FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Chapter 8: Paul's First Missionary Journey

The Antiochian outpouring launches the Gentile mission; ministry on Cyprus and in Asia Minor; planting indigenous churches

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 8 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Paul's First Missionary Journey

The Antiochian outpouring launches the Gentile mission; ministry on Cyprus and in Asia Minor; planting indigenous churches

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 8)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies the launch of the Gentile mission: the Antiochian "outpouring" sends Barnabas and Saul, they minister on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, they plant indigenous churches, and they report to the sending church in Antioch.

The transitional period ended with the door opened to Gentiles. Now the Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch, the sixth of the seven key outpourings. The author writes it as an "outpouring" in quotation marks. Keep those quotation marks.

Bible reading: Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Each part of the lesson then has its own shorter reading: Acts 13:1-3, Acts 13:4-12, Acts 13:13-52, Acts 14:1-7, Acts 14:8-20, Acts 14:20-23, and Acts 14:24-28.

Learning Objectives

• State the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, and show how this "outpouring" confirms Luke's empowerment-witness motif.

• Identify, from Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field.

• Explain what part the demonstration of spiritual gifts played in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ.

• State three important indigenous church-planting principles learned from Paul's first missionary journey.

• Explain what it means that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking."

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Keep your Bible open. The chapter reviews a shorter passage before each part of the lesson.

The Big Idea

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

The Gentile Mission Begins

• We now progress in our study to the period of the Gentile mission. This is the third part of Jesus' missionary agenda as outlined in Acts 1:8.

• The church has already extended into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The time has now come for it to expand to the "ends of the earth."

• The "ends of the earth" in Acts 1:8 corresponds to the Gentile mission.

• The Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in the church in Antioch. We call this move of the Spirit the Antiochian "outpouring."

• It is the sixth of seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts and the first outpouring during the Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

The Story: The Antiochian "Outpouring" (Acts 13:1-3)

There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. These included Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger, or the Black Man), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. Once, during a time of worship and fasting, a prophetic word was given. In this word the Holy Spirit instructed the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the missionary ministry to which He had called them. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid their hands on the two missionaries and sent them on their way.

Commentary on the Antiochian "Outpouring"

• The church's Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church of Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• We have put the word "outpouring" in quotation marks because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings in Acts.

• It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit. We are calling it an outpouring, however, to maintain continuity in our terminology.

• It must be noted that this powerful move of the Spirit points to one or more prior outpourings of the Spirit in the church in Antioch.

• Luke has already described the beginning of the church in Antioch in 11:19-26. The church was started by Christian refugees who fled Jerusalem during the persecution that broke out after Stephen's martyrdom.

• It quickly grew into a powerful multiethnic church. Under the guidance and care of Saul and Barnabas and other talented leaders, it became a truly Spirit-anointed missional church.

• It was from this congregation that the church's first ever intentional missionary effort was launched and the Gentile mission officially began.

• Luke locates a pneuma event (that is, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit) near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys. These interventions of the Holy Spirit are more specifically located at the launching of new missionary initiatives, as indicated in Table 8.1.

• These pneuma events are significant because they let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

• The Antiochian outpouring is yet another key example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif first presented in 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

• By showing this pattern over and over, Luke is trying to show his readers that any believer or any church can be used mightily by God if they will be filled with the Holy Spirit and remain committed to fulfilling Christ's mission.

13:1 Antioch

• Antioch, Syria, was called the "Queen of the East" and was the third greatest city

in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

• It was a cosmopolitan city and a commercial trading center. Its population was made up mainly of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans.

• Antioch was an ideal location for the emergence of a thriving missionary church and as a base for Paul's three missionary journeys.

Prophets and teachers

• Every healthy church should have prophets and teachers in its membership.

• Paul describes both ministries as grace gifts given by Christ to the church (Ephesians 4:7-11).

• Both are also charismatic giftings, and according to Luke, both operate by inspiration of the Spirit (Luke 5:17; Acts 2:17-18; 4:2; 5:21, 25, 28; 11:28; 13:9-12; 21:10-11).

• Jesus himself was a prophet and a teacher (Luke 24:19; John 3:2; 13:13), as were Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:26; 13:1). Both ministries are needed in the church today.

13:2 Worshiping the Lord and fasting

• Luke sees the church as a worshiping body.

