

# Acts 13

by Robert F. Adcock

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*In Acts 13, the church commissions Paul and Barnabas to spread the gospel, emphasizing the power of the Holy Spirit and the importance of prayer and fasting in ministry.*

**Duration:** 37:03

**Scripture:** Acts 11:29-30, Acts 12:25, Acts 13:2-4, Acts 13:9, Acts 13:27

**Topics:** "Christian Witness", "Salvation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians being used by God to witness to others about salvation. The story of Anne and her brother Brad is shared, where Anne prays for Brad to resist the negative influence of a man named Charlie. The speaker then discusses the responsibility of Christians to be witnesses for Jesus Christ in the world. The sermon concludes with a warning about the consequences of choosing the broad road that leads to destruction and the importance of accepting Jesus as the only way to God.

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## Transcript

Well, if any of you go to sleep this morning, it's not dreadful. Well, that'll wake you up. It'd be nice to have that early in the morning, sometimes when you have a little trouble getting awake.

Boy, it'd be wonderful to be thrilled by the message of that song when first you arise. You know, when we gather together in such pleasant circumstances, I'm always reminded of those less fortunate. And a part of my prayer daily, in my prayer time, is always to cover all those areas that I may not think of and say, Lord, do remember all of those less fortunate than we are.

And there are a number, and John has already mentioned, Lucille Stevens and Marie Gooch and so many others. And there's some back this morning here at Sister Eva Parish and others that have been away. And I think it's so appropriate when we do gather together to remember those that are not able to carry on in a normal fashion, such as we are this morning.

Thankful to God that we are assembled together for the express purpose of opening the Word of God and have the Spirit of God speak to our heart. So, let us bow in just a word of prayer and thank God again for His goodness to us and remember all those less fortunate. Our Father in Heaven, it indeed is with a deep sense of gratitude in our souls that we lift our voices to Thee and thank Thee that we are found, assembled together this morning.

And we have an open Bible, and we're able to glean from the pages and the words of Scripture those things that can enrich our lives and inspire us. Grant, we pray Thee, as we reflect upon how pleasant it is for us to remember all others less fortunate. There are some that are hurting.

There are some that are going through times of deep trial and testing. Oh, our God, preserve and keep Your people and keep them encouraged and give them that consciousness of Your presence with them. We ask this in that wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. I'd like for us this morning to read in the 13th chapter of the book of Acts. We've been going through this book, and we've arrived at this 13th chapter, which is a little change of direction.

The main characters up to this point, one of them being the Apostle Peter, we'll discover that Peter is only mentioned one time in the remainder of the book of Acts, and that's in Acts 15. But Paul, Saul of Tarsus, that enemy of the gospel, persecutor of Christians, that man that we read about and his wonderful, glorious conversion experience in the book of Acts, he becomes one of the main characters in the book of Acts. And these are the acts of the Holy Spirit.

It's that divine, sovereign work of the Spirit of God working in and through those that have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. And men and women that have been sovereignly gifted by the Spirit of God to serve the Lord, to exercise spiritual gifts that will result in the whole body of Christ being built up in its most holy face. And we will see that demonstrated throughout this book.

We've already, in reading and understanding what God is doing in this divine plan and purpose of carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to the uttermost parts of the world, here we see that launching out, that going forth for which Paul really has already been destined to do. And we read about that when we were in the ninth chapter. The Lord said concerning him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel.

Speaking of the Apostle Paul, A chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. The Apostle Paul is an exceptional character in the scriptures.

He is a man that I think without question the reason that he is given this kind of prominence by the Spirit of God, he didn't seek it for himself. The reason he's given this kind of prominence is that he had a single eye for the Lord and his heart. There's nothing half-hearted about the Apostle Paul.

This man that had been so zealous in seeking out and endeavoring to hurt Christians, to erase the name of Jesus Christ from the minds of the world itself. That man carried with him that same devotion and loyalty to the cause of Jesus Christ. You know those words well that are attributed to him after his conversion.

He says, For me to live is Christ. The whole thrust of his life was to tell others about Jesus Christ. Tell out of his own experience in knowing Christ just what a wonderful person Jesus Christ really is.

In the chapters that we have read and looked at previously, and in the close of the eleventh chapter, we were reminded that the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Now, Saul has been involved in many aspects of the Lord's work.

