Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Satanic Resistance
Scripture: Acts 13:1-13
Code: 1288

Let's turn in our Bibles tonight to the 13th chapter of Acts. Acts chapter 13. I was asked by folks in our missions department if I would share a message that would lead us to a personal...introspective, self-examination about our own availability to the Lord, about our own anticipation of what stands before us in terms of the opportunities of mission. I felt that the 13th chapter of Acts would be a marvelous place to look.

Obviously, the Book of Acts is a missionary book. It's all about the spreading of the Gospel. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth; but particularly, as we come into chapter 13, we reach a real milestone in the ongoing ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We're going to be looking at verses 1 through 13, and I'll delay their reading until we examine the text itself; but let me just say that if I were to title this passage, I would title it "Satanic Opposition to a Spirit-Filled Mission." "Satanic Opposition to a Spirit-Filled Mission."

Satan is working today, as he did then. We see it constantly, not only in our culture, but in other cultures around the globe. The enemy is always aggressively, actively antagonizing the ministry of Jesus Christ. One way or another, in multiplied manners, Satan works to shut down the efforts to build the Kingdom of God; and the activity of Satan is periodically brought, I think, home to us through various and sundry means; and I've been most interested recently, like you have, I'm sure, to sort of read the papers and look at what's been going on in Atlanta. We're all very much aware of the fact that 28 young black men and boys were murdered there, and I don't know if you're as aware of it; but at the very same period of time, during the same two-year period in which 28 young boys and young men were murdered, 33 black women were also murdered in Atlanta, which makes a total of 61 homicides, 59 of which are unsolved; and in many of the cases of the murders of the women...the...circumstances around their killing were identical or similar to the killing of the young boys.

Now, all of this has brought some very interesting insights from some of the community in Atlanta. There's a woman there by the name of Sandra O'Neillwho teaches at Emory University, and her particular doctoral studies have been in African history, ancient African history. And she has traced back the history of African occultic worship, and particularly studied the druids, which is a form of ancient witchcraft; and in the worship of the druids in ancient Africa, they offered young boys as sacrifices to the demons; and in her research regarding the Atlanta murders, she has come to the conclusion that this is all a part of a satanic cult. And she says the evidence is unmistakable and

undeniable. She called our office one day to see if she could get us to help her to sort of bring this to the attention of the authorities, because they find it very difficult to believe these kind of things.

Her discoveries were followed up by a young black woman who was involved in many of the killings...and this young black woman decided that she would give her entire story to clear the record, as it were; and it was printed in the March 30th issue of Us magazine, and in that story, she described something of the satanic, occultic activity. In response to her testimony and the queries of Dr. O'Neill and others, one Atlanta police detective who wishes to remain anonymous said, "There's no question there's a large increase in unexplained deaths, and no question that some are very similar to some of the children who were murdered. Some of us believe these murders are possibly related to the deaths of the children, although there's no proof yet. We just haven't gotten to the point where the whole puzzle fits."

Very complex, very difficult, and very elusive. This woman who gave testimony from inside the group, her name is Magill, says they use...used drugs, pornography. They were engaged in making snuff films, which are films in which they murder people, actually, and then film it for showing to other people. And also devil worship. She said the people constituted a cult whose rituals included human and animal sacrifices and murder. She distinguishes between sacrifice and murder. The murder vics...victims, she says, were drug runners who'd attempted to cheat the cult. The sacrificial victims, however, were innocent people seduced at random. She claims she visited three of the cult ceremonial grounds: the meeting ground, the trial ground, and the killing ground; and she witnessed black and white men and women indulging in drug orgies while surrounded by a large Christian cross, a Jewish menorah, Islamic symbols, an altar, and a multitude of candles. She claims to have witnessed seven deaths, including seeing her boyfriend rape a boy, kill him, and stuff his body into a plastic bag. They'd bring these people to the grounds, she says, and get them really stoned. Two other people had to walk on each side of the them to hold them up. Then they'd take them over to the altar, slit their throats, and drink their blood...

Now, if you have any questions about whether Satan is active, that oughta help answer them; and how strange and bizarre that it is all mixed with a Christian cross, a Jewish menorah, and Islamic symbols. Satan is at work in the world in many, many ways, and many not as overt as that. But be aware of the fact that he is active; and when anyone sets out to accomplish the work of God, he can be expected to face the opposition of the enemy. There's little question about that.

