



# SERMON NOTES

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Title: The Church at Antioch

#19 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. The Church in Antioch. The story begins around 45 AD and encompasses about 4 years.
  - a. Leadership team is made up of prophets and teachers.
    - i. Barnabas, the son of encouragement.
    - ii. Simeon who was called Niger who has been presumed to be a black African among the congregation at Antioch.
    - iii. Lucius of Cyrene, presumed to be one of the founders. (cf. Acts 11:20)
    - iv. Manaen, which means “*consoler*” who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch,
      1. This was the same Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and presided over one of Jesus’ trials (cf. Luke 23:7-12).
    - v. Saul
  - b. Characteristics of the church at Antioch:
    - i. Ruled and presided over by the Holy Spirit; no one can legitimately govern in His Church without the Spirit's call.
    - ii. Various ministers with different gifting,
    - iii. A mixed membership,
    - iv. It was evangelical by doctrine (go & make) to the point of being missional,
    - v. It ministered to the Lord.
  - c. “*As they ministered to the Lord...*” Certainly the church was ministered to by the leadership team, but the first job of any servant of God is to minister unto the Lord as priests under the new covenant, offering their bodies as living sacrifices (cf. Rom. 12:1). Ministering to the Lord means doing what pleases Him and honors Him – worship, praise, prayer, listening to, honoring God. “*The word translated worshipping [or ministered in the NKJV] is that usually employed in the LXX for the service of priests and Levites in the temple.*” (Williams)
    - i. As part of their service to the Lord, they also fasted, presumably, because they sensed a need to seek God in a special way. Fasting & prayer prepare our soul to receive the Word of God. It is possible that they sought God about the need to spread the gospel to all the earth. If we assume they fasted and prayed about the need of the world for Jesus, we can see how God answered their prayer – by using them. This is often how God moves, by sending the people who have it on their hearts to pray and who have the burden to do the work.
    - ii. God stirs up His people as they minister to Him. “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” Jn. 12:32
  - d. Before Barnabas and Saul could do anything significant for God, they first had to be separated to Him. If you will separate to God, it means you must separate from some other things. You can’t

really say “yes” to God’s call on your life until you can say “no” to things that will keep you from that call.

- i. It is significant that the two men called to missionary service were, as far as we can tell, the two most gifted and able men in the congregation.
  - ii. More than likely an inner call reinforced by an outer; it must be God who calls a man (cf. Heb. 5:4) Call given by the Holy Spirit as a firm conviction.
- e. God's timetable was "now."
- f. The Church offers a public affirmation of a Spirit separation often through prayer & fasting and the laying on of hands. They are meant to be an extension of the local church.
- i. The true minister has a Spirit given call, is recognized by the Church, and has a work.
- g. The Church sends them on a holy task accompanied by fervent prayers (initial & ongoing) with hope of a triumphant return. Missions is a sending by a local church, sent with prayers (initial & ongoing) and supported (\$ + love)).

## 2. Missions

### a. What is a missionary?

- i. Michael Hesselgrave writes that, *“A missionary is not just someone who goes, but someone who is sent.”*
- ii. Herbert Kane states, *“In the traditional sense the term missionary has been reserved for those who have been called by God to a full-time ministry of the Word and prayer (cf. Acts 6:4), and who have crossed geographical and/or cultural boundaries (cf. Acts 22:21) to preach the gospel in those areas of the world where Jesus Christ is largely, if not entirely unknown (cf. Rom. 15:20).”*
  - 1. He also wrote, *“The Chinese have a proverb: If two men feed a horse, it will lose weight; if two men keep a boat, it will soon leak. What is everybody’s job is nobody’s job. If every Christian is a missionary, missionary work is bound to suffer. It is correct to say that every Christian is, or should be, a witness. It is not correct to say that every Christian is a missionary.”*

### iii. E0 – E3

### b. Sending

- c. Our vision: *“The Church of the Resurrection exists to create a communal culture that is defined not only by its institutional or denominational life but by its missional life; not only by how it satisfies the needs of its members but by how it serves the needs of others, particularly the poor and the persecuted; not only by what it asks members to do for the church missions programs, but by what it asks members we can do to help them to realize their personal vision and mission for the stewardship of their lives and resources for God’s world. We want to be a community whose ecclesiology of the Church (what we are as a church) will be shaped and determined by our missiology (how we serve God’s world).”*

