

Stepping Out in God

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being open to God's call, surrendering to His leading, and trusting in His sovereignty and timing, as exemplified in the story of Paul and Barnabas.

Duration: 19:21

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:8-9, Mark 11:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:43, Acts 13:1-3

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for divine equipment to carry out God's work. He refers to the story of Sergius Paulus, who believed in the teaching of the Lord when he witnessed the manifestation of power and love. The speaker highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit moving in the church and the ability to discern the secrets of strangers' hearts. He emphasizes that God works through signs and wonders and that our faith and expectancy determine our experience of God. The sermon encourages stepping out in faith and following God's leading, even when we don't have all the details.

Transcript

This is especially dedicated to those here who have this burning desire, I am somehow called to do some special work for the Lord. I used to sit out of college, working the business world, and God was dealing with me, never dreaming I would end up in the ministry. But you just have to be open.

You have to be open to God. Well, a great turning point in the New Testament, as I've mentioned before, is this. In the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, which means black, he probably was from Africa, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul, his name was not yet Paul, his name was still Saul of Tarsus, he was a fairly new convert.

And he and Barnabas, by the way, had been in Antioch at this great church for a year, teaching the disciples there and strengthening them in their faith. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, what made them fast, why they were worshiping the Lord in some special way, but they were worshiping the Lord, they probably were following James's later injunction, which was, draw near to God and he will what? As you draw near to God through fasting and worship and special time with God, God has promised to draw near to us. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, how did he say it? Doesn't say in the text.

Probably through some gift of the Holy Spirit, through some prophetic gift or tongues or interpretation of tongues as listed in 1 Corinthians 12. There definitely was not an audible voice in the auditorium or the place, the house where they were meeting. The Holy Spirit said, notice the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that he is God, the Holy Spirit, making his own decisions and choices. Set apart for me, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit said, set apart for me.

For who? For me, the Holy Spirit. Very powerful passage. Set apart for me, the Holy Spirit said, Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them.

Who's I? The Holy Spirit. Set apart for me. I want to now control and lead them into something different.

I've had them in Antioch for a while, but now I want them to do something different. It's a work I've called them to do. This is the mystery of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all persons making up one God and all exhibiting sovereignty here.

The Holy Spirit is saying, set apart for me to the work I've called them to. What a dramatic moment. And it changes, of course, the rest of the whole Bible.

That's Acts 13. If you go through the rest of the book of Acts, it follows Paul, not Peter, not James, not John. It follows Paul, who wasn't one of the original 12 disciples.

Most of the letters written in the rest of the New Testament, most of them written by Paul, who's still called Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the church and now a fairly new convert, a couple years in the Lord. So after they had fasted and prayed, the leadership at the church and the congregation possibly, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, that's on the coast, and they sailed from there to Cyprus.

Cyprus is the closest island to Palestine, the closest island to that part in the Mediterranean. When they arrived at Salamis, Salamis is on the northeast corner, so they sailed down, stopped at Salamis. They proclaimed the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues, plural.

So they went where there were Jewish people worshiping the one true God and they shared the message of Jesus. John was with them as their helper, that's not John as in James and John, that's John Mark who wrote the second gospel, Mark. They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos, that's in the southwest corner.

There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar Jesus, who was an attendant of the pro-council Sergius Paulus. This was, Sergius Paulus was the Roman official for the island of Cyprus. It was all part of the Roman Empire.

Sergius Paulus was the man. So, but this guy, this sorcerer, this full of the devils Simon Bar Jesus was, had influence with the man. The pro-council, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the Word of God.

So here's this Roman official who's very intelligent. They're not barging in to talk to him. He asked for them, send me the two of them.

I want to hear more about this Jesus and this message that they're preaching. But Elimas, the sorcerer, that's Bar Jesus, was also called Elimas, E-L-I-M-A-S. Elimas, the sorcerer, for that is what his name

means, opposed them, opposed Saul and Barnabas, somehow, we don't know, but he opposed them, and tried to turn the pro-council from the faith.

The pro-council was opening his heart, and this sorcerer was whispering or using his influence, he said, don't believe it, they're crooks or they're talking nonsense. How could the Messiah, how could the Savior die on a empire? How could that be the answer to your life? Then Saul, who was also called Paul, this is the first place in the New Testament that his name is changed. He's now no longer ever called Saul of Tarsus.

He now becomes Paul and now the Apostle Paul. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elimas and said, you are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right. You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery.

Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. How do you know that? Obviously, filled with the Holy Spirit, i.e. controlled by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, filled with God, the Holy Spirit means you're controlled by him. He's not a liquid, he's a person.

So when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, they're controlled, and now he's especially controlled because out of nowhere it says, and now Saul, who's called also Paul, full of the Holy Spirit, said, you son of the devil, you child of the devil, and now the hand of God is against you. You're going to be blind and for a time you'll be unable to see even the light of the sun. And immediately mist and darkness came over him and he groped about seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

And when the procouncil Sergius Paulus saw what had happened, he believed. And he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. Now here we have this dramatic moment that changes the course of the New Testament church history, and now we see also a flip-flop.

Barnabas is older in the Lord than Saul of Tarsus, but now from the rest of the Bible it won't say Barnabas and Saul, it'll say Paul and Barnabas. Even though one's more senior in the Lord, it's the gifts of God and the work of the Holy Spirit that makes people leaders, not giving them a certificate or some public acclamation. A person's gift makes room for them.

You never have to worry. If we just get filled with God and let his gifts flow through us, a place of ministry will happen and nobody will need a title and you don't need a law degree or a graduate degree or a PhD. You just need a lot of God and he makes it happen from there.

Let's say amen to that. So that must have been a dramatic moment. How in the world did the Spirit do that? The Holy Spirit actually called out two people's names.

You talk about, I don't like confrontation or religion. I don't like drama. I just want to go to church and have a Bible study.

Well, the Holy Spirit's got other ideas. He calls out two people. Imagine if God moved tonight in the meeting and two names were called out.

We go home thinking like, wow, God is getting personal. So, separate me, Paul and Barnabas, the Holy Spirit said. Separate me, Paul and Barnabas, for me, for me, for the work I've called them to do.

And of course, the Holy Spirit working in perfect cooperation with the Father and the Son. This was the plan of God. The Holy Spirit is the one speaking.

He's God's only agent on earth. The only power we can have, the only knowledge we can have of God, the only teaching we can get, the only anything we have of God comes from the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

The Father sent the Son and the Son sent the Spirit and now that work is going on for the glory of Christ. So they go off and now they're sent and they're going to be used. Think of the faith that that took.

Think of the surrender that took. Because what if when the Holy Spirit said through, what, a gift of the Spirit or some way, separate me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work that I've called them. What if after the meeting, Barnabas said, Saul, you go.

Really, I don't have enough information. Where are we going? He didn't say. He just said to go.

I know, but I want to know how long we've gone for. My family wants to know. We don't know.

We don't know. I know, but where are we going? I don't know. We're just supposed to sail.

I know, but can't God give me, you know, a lot of us, we want all, we want the end from the beginning. Amen? We want to know how every detail is going to work and God just says, step out. Where? I'll show you, just go.

But who are we going to talk to? God's ways are not our ways. Neither are his thoughts our thoughts. But they're radical enough to say yes to the Holy Spirit.

We'll do it. Whatever it entails, we'll go. Led by the Holy Spirit, surrendered to God, like the folks going to Haiti, I want you to notice what happens.

Whenever God calls you to do something, ultimately there will be an open door. Paul says in another letter, pray for me, I'm staying for a while because a great effectual door is open and there are many adversaries, but there's a door. What's a door mean? A door is a door of opportunity where God works it out so that something opens up where you can speak or do or go or minister, but a door opens.

And when God opens a door, nobody can shut that door. There are doors we try to push open, but the doors we try to push open can close on us. But when God opens a door, it's a door.

And imagine Saul and Barnabas get a message, Sergius Paulus is calling for you. He wants you to preach to him. That's a door.

That's a door. It could happen tomorrow on the job where someone says to you, I don't know what I'm going to do with my life. I don't even want to go on.

Or why are you so happy? That's a door. You have to be sensitive to these doors that God opened. It can be personal, one-on-one.

It can be a huge door. I would say this mission trip is an open door. They're going to go.

They got people waiting for them. They got people praying here behind them. This is a great door.

But more doors will open down there. Doors are going to just, things are going to happen. Now notice this also.

This is why we should always pray for open doors. A church needs open doors. We need individually open doors to speak and share the good news of Jesus.

With the doors being open comes trouble. Because there's a sorcerer trying to mess up the open door. Sergius Paulus says, come and preach to me.

I want to know more about Jesus. And then this, I was going to say brujita, but that means female witch, right? I don't know how to say warlock, whatever. He's just full of the devil.