Now, with that in mind, let's look at the satanic resistance to a Spirit-filled mission in Acts 13; and it's very occultic, is this incident; and so it ties in somewhat with what I just shared with you. The 13th chapter of Acts is a critical chapter in the flow of God's expanding of His Kingdom. In the developing of the mission of the church, this is a very crucial chapter. It has been about 25 years since Pentecost...The church has flourished. The church has grown. The church has developed. It has reached Jerusalem. It has reached Judea. It has reached Samaria, and there has been the

concentration primarily in those early years of the church; but now it is time to move into the Gentile world, to begin to establish that final element of our Lord's commission, and that is to preach the Gospel to every creature. The final dimension of the plan in Acts chapter 1 to go to the uttermost part of the earth; and by this time, a very effective base of operations has been planted in the pagan world, and that is the church at Antioch...this key church is the basic place we find ourselves in chapter 13.

Antioch, the first real beachhead in a pagan world. The church had a great start chronicled for us in chapter 11. Great growth, great impact, and the church had a great attitude. All in all, it was a marvelous church, Christ-honoring church, God-exalting church, Spirit-filled church, growing church, strong church; and it is just the kind of church that is ready to explode on the world; and I might be stretching the point, but I see our church in much the same way as I see Antioch. A church well-taught, a church well-disciplined, a church well-stocked with God's precious people, a church involved in worshiping God and glorifying His name, learning His Word and walking in the power and energy of the Spirit of God, about ready to explode on the world. And, as I told you, as this last year, 1981, began, my great prayer for 1981 and the years ahead of that would be that we would begin to raise up missionaries to send all over the world, that we would explode on the world as Antioch is about to do in this 13th chapter.

If you were to characterize this church, you would find that it had a very strong doctrinal basis. Strong foundation in the truth of God. You would also note that it had many gifted men who were highly trained and capable, and women as well; and now it is ready to send them out. The foundation is laid. It is time for the sending; and so Antioch becomes, for us, I think at Grace Community Church and for all the church of Jesus Christ, a blueprint, a model, a pattern, an example. A church committed to what we see here in Antioch is the church that can explode on the world.

Now, lemme give you the basic key, because I think it's so very important that you understand this...When we look at this particular church, we notice something that stands out. Verse 2, "They ministered to the Lord. They fasted, and the Holy Spirit said." Verse 4, "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia." Verse 9, "Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit." Now if you go back to chapter 11 verse 24, it says of Barnabas, "He was a righteous man and full of the Holy Spirit. Saul was full of the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit. The leaders at Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting in the Holy Spirit; and they were sent out by the Holy Spirit; and we can easily conclude that this was a church under the control of whom? The Holy Spirit.

A Spirit-filled church, a Spirit-energized church, a Spirit-empowered church, a church that knew the meaning of Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me." And that's the key, people. The key in any church that is going to impact the world, the key in any church that is going to move out to fulfill God's great commission, the

key to any church that is going to explode, as it were, with the message of the Kingdom across the globe is that it be a Spirit-controlled church. A Spirit-filled church; and if I can just summarize all that we've ever said through the years about that subject, let me just say that a Spirit-filled church is simply defined as a church in which the people walk in consistent obedience to the will of God; and where is the will of God expressed? In the Word of God, and that's why the parallel is Colossians 3, the parallel to Ephesians 5 where it says, "Be filled with the Spirit," and in Colossians 3, it says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." So we see to begin with a Spirit-filled church, a church where people walk and live and talk and think and act in the energy of the Spirit of God, because their hearts are given over to the saturation of the Word of God. Now, this is the kind of church that affects the world.

Now, there are several things I want you to note as we look at Spirit-filled church moving out into the world. Point No. 1, it is characterized by spiritual men, spiritual men. Let's meet them. Verse 1, "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." It's so important to note, I think, at the very beginning of our thoughts, that any church that's effective has to have the right leadership. It has to have the right leadership. Hosea the prophet said, "Like people, like priest." Jesus looked on the multitude, as we've been learning in Matthew 9, and saw them scattered and saw them really ripped and torn, and they were as sheep without a shepherd. When he writes, does the Apostle Paul, to Corinthian assembly, and he writes them that first epistle, and he discusses at the beginning and clear through to the end the chaos of the Corinthian church, it has always been interesting to me that throughout that entire letter, he never makes any reference to a pastor. He never makes any reference to an elder. He never makes any reference to a leader in that church. Apparently, their problems were related to a lack of spiritual leadership...

