

Sample Study

Acts 13-28

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Read - Acts 13:1-15:35; other references as given.

Before you begin, take a minute to ask God to reveal Himself to you through His Word.

1. Jesus Christ commissioned the apostles to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8). The first twelve chapters of Acts record the divinely orchestrated “accidental” expansion of the gospel throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Acts 13-28 records the intentional expansion of the gospel from Antioch to Rome, the Gentile capital of the world. **As they [the church] ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”** (Acts 13:2). What spiritual qualities were present in the lives of these two men before God called them to missionary work (Acts 13:1, 2; cf. Acts 4:35, 36; 11:22-26)?

2. The beginning verses of Acts 13 are important because they describe the first planned foreign missionary outreach from a local church. Before this time all evangelistic outreach was carried out by individuals who did not have the original endorsement of the church (e.g., Philip, Peter). Some Christians go out as independent foreign missionaries without being commissioned by a local church. *Do you think* this is a good idea? Why?

3. Wherever the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed through dedicated servants, God’s people can expect Satan to attack the work and workers. Barnabas and Paul landed in Salamis on the eastern end of Cyprus and traveled westward toward Paphos, the seat of government (Acts 13:6-12). In Paphos, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus (Aramaic for “son of Joshua”) attempted to hinder their ministry (Acts 13:8). As an apostle, Paul pronounced divine judgment upon Bar-Jesus because he did not **cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord** (Acts 13:10, 11). Previously, Stephen prayed for God’s mercy for those who were stoning him (cf. Acts 7:60). *Do you think* believers should pray for God’s judgment or His mercy upon those who oppose the work of God? Why?

4. The missionaries left Cyprus and traveled by sea to Perga in Pamphylia (i.e., south central Turkey) where their helper John Mark deserted them (Acts 13:13, cf. 15:38). (Note: some commentators believe John left because he was not originally called into service by the Holy Spirit.) Paul and Barnabas traveled next to Pisidian Antioch where Paul was invited to give a word of exhortation to those attending the synagogue (v.15). He recounted the history of Israel (vv. 17-23) and said that Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s promise to King David that one of his offspring would be the Messiah (v. 23).
 - a. Paul mentioned three specific spiritual errors that the Jewish people committed during Jesus’ life on earth. What were they (Acts 13:26-29)?

 - b. What warning did Paul give to the Jews at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:40)?

5. Barnabas and Paul were dedicated Christian leaders who had been handpicked by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel to the Gentile world.
 - a. How did the people respond to Paul’s message (Acts 13:42-45, 50)

- b. Sometimes Christians become discouraged when others do not respond positively to their witness for Christ. How do you normally respond when someone rejects your attempts to witness to them?

6. When the Jews contradicted Paul's preaching, He said, "**It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles**" (Acts 13:46). How do we know that Paul's turning to the Gentiles was God's will and not simply a spiteful reaction to the Jews' opposition?

7. The phrase **as many as were appointed to eternal life believed** (Acts 13:48) seems to endorse a "divine election" view of salvation. However, in the next chapter the Bible says that Paul and Barnabas **spoke that a great multitude ... believed**. The latter statement seems to indicate that the speaking ability of the two missionaries was a major factor in the salvation of the people (Acts 14:1).
 - a. How can a Christian speak in such a manner that others believe (Acts 14:3; Acts 6:10)?

 - b. What kind of things should be absent from a Christian's speech when he shares the truth with others (1 Cor. 2:1-5; Acts 13:10; Titus 1:10:11)?

 - c. Do you rely on God and His strength or on human ability when you share God's Word with other people?

8. Barnabas and Paul spent a long time in Iconium **speaking boldly in the Lord** (Acts 14:3). One would expect great results to occur as a result of the ministry of these two dedicated Christian servants.
 - a. What were some of the reactions to their ministry (Acts 14:2,4, 5)?

 - b. How did the missionaries respond to their mistreatment (Acts 14:6, 7)?

9. Some Christians rarely witness to others for Christ. Perhaps they have never learned to trust Christ to overcome their fear or they have tried to witness and believe they failed. Rather than trusting Christ to help them learn to be an effective witness for Him, they have convinced themselves that they can never become an effective witness for Jesus Christ.
 - a. What did Jesus say to the disciples when He originally called them into His service (Mk. 1:17)?

 - b. Jesus taught at least two important truths about personal evangelism in this verse. What are they?