• Before Pentecost the disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53). After Pentecost the newly Spirit-baptized believers spent much time together "praising God" (Acts 2:47).

• The Jerusalem believers praised God after Peter's report that the Gentiles had received the Spirit at Caesarea (11:18). Also in Jerusalem, the brothers praised God for what He had done among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry (21:20).

• Now, in Antioch, Luke pictures the church "worshiping the Lord." Prayer with fasting was also a common practice of the New Testament church (Luke 5:35; Acts 13:3; 14:23).

The Holy Spirit said

• Luke included this move of the Spirit in Antioch because he wanted his readers to know that Paul's missionary journeys were an initiative of the Holy Spirit.

• On this occasion the Spirit spoke to the church through a prophetic gift. The

message could have come through tongues and interpretation or, more likely, through the gift of prophecy (compare 1 Corinthians 14:1-5).

The work to which I have called them

• True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed; they are called by God.

• Paul and Barnabas already knew their calling, and they knew God had sent them previously to Antioch. The issue here seems to be timing. The Spirit was saying that it was now time to begin the mission.

13:3 After they had fasted and prayed

• The church fasted and prayed after hearing the prophetic word concerning Barnabas and Saul. It seems that the church was testing the prophecy.

• Paul later wrote that prophecies must be tested. He said that "two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (1 Corinthians 14:29).

• We are to weigh prophecies by the Word of God and through prayer and fasting. No prophecy given in an assembly should be received until it is first tested and approved.

• The believers in Antioch could have also been seeking God's further insight and direction, or they may have been interceding for the safety and success of the two missionaries.

They placed their hands on them

• Just as apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed, neither are they self-sent.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit (compare 13:4).

• Paul himself later asked this question concerning missionaries: "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:15).

The Story: Cyprus: Spirit-Empowered Ministry (Acts 13:4-12)

Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the church in Antioch and by the Holy Spirit. With them was John Mark, Barnabas' nephew. The men traveled southwest from Antioch to the nearby coastal town of Seleucia. From there they

sailed to the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, disembarking at Salamis. There they preached the gospel in the local synagogue. They then traveled west across the island, preaching from town to town. Eventually, they reached Paphos on the western coast of Cyprus.

In Paphos, Barnabas and Saul met two men: the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus, and a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus. The proconsul sent for Barnabas and Saul to visit him so he could hear the word of God. However, Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas) opposed them and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith.

As this was happening, Paul was again filled with the Holy Spirit and given divine insight into what God was about to do. He looked straight at the sorcerer and announced that the hand of the Lord was against him and that he would go blind for a season. Immediately it happened: Elymas began to grope about in darkness, begging for someone to take him by the hand. When the proconsul saw this, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 13:4-12

• Being sent on their way by the church and by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Cyprus and began the primary work of missions, proclaiming the message of Christ.

• They moved systematically across the island preaching the gospel, and likely establishing congregations, wherever they went.

• It is also likely that there were already congregations of believers on the island that had been started by Christian refugees who fled because of the persecution begun after Stephen's martyrdom (8:1-4; 11:19-20).

• The meeting of Paul and Elymas is a classic power encounter. A power encounter is a situation in gospel ministry when the power of God is challenged by the power of Satan.

• Here the sorcerer Elymas opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith. He probably did not do this by using rational arguments against the Christian faith. He more likely tried to turn the proconsul from the faith by using his occultic arts.

• Paul, however, was filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly challenged him.

• Through a word of knowledge, the Spirit revealed to Paul what God was about to do. Acting in faith, Paul announced to Elymas that the hand of the Lord was against him, and that he would be blinded for a season.

• When Paul's prediction immediately came true, Sergius Paulus' heart was opened to the gospel, and he believed in Christ. The power of the God of Paul was superior to the dark powers of the sorcerer.

13:4 Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit

• Again the Holy Spirit is presented as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• He is the primary missionary strategist, the equipper, the sender, the director, the encourager, and the sustainer of missions.

Cyprus

• The residents of Cyprus were notorious for their immoral worship of the Roman goddess of love, Venus, and the Assyrian goddess of fertility and war, Astarte.

• The island was the birthplace and home of Barnabas. There was already a Christian presence on the island when Barnabas and Saul arrived (11:19).

13:5 Proclaimed the word of God

• The apostles' message was the word of God, or the gospel. This phrase is often used in Acts to mean the preaching of the gospel.