People never rise above their leaders...The church that would reach the world, the Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled church, will always feature strong, spiritual men as leaders. That has been the goal, believe me, of my ministry for the years that I've been here is to see God build strong, spiritual men, because that is what makes everything else happen...as they give their leadership; and God has always put a premium on that, always. It says in Acts chapter 6 that when the church of Jerusalem was beginning to form itself for the ministry that was inevitably going to start as they began to reach out, it tells us there that, verse 3, the apostle said, "Look, look among you and find men. Men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." And in verse 5, "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit." And verse 8 says, "Stephen was full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."

And the church has always been after men who were full of faith and full of wisdom and full of power and full of the Word of God and full of the Holy Spirit of God. In chapter 1 of Titus, in chapter 3 of 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul says, "Here are the kind of men that I demand to be leaders in my church,"

and he gives us very high standards. He is to be blameless. That's a high standard. A one-woman man, and it isn't just that he's only to have had one wife or only to have one wife, not be a polygamist or someone divorced, the idea in the Greek text is that he is to be a man utterly and totally and singly committed to and in love with his wife. That's a present tense spiritual qualification. Just being married to the same woman doesn't qualify you for anything, 'cause it doesn't say anything about what you think of her. Temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, given to hospitality, skilled in teaching, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy of filthy lucre or money, patient, not a fighter, not covetous, one who rules well his own house, has his children in subjection with all seriousness. He is not to be a novice, a recent convert. He must have a good report of the people on the outside, and it goes on.

And Titus 1 repeats many of the same things; and so there is a premium put on spiritual men. If a church is to be a church that's gonna affect the world, it has to be led by spiritual men. Now, you know, this sounds so obvious to me, and it must sound obvious to you, because you're here. But believe me, people, there are churches upon churches upon churches across this nation and around the world that do not have spiritual men in leadership. They do not have men who teach the Word of God, who live the Word of God, who are filled with the Spirit of God...and it's a tragic thing.

This church, look at it in verse 1, had certain preachers and teachers, some with a...some were proclaimers and some were more didactic; and there's a good insight into the distinction between the gift of preaching and the gift of teaching. Some were proclaimers and some were teachers, and he names them for us. Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. Now, we know about Barnabas. He was a Levite from Cyprus. Tremendous Old Testament knowledge. Chapter 12 tells us he was full of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 11, rather, he was full of the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled Jew trained in the Old Testament, a resident Old Testament scholar with a pure Christian character. He was highly respected and highly loved, a warm-hearted man, a marvelously capable teacher, a comforter. That's what his name means.

And then we meet Simeon, called Niger, and Niger means black. There was certainly no race distinction there. Simeon the black. Some think it may well be a form of Simon of Cyrene, the very man who carried the cross of Jesus Christ. This man would be a Gentile. And then there was Lucius, and Lucius, a Gentile also from Africa, the same area. And then Manaen. It says he was brought up with Herod in the family of Agrippa. And then it says Saul, destined to be the key to pagan world evangelization. Five spiritual men. Five godly preachers and teachers, a motley arrangement to be sure of Jews and Gentiles and wealthy and common, and all chosen and all controlled by the Spirit of God. There's a great principle here, and that is that the church is always to be led by, and listen carefully, a plurality of godly men.

Church is never to be under the leadership of one man who rules alone. There is always to be that plurality of godly leaders. I can say to you that I thank God that we at Grace Community Church have

this, and you can thank God, as well. We are blessed by God with a plurality of spiritually-minded, Christ-loving, God-exalting, Spirit-filled men; and that is a high and holy privilege.

Secondly, a church that is going to reach the world not only has to be one led by spiritual men, but it has to be one engaged in spiritual ministry. It has to be one engaged in spiritual ministry. Look at verse 2. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them.'" Have you ever...ever wondered what the duty of a leader in a church is? There it is. To minister to the Lord. What does that mean? To serve the Lord; and to fast and pray. And how is the Lord served? He is served in the dissemination of His Word and in prayer, and that's the same twofold perspective of Acts 6. The apostle said, "We'll give ourselves continually to prayer in the ministry of the Word."

