction. And so that's what you have working in this church. It's a healthy church. There's prophets, there's those that are faithfully speaking forth what God is giving them to say.

And then there's teachers, those that are instructing in the ways of the Lord. Now, whether this is link staying prophets and teachers, like it's one and the same, or two different, doesn't really matter.

But here they are. And then there's these guys. There's Barnabas, Simeon, who is called Niger. Niger means black, who's very possibly from Ethiopia. And then Lucius, who is of Cyrene.

And Menaean, whoever he was, he had been, or wherever he was from, I mean, he'd been brought up with Herod, the Tetrarch. So here's a guy who was brought up with Herod. He was one of his college buddies, or whatever.

[5 : 00] And just from all walks of life. But their names are interesting. At this church, these were the men who were the prophets and the teachers, as Barnabas, as Simeon. Barnabas means son of rest.

Rest. Simeon means hearkening. Lucius means light, or bright white. Menaean means comforter. And Saul, desired. And as we've said before, very often the name is the nature.

So here you see the heart of these men. You see these men in ministry. Son of rest, hearkening, bringing light, comforter, and desired. Desired by God, and the desire for the things of God.

So it's a healthy church. Very healthy. These guys are working together to instruct the people. We know Ephesians 4 gives us insight into the structure of the church.

Right? And so as we are doing this here, building this church, while God's building his church, but as we've all gathered together recognizing God is doing a new work, we were all at a place where God was doing a work.

[6 : 00] It wasn't that the work died. Or that we were, like that verse showed, booted, per se. Like, get out of here and never come back. Right? No, that wasn't it.

But we recognize that there was a call. And Ephesians tells us that the reason that God gives the apostles, and the prophets, and the evangelists, and pastor-teachers, in chapter 4, verse 11 through 13, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

So there's no edification, and you can work that backwards. There should be edification in the work of the ministry that perfects the saints, and here is how, with these roles.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. The edification should lead to further unity in our faith. There shouldn't be division.

There should be further unity. And of the knowledge of the Son of God, we should be growing in grace in the knowledge of Jesus, unto a perfect man, or a complete man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

[7 : 04] How do we measure if there's edification happening? We don't look and go, well, I need to find an evangelist, I need to find a prophet, I need to find a pastor-teacher. No. Now, is there a greater measure of the fullness of Christ?

Are we growing in unity and faith? Is there edification that looks like maturity and unity? If there's not, or if you're finding little divisive things, or little clicks, or little things over here, or a lack of unity, or you're not seeing growth, there's stagnation, you know?

Say, okay, well, we'll throw out the pastor and get a new one. No, I don't think so, because it's not by might nor by power. It's by the Spirit. And so there's a unity.

We know Paul tells us in other places, he says, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. So we all, you know, Eddie used the term lay, or laity.

There's no laity. I tell my kids that there's no junior believers. Kids, this is for you. There's no junior Christians in the body of Christ. There's no tears. You know, actually, Scripture speaks more about the faith of a child.

[8 : 14] It never says, have the faith of an adult. It says, the faith of a child. Ready to believe, ready to grasp, ready to act on what you believe. Adults step back and go, well, what's that going to cost me?

In pride, money, time, and effort. And usually in that order. And that's how we measure it. But, so this is a healthy church. There's edification.

There's the heart behind the ministry of these men. There's this unity. They're from all walks of life. I mean, look at us. We're from all over the place. New York, Seattle, North Carolina.

You know, it's just, and God's brought us here. California. To do a work. We're not making it up. We're not going to make it happen. And it's not just like, hey, let's go out and see if we can start a church.

Because we all recognize that the Lord is doing something. And so that's what's happening here. And as they ministered to the Lord. So they were serving together.

[9 : 14] They were ministering. They were ministering to the Lord. And fasted. The Holy Spirit said, separate. Separate to me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.

Separate. The word separate there means specifically to mark off boundaries or to appoint. The Holy Spirit is speaking to them. And we'll look at the context in a minute of when the Holy Spirit spoke to them, what they were doing.

But looking at a couple of these words. Separate means to mark off boundaries. The Holy Spirit spoke to them and said to the church, separate to me.

Mark off the boundaries. Appoint to me these men. So the Holy Spirit didn't come and say, I have marked the boundaries off. I have separated. He came and spoke to them.

And they recognized God is calling these men to a specific purpose. And he wants us to be a part of defining the body, defining what that is and what that looks like.