He's thwarting what they're doing. Well, pastor, you mean God opens doors and he sends you out? Separate me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work, I've called them. And then you got people full of the devil blocking you and fighting you? Exactly.

Why do you think at the end of his life, Paul said, I have fought a good fight. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Many people have a totally wrong idea.

They think if God is with me, everyone will just get converted. There'll never be problems. Are you kidding? The devil will fight you tooth and nail, but greater is he that's in us.

Come on, that he that is in the world. Come on, let's say amen to that. So there's doors and there's adversaries.

At the same time, doors and adversaries. So now this Sergius Paulus is open and he's listening. And then this guy, this sorcerer, this Elimesis, don't listen to them.

Don't, don't you listen, get them out, get them out. And so there's a wide door of opportunity. It'll happen in Haiti.

It's going to happen to us, but there'll be adversaries. The devil working in our minds, people, whatever, there's always, there's always a kickback from the devil. We're in warfare.

Some people think that because we're Christians, we're never going to have a problem. My goodness, what Bible are you reading? My goodness. I finished the course.

We're in warfare. We're wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. The minute you say yes to God, separate me, someone, the devil will attack your mind.

That wasn't God. You're not equipped. It's too late.

You're too young. You're too old. You're not, you don't know enough verses.

Wait till next week. There's a thousand attacks that will come because the devil knows that once we obey the Holy Spirit and step out in faith, we're going to do something for God that will bring glory to Christ. So there's an open door and there's an adversary.

And now what? What are you going to do? What are you going to quit and say, well, I thought this was an open door and now there's trouble and there's this Elimus and he's going to mess up everything. Nah, listen, whenever there's an open door and there's an adversary, God sends an answer for us, a word, a

something, an anointing, a direction, a vision, a dream, something will come to show us what to do. Always.

Come on. Can we say amen to that? Always, always. Otherwise, what are we going to do? We're going to say, oh, there's adversaries.

Well, I got to go try to find somebody else to talk to about Jesus. No. Paul, now he's Paul, full of the Holy Spirit.

How would he know to say that? Nobody can say that on their own. And that language is so strong. We wouldn't like to hear that in church or anyone ministering.

You ever hear a minister say, you son of the devil, you're full of the devil. You're a liar, deceiver. We would say, somebody pray for Paul.

Bring him over there. He needs ministry. He needs love and compassion.

The brother has lost it. Pray for that solitarsis. No.

Full of the Holy Spirit, God shows them what to do, although it's a very odd thing to do. And how would he possibly know, how would he possibly know that the man would be blind within a few moments? Do you think he had the power to do that? You think God grants anybody power to make another person blind? Trust me, with some of our attitudes we get into sometimes, there'd be a lot of blind people walking around in the church. Choir members trying to find their chairs saying, where am I? No, God doesn't give power like that.

The Holy Spirit showed them what God was going to do. Didn't God say that we would be co-workers with him? Didn't the Bible say God worked with them through signs and wonders? So he speaks those words. And the next thing you know, this guy, it's explosive.

It's Holy Spirit power. And if you say, I don't believe those things happen anymore, God can't do that, according to your faith, so be it unto you. Because that's the first principle Jesus gave us of spiritual living.

According to your faith and expectancy, that's what you'll get. No mas, no more, no less. According to your faith.

You and I decide what we'll experience of God. Little faith, you'll experience little of God. Critiquing everybody, sitting on the sidelines and judging everyone, you'll experience nothing of God.

Stepping out and saying, God, you gotta come through for me because I'm following your leading. I'm going to Haiti now, God. I can't go to Haiti with my own equipment.

I need divine equipment to do this. Then God will do it. And Sergius Paul has believed when he saw the teaching of the Lord because it didn't come in word only.

It came with some manifestation of power, of love. There's got to be something where people know this is not just a guy talking, this is not just a woman talking. There's something else in the air.

Like the people who left the church. First Corinthians 14, Paul says, and when the spirit moves in the church, the secrets of strangers' hearts will be made known. The people we're going to invite, Palm

Sunday, Easter Sunday, Good Friday, next Tuesday.

As I'm speaking and as that's going on, the Holy Spirit's going to be searching them and dealing with them. And when they leave, they'll stop outside and say, I don't know what's going on there, but God is in that place. How many want that testimony? God is in that place.

I don't know the pastor's name. I don't know what denomination, but God is in that place. And only God can do that.

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