In this case, he with Barnabas had gone back because of the rather needy conditions that existed. He carried a gift, he and Barnabas. And the closing verse of the twelfth chapter says, And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

And so now we begin the thirteenth chapter. I'd like for us to read these first twelve verses and may God speak to us from His Word. Now, in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manian who had been brought up with Herod the Septuagint, and Saul.

And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, to me Barnabas and Saul for the work of which I have called them. Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. Now, when they had gone through the island to Tephass, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man.

This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the Word of God. But Elamos, the sorcerer, for so his name is translated, withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, O fool of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. The striking thing about this, again, is that a man that is completely devoted to the cause of Christ, a man that has declared that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation for all that believe it, Saul, the one that was converted, the person with that enmity in his heart and soul toward Christians and the person of Christ.

On that Damascus road, he met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. And there, in the light of the glory of God, the conversion experience, this man responding, Lord, what will you have me to do? Well, we've just read that the Lord said, he is a chosen vessel. I chose him for a special purpose, a very special mission.

That mission is that he will go out over the face of the earth. He will faithfully, if he's in the king's courtyard, if he stands before Potentate, doesn't matter wherever he goes, he has just one message. And I'm so thankful this morning that that message has not changed.

If there were amendments to that message and it was constantly changing and we had to update our Bibles and have different additions made of the Scriptures saying, this must be added and this must be taken away, it would add nothing but confusion to what we have that is so solid and so steadfast. The Word of the living God, it shall indeed endure forever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of God endures forever.

Saul of Tarsus, now Paul, that great apostle, is launching out on that mission, that mission that will send him all the way to Rome. Ultimately, he will become a martyr for the cause of Christ. Paul, the one that identified himself as the chief of sinners, least of all the saints, through the grace of God, he becomes God's man for reaching the world.

And it's, I think, remarkable that this man who had such a low opinion of himself had such a high opinion of the Lord Jesus Christ. He must have the preeminent place like John the Baptist of old when he is asked about the person of Christ and some would even identify him as being the Messiah. Oh no, never.

I must decrease, but he must increase. And those that would truly serve the cause of Christ must be constantly reminded that without him, we can't do anything for the glory of God. Without him, if we didn't have him, life again becomes something that indeed is so meaningless.

Now, Paul has a mission. These saints at Antioch, and Antioch now becomes the center, the center for sending forth those that would proclaim this message of the gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ says in that eighth verse of the first chapter of this book, You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.

Witness has been born in Jerusalem and it has spread out over Judea and Samaria, and now it's time for this special messenger of God to go out across the Mediterranean, to go into Europe to carry this wonderful message of the gospel. The best news that any man ever heard is to be delivered by the Apostle Paul. As they assemble there, you're given some names, and these names are men that are filled with the Spirit of God, and these men as they ministered to the Lord.

In that second verse, that's the expression that is used, and fasted the Holy Spirit said. Now, it doesn't mean that the Spirit of God in an audible voice instructed Saul or Paul and Barnabas as to what they were to do, but through these men that were filled with the Spirit of God, the message and the will of God was conveyed, and they spoke the will of God, and they directed Barnabas and Saul to go forth to this work to which they had been called of God, and it should ever be that way. When anyone who says they have a calling to go to a mission field, you certainly would want the support and the approval of your brethren, and you would pray and hope that those men were guided and filled with the Spirit of God lest there be some misjudgment.

So easy sometimes to arrange things and to conclude because of our organizational skills and all that makes us so innovative and sometimes ignoring the ways of God and the things that we do in His name to say, well, we can do this, and it doesn't necessarily require that we be filled with the Spirit of God. Well, I would be very, very dubious of any decision that is made for the honor and glory of God and that includes the will of God in which the Spirit of God was not involved. Hear the Spirit of God.

Again, the act of the Holy Spirit working in and through these men, these men that have solemn responsibility, separates us unto Me. Barnabas and Saul for the work for which they have called. Undeniable, no question, that indeed these men are being sent forth by a solemn dictate from God Himself to go out into the world.

And they did. But notice what they did. Having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

And that simply meant that there was perfect accord in what they were doing. And they prayed together. Fasting in this sense means that they abstained from anything that would cause them any stray thinking, anything that would be a distraction, anything that would be a threat to them wholly looking unto the Lord for direction and help as far as sending these men forth.

They fasted. They prayed. And that's not something that should be out of date.

Fasting and prayer are still in order for God's people. And our Lord Jesus Christ reminded His own concerning their inability to deal with a demonic spirit this kind only come forth when there is prayer and fasting. If you get desperate in the course of life, if you get desperate for knowing the will of God, try prayer and fasting.