[10 : 15] Called, where he says, I have called. Whereunto I have called them. Separate. Mark off boundaries. Appoint them to the work I've called them to. It's specific. The word called means to call to oneself or to bid to come.

So he's saying, hey, there's a work that you need to be part of helping identify. I'm calling them to myself. I'm bidding them to come. You need to be part of helping them do that.

Don't hold them back. Release them to do that. Remember, back in Acts chapter 9, Ananias was sent to Saul when he was blind and was in the home on Straight Street for three days in the house of four, what was his name?

Judas? It might have been. And Ananias is like, no, no, Lord. You know who this guy is? He's a murderer. He's going to kill us. And the Lord said to Ananias, he said to him, go your way.

See what I've told you to do. For he, Paul, or Saul, is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. So way back then, he tells Ananias, who then we know from looking at other sections in Acts, comes to Saul and tells him this.

[11 : 32] He says, hey, he's a chosen vessel to bear my name before the Gentiles. And so God brings the support to do this. You know, Saul's in the wilderness. Barnabas comes and gets him.

Today's the work to do at Antioch. They're excited. Paul must have thought, well, finally, I'm doing what God's called me to do. They go back to Jerusalem to tell them about the work that's happening. Then they come back.

The church is growing and thriving. And Paul's thinking, this is where I'm supposed to be. And yet, I'm sure if the Holy Spirit is doing this work to call these men out and to tell the church this, there's got to be something in his heart going, I just think there's more.

I think God's calling me to something more. And so God brings the support to do this. It's not just he runs out on his own. God is bringing along those to do this.

So this word, ministering to the Lord. And as they, verse 2, as they minister to the Lord. So we have a healthy church. It's being edified. It's got prophets. It's got t-shirts. T-shirts. T-shirts are very important.

[12 : 34] We'll get to those eventually. It's got prophets and teachers. It's being edified. It's got people from all walks of life with a heart to do this. They're listening to the voice of the Lord. They're praying.

They're fasting. What does ministering to the Lord look like? To minister to the Lord? Well, the word Lord means he to whom a person or thing belongs. That which about he has power of deciding.

Master. Lord. We know. We say, oh, go Lord. Praise the Lord. Lord, we just ask you to bless this day. We say Lord all the time. And we know what it means innately. Because our spirit yields itself to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit.

But the word means to whom a person or thing belongs. We belong to the Lord. They're ministering to the one to whom they belong. He has the power to decide.

The Holy Spirit said to them, separate unto me. They did not do this on their own. It wasn't, well, I see a work to do. And we talk about it all the time. With, pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, he sent forth laborers into the harvest.

[13 : 35] To pray you the Lord sent forth. Not rush out into the harvest with your sickle and start swinging. But pray that the Lord would send laborers. And then waiting for him to do that.

So that's what the word Lord means. Minister. They're ministering to the one to whom they belonged. The one who had the power to decide. They're ministering to him to minister. Well, you know, it means to serve.

But I like it also has this idea within it. To serve the state at one's own cost. To assume an office which must be administered at one's own expense.

To discharge a public office at one's own cost. So it has the idea there that a minister, a minister of the people in government, is to serve them. But it's to serve the state at your own cost.

To assume an office which must be administered at your own expense. Oh, man. My own expense. Discharge a public office at one's own cost. And I think of where Peter says, he says, hey, when speaking to the pastors, he says, take the oversight thereof willingly.

[14 : 39] Not of constraint. Don't be constrained. And don't do it from financial gain. Do it willingly. Do it willingly. Colossians 3, 23 to 24 says, and whatsoever you do, do it heartily.

Arr. Heartily. And whatsoever you do. I picture like someone very hairy, but sorry. Heartily. Arr. Whatever you do, do it heartily.

As to the Lord, and not unto men. Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ. We are to serve Christ. So what is it?

To minister. To serve this one at our own expense. Discharging the duty that's been given us. The one to whom we owe our allegiance.

Well, turn over to Matthew 25. This is a long chunk. Verse 33. We're going to see what it looks like to minister to the Lord.

[15 : 39] Because they ministered to the Lord and fasted. How do they do that? They're like, Lord, what do you need? Can I have them do some food? Do you need a coat? Do you need a cup of water? How do I minister to the Lord?

Well, Matthew 25. Jesus is explaining to the disciples the signs of the end. When they say, hey, what shall be the end and the sign of your coming?