• In missions, our message is the full counsel of God (20:27), and the heart of that message is the message of Jesus (4:2; 5:42; 8:5; 9:20; 17:3).

13:9 Filled with the Holy Spirit

• This phrase is not describing Paul's initial filling with the Holy Spirit, for that happened several years earlier when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• This experience of Paul's can more properly be termed a refilling or an anointing with the Holy Spirit.

• Like Peter in 4:8, Paul is being anointed by the Spirit to release a spiritual gift.

13:12 The proconsul... believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord

• Power ministry is not an end in itself. The ultimate goal of power ministry is to bring people to faith in Christ.

• Power encounter (a demonstration of God's power) must always be accompanied by truth encounter (the proclamation of the gospel).

• In this verse "the teaching of the Lord" includes both proclamation and demonstration.

The Story: Pisidian Antioch: The Gospel Is Proclaimed (Acts 13:13-52)

From Paphos, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed northward until they arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There John left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, however, continued northward through Pamphylia as far as Pisidian Antioch. The next Sabbath Paul was invited to speak in the Jewish synagogue there.

Paul began his message by reminding those present of how God had blessed Israel in many ways. He especially blessed Israel by sending to them the message of salvation through Jesus, the Savior and descendant of David. Though the people of Jerusalem and their rulers rejected Jesus and asked Pilate to execute Him, God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. This was all foretold by the prophets. Now, through this same Jesus, they could have forgiveness of sins, and through faith in Him, they could be justified before God. This was a thing that the Law of Moses could never do. They therefore must not reject Jesus. If they were to do so, God would judge them, as the prophets had solemnly warned.

After the meeting, some asked Paul and Barnabas to come and speak again on these topics. Many Jews and God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and the apostles urged them to continue in God's grace.

The next Sabbath almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. This caused some Jews to become jealous, so they began to contradict what Paul was saying. Paul and Barnabas then turned to the Gentiles. As they did, they applied the words of Isaiah the prophet to themselves: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles." When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the Lord.

The word of the Lord then spread through the whole region. In response, the Jews

stirred up some high-ranking officials of the city, who in turn instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas, expelling them from their region. Paul and Barnabas therefore shook the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. The disciples in Antioch, nevertheless, were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Commentary on Acts 13:13-52

• Paul's sermon in Antioch is another example of apostolic preaching, sometimes called the apostolic kerygma. (For a discussion on the apostolic kerygma, see comments on 2:22-36.)

• As in every other case in Acts, Jesus is the central theme, especially His death and resurrection. Paul appeals to Scripture to prove his case. Finally, he calls his hearers to repentance and faith in Christ. These elements should be a part of all gospel preaching.

• Some commentators have pointed out that verses 38 and 39 are a summary of Paul's letter to the Galatians that he would later write to these same people: through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, and through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything they could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

13:30 God raised him from the dead

• In this short sermon Paul mentions Christ's resurrection five times (vv. 30, 33, 34, 35, 37), demonstrating its importance to the message of the gospel.

13:38 Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you

• We do not preach the gospel simply to transfer information.

• The purpose of gospel preaching is to call people to make a decision to follow Jesus and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him.

13:47 A light for the Gentiles... to the ends of the earth

• Jesus is Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). He is a light not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.

• The phrase "ends of the earth" (Greek eschatos tes ges) reminds us of Jesus' promise in 1:8: "You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth."

• Our mission is to preach the gospel in pentecostal power to all nations before Jesus returns (Matthew 24:14).

13:50 They stirred up persecution

• Although persecution came again and again, the apostles persisted in proclaiming the gospel.

13:52 The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

• This verse reveals that Paul led the new converts in Antioch into Spirit baptism, for they were "filled... with the Holy Spirit." This fact is borne out in Paul's own words (Galatians 3:2-5, 14).

• As a result of these people being filled with the Spirit, "the word of the Lord spread through the whole region" (Acts 13:49).

• Joy is one natural by-product of being filled with the Spirit (Luke 10:21; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

The Story: Iconium: Signs and Wonders (Acts 14:1-7)

Upon arriving in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue, as was their usual practice. There they preached with such power and clarity that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. However, as in Antioch, several Jews rejected the message of Christ and began to poison the minds of the Gentiles against the apostles by saying evil things about them. Paul and Barnabas were undaunted and stayed a long time in Iconium, preaching boldly. The Lord confirmed their message by performing mighty signs and wonders among the people.

