

**Satanic Opposition to a Spirit-Filled Church, Part 2**

Scripture: Acts 13:2b-13

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1973

As we begin our study of this critical 13 chapters we told you last week Chapter 13 is the beginning of the new portion of the book of Acts. The church as it goes to the world, the ministry of Paul, as opposed to the Jewish church and the ministry of Peter in the first 12 chapters.

Now as we have continued to study the book of Acts we have been exposed to the blueprint of the church. Our Lord designed the church. It is our Lord's church. He is the one that builds it and He has some very precise plans for its building and its operation. And I hope that several things are happening as we're studying the book of Acts. One of those is I hope that it's iconoclastic in a sense. That is I hope that it smashes some idols about the church, because I think that for many years through the filtering in and out of church history and culture and so forth the church has very often substituted its form for its real life. It has substituted its ritual for its reality. It has become an institution instead of life. It has become a business instead of a body. It has become a kind of professional pulpitism sponsored by lay spectators rather than a ministering organism and I hope that somehow as we study the book of Acts, even as we did when we studied the book of Ephesians, we are smashing some old idols about the church and that we can kind of get down to the basis of what the New Testament church is to be.

Now we know there are not verses and texts in Scripture that give us all the forms of the church, how we ought to do this, and what time we ought to meet, and what day, and such and such, and whether we ought to have a ladies' aid society and a men's fellowship and how we ought to do this and that and the other. Those little form details are not there, but at the same time there are details that are basic in terms of the philosophy and the ministry of the church.

Time changes, but they are timeless principles. The church today obviously is not going to have the form that it had its early years, but it still has to have the same kind of life. It has to be the same basic organism, energized by the same power, and committed to the same priorities. And the church today, and I used word church in a very broad and general sense really misses the boat in this area. And I'll tell you I would rather than be a critic of the church, be a reformer. There are plenty of critics. What the church needs is reformers not people who sit outside and condemn, but people who get inside and change. And I think that's really the commission of any man of God is to make into the organized church what God intends the organism to be. And you know, as you look at the church today around

the world there's so many things that you could criticize and rightly so. There are two extremes of the church that I see. There is the religious machine type church, which is big business. The church becomes an end in itself. It just exists to exist. It is not a means to anything. It is just an end. It doesn't have as its primary goal, at least in a working sense, teaching and winning and discipling and reproducing. It's success is measured by the number of people that are there, the number of bodies that are briefed, baptized, blessed, and given tithing envelopes, and that's about it. And if you have more bodies in your building than the guy down the street you're successful and he's not.

And so you have the big business idea of the church, which, of course, is totally foreign to the concept of an organism and a body that operates in simplicity through the gifts of the Spirit and the responsibilities of fellowship.

On the other hand, you have the other extreme, which is the social reform view of the church. That the church isn't really to preach the Word of God, the church is to preach economics, politics, it is involved in civil and social and environmental struggles and truly the pastors and leaders are as lost as the heathen, only they are more damned the Bible says, because they sin willfully against light and their false prophets. Their concern is a preoccupation with civil issues. If there is no reality to their theology, if they can't believe the Word of God, if they can't really nail down who Jesus is and they can't be firm on fact on who God is, the only thing left to do is fool around with man. And so that's what happens.

In U. S. and News and World Report recently did some surveys of young pastors and young ministers and these men says the article, "Are calling on our churches to save the individual." Sounds good. It goes on, "By saving or reforming society dealing with the ills of urbanization technology and discrimination." Only that approach they feel will make religion relevant.

Beloved, that approach will make religion obsolete. That is not what we're to do. Oh ultimately we are to minister to the total man in every way, but the church preoccupied with social ills is a church that is had the gospel vacuumed and sucked right out of it. And I reject the idea that the church is a reformed institution for the world. I think the church is a reformed institution for one man at a time on the basis of the gospel of Jesus Christ and changed individuals will change the world. You'll never change society any other way than to change men through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now I don't reject the church. I'm not going to throw the baby away with the dirty bath water just because there are some things wrong. That doesn't mean we eliminate the whole thing, right? There's two reasons I don't want to fight the church. I want to be a reformer, not a critic. The reason is Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Two reasons I don't want to fight the church: one I don't want to be on the team that's fighting it, the gates of hell, two, you can't win because Jesus will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. So you

might as well realize you can't fight the church, but you can sure get inside and do everything you can to teach the Word of God and make it be what it ought to be. And it all boils down to just working with people, doesn't it 'cause people are the church. And people bother me who sit outside and make great sweeping criticisms of the church.

We must strive, I think, to see the church become what God wanted it to be. And as we look at the book of Acts, I'm just flooded, and I don't even give, what I give you is the tip of the iceberg believe me. I am flooded with principles that I hope I'm beginning to filter through my ministry here and make operational in this church, principles that I have seen in the first 12 chapters of Acts that really make a church what God wanted it to be. The idea of fellowship, and sharing, and ministry, and teaching the Word, and prayer, and all of these ingredients that made that early church so dynamic. The idea of boldness, the idea of waiting on the Holy Spirit instead of running ahead with your own ideas and your own programs and your own inventions and this and that and the other thing, and just waiting on the Spirit of God.