And then he gets down in verse 33. He starts to talk about those at the end that will be separated out. The sheep and the goats. And then he describes what that looks like.

And how you can identify them. And within that, we're going to see what it is to minister to the Lord. Matthew 25.33 says, And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

So identifying who we're talking about. At the end, the judgment, when the harvest shall be reaped, the angels shall go and put in their sickle, and they shall bring the sheep and the goats, and they shall separate them.

[16 : 40] Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was in hunger, and you gave me meat.

I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in. Naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came unto me.

So here the Lord, the master, saying, You did all this to me. Come and inherit these things. And here's how the sheep respond. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you hungry, or fed you, or thirsty, and gave you drink?

When saw we you a stranger, and took you in, or naked, and clothed you? Or when saw we you sick, or in prison, and came unto you? Like, we never did any of these things, Lord.

We would have, if we could have found you. If we knew you were here in the world, and needed that, we would have done it. When did we do this? And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Truly I say unto you, Inasmuch as you've done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you've done it unto me.

[17 : 51] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Why are they cursed?

He says, Because I was hungry, you gave me no meat. I was thirsty, you gave me no drink. I was a stranger, you took me not in. Naked, and you clothed me not. Naked, and you clothed me not.

Sick, and in prison, and you visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you a hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, did not minister unto you?

Like, the same answer the other guys gave. When did we not do this? How could we have done this? And he answered them, saying, Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous into life eternal. What an interesting litmus test that he has for them. It's interesting, too, if you look there, of all the things that they've done, notice where he says, I was sick.

[18 : 57] He doesn't say, and you did not heal me. He says, you did not visit me. So this idea that, like, well, you should always be able to heal, is not always the case. Sometimes the greater thing is just to bear the burden with the person who's sick.

But anyway, this is what it is to minister to the Lord. We have this picture here. He says, if you've done it to the least of these, you've done it unto me. And so when we look over here in verse 2, back in Acts 13, it says they ministered to the Lord and fasted.

Well, I think we have an idea of what that is. There were prophets and teachers. It was an edified church. It was a well-cared-for church. They're ministering to one another by doing it to the least of these.

But what does the least of these look like? It's probably the person you're not the most comfortable with. Probably the person you're not most clicky with. It's probably the person who may feel more on the outcast.

Remember, James says, hey, look, when the poor man comes in, don't say, hey, sit here by my footstool. You know, you sit on the ground right here. And when the rich man comes in, don't be like, oh, brother, take the front seat.

[19 : 58] You know, don't let that be by what you judge. But we do. We don't do it based on financial. But we do it based on, oh, I see greater value in you personally for myself than I do you because I don't really click with you and I don't really, you know, understand you as well.

Or it might be, well, my conversations with you are so shallow because you're just not a very deep Christian. I'm not saying that about anybody here. I'm just saying that's what you can see.

You have natural affinities. Of course, you can have friendships that are greater than others. But we need to be careful in the context of when we're ministering to the Lord, when we're in the body, that we're not portraying this idea that God has favorites or that God is somehow separating out into these cliques or whatever.

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, well, Paul and Barnabas are pretty tight at this point. And then they're going to go off together. But they're with all of these guys. And there's a unity that we need to have as well.

What do they do as this happens? They hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and he says, separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I've called them. So they're going to go out into this work.

[21 : 11] And then when they fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Hey guys, God bless you. Good luck. Go. There's a few other things we can see here as we continue on.

So they being sent forth by the Holy Spirit departed unto Seleucia. And from thence they sailed to Cyprus. Well, where was that in there? Who told them Seleucia? Why did they go on to Cyprus?

So there's a lot that's happening here that we're not being told. They didn't just rush out into this. There was a specific, as we said, to separate means to mark off boundaries and a point.

And I think the church, we're going to look at what it is to be a sending church and to be sent well. You know, they help prepare and provide. They were prepared and they were provisioned.

They didn't just shoot them out, like out of a cannon. They didn't boot them out the door. I think today we do really well in the church. When I say church, I mean like Bonhoeffer would say, the confessing church, the remnant church, the true church that hears the voice of the Lord.

[22 : 15] They're hearing the Holy Spirit. I think we do that well. I think we hear the voice. I think we can recognize God's hand on someone. I think we do really poorly sending people really well.

I don't think we do that really well. I think we kind of recognize, hey, God's doing something with you. He's calling you. Okay. God bless you. We love you. Do it well. That's it.