The people of the city were, nevertheless, divided in their opinion concerning the apostles. Some supported them; some opposed them. When Paul and Barnabas learned of a plot to incite a mixed mob of Gentiles and Jews to capture and stone them, they fled for their lives from the city. They then went to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. Everywhere they went, they faithfully preached the gospel.

Commentary on Acts 14:1-7

• In Iconium, as in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas encountered the hostility of the Jews.

• Their preaching of the gospel resulted in division in the city. The cause of this division, however, was not their preaching; it was the reaction of those Jews who violently opposed the message.

14:1 They spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed

• It is important that we learn to proclaim the word of the Lord effectively.

• Effectiveness in preaching comes from the preacher's personal character, thorough knowledge of Scripture, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

14:3 Confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders

• Again God confirmed the word they preached with "miraculous signs and wonders." This is a favorite expression of Luke.

• In its various forms he uses it eleven times in Acts (2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12).

• Jesus promised that He would confirm the preaching of the gospel with "signs following" (Mark 16:15-18). That promise has never been taken away from us.

• As we faithfully go and preach the gospel to those who have never heard, we can expect God to confirm the message in the same way today. Signs and wonders are manifestations of the Spirit's power (Romans 15:19).

14:4 The apostles

• Here both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles. Apostolic ministry is broader than the original twelve. Apostles exist today.

• However, nowhere in Scripture is the word apostle used as a title (for example, the apostle Paul); it is always used to describe a function or ministry.

• We have no scriptural warrant for calling any person by the title "apostle." Those who use this title today may risk becoming guilty of pride or manipulation.

• We do, however, have abundant scriptural warrant for those who function in an apostolic ministry.

• Apostolic ministry involves pioneer church planting done in the power of the Spirit in formerly unpenetrated areas and among unreached peoples (Romans 15:17-21; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

14:6-7 They continued to preach the good news

• Even after being chased out of the city, Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the gospel.

• We cannot let opposition keep us from preaching Christ to the lost.

The Story: Lystra: Gifts in Operation (Acts 14:8-20)

One day, as Paul was preaching in Lystra, a crippled man was present who had been crippled from birth. During his message Paul looked directly at the man and saw that he had faith to be healed. Paul commanded the man, "Stand up on your feet!" The man immediately jumped up and began to walk.

The crowd went wild with excitement and began to shout that Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes come down to earth in human form. When the two apostles saw a pagan priest bringing two bulls to sacrifice to them, they ripped their clothes in dismay and cried out, telling the people to stop. "We are bringing you good news," they shouted to the people, "telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them." They told them that He was the same God who had revealed himself to them with rain and crops and had given them joy to fill their hearts. Even so, Paul and Barnabas had difficulty keeping the people from sacrificing to them.

About that time a delegation of Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and as they had done before, they began to poison the people's minds against Paul and Barnabas. An angry crowd then seized Paul, stoned him, and dragged him outside the city, leaving him for dead. But when the disciples gathered around him, he was revived and emboldened and went back into the city.

Commentary on Acts 14:8-20

• As a result of a wonderful miracle, Paul and Barnabas gained great credibility among the people of Lystra. They then seized the opportunity to present the gospel

to a more receptive audience.

14:9 Paul... saw that he had faith to be healed

• Only God can see into a person's heart and determine if there is faith. Paul could have known this only by divine revelation.

14:10 Stand up on your feet

• Like Peter, Paul uses a command of faith to heal the sick man (compare comment on 9:40).

• Speaking (or commanding) was the method Jesus used most often in healing the sick (Mark 7:34; Luke 4:39; 6:10; 7:14; 8:48; 13:12; 17:14; 18:42; John 5:8; 9:7; 11:43).

• Paul could have been exercising the gift of faith on this occasion (1 Corinthians 12:9).

• If the man had not stood up, Paul would have been shamed, and his ministry in Lystra would have been greatly hindered. However, since the man did stand, a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel resulted. Paul had to act with great faith to perform this miracle.

14:15 We are bringing you good news

• The primary purpose of all missionary ministry is to present the good news and call people to faith in Christ.

14:20 The disciples... gathered around him

• These disciples gathered around Paul to pray. They probably prayed for him to receive healing, which he did.

