



Turn your Bibles to Acts 13:1-3

Title: Biblically Sent *////*

Theme: Enjoying the Protection of Healthy Oversight

Series: Laboring Together With God

Listen as I read Acts 13:1-3, “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. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

(Acts 13:1-3) Let us pray!

Introduction: *The Body of Christ as represented in the local church can be a great assistance to foreign missions.* There is a great difference of opinion in how missions should be overseen, but all deep studiers of the Word of God agree that Acts 13 is a valid starting point for consideration of how to Biblically oversee foreign missions. To me foreign mission is any ministry that is sacrificially operated outside the local Body of Christ. The Word of God, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, gives us guidelines for nurturing, organizing and training those who are responding to the high calling of missionary work. “The procedure of evangelizing found in the [Word of God] is reproducible and should be reproduced.” (Mark C. Vowels, Director of Missions at Bob Jones University)

Interrogative Sentence: *Just how can truths known and lived out in the first century be reproduced in our lifetime in regard to missions?*

Proposition: *I would propose to you that the Word of God gives at least five key truths for the enjoyment of foreign missions. Understanding these truths enables us to 1.) Embrace the Source. 2.) Be Submitted to the Separation. 3.) Participate in the Sending. 4.) Give Healthy Supervision. 5.) Biblically Support Our Missionaries.*

Transitional Sentence: *The first step to enjoying a healthy missionary ministry is to embrace the source. Matthew 9:35 – 38 says, “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’” (Matthew 9:35) The Winston Dictionary for Schools tells us “to embrace is to adopt; turn to; as, the heathen embrace Christianity.”*

To embrace Christianity is to become a disciple of Christ. The New International Dictionary of the Bible tells us that a “Disciple, (*mathetes*) is a pupil of some teacher. [The personal application] is the acceptance in mind and life of the teacher. The heart of the “Great Commission’ is to make ‘disciples’ (*matheteuo*) or followers of the doctrine [of Christ].” (The Complete Dictionary of the Bible)

The spiritual heartbeat of this first division is to have compassion on those to whom the Lord is sending missionaries. Those whom we should partner with regarding missions are to have the same compassion as that of Christ.

The missionary we should partner with has a heart that sees the people they will serve as souls like sheep without a shepherd and to teach them about Christ and the Word of God. They grieve in their hearts because they know that those they are sent to reach are unprotected from the wolves of the flesh, the world and the devil. All true missionaries have the heart of the Apostle Paul whom the Holy Spirit led to make this great plea, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

We see God's heart for reaching the wicked in the story of Jonah, the reluctant Hebrew Prophet. (Book of Jonah) God's call for repentance is so clearly seen in the work He did through John the Baptist, the great Nazarite New Testament Evangelist and forerunner of Christ. (Matthew 3:1-6) Through Phillip, one of the original seven deacons, who led the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ we see God's work in reaching out to those who are hungry to hear the preaching of God's Word. (Acts 8:5; 21:8; 8:26-38) God's heart in making disciples is clearly seen in His sending Apollos, a powerful teacher from Alexandria to Ephesus. (Acts 18:24-28) We see God making the way for true shepherds for the flock in the appointing of Titus to oversee the church in Crete. (Titus 1:5) God's heart and enabling for the work of missions is found in and throughout the life of the Apostle Paul, a missionary and evangelist. God used him to write most of the New Testament. (Acts 13-28; 1 Timothy 1:12) Epaphras, an evangelist from Colosse was trained by the Apostle Paul. (Colossians 1:7; 4:12-13)

Those we should partner with in missions must embrace the heart of Christ for the souls of mankind. True missionaries trust not in the efforts of man but, "...the Lord of the harvest, ...to send out workers into His harvest field."