## 3. Cyprus

- a. As a destination; Cyprus was not specifically indicated by the HS, reasonable to see that they went that direction partially due to Barnabas' background. We know that there were already other Cypriots who were believers (*cf. Acts 9:20*)
  - i. Paphos was known for its immorality and here Barnabas and Saul faced a combination of immorality and spiritual darkness that was common across the pagan world of the Roman Empire. *"Paphos was infamous for its worship of Venus, the goddess of [sexual] love."* (Barclay)
- b. Synagogues; E0 --> E2
- c. The Proconsul Sergius was an important man. A Roman proconsul was responsible for an entire province and answered to the Roman Senate. *"All Roman provinces were divided into two classes, those that required troops and those that did not. The latter were administered by the Senate and ruled by proconsuls; the former were under the administration of the emperor."* (Williams)
  - i. *"Sir William Ramsay reports that inscriptions bearing Sergius Paulus' name have been found on Cyprus confirming that he was a Christian and that his entire family became Christians."* (Hughes)
- d. The opposition from Elymas. *"Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives against his kite."* (Spurgeon) Simon Magus & Bar-Jesus show us that there is always some sort of counterfeit spirituality and demonic opposition.
  - i. Elymas (Bar-Jesus) meaning the "wise man" or "wizard", was a Jew; name was arabic.
  - ii. The grossest act of wickedness is perverting the right ways of God or/and opposing the salvation of others.
  - iii. Paul's 3 accusations: *"full of all deceit and all fraud"* (deceit & criminality), *"son of the devil"* (instead of Bar-Jesus (son of salvation)), and *"enemy of all righteousness"* (equal to the father of lies)
  - iv. *"The severest words of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are reserved for those who stand between men and truth, for those who stand between men and God...It must be the heart that loves Sergius Paulus that speaks in anger to Elymas the sorcerer."* (Morgan)
- e. Three sorts of wisdom
  - i. Elymas, a false wisdom subtly inspired by Satan,
  - ii. Sergius, an earthly wisdom which the world admires,
  - iii. Paul, the true & celestial, (as apart from false & earthly).
- f. Sergius accepts Jesus as His Lord.
  - i. As amazing as the miracle of Elymas' sudden blindness was, the good news the proconsul heard from Paul was even more amazing. His astonishment is said to be at the teaching of the Lord (presumably, the doctrines of God's gracious gift to man in Jesus, through the cross) not the miraculous work before his eyes.

- ii. The proconsul saw the courage and conviction of Paul and the just result of sin in Elymas' punishment (physical blindness corresponding to his spiritual blindness). Sometimes, when we see the trouble sin brings people into, it helps us pursue God more earnestly.
  - g. The ways of the Lord are right (*cf.* Ps. 19:7-8) but they can be perverted by false teaching (*cf.* 2 Pet. 2:1), bad examples (*cf.* 2 Tim. 3:5-6) and by temptation (*cf.* 2 Pet. 2:15), this perversion of His way is offensive to God as presumptuous and risking Divine judgment.
  - h. Cyprus today. Invaded in 1974 by Turkey, Greek-Cypriots were not allowed to cross over until 2003; around this time that scholars and photographers were able to visit northern Cyprus to document the destruction of historic churches and artifacts. In the span of three decades under Turkish control, more than 530 churches and monasteries have been pillaged, vandalized, or destroyed in the northern area, according to The Republic of Cyprus. Over 80 percent of the Republic of Cyprus population is Christian. While the island population is only 800,000, it is a major tourist attraction, drawing over 2 million tourists each year
4. Pamphylia
- a. Mark's departure. Luke 9:62, "*But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'*" Beware of the weariness in well-doing:
    - i. a common occurrence (plausible y good excuses; never a right reason to do the wrong thing),
    - ii. an unfortunate example (discouraging & hurtful to fellow workers; bad examples are much more contagious than good ones),
    - iii. an irremediable mistake (can't always be picked up where it was left off),
    - iv. an irreparable loss (miss the reward which is promised to & laid up for them who labor on and faint not (Gal. 6:9)).
  - b. Why did Mark leave? Was he too young and not inured to hardship? Was he jealous of Paul's ascendancy over his uncle? Did he have theological issue with Paul's theology towards the Gentiles? Homesick? Perhaps he was afraid of the tough and dangerous travel through the mountains ahead of them.
  - c. Paul was clearly upset and it later on causes problems between him and Barnabas. (*cf.* Acts 15:38-39)
5. Take-aways
- a. Diverse church, diverse gifts – this is Jesus' Church!
  - b. Minister unto the Lord; God stirs up His people as they minister to Him. "*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*" Jn. 12:32
  - c. Separate yourself unto the Lord
  - d. There's always opposition and counterfeit beliefs; 3 wisdoms
  - e. Do not grow weary
  - f. Communion