

## ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

### XXIX. God's Strong Support For The Spiritually Receptive

(Acts 13:4-12)

#### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. One concern that professing believers have expressed is the difficult spiritual state of people who are heavily influenced by evil parties around them not to believe God's truth. In answer to this concern, Acts 13:4-12 displays God leading Paul to support an unsaved but receptive government official who was influenced by a man who strongly opposed that truth in Satan's power. We view this passage for our insight and edification:

#### II. God's Strong Support For The Spiritually Receptive, Acts 13:4-12.

- A. Acts 13:4 states that the Holy Spirit was behind the sending of Barnabas and Saul by the elders of the Church of Antioch, what Acts 13:2-3 revealed, so they traveled by land from Antioch down to the seaport of Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus, a natural destination since it was the homeland of Barnabas, Acts 13:4 with 4:36; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, Map 13: "The missionary Journeys of Paul."
- B. Arriving at Salamis in eastern Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul preached in the Jewish synagogues, moving westward through the island until they came to Paphos on the western shore of Cyprus, Acts 13:5-6a; *Ibid.*
- C. At Paphos, they encountered a magician (*magos*), "a fraudulent wizard" (*Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 388), a Jewish false prophet named "Bar-Jesus" who was with the island's proconsul Sergius Paulus who had been appointed leader of Cyprus by the Roman Senate (*Ibid.*), a man of intelligence who summoned Barnabas and Saul to hear the Word of God, Acts 13:6b-7.
- D. However, "Bar-Jesus," whose was also called "Elymas," a "name given to Bar-Jesus by Greek-speaking acquaintances" (*Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Acts 13:8), tried to turn the proconsul away from the Christian faith.
- E. However, "Paul," the Gentile name that was given him at birth along with his Jewish name "Saul" (*Ibid.*, fn. to Acts 13:9), in understanding Gentile minds better than Barnabas, led by the Holy Spirit, suddenly took the lead in strongly confronting Elymas. Paul set his eyes on Elymas and addressed him as the son of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, who did not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord, Acts 13:9-10 NIV! (*Ibid.*) "Sorcery, exercising power by the help and control of demons, had led him into all kinds of deception of others and distortion of the truth. The occult is indeed dangerous," *Ibid.*
- F. Paul predicted that the hand of the Lord was upon Elymas so that he would be blind and unable to see the sun for a period of time, Act 13:11a. Accordingly, there immediately fell a mist and a darkness upon him, and Elymas went about seeking people to lead him by the hand, Acts 13:11b.
- G. This obvious divine punishment of Elymas showed the proconsul that the Gospel Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming was the truth of the powerful God Who was greater than what Elymas served, that Elymas was serving the devil, so the proconsul believed Christ's Gospel and was saved, Acts 13:12. Sergius Paulus was astonished at the teaching of the Lord through this event, showing how the Holy Spirit had spiritually protected him through Paul's ministry that in his openness to the Gospel, he might believe and be saved!

***Lesson:*** *When the wicked Jewish false prophet Elymas who was also involved in demonic sorcery sought to influence the proconsul of Cyprus who was open to the Gospel of Christ not to believe it to be saved, God the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul publicly confronted and condemned Elymas to suffer blindness for a period of time to certify the credibility of the Gospel to the proconsul that he might believe in Christ to be saved.*

***Application:*** *(1) If unsaved people are open to the Gospel, even if demonically influenced people around them try to discredit the Gospel to block such folk from believing it, God the Holy Spirit will work to provide the evidences necessary to show to the unsaved that the Gospel is true that they might believe it to be saved! (2) This principle also applies to believers who are surrounded by others who try to influence them to reject certain Bible truths: if believers are open to the truth, God the Holy Spirit knows how to persuade them of the truth's credibility regardless of peer pressure to the contrary. (3) If we face foes who try to discredit us or our ministries, we must use the spiritual gift the Holy Spirit has given us to succeed in ministry, 2 Timothy 1:6-7 with 1 Corinthians 12:11. Relying on efforts that fail to use the spiritual gift God gave us is a recipe for failure in the angelic conflict.*