• They may have also prayed for him to receive a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

• He must have received strength and boldness from the Lord, for after they prayed, he went back into the city.

Further Insight: Spiritual Gifts in Missionary Work

• We learn from the book of Acts that the operation of spiritual gifts is an important part of missionary work.

• In Paul's ministry in Lystra, spiritual gifts opened the way for effective

evangelism. This was true in many other instances in Acts.

• According to this author's count, there are sixty-six instances of spiritual gifts in operation in Acts. This includes gifts from all three categories: prophetic gifts, revelation gifts, and power gifts (compare 1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

• Unlike Paul's epistles, which focus on the operation of spiritual gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12-14), Acts focuses on the operation of spiritual gifts in evangelism and missions.

• These gifts often worked together in groups to bring about the desired result of people coming to Christ.

• This happened in Lystra. As Paul was preaching a Spirit-anointed message (a prophetic gift), he was enabled by the Spirit to look into a man's heart and see that he had faith to be healed (a revelation gift). Then, acting in extraordinary faith, Paul commanded the crippled man to stand on his feet. The man obeyed, and a miracle occurred (a power gift).

• A similar thing took place when Peter and John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (3:1-4:4). Gifts were manifested from all three categories. Through a word of knowledge (revelation), Peter knew that it was God's time to heal the lame man. Through a gift of healing (power), the man was miraculously healed. And through a manifestation of the gift of prophecy (prophetic), Peter stood and powerfully addressed the crowd. Because of the release of these three categories of spiritual gifts, many were added to the kingdom (4:4).

• Every missionary and minister of the gospel must ensure that spiritual gifts are in operation in his or her life and ministry. The missionary or minister should also ensure that the church he or she plants understands how to operate in the gifts of the Spirit.

The Story: Derbe: Soul Harvest (Acts 14:20-23)

The following day Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe. While there, they preached the gospel and won many new disciples to the Lord. They then returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they strengthened the new believers, encouraging them to remain true to the Lord in spite of persecution. They also appointed elders in each church and committed them to the Lord with a time of prayer and fasting.

Commentary on Acts 14:20-23

• Few details are given concerning Paul and Barnabas' missionary ministry in Derbe. What we are told, however, is exciting. As a result of their preaching the gospel there, the apostles experienced a great soul harvest!

14:21 They preached the good news... and won a large number of disciples

• True to their commission from Christ, the apostles preached the gospel in Derbe, as they had done in every other place (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). As a result, they won many people to the Lord.

14:22 Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them

• The missionary's role goes beyond simply preaching the gospel and bringing people to salvation. Jesus told us that we are to make disciples of them (Matthew 28:19).

• A disciple is more than a convert; a disciple is a follower and learner of Christ.

• The missionary's role thus includes encouraging Christ's followers to remain true to Him. This can be done through fellowship (Romans 1:12; Ephesians 6:21-22; Philemon 7; Hebrews 10:25), teaching (Acts 20:2; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 2 Timothy 4:2), and prophetic words (Acts 9:31; 15:32; 27:33-36; 1 Corinthians 14:3).

The kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is mentioned eight times in Acts (1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

• It can be defined as God's sovereign reign over His creation. Christ has been declared king over the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15).

• Therefore, to preach the gospel of the kingdom is to preach Christ (Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31).

• We are to preach the gospel in all the world before Jesus comes again (Matthew 24:14).

The Story: Antioch: The First Missions Convention (Acts 14:24-28)

Leaving Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas returned through Pisidia into Pamphylia. After they had preached in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where the church had first committed them to the work they had now completed. When the church gathered, the apostles gave a report of all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. They then remained in Antioch with the disciples for a long while.

Commentary on Acts 14:24-28

• This passage tells us of the world's first ever missions convention in Scripture.

• After Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary journey into southern Galatia, the church gathered to hear their report. It was a report of how God's grace had reached out to the Gentiles.

• The apostles shared how God had sustained them in the work and how the Spirit had moved in power among the Gentiles.

• The sending church in Antioch must have rejoiced when its members heard about the healing, deliverance, hope, and salvation that had come to those who had never before heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

14:26 The work they had now completed

• The two apostles did not just begin their mission; they completed it.

• They were able to endure the hardships and complete their mission because they were truly called of God (13:2), because they remained focused on their mission (14:21, 25), and because they stayed full of the Holy Spirit (13:9).