So here they are ministering the Word, serving the Lord, offering their service as an act of worship to God and spending their time in prayer. The responsibility, beloved, of spiritual men is a spiritual ministry. So many times in the church, people who are called to be in spiritual leadership are drowning in a sea of activity which may or may not be in the least related to spiritual ministry, the ministry of the dissemination of the Word of God and prayer. This is that which this church was marked by, which uniquely set it apart to be used by God. They were doing what they were called to do.

You know, it's amazing when I go around the country and speak at pastor's conferences and...and I love those. We have a great time with pastors, and I'm looking forward even this month to going to Chicago to speak to 1700 pastors, and then down to Texas to speak to 1,000 Southern Baptist pastors for three days, and...and, you know, inevitably, what I tell them, and it's.. it's so obvious, but they have to bring me in from California to tell 'em this, and when I get there I say to them, "Men, give yourselves, in effect, to the ministry of the Word and to prayer." And they take notes...and then they come up and they say, "But how can get to that? I have so much other stuff to do." A fellow asked me that recently, and I said, "I have a...I have a wonderful plan for that. Don't do it."...He said, "Well, if I don't do it, it won't get done." I said, "Precisely, and if it doesn't get done, then maybe people are gonna realize that if they don't do it, it isn't gonna get done at all, 'cause you're not gonna do it, because you've been called to the ministry of the Word and to prayer; and if you sacrifice that for other things, you will violate the principle of the apostles in Acts 6 and the principle of the pastors at Antioch in Acts 13 who ministered in terms of serving the Lord for the dissemination of the Word and prayer, intense prayer.

The word minister there is an interesting word. It is the word liturgeaor liturgea, I guess. We get the word liturgy from it, and it basically means to serve in a priestly manner. To serve in terms of worship, I suppose we could say. A worshipping kind of service. It...it's used in 1 Peter 2:5 with the idea of offering priestly service to God. And so they see, and this is wonderful, they see their ministry to the people, watch this, they see their ministry to the people as an act of worship to God...If you ask

me, for example, "What do I give...what do you give God?" I don't sacrifice a lamb. I don't sacrifice a turtledove. I don't sacrifice a...a goat or a ram or anything else. My sacrifice to God is my service rendered, and every sermon I...I preach is in my heart as if I were bringing an offering into the very sanctuary of the Old Testament to present it to God. Every sermon I preach, every day I live, every hour I study, every moment I spend in prayer is what I offer God as an act of loving service and worship for Him.

Now, that's the heart and soul of what ministry's about. Oh, sure there are other things you have to do like write letters and sign letters and...and work on projects and do all kinds of details, but you never lose sight of the priority. All of their service in verse 2 was seen as a ministry to the Lord. Everything they did was a spiritual sacrifice offered to Christ, and, you know, that is a very important thought, because you should be able, in the ministry of Christ and in leadership in the church, you should be able to say, "Everything I've done today can stand as an offering to Jesus Christ." It has that spiritual value to it...A sweet-smelling offering given to Him.

These men ministered to the Lord. There's another note I would put in your mind, and that is they ministered to the Lord rather than just to the people. When all you're concerned about is ministering to the people, you tend to compromise, because the people become the end; and if you wanna gain your end with the people, you might compromise. But as long as you're offering everything as an offering to God, there's no place for compromise...

And so, like the Macedonians, they first gave themselves to the Lord and everything flowed out of that. They fasted, which indicates the intensity of their prayer. Fasting is a way to express intensity. Fasting is a way to express devotion and vigilance and passion. It's not that you're gonna become spiritual because you don't eat. Some people go on a diet just so they can lose weight, and then think they oughta feel spiritual. Well, you should feel a little spiritual if you lose some weight, but that isn't what fasting is. It isn't stopping eating so you'll look better or feel better. It is when you are so passionately consumed in the cause in your heart that you have no desire for food; and we see also that it is sometimes a partial abstinence from the things of the world and the delicacies of the world, because you are consumed with the things of God. Fasting can be, then, partial or total as the Lord directs.