Transitional Sentence: *Embracing the heart of God and Christ in the work of missions prepares the heart for Biblical separation for missions work.* Acts 13:2-4 says, “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit...” The heart of this part of the message is “set apart” (*aphorize*) meaning to select to some office or work of the Lord. (Acts 13:2; Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:15; The Complete Word Study of the New Testament)

There are Christians who are sold out to the work of the Lord and they are given the privilege of serving the Lord by going out from the local Body of Christ. There is a leading of the Holy Spirit being confirmed by both those being sent out and those who are joining hands with the missionaries. Though the missionary’s call begins in the heart of the person being sent, the Lord’s people should also confirm it. Director of Missions at Bob Jones University, Mark C. Vowels writes, “Missionary candidates should not go to the field without the approval of Godly counsel from those who know them.”

When those who have Christ apportioned gifts for edifying and maturing the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13) are truly ministering to the Lord through fasting and prayer, their spiritual hearts are enabled to be led of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Frequently, in the Book of Acts, we read of those who have Christ apportioned gifts being guided by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8:29 we read, “The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’” This is when the Ethiopian eunuch believed upon the Lord and was baptized.

In Acts 10 we read of the account of Peter's vision. The Bible says, "While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you... Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'" (Acts 10:19-20) In Acts 10 we read that this vision came to Peter after he went to pray. (Acts 10:9) In many different places in the Word of God we read of the people of God being led of the Holy Spirit including Jesus. (Acts 16:6-7; Acts 13:4; Isaiah 6:1; Matthew 4:1)

The New International Dictionary of the Bible tells us, "As the Heavenly Father is God and His Son Jesus Christ is God, so the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit as well as the Son was active in creation; He was active on certain occasions in His own person in Old Testament times and more intensively in the Gospels; and in Acts and the Epistles He becomes the resident divine agent in the church and [her] members. Teaching concerning the Holy Spirit has been neglected and [sadly] distorted, but the subject deserves careful attention." Romans 8:14 says, "...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Let the Holy Spirit take His sword, the Word of God and place it deep within your heart. The church at Antioch was first to set forth the workings of the organized church. (Acts 14:23; A Commentary Critical and Explanatory) The Christian Church was becoming more organized with heart of deliberately evangelizing the world. Because the church wanted to enjoy God's plan they were willing to be overseen by "prophets" and "teachers." These prophets spoken of in Acts 13 were preachers who had given their hearts to listening for the word of the Lord and at every opportunity provided they took God's Word and made it known. The teachers were men in the local area whose duty was to instruct new converts in Christian doctrine. (Daily Study Bible Series)

“Fasting” (*nesteu*) and prayer in our key text is often the model set forth for the organized church when appointing people to oversee a great work for the Lord. (Acts 13:3; 14:23) Fasting in the right spiritual heart means to be so consumed over a matter that spending time away from food or other desires of the flesh is for the key purpose of determining the will of God. (The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible) Satisfying the flesh is replaced with the sole desire of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading for the purpose of achieving the perfect will of God. “Reasons given for fasting are to strengthen in prayer [and] to prepare for revelation...” (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament)

In Scripture we see several purposes for fasting. Fasting is self-control submitting to the control and enabling of the Holy Spirit. It is a way of depending upon God alone and drawing all strength from Him. It is a way of focusing totally on Him when seeking His guidance and help. We tend to think of fasting as going without food, but we can fast from anything. We can choose not to do something we like in order to do what is better so we can spend time with the Lord and give Him proper adoration. (Isaiah 58) There is no power in fasting. It is simply a way of expressing a heart attitude before the Lord that you would rather be with Him and know His will.

Let the Holy Spirit of Christ lay this truth deep into your heart. When spiritual leaders take seriously the call to reach lost souls for Christ, there will be obedience in separating themselves from living for the flesh, being influenced by the world and listening to the lies of the devil. They will be involved in fasting and prayer; thus, enjoying separation unto the Lord’s work.