• We too can complete the work that God has given us, even under trying circumstances, if we will do the same.

14:27 They gathered the church together

• The church was excited and anxious to hear what God had accomplished through their missionaries. They therefore called a special missionary meeting to hear the apostles' report.

Reported all that God had done through them

• The believers in Antioch must have rejoiced when they heard how God had worked through Paul and Barnabas to bring Christ to the Galatians, both Jews and Gentiles.

• The essence of missions is God working through Spirit-filled missionaries to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost and to demonstrate the power and superiority of His kingdom through mighty signs and wonders.

God... opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

• When Paul was saved and filled with the Spirit, God had informed him that he would be His "chosen instrument to carry [His] name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18).

• Now Paul's apostleship and missionary calling to the Gentiles had been firmly established. God used Barnabas and him to open to them "the door of faith."

Further Insight: Planting Indigenous Churches

• Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey gives us our first insight into Paul's missionary methods.

• Paul planted churches. Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

• Indigenous churches are churches that are able to support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

The methods he used to plant such churches

• Proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13:5, 23-43; 14:3, 7, 14-18; 14:21).

• Demonstrating God's power through signs and wonders (13:9-12; 14:3, 8-10).

• Ensuring that those who were saved were also filled with the Holy Spirit (13:52).

• Teaching and encouraging new disciples to remain true to the faith (13:43).

• Mobilizing believers to reach out to others (13:49).

Paul appointed leaders over the churches

• According to Acts 14:23, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church." These men would lead the church in Paul's absence.

• Church leaders should be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). They should also be people of mature character and respected in the community (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Paul trusted the Holy Spirit

• The last part of Acts 14:23 says, "With prayer and fasting, [Paul and Barnabas] committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

• Paul and Barnabas could commit these new disciples to the Lord because they knew that they had been truly converted and filled with the Spirit (13:52; 14:1).

• If we make sure that people have been truly born of the Spirit and that they have been filled with the Spirit, then we can trust the Holy Spirit to teach and guide them, just as He has taught and guided us (compare John 14:25-26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

Conclusion

• God had opened the door to the Gentiles; however, not all of the church was convinced.

• Certain Jewish Christians in Jerusalem felt strongly that one must first become a good Jew before becoming a Christian.

• This meant that before the Gentiles could follow Christ, they must first accept and adopt a Jewish lifestyle, which involved keeping the Jewish laws, including circumcision.

• This was a nearly impossible requirement for most Gentiles. It would keep most of them out of the church.

• The question needed to be settled once and for all. In the next chapter we will see how the church addressed this critical question.

Figure 8.1: Paul's First Missionary Journey

Figure 8.1. Paul's first missionary journey, reconstructed from the chapter narrative. The original is a map in the printed book.

• Antioch: The sending church. During worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid hands on

them and sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

• Cyprus: Via Seleucia they sailed to Salamis, preached across the island, and at Paphos the proconsul Sergius Paulus believed after a power encounter with Elymas (Acts 13:4-12).

• Pisidian Antioch: Via Perga in Pamphylia. Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:13-52).

• Iconium: They preached boldly a long time. The Lord confirmed the message with signs and wonders. A plot to stone them drove them on (Acts 14:1-7).

• Lystra: Paul healed a man crippled from birth. The crowd tried to sacrifice to them as Zeus and Hermes. Jews from Antioch and Iconium had Paul stoned; the disciples gathered around him, and he went back into the city (Acts 14:8-20).

• Derbe: They preached the gospel and won a large number of disciples (Acts 14:20-21).

• Return: They returned through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, strengthening the disciples, appointing elders in each church, and committing them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. Then through Pisidia and Pamphylia they preached in Perga and went down to Attalia (Acts 14:21-25).

• Report: They sailed back to Antioch of Syria, gathered the church, and reported all that God had done and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles: the first missions convention in Scripture (Acts 14:26-28).

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions. Luke locates a pneuma event, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys, at the launching of new missionary initiatives. These pneuma events let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Journey · Pneuma event · Scripture

• Journey: First missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Antiochian "outpouring". Scripture: Acts 13:1-4

• Journey: Second missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Spirit redirects the team to Macedonia. Scripture: Acts 16:6-10

• Journey: Third missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Ephesian outpouring. Scripture: Acts 19:1-7

Important Terms

Antiochian "outpouring". The powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch that set apart Barnabas and Saul and launched the Gentile mission.