Go aside. There are many, many faithful servants of God today. I'll just mention one, a man that I admired so much, Theodore F. Back to the Bible broadcast.

All of you are acquainted with him. Brother F., it was a part of his life from time to time to isolate himself from everything else. The distractions from the news that is flowing today through so many of the news media, the newspapers and the radio and the television.

Isolate himself and devote himself to prayer and fasting so that he might clearly discern the will of God. How many of us do any prayer and fasting? We ought to try. If you haven't tried it, you ought to try.

I believe we would discover new things about our dealings with the Lord. We so often have such low opinions of ourselves. We can't sometimes see ourselves as being very important in the plan and the purposes of God.

What a ridiculous thought. We are counted as being co-laborers with Him. We are His messengers to the world in which we are living.

The Apostle Paul says, I am an ambassador for Jesus Christ. I have a responsibility. And you know, until we get, this is not something that involves an inflated ego about how great we are, but it's an awareness of how great He is and what He can do in and through us.

And again, the Lord Jesus said, without me you can't do anything for the glory of God. Just as that branch in the vine can never be fruitful, can never bear fruit, unless that channel between the vine and the branch are wide open and the full life and the blessing of God can flow from the vine through the branches. Let us be aware.

And indeed, don't have a low opinion of yourself and think, well, God wouldn't use me. I'm too insignificant. God loves you.

And God saved you for a purpose. And don't think only in terms of men like the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter and others and the D. L. Moody's and the Billy Graham's. They are prominent, to be sure, and they are indeed a blessing to so many.

But what about your life and my life? Aren't we important in the sight of God? You better believe we are. We are members of the body of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And we are to be witnesses for Him.

I read just a little devotional thought that I thought was so appropriate. It says, Those who are on the road to heaven should never be content to go there alone. And again, the great D. L. Moody one time viewed a

picture of a woman that she was in peril.

Waters were rushing all around her, and that picture showed that woman holding on to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Moody thought about it for a while, and it just didn't quite set with him until finally he saw another picture. And he said, That picture was the one that I really liked.

It showed a picture of this woman, and she was hanging on to the cross with one hand, and she was rescuing someone that was in the same peril as she was from the danger that existed. The Apostle Paul had been saved by the grace of God, and he never forgot it. And you in this room this morning, and I speak to myself, we've been saved by the sovereign grace of God just through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

If that means so much to us, don't we know that there are souls that are perishing in this world? Don't we know that there are lonely hearts everywhere? Don't we understand that indeed those without Christ, they're on the broad road that leads to destruction? Don't we know that Christ is able to save to the uttermost those that will by faith come to Him? Don't we know this? And isn't it our responsibility? Indeed, we appreciate what Christ has done for us. We appreciate it so much that we reach out and we seek to save those that are lost. A young man on a beach out in Australia, he was given some notoriety because on his little seat or stand that he sat upon, he had there John 3.16. And everybody called him John 3.16. And quite often he had the opportunity of explaining to people why the John 3.16. He said, Well, as a young boy on this very beach, one day I was in peril in the waves and one of the lifeguards that was on duty here ran out and dived into the water and he saved me.

He rescued me from those angry waves. And that same lifeguard took me under his wing and he told me about Jesus Christ and I was saved. And he told me that in the course of life to be sure to remember that I had a responsibility because of what had been done for me.

I could show my appreciation best by doing something for someone else. And he said, I purposed that one day I would be a lifeguard. I purposed that one day I would rescue someone from those angry waves.

I purposed that one day I would tell others about this wonderful person, Jesus Christ. And my whole life is devoted to telling others about the Lord Jesus. I just want us to get a sense of the responsibility that's ours as Christians.

It's a sad thing to see someone live what is called bubble Christianity. You know, we isolate ourselves in our little bubble and you can touch your bubble, my bubble, but you can't touch me. We insulate ourselves.

We isolate ourselves from the world in which we're living. And that's a thought that is foreign to the Word of God. Paul and Barnabas went forth, men filled with the Spirit of God.

Their first encounter is they come now to the island of Paphos. They found there a man, a man that they witnessed to. They found that the devil was already there too.

And through a sorcerer, an enemy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they found that there was someone there that represented the forces of evil that are in the world. And on the one hand, they were giving to this man the wonderful message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the enemy of the cross of Christ. He was doing everything that he could to tear down and to prevent that poor soul from being rescued, from going down into a lost eternity.

