

Prophets and False Prophets

AC 13:4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

AC 13:6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who 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. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹ Then 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? ¹¹ Now 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. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

AC 13:13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

AC 13:16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, ¹⁸ he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert,

¹⁹ he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²² After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

AC 13:23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

AC 13:26 "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷ The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸ Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

AC 13:32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

" 'You are my Son;
today I have become your Father. '

AC 13:34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

" 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'

AC 13:35 So it is stated elsewhere:

" `You will not let your Holy One see decay.'

AC 13:36 "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

AC 13:38 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

**AC 13:41 " `Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish,
for I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you.' "**

AC 13:42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

1. i. Some people want to hear – others just want to criticise.

Notice first though that these two guys, who had been set apart by the Holy Spirit and the Church leadership at Antioch, were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit.

AC 13:4 ***The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.***

Not only does the Holy Spirit do the setting apart and gifting but also the directing. The Holy Spirit does the leading when we are in relationship with God. The Holy Spirit becomes part of our life to be involved in all of our life.

God doesn't leave us on our own but is permanently with us. More about that over the next few weeks.

ii. Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the truth. Bar Jesus or Elymas wanted to stop the truth. Hey, isn't that just life!!!! Some people want to know and others just don't want to know. This Elymas guy thought he had the answers, thought he had what his boss needed, him. Notice he was a sorcerer and a false prophet. We heard last week that a prophet is someone who tells God's message, so a false prophet is someone who tells something other than God's message. Istly, sorcery is out. We are told in the old testament and the New to have nothing to do with it.

LEV 19:26 ***" Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. "***
" Do not practice divination or sorcery.

We are also warned about false prophets.

MT 7:15 ***"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.***

So, this guy is basically evil.

But before we criticize. It is easy to give a false message. It is easy to say “God is speaking and this is the message” but it is hard to define the truth in it.

How do you work it out?

1. **Scripture.** What does the bible says about the situation? The word of God will not be criticized. That includes characteristics, laws, narrative, poetry, instructions.
2. **Wise people check it out.** It could be that we are saying what we want and have read scripture or feel something out of context. Talk to people about it. Find some wise counsel. In parts of the New Testament we are told to take it to the Elders. Good process.
3. **Usually there is confirmation.** The Holy Spirit spoke to the church leaders. They confirmed the Spirits leading. It will be evident. And scripture, your own bible reading will support or dispute the message. Having said that, just because someone gives a wrong statement doesn't mean they are false prophets. Perhaps mislead, perhaps got it wrong, perhaps personal desire took over, maybe sin got in the way. Those issues are dealt with by God. Repentance and humility is required AND understanding and forgiveness required by the other parties. Having said that there are people out there who want to take us down. Evaluate what is said, be realistic and let God show you the way.

2. Notice what Paul does.

⁹ Then 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? ¹¹ Now 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."

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Paul lets the Holy Spirit work in his life, and lets God do something amazing.

Notice though it wasn't just punishment for Elymas, but a positive sign to Sergius Paulus. He heard and saw and believed.

But old Elymas, got an instant prophetic statement. Blindness. A bit of a warning isn't it, to watch what we say.

3. Paul and Barnabus moved on. And get this – He is asked to speak.

When you get a chance – preach it brother.

And here we have a basic gospel message outline.

- i. What God has done in the past. V 16-22
- ii. Where Jesus fits into God's plan v23 – 25
- iii. What Jesus did v26 – 31
- iv. What it all means. V32 – 37
- v. What you need to do v 38-41

Check it out. Great message, culturally appropriate, theologically sound, makes sense, and lead by the Spirit. That's the template for a message.

4. So everyone became Christians on the spot. No.

Why not, everything was right, Paul did a good job, said the right things. Yeh, but sometimes things take time. God respects people so much he lets them make up their own minds, in their own time and at their own pace.

Sometimes people like to know the full story, not just part of it. Give 'em time.

Look at what happened here.

^{AC 13:42} As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Paul talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. Continue to find out about how God works in our lives. The next week they could explain further. And that's exactly what happens here at

church. Each week a bit more is added to the story. I cant tell it all at once, so I do it bit by bit. And hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will add it into our lives.

So come back again next week for another installment of God talking to us about our lives.