I think a test of if it was done well is, as we're going to see here with these guys, is the door open for fellowship? Is the door still open that when you return to that church you've been sent from, is there still fellowship?

Or is it awkward? Or they're kind of like, what are you doing back here? Or whatever. You know, there still should be the door for fellowship. Jesus sent out his disciples. In Luke 9, Jesus called his 12 disciples and he gave them power and authority over all devils to cure diseases.

And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And he said unto them, take nothing for your journey, neither staves nor script, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats of peace.

[23 : 18] And whatsoever house you enter into, there abide and fence depart. And whosoever will not receive you when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

And they departed and they went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. So Jesus is sending them out and he's saying, hey, I'm going to provide. There's going to be provision for you in the sending where you go.

Now, later on, he doesn't necessarily rescind this, but he that says to them, remember when I told you don't take a coat or money or a sword? Go get a coat, money and a sword. Now it's time to have that provision.

And so there's times where when we're sent out, there's going to be provision ahead of time. There's going to be time where it's going to be provided in the way. And so we are to go. First Corinthians chapter nine.

One of my favorite verses is tucked in here. Verse four through nine. So this is Paul speaking of him and Barnabas. I like that because speaking of the two of them and he's defending himself essentially against one of these churches is going to plant being sent out.

[24 : 22] He's going to go to Corinth and they're going to plant this church. And he's defending himself that he and Barnabas are true apostles because Corinth is like, well, we don't think so. Because you're just not mean enough, Paul.

I mean, when you come, you just kind of give us the gospel and talk lovingly. These other guys who come in, they preach, you know, and you just kind of come in and share Jesus with us. And also, you know, you're not really flamboyant.

Like these guys, man, they take a love offering when they come and they need the funds and you just kind of like roll in and whatever God provides. I mean, that one time you came on an Uber and the next time you borrowed some of the car. I mean, come on, Paul.

So he says, have not we power to eat and drink? Have not we power to lead about a sister, a wife, sister in the Lord, not marrying your sister, as well as the other apostles and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?

Or only I and Barnabas? Have not we power to forbear working? He's saying, hey, come on. Is it only these other guys? Are Barnabas and I the only ones that like we can't eat and drink?

[25 : 21] We can't have the freedom to do that. We can't have the freedom to have a wife. And we can't have the freedom to forbear working. Who goes, and this is the verse I love, who goes to warfare anytime at his own charge?

Who goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard? Needs not of the fruit thereof. Or who feeds a flock? Needs not of the milk of the flock. Say I these things as a man? Or says not the law the same also?

For it's written in the law of Moses. I shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Does God take care of the oxen? In other words, I like this because it just confirms what we've been looking at in the creation account.

The pictures we see in creation are to show us the heart of God. So God's not so worried about the oxen as much as he is us learning the lesson of the oxen. That as we walk in God's call, God's going to provide.

He's the one who calls. We go to war at his expense. He's going to provide. As we give of our time, as we give of what we have, God will provide. And as the church here, I don't think it's the church's place to just throw someone out the door like, hey, you're calling the missions?

[26 : 31] Bye-bye. Now, here's what I don't think it means. I don't think it means we start a GoFundMe page or do a ton of fundraisers and all that kind of stuff where God guides, he does provide.

But he's going to provide in a way that's going to be in accord with the life of the spirit. Now, there may be times where it's appropriate to do that, but I don't think just because there's a missions trip or a ministry opportunity God puts in front of us, it means we do the American thing, which is just scrounge up all the money we can, find a big donor, go to the bank, you know, talk to the local people, and hey, you want to be a sponsor of us?

And we'll do it. I think there's a part where we need to let the Lord decide what that's going to look like, whether that is, just go. And wherever you land, hey, I'm going to provide for you.

Or whether that is, like we just looked at here, no man goes to war at his own expense. You know, expect that God will provide. Real quick touching on fasting. They were fasting at this time.

Oh, I remember as a kid thinking, oh, fasting, I don't think I could do that a whole day without food. How do you do that? And it just seemed like such a condemning thing, because the few times I tried as a young kid in my own strength, I never made it to the end of the day, and I always have to have peanut butter and jelly, and I just ruined the whole thing.

[27 : 49] Then I feel guilty, and God, I'm fast. Well, fasting means to abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink. We know that. But either entirely, if the fast lasted but a single day, or from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days.