So there they are, ministering to the Lord, fasting, disseminating the Word, and their prayer life is offered as an offering to God Himself. Spiritual men with a spiritual ministry. But, oh, how grateful I am to God that I see in this church that spiritual ministry where our leaders are concerned with the Word of God and the souls of people and concerned to pray and to teach.

Then comes a third element in this wonderful section, and that is a spiritual mission. Spiritual men with a spiritual ministry are called on a spiritual mission. Verse 2 says, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them." The Spirit moves in and speaks. Now, I don't know

what that said means there. I don't know who was the voice of the Holy Spirit, but I would venture a guess that if, in fact, there were, as verse 1 indicates, certain prophets among these five, that the prophets' special ministry before the completion of the New Testament was to speak a direct word from the Holy Spirit to the life of the church. The apostles gave the doctrine. The prophets spoke the practical aspects and the application; and so, no doubt, one of these five or another in their midst who was a prophet who spoke for God, was used by the Holy Spirit and pinpointed "Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them."

And would you notice that it happened as they were ministering? It's always the way, as they were ministering. God does not dust off the people who haven't been doing anything. He uses the ones that are in the middle of it. He takes the best. I mean, can you imagine if you were in that church, and you had these five, and two of them were Saul and Barnabas, and it came to a decision as to who you'd send to the mission field? Everybody would probably say, "Well, I nominate Simeon. I nominate Lucius, and I nominate Manaen; but, oh, God, don't take Barnabas and Saul. I mean they're the best we've got," and that's exactly what God took, Barnabas and Saul, and called them into a special mission.

Now, notice the word separate. "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul," and the idea is to separate in a unique sense unto the Holy Spirit. They're His men. They're His to use, His to send. "Pull them apart from the rest unto Me...this is marvelous...for the work unto which I have called them."...The call of God. Oh, what a special call that is. I know that God has called me to...to a work and to this work, and that is the greatest reality in my life in the ministry. That I know God has called me, and I can't shirk that; and it is...while it is a great responsibility, believe me, it's a great joy. To think that God called me...

I shared with the missionaries this week that I read a most fascinating book sent to me by Thomas Nelson Publishers. They said it was one of the most amazing stories they'd ever received, and they wanted me to review it and tell 'em what I thought about it; and once I picked it up, I couldn't put it down. It was a story of a young man in Kansas City by the name of John P. Jewell who was called by God to preach. He knew if he knew anything, even his name, that God had called him to preach, and so he went to Calvary Bible College in Kansas City. Three weeks ago, I preached the commencement at that school. A fine school that trains young people for Christian ministry.

And then about the third year, he decided he was getting enough intellectualism, so he transferred to a liberal school; and when he finished that, he went to Colgate Rochester Divinity School, where they really don't believe anything; and they absolutely destroyed his faith. They made shipwreck of it. He became an alcoholic. He tried to maintain a ministry, because it was all he knew. He said, "I knew I was called by God, but I hadn't the faintest idea of what I could say. I had a call, but no message." But all the while, the Spirit of God tugged at his heart, and the one thing that held him and held him and held him and held him was the sense of a call of God. He said, "I couldn't shake the call, even

thought I didn't any longer know the message. I denied the truth of the Bible. I denied the reality of God. I went to the God is dead theology, and I denied the deity of Jesus Christ; but somehow in some way I could not deny that God had called me to preach, even though I didn't even know what the message was. Amazing...

They had a little baby, a lovely little son that was the darling of their life. When he was in the ninth grade, he ran away and became a drug addict, and they were called on the telephone periodically from cities all across America where he was picked up. And through that tragic high school, junior high and high school period in that young boy's life, this man was drawn back to Christ; and he threw away all the garbage and the liberalism that he had been pumped full of in seminary. He went right back to the church where he was first redeemed; and, today, he's back in the pastorate fulfilling the call of God in his life...He was called; and although we don't talk much about that, because we tend to associate it with a...some kind of a strange voice out of heaven, you know, like "Go to India." You know, we...I...I think that that's not what happens; but I'll tell you one thing. There is a call when the Spirit of God puts His hand on your heart, and I think that call is dominantly expressed through your desire...Sometimes people have said to me, "Why did you go into the ministry?" And it's so easy to answer that, "Because I didn't wanna do anything but this, and I don't ever wanna do anything but this."...