Paul says some things there that you better be careful if you ever use these words and say these things to someone. You might get hurt. But Paul, when he realized what was happening, this man filled with the Holy Spirit, he looked intently at him.

In other words, they had an eye-to-eye encounter. He didn't say it to his back. He got right in his face.

And he told him with a certain amount of conviction that he did not misunderstand. Oh, you that are full of deceit. And Satan is a deceiver.

And anyone that's on his side is a deceiver. So sad to see people, they're not content just to be lost and miserable in this world, but sometimes they try to influence others. Satan works that way.

All frauds. You are a phony. You don't have anything for this man.

You are sorcery. This delving into the occult. Spiritualism.

Spiritism as it's so called. Seeking encounters that are mysterious. And I'm reminded that Satan as an angel of shining light can present himself to people.

It would probably cause each one of us to be just amazed at perhaps all these encounters that people talk about having with spirit beings and what they felt. And it may have been a direct encounter with Satan, that angel of shining light. Be careful how you look for angels and these experiences that indeed may be a direct encounter with the devil himself.

His ministers of righteousness do his work. But he saw Paul of the Apostle with that kind of courage that's needed. He looked right into this man's face and he said, you're full of deceit.

You're a phony. You are the son of the devil. And the Lord Jesus said that to some Pharisees one day in the 8th chapter of John's Gospel.

He says, you are of your father the devil. And you know, that's a horrible thought. A horrible thought that a human being created by God, created for the purpose of bringing glory to the God that created them.

And yet they would align themselves with the enemy of God. And the Son of God would say, because of your alignment with Him, because you've made a choice to walk on the broad road that leads to destruction, you are of your father the devil. You're just doing his bidding.

You're serving his cause. He has you captive. And he'll take your soul down into the hell that is reserved, that was created for the devil and all those fallen angels.

You enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? That man, of course, felt the hand of God upon him. As a result, a dark mist fell on him. He went around seeking someone to lead.

He was blind. It says this, then the procounsel believes. He witnessed something.

Would you not today? It takes all kinds of experiences sometimes to bring people to Christ. But we know one thing for sure, there's only one way to God and that's through Christ. If this man had his eyes open, this power here, there's something exceptional going on here.

I wouldn't covet that power necessarily just to carry out an act like that. But indeed, every one of us should desire from the depths of our souls to be used of God in witnessing to others about our wonderful Savior. A story that comes to mind that indeed is true.

A dear girl by the name of Ann, who had moved to a very large city, her brother Brad came to live with her and he went to work in an industrial plant and there he met a man named Charlie. Ann was a Christian. She knew the Lord and she witnessed to her brother and he listened.

But she soon discovered that this Charlie that he was working with, this man was leading her brother astray. He was a good time Charlie. He lived for today.

Eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow you'll be gone. That dear sister on her knees daily was praying that Brad would not listen to Charlie. And Brad seemed so inclined when she presented the Gospel to him to accept Christ.

But he heard his sister praying and he heard her praying regularly, Lord break the power of Charlie over Brad's life. Lord save my brother. He heard her praying at night.

One day Brad went to work and where's Charlie? Charlie's not here. Charlie's had an accident, a very serious accident. In fact, he won't be back to work for perhaps several months.

You know in reading that story and applying it to what happened here, the intervention of God sometimes in seeing to it that those that are receptive to the Gospel of Christ, they'll hear it. And He will remove every obstacle for them to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Brad got saved.

I believe God intervened. I believe Anne's prayers were answered. You may be praying for someone.

There may be someone else because this world reaches out. And the Apostle Paul says don't be conformed to the ways of this world. Don't be pressed into this world's mold.

It will make you just like it is. We can pray and we can ask the Lord to intervene and to save souls. That's our responsibility.

The Apostle Paul is going to launch out. He is going to be a mighty force for spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the face of the earth. You say, I like that story.

I like that. That excites me. Well, what about your life and my life? Does that mean we just become spectators and say Paul can do it? Philip Graham can do it? D.L. Moody could do it? Others can do it? No.

You and I are entrusted with the solemn responsibility of being witnesses for Jesus Christ in this world in which we're living today. We're not doing it. We're out of the will of God.

Our Father in Heaven, help us as believers in the Lord Jesus to accept that responsibility of being a spokesman, a witness, an ambassador for our Lord Jesus in this world today. We ask it in our Savior's precious name. Amen.

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