Pneuma event. A moment marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern: the Spirit comes, and witness follows.

Power encounter and truth encounter. Power encounter: God's power meeting Satan's power. Truth encounter: preaching the gospel. Both belong together.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs and oversees the work of missions.

Apostolic kerygma. The apostles' gospel preaching: Jesus at the center, especially His death and resurrection, proved from Scripture, calling people to repent and believe.

Indigenous churches. Churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

Apostolic ministry. Pioneer church planting in the Spirit's power among peoples who have not yet been reached. It is a function, not a title.

Key People

• Barnabas: Prophet and teacher in Antioch; sent with Saul by the church and the Holy Spirit. Cyprus was his birthplace and home. In Iconium both he and Paul are called apostles.

• Saul (Paul): Prophet and teacher in Antioch; set apart with Barnabas for missionary ministry. On Cyprus he was again filled with the Spirit and released a spiritual gift. This was a refilling, not his initial filling, which happened when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen: Prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, along with Barnabas and Saul. Simeon was also called Niger, or the Black Man.

Lucius was from Cyrene. Manaen was the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch.

• John Mark: Barnabas' nephew. He traveled with them from Antioch to Cyprus and as far as Perga in Pamphylia, where he left the group and returned to Jerusalem.

• Sergius Paulus: Proconsul of Cyprus. He sent for Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God. After the power encounter with Elymas, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

• Elymas (Bar-Jesus): A Jewish sorcerer and false prophet at Paphos who opposed the missionaries and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith, likely by occultic arts. Paul announced that he would go blind for a season, and it happened immediately.

Key Places

• Antioch of Syria: Called the "Queen of the East," the third greatest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. A cosmopolitan trading center of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans. Base of Paul's three missionary journeys, and the sending church of this journey.

• Seleucia: The nearby coastal town southwest of Antioch, from which the missionaries sailed to Cyprus.

• Cyprus: Island in the eastern Mediterranean, birthplace and home of Barnabas. They preached from Salamis in the east to Paphos in the west. There was already a Christian presence there (11:19).

• Perga in Pamphylia: Where John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. They later preached there again on the return journey.

• Pisidian Antioch: Where Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

• Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe: Cities of the first journey in Asia Minor. In Iconium, signs and wonders confirmed the message. In Lystra, a crippled man was healed and Paul was stoned. In Derbe, they won a large number of disciples.

• Attalia: The port from which they sailed back to Antioch after preaching in Perga.

Key Event

The Antiochian "outpouring": while the church was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them, and the church and the Spirit sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

This is the sixth of seven key outpourings in Acts and the first of the Gentile mission. The author places "outpouring" in quotation marks because it is technically an action or move of the Spirit rather than an outpouring like the other six. It launched the church's first ever intentional missionary effort.

Key Verse

"Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit."

Acts 13:4

Remember This

• The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit.

• Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

Life Application: Become a Spirit-Empowered Missional Church

• If we are to have powerful missionary churches, we must be ever open to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

• We must ensure that our members have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and that they thoroughly understand their responsibility of remaining full of the Spirit and focused on the mission of God.

• A truly missional church like the church in Antioch will reach out aggressively in evangelism and church planting. At the same time, it will remain focused on the nations that need to hear the gospel.

• Such a church will be strong in pastoral care and discipleship training. The gifts of the Spirit will be in operation, and the people will be taught to give generously and sacrificially to the work of missions.

• The truly missional church will gather often for Spirit-anointed worship and times of intensive prayer and fasting.

• It is God's will for every local congregation to be a Spirit-empowered missional church.

Life Application: Trust the Spirit in Opposition

• When involved in gospel ministry, we must trust the Lord to anoint us to proclaim the gospel with power.

• We must also trust Him to manifest His power through us in the release of spiritual gifts.

• When we face opposition from Satan, we can be confident that the Spirit of God is more powerful than the power of the enemy (1 John 4:4).

• If we are full of the Spirit, we can boldly challenge demonic forces in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• In all that we do, our goal must be to point people to Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Life Application: Preach Christ to All Peoples

• We must be faithful to preach the gospel wherever we go. As we preach, the cross of Christ must remain our central message.

• We must clearly teach people of His saving work on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead.