And so God said, "I want two of the best five you've got." I always think about this, and then I think Jim George from our staff who went to Singapore; and my first reaction was, "Lord, but we need him. He's...he's one of the best we have." And the Lord said, "Right, and that's exactly why I'm taking him." And how blessed it is to see him go.

Verse 3, the church responded, "They fasted. They prayed. The just poured their hearts out to God." Oh, I love the spiritual quality of this ministry, don't you? Convicts my own heart. We get so bound up in the pragmatics, and we lose this sense of flow in the power of the Spirit of God. "And so they prayed and they laid their hands on them, and they sent them away. And so they...I like this...being sent forth by the Holy Spirit." The church prays and the church fasts and the church lays hands of them; and that, by the way, is a sign of affirmation, confirmation, identification. It's like saying, "We're with ya. We stand with ya. We're in solidarity with you and your cause. We stand behind you with prayer and support, and we sent you out."

Verse 5 says, "When they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had also John as their helper." That refers to John Mark. So they departed to Seleucia, which is the port of Antioch, by the way, about 15 miles away on the Mediterranean. "And from there they sailed to Cyprus, which was the home of Barnabas." I would guess maybe 110 miles away, and then, beyond that, Salamis and there they preached. That was the principle trade city, trade center, the largest city, the great population of the Jews. That was large enough, by the way, to handle many synagogues. There were several in that city. They went into one of those synagogues,

and the preached. You notice at the end of verse 5, they had John as their helper? This is John Mark, named in 12:12 of Acts. John, whose surname was Mark, who's mother's name was Mary; and they used to have home Bible studies in his house.

And so he's along with them; Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark, and they are sent on a spiritual mission. Now, now we come to the crisis. Spiritual men, operating a spiritual ministry, are separated and sent on a spiritual mission; and then, if I could beg the issue with the M's, they run in the spiritual militants immediately. Verse 6, so predictable. "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos...which is on the West Coast of the island that they're on. They're on the island of Cyprus in the, starting in the town of Salamis, now going over to Paphos...they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus." What an amazing name for a sorcerer. It means son of salvation. Son of salvation. Now Paphos was a very interesting place...This was the seat of Roman government. It was also the center for the worship of Venus, the fabled goddess of love and sex.

By the way, if I remember my tradition right, tradition says that Venus was born near Paphos, born out of the foam of the sea; and, of course, she was worshipped in the wildest, most extravagant sexual orgies imaginable. The city was a sin pit where people wallowed in moral filth; and when they came to Paphos, it's little wonder that "They found a sorcerer there, a false prophet, a Jew who name was Bar-Jesus." Verse 7 tells us that this sorcerer was with the deputy of the country, who was a man named Sergius Paulus, and a prudent man. It means he was an intelligent man. "And he called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the Word of God."

Now, somehow, when Barnabas and Saul went to Paphos, they got an interview with the governor, the Roman proconsul, that's what it means, the deputy of the country. He was the governor. He was what Pilate would've been over in Palestine at an earlier time; and they probably wanted to meet this guy just for whatever intentions they had in presenting the Gospel. They received an audience with him, and they found alongside of him this sorcerer who was basically one who contacted demons. He would be like a medium.

The word sorcerer is the word magos, from which the word magi comes. In its positive connotation, it has to do with someone who is wise, who consulted the stars, as it were, as an astronomer. In its negative sense, it was someone who was superstitious and occultic, who consulted the stars as an astrologer, and there's a big difference. One is a science, and one is a false religion.

And so here was an evil man. Here was a satanic man, a man who consulted demons, who was a false prophet. Verse 8 tells us a little more about him. It says, "Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by re...by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." Isn't that interesting? They're confronted with this man who's the governor of the area; and so sooner does he say, "I wanna hear from you," verse 7, "the Word of God," but who is immediately threatened by that? Satan, right? So Satan's agent, Elymas Bar-Jesus, begins to withstand them in order to turn

away the deputy from the faith.

