

# Acts 13:1-12

## October 19, 2025



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

In our passage today, Barnabas and Saul were sent out for mission work. In their story we are reminded that God can work in and through anyone for the good of the kingdom and for His glory.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What have you been learning so far in our study of Acts? Any takeaways you'd like to share?**

**When you think of someone or something being "commissioned," what comes to mind? How do we commission people in the church as the body of Christ?**

We've been following along with the happenings of the early church and today, we will study a very important and impactful event: the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas for



mission work. The results of this mission work would have a huge impact of the spread of the gospel in the first century!

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 13:1-3.

**What stands out to you in these verses? What was the church doing? What descriptors do we receive of the body?**

**How did Saul and Barnabas and the other believers respond to God's call to send them out? How might they have responded otherwise?**

The church at Antioch was made up of believers with different giftings (all spiritual gifts are valuable in the body of Christ), seeking God through worshiping and fasting. As they were doing this, the Holy Spirit prompted them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for specific work.

Notice the immediate obedience of the body. The commissioning involved them fasting, praying, laying hands on them, and then “they sent them off.” (v.3) Barnabas and Saul were the only ones physically going out on mission at this time, but support like fasting and prayer is vital for missional kingdom work—both in that time and now.

Barnabas and Saul were also immediately obedient to the call of the Spirit. If you've read the book of Acts (and much of the rest of the New Testament), you know the incredible impact their “yes” had for the gospel. Their work is still impacting believers today.

Note, the believers heard the Holy Spirit's call as they were intentionally seeking to grow stronger in their faith and closer to the Lord through spiritual disciplines. Many of us don't recognize God giving us direction in our lives, but it's not that the Lord isn't calling, it's just that we haven't slowed down the noise in our lives enough to listen for Him.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 13:4-12.

**What significant events took place in Cyprus?**

**Where do you note the apostles speaking with boldness and authority? What enabled them to do so? How are we enabled to do the same today?**

**How do you see God at work in this passage?**



Once again, Luke emphasized the kingdom work Barnabas and Saul set out for was ordained and guided by the Holy Spirit. When we say “yes” to the ways God desires to use us for His kingdom and glory, the Holy Spirit guides us too!

This passage describes the beginning of Paul’s first of three missionary journeys. “Saul” was the Jewish version of his name, and “Paul” was the Roman version of his name (Paul was a Roman citizen). From this point on in Acts, he was largely referred to as Paul, perhaps because his ministry focused primarily on the Gentiles.

In Paphos, they encountered a sorcerer who was demonically influenced. Note the curiosity of the proconsul (who governed the Roman province). Many times in Paul’s ministry we will see curiosity and openness from Gentiles, in contrast with closed hearts from the Jews.

Elymas, under demonic influence, attempted “to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (v.8), but the Lord had other plans! With the Holy Spirit’s guidance, Paul saw the truth about Elymas and called him out. Paul’s speech here gives us insight into some of the enemy’s favorite tactics—“deceit and trickery” (v.10) and “perverting the straight paths of the Lord” (v.10). The enemy’s constant goal is to sidetrack believers through lies and twisting and opposing God’s plan for our lives. For non-believers, his goal is to keep them from believing, like we see from Elymas here.

The Lord’s immediate judgment on Elymas astounded the proconsul into believing, but the absence of a mention of the Holy Spirit or baptism is significant. It’s possible Luke shortened his account, but it’s possible the proconsul’s belief wasn’t that of Christian regeneration.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**Where do you need to make room to listen for the voice of God this week?**

**How can we support missionaries that the Holy Spirit has chosen for kingdom work today?**

**What does the story of Barnabas and Saul’s calling teach us about surrendering to God’s will for our lives? How does this type of surrender give us opportunity to share the gospel with others?**

God can work in and through anyone. Paul, who once ravaged the church, is a perfect example. When we become believers, God gives us spiritual gifts He desires us to put to use in the body of Christ. We all have gifts, and He wants to use all of us. A kingdom calling isn’t reserved only for international mission work and preaching. Consider how



God has gifted you and how can you use that to benefit the church and live out the Great Commission. You were created on purpose for a purpose, and the Holy Spirit walks with you each day.