• We must tell them that through faith in Him, they can have forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

• Further, we must let them know that Christ has ascended to the right hand of God where He has poured out the Holy Spirit to fill us with His joy and to empower us to reach others with the message of the cross.

• And, in all that we do, we must never forget that the gospel is not for our people only; it is for all people everywhere on earth.

Life Application: Keep Preaching When Some Oppose

• When we go out to preach the gospel, we must not expect everyone to receive

our message gladly. Some, however, will.

• Apostolic ministry in formerly unreached areas will be difficult work. There may be powerful spiritual forces present that will blind people to the gospel.

• Whatever the case, we must continue to preach the good news as long as God wants us to remain in an area.

• If we will live holy lives, remain full of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully proclaim the gospel, we can expect God to confirm His Word by performing signs and wonders.

Life Application: Gospel Ministry Is More Than Talking

• To be truly effective missionaries and ministers of the gospel, we must know how to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to be used by Him to minister spiritual gifts.

• Gospel ministry is more than simply talking (1 Corinthians 4:20).

• It also involves hearing and obeying the voice of the Spirit and preaching and teaching the gospel under His anointing (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

• It further involves acting in faith and allowing the Spirit to minister through us by prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance.

• If this is to happen in our lives and ministries, we must learn to walk in the Spirit daily. In addition, we must live lives of prayer and holiness before the Lord.

Life Application: Have Confidence in the Gospel

• In Derbe the preaching of the gospel resulted in a great harvest of souls.

• Because Paul had great confidence in the gospel he preached, he did not hesitate to preach it wherever he went. He knew that it contained the power of God to bring people to salvation (Romans 1:16).

• We, too, should have great confidence in the gospel, and we should be faithful to preach it often, calling people to faith and repentance.

• We must never forget that the message of Jesus is the only message that will get people to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Life Application: Hold Missions Meetings

• Like the church in Antioch, churches today should also have missionary meetings.

• In these meetings, missionaries can share with the church their calling and burden for the lost. They can also share news about what God is doing among the people to whom they have been sent.

• Such meetings will encourage the people to participate in missions through prayer, giving, and maybe even going themselves.

• They will also encourage the missionaries, knowing that the church stands behind them in their work.

• Every church must be involved in missions in this way.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch? How does this "outpouring" of the Spirit help to confirm Luke's empowerment-witness motif?

• 2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field?

• 3. What part did the demonstration of spiritual gifts play in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ?

• 4. Discuss the role of spiritual gifts in missionary work in the contemporary world. Are they primary or secondary in demonstrating the superiority of the gospel?

• 5. What three important indigenous church-planting principles can we learn from Paul's first missionary journey?

• 6. What does it mean that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking?"

• 7. Has your church held any missions services or conventions? Discuss this question.

Quick Review

1. Why does the author put "outpouring" in quotation marks when he writes of the

Antiochian "outpouring"?

Answer: Because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings. It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit.

2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who sent Barnabas and Saul?

Answer: They were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed and not self-sent.

3. How did spiritual gifts play a part in Sergius Paulus' conversion?

Answer: Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Through a word of knowledge he announced that Elymas would go blind for a season. When it happened immediately, the proconsul was astonished and believed. Power encounter was accompanied by truth encounter.

4. What three indigenous church-planting principles come from this journey?

Answer: Paul planted indigenous churches (churches able to support, govern, and extend themselves). He appointed Spirit-filled, wise leaders (elders) in each church. He trusted the Holy Spirit, committing the new disciples to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

5. What does it mean that gospel ministry is more than just talking?

Answer: It involves hearing and obeying the Spirit, preaching under His anointing, and acting in faith so the Spirit can minister through prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance (1 Corinthians 4:20; 2:1-5).

Chapter Summary

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. This is the sixth of seven key outpourings and the first of the Gentile mission.

• On Cyprus a power encounter opened Sergius Paulus to the gospel. In Asia Minor they preached, God confirmed the word with signs and wonders, and they planted churches.

• Paul planted indigenous churches: he proclaimed the gospel, demonstrated God's power, saw new believers filled with the Spirit, appointed elders, and committed them to the Lord.

Remain full of the Spirit and focused on Christ's mission, preach more than words,

and plant churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

A powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch launched the Gentile mission; Barnabas and Saul preached on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, planted indigenous churches, and reported back to the sending church.