

Acts 13

This chapter is a good example of why this book is called ACTS! There is a lot of action here related to the spreading of the Good News.

Acts 9:15-16 NKJV But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (16) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

The HOLY SPIRIT SAID: GO to the Gentiles!

To the Jew first!

Fasting

Persecution

(Acts 13:1 NKJV) Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain **prophets and teachers**: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Manaen: Herod (antipas) the tetrarch's foster brother; Great news that someone from that blood-thirsty background could break the cycle and become a follower of the Messiah!

But note that Barnabas was listed first and Saul was listed last...

(Acts 13:2 NKJV) As they **ministered to the Lord and fasted**, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **(Acts 13:3 NKJV)** **Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them**, they sent *them* away.

The phrase "ministered to the Lord" is important because it tells us that when we minister to others (the word means public servant and it is sometimes used to describe serving in the Temple or Church), we are actually serving Jesus! And serving Him or others requires humility.

Part of their demonstration of humility was in *fasting*. Guzik notes that in 1827, Adam Clarke wrote about fasting the following: "At present it is but little used; a strong proof that **self-denial** is wearing out of fashion." Clarke thought this was true of his day; he would probably think it all the more true of modern times.

When I did a word search for "fasting", it was almost always associated with other **attitudes** of the heart:

fasting and **weeping** (in repentance)
fasting and **confession** of sins
fasting and **seeking** the Face of God!
Fasting and **humbling** yourself in the sight of the LORD

Dr Bill Bright taught on fasting. Here's a few insights from him:

A renewed closeness with God and a greater sensitivity to spiritual things are usually the results of a fast. Do not be disappointed if you do not have a “mountaintop experience,” as some do. Many people who have completed extended fasts tell of feeling a nearness to God that they have never before known, but some who have honestly sought His face report no particular outward results at all. For others, their fast was physically, emotionally and spiritually grueling, but they knew they had been called by God to fast. Even so, **they completed the fast unto Him as an act of worship and God honored that commitment.**

Your motive in fasting must be to glorify God, not to have an emotional experience and not to attain personal happiness. When your motives are right, God will honor your seeking heart and bless your time with Him.

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.1.html>

Isaiah writes of fasting in Chapter 58:

Isaiah 58:3-14 NKJV (3) 'Why have we fasted,' *they say*, 'and You have not seen? *Why* have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?'

Seems obvious that there was an attitude issue with those fasting: “LORD, we fasted and You did not respond...what gives?”

And yet, the LORD immediately responds:

"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. (4) Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, To make your voice heard on high. (5) Is it a fast that I have chosen, **A day for a man to afflict his soul?** *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD? (6) **"Is this not the fast that I have chosen:** To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? (7) *Is it* not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? (8) Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (9) Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I *am.*' ..."

Fasting is good; Doing it without practicing mercy and justice for others is meaningless and futile. Doing it with selfish motives is to force the Face of God to turn away;

Zechariah 7:4-10 NKJV (4) Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, (5) "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, **did you really fast for Me—for Me?**

THE FIFTH MONTH IS AV (JULY/AUGUST) AND IS NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE ON THE SAME DAY (THE 9TH) THE FIRST AND SECOND TEMPLES WERE DESTROYED)

The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 CE on the 9th of Av. In 1492, the Golden Age of Spain came to a close when Queen Isabella and her husband Ferdinand ordered that the Jews be banished from the land. The edict of expulsion was signed on March 31, 1492, and the Jews were given exactly four months to put their affairs in order and leave the country. That date was the 9th of Av.

The fast in the seventh month was for the murder of the Gedaliah in Jerusalem whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed as Governor of what remained of Judah after its destruction by the Chaldeans. So the Jewish governor and the Jewish nation were both gone...

(6) When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink *for yourselves*? (7) Should you not *have obeyed* the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?' " (8) Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, (9) "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother. (10) Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart Against his brother.'

Like we told our kids about helping around the house: attitude counts!

(Acts 13:4 NKJV) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

(SLIDE – First Journey.png)

This becomes "Saul's First Missionary Journey"!

(Acts 13:5 NKJV) And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* assistant.

"To the Jew First" –There's a huge spectrum of opinion about what this means. Some believe that this is just an historical precedence given to the Jews in the initial church, that is, them first, then others. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 10:

Matthew 10:5-6 NKJV These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. (6) But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And of course the Great Commission to start in Jerusalem...