## **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Thank God for desiring to use us and the gifts He has given us! Ask Him to reveal the gifts He has given to the members of your group and the ways that He desires you to use them. Ask for His help as you reflect on how you can more actively serve the body of Christ with the unique gifts He has given.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

**October 26, 2025 --- Acts 13:13-41**

## **COMMENTARY**

**Acts 13:1-12**

**13:1** Prophets and teachers apparently refer to functions and (possibly) offices within the early church. The teachers continued the apostolic function of transmitting Jesus's message (see note at 6:2–4), while prophets conveyed divine revelation via interpreting the OT or giving new insights (11:27). This is the only reference in Acts to teachers, although the function of teacher is described elsewhere in the NT (1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11; 1Tm 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; 2Tm 1:11; 2:24). The group of prophets and teachers was diverse, including people from Africa and Cyrene, and at least one person (Manaen) who was connected to Herod's household.

**13:2–3** The routine of the prophets and teachers included worshiping the Lord and fasting. This helps to account for their openness to the Holy Spirit, who directed them to set aside Barnabas and Saul for a work to which the Spirit had called them. Barnabas and Saul were confirmed in their calling after a process of fasting, praying, and laying on of hands. This commissioning marks an important turning point in the history of the church, as Saul and Barnabas were selected to extend the gospel message beyond Judea and surrounding regions.

**13:4** This verse describes the beginning of the first of Paul's three missionary journeys. This journey included the island of Cyprus and a part of Asia Minor. The first two



journeys began and ended in Antioch, which had become a center for world Christianity, committed to evangelizing Gentiles. Paul's third journey ended in Jerusalem because he was arrested there before he could make his way to Antioch (see chap. 21).

**13:5** Paul began his preaching efforts at local synagogues, continuing his early pattern (see note at 9:19–20). John (“John ... Mark,” 12:25) was with them for now (but see 13:13 and note).

**13:6** Just as Peter had a confrontation with a magician (Simon; see note at 8:9), so Paul confronted a sorcerer on Cyprus. Parallels in Acts between the lives of Peter and Paul have been noted by scholars. These include healing a lame man (3:2–8; 14:8–10; cp. 5:15; 19:12), exorcism (5:16; 16:18), being miraculously freed from prison (12:6–11; 16:25–26), receipt of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (8:17; 19:6), and raising the dead (9:36–41; 20:9–12).

**13:7** A proconsul governed a Roman province. Archaeology has turned up evidence for many of the proconsuls of Cyprus. At least one inscription bears the name “Paulus,” but he is too late to be Sergius Paulus.

**13:8** The sorcerer Bar-Jesus (v. 6) is here called Elymas. Possibly Elymas is a Semitic word, as is Bar-Jesus, and “sorcerer” is its translation. In any case, true to his demonic influence, Elymas tried to keep Sergius Paulus from embracing the gospel.

**13:9** From this point on in the book of Acts, Saul is referred to as Paul (except when here counted his conversion experience in chaps. 22 and 26). Perhaps the switch in preference is because his missionary ventures moved him outside of a more distinctly Jewish context and into the larger Greco-Roman world. Paul was the Roman version of his name.

**13:10–11** Paul called down a punishment of blindness on Elymas for a time. Hence the judgment was not permanent, giving Elymas the chance to repent and believe.

**13:12** The signs normally associated with conversion in Acts (baptism, reception of the Spirit) do not appear in this account of Sergius Paulus's conversion. Possibly Luke just abbreviated his account, but it is also possible that Paulus's belief amounted to nothing more than his being astonished at the teaching and the blindness that befell Elymas.

**13:13** John Mark (son of Mary, 12:12) left them at Perga and went back to Jerusalem. No reason is given for his leaving, but it must have seemed unwarranted to Paul, for on the second missionary journey Barnabas suggested that they take John along, but Paul refused, pointing out that John had previously abandoned them (15:37–38).