May I say this to you? That whenever you set out to reach a soul for Jesus Christ, you can be sure that hell wants to prevent what you're doing. You're in battle, and you're wrestling, not against...what?...flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. By the way, Elymas is an Arabic root. It could come from the Arabic word alamin, which means wise, or alama, which means powerful. Either way, and maybe a combination of both. But here is Satan's emissary, a fast-talking, turncoat Jew who had rejected the true religion, a self-styled false prophet who had attached himself to the leader of the country, and now was trying to prevent him from coming to know the truth of Christ. It's indicative of the fact, also, that Sergius Paulus dabbled in the occult...and Bar-Jesus was his constant contact with demons. Many people like that.

I'm reminded that some years ago, there was a famous book that came out called Dear and Glorious Physician, written by a woman by the name of Taylor Caldwell. It was hailed as a brilliant book because of its tremendous historical insight. It described the story of Luke, and it had all of the history correct. It...it even had all of the Zoroastrian religion correct. It was an amazing account, and many Christians thought it was a marvelous book because of how it reproduced the story of the New Testament and of Luke and his relation to it; and nobody could figure out how Taylor Caldwell had all this information, because she had no education. Nobody could figure out how she knew all this historical data until Jess Stearns, who's a well-known hypnotist on the East Coast, hypnotizes Taylor Caldwell; and when he got her under hypnosis, he found that she was in contact with multiple demons; and the demons had fed her all of this historic information which, of course, they know, because they've been around since they were created long before man. And all the information came from demonic sources.

I have literally picked up and read volumes that thick written by a demon by the name of...who goes by the name of Seth; and Seth goes through the body of Jane Roberts, who goes into some kind of strange contortion with her mouth and her face and begins profusely to write all at Sec...Seth dictates to her, and it comes out in massive volumes of demonic data, far too complex for any one human mind to ever know...And so Satan has his ambassadors; and at the great moment when the Gospel is to be presented to this needy man, Sergius Paulus, the demon activates this individual, Elymas, and he does everything he can to stop the process.

Now, if you would compare for a moment 1 Timothy chapter 3...chapter 4, rather, verse 1, you read there, "That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith," and when they are drawn to the faith and then they depart from the faith, it is because they are "giving heed to...what?...seducing spirits." Isn't that amazing? Have you ever wondered why someone comes along and seems to be interested in the faith, and all of a sudden falls away? It may not just have been an intellectual exercise. It may have been a hellish invasion by "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils or demons."

If you look, for a moment, at 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 8... you will find that it names there some of these same kind of people who withstood Moses. When Moses came to speak the truth, it says, "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, and so there are others...he says...so do these also resist the truth - men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." Just as there were those then, there are the same now; and verse 13 says, "Evil men and seducers shall become worse and worse." So the satanic seduction that happens when the faith confronts a soul is nothing new. It went on in Moses' time. We see it illustrated in Acts 13, and we hear from the pen of Paul himself that it'll occur again through the latter days. We're in a battle with the demons. The gowaytase, the imposters...the magicians, the sorcerers, the occultists. Demonic opposition to the Gospel.

Now, listen, I believe our church has spiritual men. I believe our church is engaged in spiritual ministry, and I believe God would call us to spiritual mission around the world; and, at the same time, I know that immediately, we will run into spiritual militants. You know what my fear is? That some of you who should be going are getting stopped right here before you even go, because Satan is trying to end the process before it even begins...

Now, Satan not only resists us on the outside, but would you notice verse 13 and a remarkable insight into how he resists us on the inside? "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John...John Mark...departing from them, returned to Jerusalem." You have the outside attack from Elymas, and you have the inside attack from John Mark. Very common, you know. You know, the church in its mission is very often devastated internally as much as its devastated externally? Disunity, discord, dissension, division, an unwillingness to go. Here's John Mark, he just bails out. Doesn't tell us why, but I'll tell you one thing. He had no good reason, and Paul never forgot it.

Chapter 15, Barnabas said, "I wanna take John Marks, John Mark with us." Paul said, "No, sir, you're not taking John Mark. He's a traitor." And you know what happened? The argument got so hot that Barnabas took Mark and split up with Paul, and Paul took Silas, and they parted...Paul knew that John Mark had demonstrated cowardice, and Paul was tough. Barnabas was a comforter, and he wanted to forgive him, and he wanted to restore him, and he wanted to give him a second chance, but Paul was a tough one.