This is the general form of what fasting was. When Moses was on the mount 40 days and 40 nights, and Jesus was in the wilderness, they weren't just fasting from cookies. They were totally fasting from anything.

But for us to fast, you know, it could be that the Lord's like, no food or drink for today. Or it could be the kind of thing that we're like, hey, I'm going to set this thing aside, fast from it, to do what for what purpose?

To further focus on the things of the Lord. And so they're told here, in the process of ministering to the Lord, of being one in the Spirit together, hearing God's voice, they're told, hey, separate them.

And service always requires separation. Always. Always. When we're called to serve, we'll always be separated from and unto.

[28 : 56] God separates us from something unto something. We're separated unto a work by being separated from something else. Kind of like we said, a service always requires sacrifice.

Always requires separation. These are not negotiables. Unfortunately, the church today, here I don't mean the confessing church. I mean the quote unquote church of the West and, I don't know, church of the East as well.

The church, the more carnal church, they want to serve without separation. They want to still be using the things of the world and part of the world. We're called for separation.

And here's Paul and Barnabas. Man, this thriving church. Totally thriving. They're in there with the guys, you know. They're praying. They're fasting. The Lord's growing the church. And then in this process, the Holy Spirit clearly says, go.

Go out. It's time to go. And when they had fasted and prayed, so they continued to fast and pray. They prepared. They provided.

[29 : 59] Prayer is the preparation. They laid their hands on them and sent them away. With authority, they sent them away. It wasn't, we acknowledge what God is doing, so goodbye, go do it.

And have fun. It was, we recognize what God's doing and we're part of what God is doing. And we want to make sure that for our part as the church, so like let's say one of us, there comes a day where someone's called to go out, whether it's into ministry, missions, plant a church.

We want to be able to say, yes, because the Holy Spirit's doing it. We're in tune with the Holy Spirit. Let's pray. Let's get around you. Let's make sure that, like we looked at that one word, what it meant, let's make sure that we are marking off boundaries with you, that we are pointing you, that we recognize and ratify what God is doing and we're part of that.

We want to do that here. God has sent us all. Here we are. So we want to be able to hear the voice of the Spirit and say, God, what are you doing in our midst? So let's look at a real quick, a few things as we wrap up.

How did the call of God come? God's call came to these people, this church, this thriving church, and was telling them it's time for these men, I have a call in their lives, for them to do something different than what they're currently doing.

[31 : 26] The call came in the midst of service. There are men who are already serving the Lord. They're already ministering to the Lord. It was as they ministered, it was an active process.

There's people that they'll show up and be like, God's called me to be a pastor. Like, oh, okay. So if you ever need someone to step in when you're not here, let me know. Thanks.

You know? Or, hey, I play guitar and sing. And so that's all there is to worship? There's people that think that, you know, I need something to do.

No, you don't need a call. You need to do something, and then God will call you. Be in the midst of service. The call came while among God's people. They were together.

They were ministering and fasting. They were ministering to the Lord. They were praying. They were together. There was a unity here. Oh, I missed the word call in there. The call came while occupied with matters of eternity.

[32 : 23] And that's where I think fasting comes in. They were setting aside the things of the flesh, the things of the world, and saying, hey, we want to focus in a greater way, in a greater intensity on what God is doing. We want to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and know that it's Him.

The call came during personal sacrifice. We looked at what that word ministered meant, that to discharge duty at our own cost. And the call came to lives already dedicated to the Lord.

These were already prophets and teachers. They were already doing the work of the Lord. Paul and Barnabas had already gone back to Jerusalem to take this love offering. Peter's just been released from prison. They're coming back to Antioch, and they're like, guess what God did, guys?

He's a big God. And so as they minister to the Lord, you know this just totally inspired the prayer ministry at Antioch because of what they saw with Peter as they're praying here.

And that's how the call came. The other thing that's interesting to see, that they did not act rashly, but they also didn't delay. You know, they heard the voice of the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, separate to me.

[33 : 30] And when they had fasted and prayed, there's an interlude in there, isn't there? It wasn't like, oh, the Holy Spirit said to me, separate Barnabas and Saul for the work. Get out of here, guys.

Go. Get out of here. God's calling you. We don't want to hold you back. You know, they continued to fast and pray. They didn't act rashly, but they didn't delay either. And they said, well, you know, how are we going to replace you, Barnabas?