Transitional Sentence: *Holy Spirit leaders and Christians enjoy separation unto the Lord's work and participate in the sending of missionaries.* Acts 13:3 says, "So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Because the term "sending church" is so widely used in the Body of Christ today to challenge people to become involved in missions, it is important to understand what the Holy Spirit is teaching. Here we see the recognition of Christian unity of fellowship and purpose in the Holy Spirit. (New Bible Commentary) The laying on of hands identified the church with their missionaries' work and acknowledged the Lord's direction for the missionaries being sent. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

The church in Antioch fasted and prayed for Barnabas and Saul at the sending off for their first missionary journey. Likewise, there needs to be a core group of believers in a local Body of Christ that the Holy Spirit is moving through. They should willingly separate themselves from the pleasures of the flesh to seek the Lord's guidance in whom to send and the Lord's anointing on their work. Mission minded servants of the Lord have the heart of Christ who fasted from sleep to spend the night in prayer before selecting the first apostles. The Bible says, "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles." (Luke 6:12)

Just as Christ took the battle for the souls of men seriously, missions minded Christians take this battle seriously. Fasting and praying for the work our missionaries are sent on is being Christ like because it shows a Biblical concern for their expeditions.

It is imperative that missionaries and the church that sends them are aware of the work God has placed before them and that this work is blanketed in fasting and prayer. Holy Spirit led churches that are mission minded set aside times when the congregation is offered the opportunity to agree in prayer and fasting for their missionaries as the Lord leads.

Transitional Sentence: *Churches led of the Holy Spirit to be involved in missions enjoy Biblical supervision for the congregations and the spiritual leaders who provide direction in fasting and prayer. Acts 13:4 holds a powerful truth that must be grasped, “The two of them [Barnabas and Saul], were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit calls and anoints. He is the One who is to lead our missionaries in the tasks the Lord lays on their hearts. We have already seen the Biblical way missionaries are selected and sent to the field. We must understand that it is the Holy Spirit who will give the direction of their ministry. Acts 16:6-10 powerfully records this truth, “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Mission boards and the local church are not the ones to tell missionaries where to do a work nor who can be on their support team.

When missionaries are truly separating themselves unto the Lord and fasting and praying for Holy Spirit guidance, it will be clearly revealed to them what the Lord's directions are. There will be a support team working with them and that team is set up by the missionaries already working in the field.

This is so clearly seen in the appointing of fellow laborers with the Apostle Paul. Timothy had a great testimony among several churches in the area of Asia. (Acts 16:2) However, there is no Biblical evidence that the church at Antioch knew him. What is clear is that it was on Paul's heart to take Timothy with him. (Acts 16:3) It was the Apostle Paul who sent Timothy to Thessalonica. (1 Thessalonians 3:2) Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. (Acts 19:22) He sent Timothy to Corinth. (1 Corinthians 4:17) and Epaphroditus to Philippi. (Philippians 2:19-25) Paul was a servant of the Lord sent on missionary journeys. He prayed and denied himself for the sake of the Gospel and certainly was led of the Holy Spirit. Thus he was able to discern whom the Lord wanted him to work with. It takes faith to trust the Lord to do His work in and through the missionaries any Body of Christ partners with.

When both the Body of Christ and missionaries are sold out on the work of the Lord they get to enjoy the benefits of that work. In Acts 14:27 we read, "On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles." Acts 15:4 gives this accounting, "When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them."

In Acts 11 we read of a time when the circumcised believers criticized Peter for going to the home of uncircumcised men and having fellowship with them. (Acts 11:2) Peter explained in great detail to the Jerusalem church all that led to the ministry's calling to Cornelius's household and all that the Lord did in bringing these gentiles to truly believe in Christ. (Acts 11:1-18) All that the Lord did in the Cornelius home was a landmark in the history of the gospel's advancement. (The Pulpit Commentary) Accountability was necessary in order for the Jerusalem church to enjoy what God had done. Listen to what the Jerusalem church had to say after the full accounting of Peter, "When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God saying, 'So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.'" (Acts 11:18)

The Biblical account of Peter's call and ministry to Cornelius's household spells out so clearly God's working through a believer who is called and supervised by the Holy Spirit. Peter was a man of fasting, prayer, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. He clearly explained to all just what the Lord had called him to do as well as what the Lord did. This powerful obedient servant of the Lord even took six men with him to Cornelius's household and to the church in Jerusalem so they could bear witness to the ministry that took place. (Acts 10:23; 11:12)

Missionaries who are valuable to the work of the Lord will show Biblical maturity in accountability. This enables the Body of Christ to rejoice in all that God is doing through those for whom the church is fasting and praying.

