

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 41

### I. Exposition of Chapter Thirteen (Continued).

#### A. Verses 4-12 - Barnabas and Saul go to Cypress (Continued).

1. Verse 7 – “[W]ho was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.” – So, this sorcerer and false prophet, Bar-Jesus (which means “son of Jesus” (Joshua), was with this “proconsul” (a governor appointed by the Romans Senate<sup>1</sup>). This suggests that he was some kind of attendant or servant to the proconsul. Luke states two positive things about Sergius Paulus. First, he was “...an intelligent man.” This suggests that he wasn’t one to be easily deceived by sorcery. Second he was a man who “...sought to hear the word of God” which shows he was a man who sought for truth and had a hunger to know God. This brings up the subject of the historical accuracy of Luke. Pertaining to this, Dr. Robert Utley writes:

**“There has been much discussion about the historicity of Luke’s accounts. Here is a good example of the accuracy of Luke the historian. He calls this man “a proconsul,” which meant Cyprus was a Roman Senatorial province. We learn this occurred in A.D. 22 by decree from Augustus. We also learn from a Latin inscription at Soloi that Sergius Paulus began his proconsulship in A.D. 53. The more information archaeology discovers from the Mediterranean world of the first century, the more Luke’s historical accuracy is corroborated.”<sup>2</sup>**

2. The Book of Acts is full of Historically accurate facts about People, Places and Things. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek make the following statement:

**“Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer chronicles Luke’s accuracy in the book of Acts verse by verse. With painstaking detail, Hemer identifies 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research.”<sup>3</sup>**

3. Verse 8 – “But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”

a. “...Elymas...” – According to Dr. Utley, this word “is a transliteration of an Arabic term for a wise man (a sage, a diviner, one who can foresee and control the future by manipulating the unseen powers/forces of the unseen realm).”<sup>4</sup>

b. “...withstood...” – means; “to resist by actively opposing pressure or power”<sup>5</sup>

c. “...seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” – This is a very dangerous position for someone to take. When a person attempts to stand in the way of someone coming to faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord takes it very seriously and, essentially, that person has made themselves the enemy of God. (cf. 9:1-9; 12:20-24).

**“But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.” – Acts 13:8 (NLT)**

4. Verses 9-10 – “Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full 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?’”

a. This is the first time Saul is referred to as Paul and he is called this for the rest of the book of Acts. Concerning this, Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

**“Luke notes at this point also that Saul had another name, a Roman name, Paul (‘little one’). Gentiles probably preferred it to his Hebrew name. This is significant because in the rest of the Book of Acts he is always called Paul. In his epistles also, he always calls himself Paul. The use of his Roman name draws attention to his Roman citizenship and, of course, fits in with his divine call to minister to the Gentiles.”<sup>6</sup>**

b. “...filled with the Holy Spirit...” – In his book, “*What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*”, Dr. Stanley Horton refers to this as an example of how God would give “...fresh fillings to meet new needs and new challenges...when Paul, ‘filled with the Holy Spirit,’ faced Elymas the sorcerer

<sup>1</sup>Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 388.

<sup>2</sup>Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 162.

<sup>3</sup>Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 256. See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>Utey, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, 163.

<sup>5</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 494.

<sup>6</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 236.

**and rebuked him...the rebuke here was the Spirit's rebuke in a special way.”<sup>7</sup>**

**c. Verse 10 – Paul gives several characteristics of this false prophet/sorcerer.**

- 1) “...full of all deceit and all fraud...” – “deceit” means “treachery or guile”.<sup>8</sup> “Fraud” means “to violate moral principles by acting in an unscrupulous manner”<sup>9</sup>
- 2) “...son of the devil...” – Instead of being “Bar-Jesus” or “son of Jesus”, Paul calls him what he really is, a “son of the devil.” (cf. John 8:44).
- 3) “...enemy of all righteousness...” – This means he was an enemy of everything that was right.
- 4) “...perverting the straight ways of the Lord.” – This means “twisting” or “distorting” the right ways of the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

**5. Verse 11 – “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.”**

- a. We’ve already mentioned that the expression, “hand of the Lord” refers to the power of the Lord or even the Spirit of the Lord (See part 37 comment on Acts 11:21).
- b. This judgment on Elymas was that of blindness which was temporary – “...not seeing the sun for a time.” This is Paul’s first recorded miracle and must have reminded him of when he was struck blind - for a season at his conversion (cf. 9:8, 17-18).

**6. Verse 12 – “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”** – This is another example of how the power of God, confirming the Word of God, can help in reaching people with the Gospel. Dr. Horton adds another important point:

**“It is important to note also that the truth of the gospel preached in the power of the Spirit, and this alone, is effective against astrology, pagan magic, and the occult (see also Acts 19:11-20; cf. Luke 10:19).”<sup>11</sup>**

**B. Verse 13-52 – Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia.**

**1. Verse 13 – We see the departure of John Mark.** No one knows for certain why John Mark left the group to go back to Jerusalem but Stanley Horton shares some of the more common speculations:

**“It may be that the work became more difficult as they encountered unfamiliar territory on the mainland. Some have suggested that since Mark was from a wealthy home where there were servants, he decided to go home where life would be easier. Others suggest he left because he resented the fact that his cousin Barnabas was no longer the leader or that he resented preaching to the Gentiles.”<sup>12</sup>**

a. Later this caused a great dissension between Paul and Barnabas – Acts 15:36-40. Even later, however, Paul recognized that Mark was valuable for ministry (cf. II Timothy 4:11).

**2. Verses 14-15 – Paul and Barnabas a invited to speak to the people in the Synagogue.**

a. **Verse 14** – As was their custom, when they entered a city, they usually began by going into the synagogues.

b. **Verse 15** – Even though it was a common practice for the leaders of a synagogue to invite traveling visitors to speak, it seems quite likely that the Holy Spirit was orchestrating this opportunity for Paul and Barnabas. Grant Osborne gives us insight into this. He writes:

**“As would become his regular practice, Paul and his companions went to the synagogue and ministered there first. It was common for the heads of the synagogue to invite visiting rabbis to speak, and apparently the leaders had learned who Barnabas and Paul were, so they asked them to share “a word of exhortation”...during the service...A last-minute request to distinguished visitors was not unusual. Paul accepts, stands to speak, and motions with his hand to get their attention.”<sup>13</sup>**

c. Luke recorded three of Paul's evangelistic messages to unbelievers: here in Antioch Pisidia, the in Lystra (14:15-17), and, finally in Athens (17:22-31). This is the longest of the three, but most scholars seem to believe that Luke condensed all of them.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 150.

<sup>8</sup>D. H. Tongue, "Deceit," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 268.

<sup>9</sup>Louw and Nida, 774.

<sup>10</sup>Horton, *Acts*, 237.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 238-239.

<sup>13</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 240–241.