By the way, he got tender in his old age. First Timothy 4:11, Paul writes...or 2 Timothy 4:11, and this is his swan song, really. He says, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he's profitable to me for the ministry." Isn't that good? Mark restored himself, and Paul was willing to take him back later. But you say, "Well, what made Mark leave? What...what made him leave Paul and Barnabas?" Well, fear of the danger. They were going to have to cross the Taurus Mountains. The caves in those mountains were occupied by robbers and, no doubt, Paul referred to them when he talked about the perils of robbers in his letter to the Corinthians. The romance was very fast wearing

off when he thought about the drudgery of the journey, the tremendous price he had to pay, and he just quit; and that attacks the mission, too. That attacks the mission from the inside. So whenever you start to do something, the folks that get out there, they hit it, and then there are those who never make it because they quit right here.

I believe, and I say it again, God has given us spiritual men and women engaged in spiritual ministry, that He would separate unto a spiritual mission. They have to face the spiritual militants and win the victory; and I guess I could call that spiritual mastery. Back to verse 9..."Then Saul (also called Paul) filled with the Holy Spirit...now we're back to Elymas, and, oh, Paul is so confrontive...filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him." That's...that's...that's very important, isn't it? You ever had your dad or your mom when you were little say, "Look me right in the eye." I mean this is a very important message...Paul looked that guy right in the eye, and this is what he said. "O, full of all deceit and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

How do you deal with the devil? Head on, folks. Head on. That's the definition of an occultist. What is an occultist? No. 1, full of all deceit and all mischief. What is mischief? It's a Greek word that means easy wickedness, doing wickedness with ease. Deceitfully evil. The word deceit is fishhook. Oh, how deceitful a fishhook is. The occultist is deceitful and wicked, mischievous. Secondly, he says, "You son of the devil." Kind of a play on words. Your name may be son of salvation, but you're son of Satan, son of the devil. "You enemy of all righteousness." Nothing good in you. "Will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"...That's not all. A tongue lashing wasn't the end of it. Verse 11, "'And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.' And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." God struck him blind on the spot...He got an eye disease.

That's spiritual mastery, and you know what's important about that? When you get into the spiritual battle, you know you're on the winning side; and nothing is more sweet than winning the battle; but lemme say if you're just gonna stay back and not even get involved, you'll know the sweetness of the victory. Spiritual mastery. How wonderful. But the battle wasn't really with Elymas. The battle was for the soul of Sergius Paulus, and look at verse 12. "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done...here's the great word. Underline it...believed, being amazed, astounded, and astonished at the teaching of the Lord." Spiritual mastery.

I believe there are souls all over this world that God would reach. Dick Winchell, who's a general director of TEAM, told me today that they think there are...35 tribes in one area of Irian Jaya that have yet never heard the message of Jesus Christ. What a challenge, and Monty was telling me that they showed a little film clip where they dropped a missionary in, and everybody ran out and put their arms around him, and the pilot thought they were embracing him as a friend, and they were capturing him... There are many places where Satan has a stronghold. I think about Europe...I was amazed at what

you said - in the city of Bologna with 600,000 people, one small assembly of believers, and that's the way it is all across that continent. And, yes, there's a war out there. But, listen, where you have spiritual men and women engaged in spiritual ministry and, folks, listen to me, God isn't gonna send you there unless you've proven your ministry here.

I remember a man from Wickliffe coming to chapel when I was in seminary. I'll never forget what he said. He said, "I just want you to know what we've learned in missions. That the geographical location of your feet has absolutely nothing to do with your heart. If you're not concerned about souls here, there's no reason to believe you will be somewhere else. Where you have spiritually minded men and women who are engaged in spiritual ministry, those are the kind God chooses and calls to a spiritual mission, and they must face the fact that immediately upon the call to a spiritual mission, they're gonna run smack into the militants of Satan to thwart that effort; but if they are faithful, and if they call on the resource and the power of God, they will know the spiritual mastery that God gave to these men that day."

For our God has not changed, Amen? He is the same. The victory is ours. The key behind everything is that we should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. I think we think we live in the post-missionary era, that it's all been done. But it hasn't. It hasn't...No one loves this church more than I do; and no one is more rejoicing in his heart over the fact that we have a full church. But no one would be happier than I would be if half of you just took off to minister for Christ around the world; and we'll just fill it up with new recruits. There's a work to be done. Satan will resist, but I love it. The text says, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is the world." That's the promise of victory.

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