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1.
 1. Barnabas was a generous man who was willing to use his material possessions for the advancement of the gospel (Acts 4:35).
 2. Barnabas was a man who had the ability to encourage others in the Lord (Acts 4:36).
 3. Barnabas was a good man who was full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:22, 24).
 4. Barnabas was a wise leader who realized the need to involve others in the teaching ministry of the believers at Antioch (Acts 11:25).
 5. Barnabas and Paul had demonstrated effective spiritual leadership in the church at Antioch prior to their call (Acts 11:26).
 6. Barnabas and Paul were also busy serving in the church from which the Holy Spirit called them (Acts 13:2).
2. The spiritual magnitude of world missions necessitates the prayer support of God's people. Some independent missionaries fail to gather the prayer support of God's people that is essential to spiritual effectiveness in missionary work. All missionaries should be accountable to the local church, which is another important aspect of missionary work. Other answers could apply.
3. The believer should pray for God's mercy. Although there are examples in the Bible of God's people asking Him to bring judgment upon their spiritual enemies, the Christian should not use these examples as a pattern to follow. Sometimes the OT psalmists asked God to exact judgment on their enemies. (Note: these psalms are commonly known as the imprecatory psalms.) Under the OT Mosaic covenant, God obligated Himself to defend His people against their enemies if His people would obey the stipulations of the covenant (cf. Dt. 28). However, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) that God's people are to bless those who curse and persecute them (Matt. 5:10, 11). The apostles (Acts 4:8 ff.), Stephen (Acts 8:60) and Paul (1 Cor. 4:12, 13) all followed Christ's teaching and manifested an attitude of spiritual non-retaliation. However, a notable exception was when the apostle Paul said he delivered a man unwilling to repent of his immoral living situation to Satan for the destruction of His flesh (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4-5). Regarding the incident with Bar-Jesus, it is likely that Paul was acting as God's apostolic representative when he pronounced judgment upon Bar-Jesus. This is hardly a position that an ordinary believer should assume.
4.
 - a.
 1. The Jewish leaders did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 13:26).
 2. The Jewish leaders did not understand the words of the prophets (Acts 13:26).
 3. The Jewish leaders killed Jesus just as the prophets had predicted (Acts 13:29).
 - b. Paul warned the people of Pisidian Antioch to be careful so that God's judgment did not come upon them.
5.
 - a.
 1. Many of the Jews begged Barnabas and Paul to tell them the same things the next Sabbath (v. 42).
 2. The people followed them (v. 43).
 3. All the people of the city gathered together to hear them (v. 44).
 4. Some of the Jews (probably the Jewish leaders) were filled with jealousy and were blaspheming (Acts 13:45).
 5. These Jewish leaders stirred up the prominent women and the leading men of the city and instigated a persecution which drove Barnabas and Paul out of the city (Acts 13:50).
 - b. Answers will vary.
6. Paul and Barnabas interpreted the Jews' rejection of the gospel as God's will to turn their spiritual attention to the Gentiles. They believed Isaiah's prophecy (cf. Acts 13:47; Is. 42:6) applied to them directly (**the Lord has commanded us**).
7.
 - a. A believer should speak boldly or confidently with reliance upon the Lord. This means that he should not trust in his own ability to speak or persuade men but he should rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide him as he speaks. He should also trust Jesus Christ to work in the hearts of those who heard the message of salvation, trusting God to convict and convince of sin and the need for salvation.
 - b.
 1. There should not be any use of human wisdom that contradicts the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:1).
 2. There should not be any use of deceit or mental manipulation (Acts 13:10).
 3. There should not be any gainsaying, which is religious teaching motivated by a desire to exploit others for the personal financial advantage of the teacher (Titus 1:10-11).

c. Answers will vary.

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8. a.
 1. The Jews who did not accept the message of salvation stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against those who had been saved (Acts 14:2).
 2. Some of the people believed the missionaries, and others did not (Acts 14:4).
 3. Some of the Jews and the Gentiles who did not believe the gospel tried to mistreat Barnabas and Paul and even attempted to stone them (Acts 14:5).
 - b. They fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, Derbe, and the surrounding region where they continued to preach the gospel.
9. a. "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."
 - b.
 1. A Christian must learn to follow Christ first of all.
 2. A Christian does not automatically know how to be an effective fisher of men - it is something the believer must learn to do as he follows Christ.
 3. Like a fisherman, an effective witness for Christ must use wisdom and learn how to create an interest in those he hopes to catch for Christ.