Transitional Sentence: *Biblical Supervision enables missionaries to complete the will of God. All who have joined hands together with them enjoy the reports of the work the Lord is doing.*

Churches who are missionary minded may also participate in financial support of their missionaries, “For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’” (1 Timothy 5:18) The Holy Spirit places this passage of Scripture just after a powerful truth presented to Timothy through the great missionary, the Apostle Paul, “The elder who directs the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17) In sending out the seventy-two to every town the Lord Jesus said, “...the worker deserves his wages.” (Luke 10:7)

All true missionaries are sent and commissioned by the Lord to make disciples of Christ Jesus. Christians who devote themselves to fasting, prayer, and hearing the voice of the Lord and are sold out to taking the gospel message to wherever the Lord sends them are entitled to compensation. The great missionary, the Apostle Paul, lays a principle which is not always followed as it should be regarding missions. The idea in this is to reward for work done well. (New Bible Commentary) 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

The missionaries who are supported by any certain Body of Christ have, out of spiritual maturity, proven themselves faithful in living the Christian life, faithful in preparation in what the Lord as called them to do and faithful to pray through to completion the ministry to which the Lord has called them. They have shown themselves able to trust in God regardless of the trials of life and conflicts that come in battle for the souls of mankind. They live the life that says as the Missionary Paul when he wrote, “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our

hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)

In Closing: The Holy Spirit clearly revealed the heart of Christ toward missions in the spiritual heart of missionary Charles Inwood who wrote, “The sob of millions of poor souls sound in my ears, and this moves my heart. And I try to measure, as God helps me, something of their darkness, something of their blank misery, something of their despair. Oh, think of these needs! I say again, they are oceans depths. And, beloved, in my Master’s name, Jesus Christ, I want you to think earnestly about them, until they appall you, until you cannot sleep, until you cannot criticize.” (Knight’s Treasury of 2,000 Illustrations)

There is complacency in many who are involved in missions and those who attend church today. This makes me think of an illustration I read while doing research for this message:

“Through the quiet streets of a fishing village that lay at the mouth of a turbulent river, a cry rang out ‘Boy overboard!’ Quickly a crowd gathered, and anxious eyes looked out over the rushing water to the figure of a drowning boy. Each mother’s heart asked the question, ‘Is he my boy?’ A rope was brought, and a known strong swimmer volunteered to rescue the drowning boy. Tying one end of the rope around his waist, he threw the other end out into the crowd and then he plunged into the river. Eagerly they watched the brave swimmer fight the tides with strong strokes. After reaching the drowning boy, the swimmer yells, ‘Pull us to shore!’ The villagers looked at each other and someone asked, ‘Who has the rope?’

The end of the rope had slipped into the water because those in the crowd did not catch the rope. Powerless to overcome the constant raging waters, the brave swimmer and the drowning little boy perished.” (AMG Bible Illustrations, Logos Library System)

When the church and missionaries fail to embrace the heart of Christ, to be Biblically separated, to Biblically participate in the sending, or to provide healthy supervision and support for the work of missions, there will not be anyone whom God has called to tie on the rope of the Gospel and plunge into the lost world of souls. There will not be anyone who is on shore holding the ropes of fasting, prayer, and vision for missions.

Mr. Frodsham relates, “Sir William MacGregor, whose unflagging zeal for [lost souls] in many parts of the globe has done much for the cause of [Christ], shared his thoughts. In discussing the rapid progress of Islamic belief in West Africa, as compared to that of Christianity he said, ‘Its just that every Muslim regards himself as a missionary; the majority of Christians think it is another man’s work.’” (AMG Bible Illustrations, Logos Library System)

The whole of Scripture presents the heart of missions in the “Great Commission.” Missions is a team effort and when everything is done in “a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40) the Body of Christ will enjoy what is promised to the New Testament church, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) The church that lives out the heart of Christ in missions will know the promise of Christ, “...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Let us Pray!!!