Oh, how are we going to replace Paul? Oh, man. But the church's part in the call, what was the church's part? As a body. They were to hear and heed God's voice.

They knew God's voice. They heeded God's voice. What about us? Do we hear his voice as a body? And do we heed it? I think we do. Because I know each of you.

We all know each other. I just don't want to get caught where we're just rolling. We're just doing what we're used to doing because that's what we do. Like, well, let's make sure we take moments where we sit, hear, and heed God's voice.

[34 : 30] They recognized and ratified God's hand. They recognized God's hand and call on an individual's life, and they ratified it. Right? Paul will eventually, with Titus and Timothy, he'll say, hey, I've left you, you know, says to Titus in Crete, to appoint elders and deacons.

I want you to recognize and ratify what God is doing in people's lives. I think we do that pretty well. They were to separate God's people to God's work.

This was something the Holy Spirit said to them to do. It wasn't something he did. It was for the body to do. Hey, church, separate what God is doing in the life of his people. Separate them to God's work.

They were to prepare God's people for God's work. You see that with where they didn't just run off and directionless. They were to give them direction and boundaries. And they were to send with authority.

And that would be where they laid their hands on them and sent them away. They were the conveying of authority. There was a moment where they said, we have recognized God's call. We've heeded God's call.

[35 : 32] And we want to send you out now with authority as we've prepared you. But how did Paul and Barnabas respond to the call? So the church heeds the call.

The call comes to people in ministry. The church does their part. And then Paul and Barnabas, to the people being called, they responded with direction. They had a direction they were going.

It wasn't aimless. They responded with determination. They didn't delay. They prayed. They fasted. They recognized we need to be prepared for the work God's calling us to. And they responded without delay.

And so those are just some of the things that I was kind of thinking over as I think about how the church today, how should they recognize God's work in their midst?

How do we recognize it? Well, the primary thing in the call of God is the voice of the Holy Spirit. That's the primary thing here, that they heard the voice of the Holy Spirit saying, separate unto me.

[36 : 28] The ones I have called. And then verse 4, so being sent forth by the Holy Spirit. I think it's interesting, the way the Holy Spirit's weaved with the body of Christ. It says, you have all these men who are prophets and teachers and ministering to people, and yet it says they're ministering to the Lord.

And then you have the body sending out people and preparing them, and yet it says the Holy Spirit sent them forth, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, right after people just laid hands on them.

So like you have it working together. And so how do we prepare for participation in the plans of God? We want to do this well. Well, quite simple. It's prayer.

It's together, coming together to pray and to do the work. The work is prayer. And with an Oswald Chambers quote, a Yoda quote, instead of a verse.

Oswald Chambers says, prayer does not fit us for the greater works. Prayer is the greater work. There's nothing thrilling about a laboring man's work, but it is the laboring man who makes the conceptions of the genius possible.

[37 : 35] And it is the laboring saint who makes the conceptions of his master possible. You labor at prayer, and results happen all the time from his standpoint. What an astonishment it will be defined when the veil is lifted.

The souls that have been reaped by you simply because you've been in the habit of taking your orders from Jesus Christ. He's our master. He's the one who owns us to do.

Let's make sure that we're hearing his voice, heeding his voice, and then we are ratifying what he's doing with authority he's given us. And let's make sure that as we do that, it's not a, oh, you do your thing.

I'll be here. But that we're part of that. That when we send out, we send out well. You know, Paul and Barnabas will never come back to Antioch to minister there again. It'll be their base they'll go from.

They'll come back, and they'll go. They'll come back, and they'll go. But they'll never come back in this capacity. But the door for fellowship is still open, and I think it's because of the way they were sent, particularly.

[38 : 35] So Father, we thank you for just giving us ears to hear. Thank you for your word that so clearly and so simply just lays out for us a life that ends in edification, fruitfulness, a yielded life to the Holy Spirit, having direction.

I love how there's no specific direction in all of this given where these men should go, but they go with specific direction. So you know in this process as they're praying and fasting with one another, that you have also opened doors for them.

Oh, there happens to be someone going to wherever. Oh, there's cheap airfare to, oh, there's a church over here that needs some help with, and the doors open, and they walk through them.

Lord, help us to hear and to hearken to your voice, and Lord, help us to ratify what you're doing in each other's lives, but to do it in a way, Lord, that brings greater edification and greater unity.

Lord, we love you, and we pray you'd speak to us now by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.