Paul expands on this in Romans:

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 2:8-11 NKJV but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, (9) tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; (10) but glory, honor,

and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
(11) For there is no partiality with God.

Paul understood the mystery of gentile salvation as it relates to God's covenantal relationship with the Jews:

Romans 11:25-29 NKJV For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (26) And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "THE DELIVERER WILL COME OUT OF ZION, AND HE WILL TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB; (27) FOR THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." (28) Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. **(29) For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**

This in no way implies a 'free ride' to the Jews. But it means that the calling and promises of God cannot be taken away, because they are of God, who is not a man that He could lie! Paul knew that he had to always make the offer of salvation to the Jews because, quite frankly, the Promises made thru the Prophets were first for the faithful and believing Jews of Judah and Israel!

So here's Saul, who was giving the task of reaching the Gentiles who, like a loving parent who could not abandon his/her unbelieving child, he felt compelled to convince his fellow Jews that their Messiah had come according to their Scriptures, that He died according to their Scriptures and rose again on the third day, according to their Scriptures. (Romans 9-11);

(Acts 13:6 NKJV) Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* **Bar-Jesus**, (7) who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, **seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.**

The local governor heard about Barnabas and Saul and ask them to come to share the Word of God with him; But another local man, known to be a sorcerer and a false prophet did everything in his power to turn the men away and, truly, keep the proconsul from the truth.

(Acts 13:9 NKJV) Then Saul, **who also is called Paul**, filled with the Holy Spirit, **looked intently** at him (10) 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? (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.

And that's the last we time we hear of him...oh will he ever return? No, he'll never return. And his fate is still unlearned...

(Acts 13:12 NKJV) **Then the proconsul believed**, when he saw what had been done, **being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.**

The teaching was astonishing, but the rebuke and then the sign...that made the object of the teaching, Jesus's saving grace, irresistible!

(Acts 13:13 NKJV) Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

This “departing of John Mark” is described in chapter 15...All I want to say now is that since nothing was said here so we'll wait patiently...

(Acts 13:14 NKJV) But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, **and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day** and sat down. (Acts 13:15 NKJV) And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "**Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.**"

An offer some soon may regret!

(Acts 13:16 NKJV) Then Paul stood up, **and motioning with his hand said**, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, **listen**:

As we have learned, the local synagogue was made up of both Jews and “God Fearers” who were gentiles who worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but stopped short of full conversion.

(Acts 13:17 NKJV) The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. (18) Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. (19) And when He had **destroyed** seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

Note that the 7 nations weren't totally destroyed and were always a thorn in their side;

The idea behind allotment is that they cast lots to divide up the land between the 12 tribes (but not Levi. But it included the 2 tribes for Joseph's sons); Lots was seen as a way to avoid animosity or contesting land rights later on [does one team ever contest a coin toss].. (SEE JOSHUA 14 for more details).

(Acts 13:20 NKJV) "After that He gave *them* judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. (Acts 21) And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. (22) And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID THE SON OF JESSE, A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART, WHO WILL DO ALL MY WILL.'

Some have accused Saul of “cloning” Stephen's sermon. But both built a case that the history of the Jews was a history whose goal was Messiah!

(Acts 13:23 NKJV) From this man's seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—

Matthew 1 and Luke 3 give the details of the geneology...
And the promise of David's seed was recorded in:

2 Samuel 7:12-16 NKJV "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My name, **and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**

(Acts 13:24 NKJV) after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. (25) And as John was **finishing his course**, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not *He*. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

Saul describes John's calling as a race (finishing his course).

(Acts 13:26 NKJV) "Men *and* brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and **those among you who fear God**, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

Again, Saul acknowledges the concept of "to the Jew first".

(Acts 13:27 NKJV) For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, **because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled *them* in condemning *Him*.**

Unlike Peter who speaking of Jesus in Acts 2, said:

Acts 2:23 NKJV Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Saul "goes easy" on them, recognizing that not all willfully rejected Him with perfect knowledge that he was the Messiah – that is, many didn't understand Him nor what they were taught about Him from the Scriptures!

