

Barnabas & Saul Sent Off / On Cyprus



Ice-Breaker

What were you called as a child? Did you ever want a new name besides the one you were given?



Scripture Passage

Acts 13:1-12

13 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

⁶They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰"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? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.



Bible Study

1. What was the scene when the Holy Spirit spoke to the leaders at Antioch? How do you think he may have spoken? How does he speak today?

2. Cyprus is a 150-mile sail from Seleucia, and was Barnabas' home (4:36). What might these two men be talking about as they travel?

3. Since Gentiles were already welcome in the church (11:18), why would Barnabas and Saul go to the synagogue?

4. The change of Saul's name to Paul (v. 9) may be related to the beginning of his ministry to the Gentiles. Why do you think names are so important to God?



Reference Notes

13:1 prophets and teachers. While the line between prophets and teachers is not all that distinct, teachers were those who had a more sustained ministry of interpreting and applying the Old

Testament Scriptures and the words of Jesus to the life of the church. Whether or not the men mentioned here were all both prophets and teachers is uncertain. It is clear that Barnabas and Paul were recognized and respected as teachers (Acts 11:26).

13:2 *the Holy Spirit said.* The implication is that the Spirit prompted one of the prophets to declare this message.

13:3 *they placed their hands on them.* The laying on of hands was a sign of solidarity between the church and the missionaries, as well as a sign of committing them to God's grace.

13:5 *Salamis.* A Greek city with a substantial Jewish population. Throughout most of Paul's travels, he made it a point to begin his ministry by preaching in the synagogues in the hopes that his listeners would believe in Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 13:14,42; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1,10; 18:4,19; 19:8).

13:6 *Paphos.* The Roman seat of power on Cyprus, about 90 miles from the port of Salamis on the western side of the island. a Jewish sorcerer. The practice of magic was forbidden to Jews. However, outside of Palestine some Jewish religious practices tended to reflect a great deal of the surrounding culture (see 19:17-19).

13:7 *an intelligent man.* By this, Luke implies that the proconsul was not taken in by the sorcerer's abilities. Instead, he was attracted to what he heard about the Gospel.

13:8-11 Just as the power of God through Moses was able to overpower the magician of Egypt (Exodus 7:11-12; 8:18), so the Spirit of God through Paul overcame the opposition of this magician.

13:9 *Saul, who was also called Paul.* As a Roman citizen, Paul had three names, and perhaps four. "Paul" (or actually the Latin "Paulus") was his third name which showed the branch of the clan from which he descended (Williams). His first two names are unknown. "Saul" was probably his fourth name, commonly used in a Jewish environment. Since Paul operated primarily in a Gentile context, from this point on Luke refers to him exclusively by his formal Latin name.

13:10 *You are a child of the devil.* Although, according to verse 6, Elymas was also called Bar-Jesus (meaning "son of a savior"), Paul does not hesitate to clarify the reality of the situation. His opposition to the Gospel means he reflects the characteristics of Satan.

13:11 *You are going to be blind.* This was a temporary blindness meant as a warning for Elymas to repent. Whether or not it had the desired effect is not mentioned, but it was a sign that led Sergius Paulus to believe in the Lord (v. 12).

Caring Time

1. With what types of people do you feel most comfortable talking about the Lord? Why?
2. When have people tried to turn you from your faith? What happened? How do you deal with such pressures?
3. When should you strongly confront people who oppose Jesus?