(Acts 13:28 NKJV) And though they found no cause for death *in Him*, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

In other words, the cowards asked a gentile to put an innocent man to death;

(Acts 13:29 NKJV) Now when **they** had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took *Him* down from the tree and laid *Him* in a tomb.

The Psalms and Prophets wrote about his betrayal, scourging, Him beatings, the piercing of His hands and feet and hung Him on a tree in the shape of a cross between two thieves, stripped of his clothing and cast lots for them; when they had pierced His side, and it was sufficiently evident that his life was taken from the earth; they buried Him in a rich man's tomb and there He lay for 3 days!

(Acts 13:30 NKJV) **But God raised Him from the dead.**

Which we will celebrate in just a couple of weeks!

(Acts 13:31 NKJV) He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

This is often said because the idea of "honest witness" was ingrained into the Jews thru the law – only on the witness of 2 or more could a man be accused of wrongdoing!

(Acts 13:32 NKJV) **And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers.**

Genesis 22:18 NKJV In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

(Acts 13:33 NKJV) God has fulfilled this for us **their children**, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

This verse was fulfilled when God raised Him up because it proved who Jesus was – God the Son!

(Acts 13:34 NKJV) And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID.'

In other words, never to die again!

Isaiah 55:3-4 NKJV Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David. (4) Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people.

(Acts 13:35 NKJV) Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*: 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.'

Psalms 16:10 NKJV For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

(Acts 13:36 NKJV) "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

David died and decayed in the grave;

(Acts 13:37 NKJV) **but** He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

DO WE FINALLY GET IT? It was when death was arrested and our lives began!

(Acts 13:38 NKJV) **Therefore** let it be known to you, brethren, **that through this Man** is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; forgiveness of sins: sin is no longer imputed to us; sin is no longer remembered by the Father; sin is not only covered but put away! Sin is blotted out and our names, therefore, are inscribed in the Book of Life forever! All of this, and more, from act of **free** grace and mercy through the blood of Christ

(Acts 13:39 NKJV) and **by Him everyone who believes is justified** from all things from which you **could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

Belief in Him causes a pronouncement of righteousness in the sight of God; **justification** by the faith of Christ; and never by the works of the law; Gill describes this as justification as complete and perfect;

“it is from all sin, original and actual, secret and open, greater or lesser sins; sins of presumption and ignorance, of omission or commission; from all things the law can charge with, as breaches of it; from all things which the justice of God can demand satisfaction for; and from all things that Satan, or a man's own conscience, can justly accuse him of ... but God justifies them, by imputing the righteousness of his Son to them, in which he views them as without fault, unblamable and irreprovable; ... Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to all these, and therefore they shall never enter into condemnation, but shall be acquitted and discharged from all things”

We cannot be justified by the Law because our obedience is imperfect due to weakness of our flesh. Without perfect obedience the Law, built on the Perfect Will of God, He cannot declare us perfect – and it must condemn it.

(Acts 13:40 NKJV) Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: (41) 'BEHOLD, YOU DESPISERS, MARVEL AND PERISH! FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL BY NO MEANS BELIEVE, THOUGH ONE WERE TO DECLARE IT TO YOU.' "

A quote from the prophesy of Habakkuk speaking of the proud and haughty Jews who neglected and despised the law to show the same attitudes found by current day Jews who reject the Good News of their Messiah. And like the days of the destruction of the 1st Temple and Jerusalem, a repeat of this was prophesized by Jesus Himself – and most would not believe it as their forefathers refused to believe it!

(Acts 13:42 NKJV) So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. (43) Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Initial reactions were positive; many believed the Good News of Salvation by Grace;

(Acts 13:44 NKJV) On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. (45) But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

As always, opposition arose! The flesh erupted in envy and greed and jealousy and staunch unbelief!

(Acts 13:46 NKJV) Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

(Acts 13:47 NKJV) For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I HAVE SET YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BE FOR SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.' "

Isaiah 49:6 NKJV Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

(Acts 13:48 NKJV) Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

(Acts 13:49 NKJV) And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

(Acts 13:50 NKJV) **But the Jews** stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, **raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.**

no good deed goes unpunished

(Acts 13:51 NKJV) **But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.**

Matthew 10:14-15 NKJV **And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. (15) Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!**

(Acts 13:52 NKJV) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

In the face of persecution, there is joy....because of the presence of the Holy Spirit with them, and in them!