I talked to a fellow this week who said you know this pastor so and so has got a terrible problem. He says he just spends all his time inventing programs and none of them work. Now that's a frustrating thing. If you read the New Testament you don't find them doing that, as we shall see again this morning.

But as we go through the book of Acts principle after principle after principle comes out of the text. Now when you study the Word of God, you don't study it just for the history of it. You don't just read through well they went over there and they did that and then they went to Antioch and they did that. Hm that's nice and then they went over there and did that.

There's more to it than that. What you want to do, and this is what I think good teaching is, for you who would like to teach this is the thing to remind yourself of, you take what is there and you turn it into spiritual principles that are practical for life now. Right? One historian said, "We learn one great lesson from history, that men learn nothing from history." We go over the same mistakes again and again and again and again and we learn nothing. Well let me tell you something, there's no sense in just studying history in the Scriptures. What you need to do is principlize it and then make it practical in your life.

So when I'm going to talk to you about the church in Antioch, I'm not just going to say there was a church and they did this and they went there and now we'll go on. I'm going to say what are the principles that come out of that text that I can apply to my life and to my church today in 1973. Right? That's God's Word to me because the principles are timeless.

So let's look at some principles even though we're talking historically in the 13th Chapter of Acts, we're going to see some principles. Now in part one last week we saw that the church in Antioch, the

first Gentile church established in this pagan city, and a very large and famous city, this first Gentile congregation had some fantastic ingredients. In fact, they had the features that really make a church effective, that really make a church dynamic. In fact, they had the things that make a church the church that reaches the world.

What makes a difference between a church that affects other people and the church that doesn't? The ingredients are here. There are some basic principles and I see them illustrated in the church at Antioch. Let's begin by looking at Chapter 13, and we'll look at the first verse as a review.

"Now there were in this church, that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch and Saul." Now in this church at Antioch, a Gentile church, you're introduced immediately to five leaders, the five prophets and teachers in the church. And we saw last week that the first feature of effective ministry in the church is spiritual men. No church ever rises higher than its leadership, no church. That is the heartbeat and the key to the ministry of the church. This church had spiritual men.

Verse 2 says, "They ministered to the Lord, and fasted." That means they were praying. The Holy Spirit spoke through them. This was a Spirit-controlled thing. The general principle we saw last week about Antioch was it was under the control of the Spirit. Remember? We said it was a Spirit-controlled church. Then on the inside we broke it up into some features. The first thing: spiritual men, spiritual leadership.

The second thing we saw was not only spiritual men, but spiritual men had a spiritual ministry. The men in this church were not preoccupied with programs, with planning, with all kinds of superficial activities. They were preoccupied with a spiritual ministry. They ministered to the Lord and they fasted and we went into some detail on that. We determined that that really had reference to the fact that they were involved in two things, teaching the Word and prayer. And that's Acts 6:4, isn't it, that the apostles said we'll give ourselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer.

And so they were geared to the priorities. They ministered to the Lord. Remember how we talked about the fact that every Christian in everything he does gives an offering to Christ. We're believer priests offering up sacrifices and we talked about what kind of sacrifices we're offering Him. They offered to the Lord the sacrifice of a believer priest that was pleasing to Him. Spiritual sacrifice. So they were spiritual men with a spiritual ministry. No church will ever reach the world, no church will ever reach its community, listen to this one, no church will ever reach the people sitting in its pews unless it's a church guided by spiritual men who are preoccupied in a spiritual ministry, not inventing things, but teaching the Word of God and spending time in prayer and fasting over the people. Has to be.

Now watch. Spiritual men with a spiritual ministry will eventually have spiritual mission. God when He starts to reach out reaches out with strength at the foundation and when you have a church that's strong in its leadership and strong in its spiritual ministry God will move in and that church will begin to reach out.

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.'" Now I just love this verse. There is so much here. We could talk about every one of these little features and just really study them in depth. But let me just say this: First of all the Holy Spirit said. Now we saw last week that this is a church under the control of the Spirit, so it was no intrusion when the Spirit of God spoke, was it? This was right in the flow of their very existence. They were under the guidance and control of the Spirit at all times, "Barnabas, their leader, full of the Holy Spirit," Chapter 11:24. "Saul, their other key leader," Chapter 13:9, "full of the Holy Spirit." Their whole congregation when the Spirit of God said separate Barnabas and Saul, the congregation said, Great, we'll send them out." The Spirit of God was in control of the leaders and the people. It was a Spirit controlled church.

And so now the Spirit of God simply speaks and I told you last week that a prophet was one through whom the Spirit spoke giving practical direction to the church, so through one of those five prophets, very likely, the Spirit of God simply said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them."

Now notice two things there. Who does the calling for ministries? The Holy Spirit! Now mark that in your mind. It's so very important. Mark something else. He says, "Separate Me." Anybody called into spiritual ministry is called unto the Holy Spirit. Your ministry is to Him, not to the organization, not to the church, but to Him, "And for the work, which I have called them." The whole thing is under the control of the Holy Spirit. You know it's a battle you fight in the church because you see so many things that aren't being done and you say to yourself, "Boy I got to do that. We got to get a program. We got to get a plan to do that." And then you get your little wheels going and you run out and kaploolie, the thing just falls flat on its face. You know why? Because you did it and the Spirit wasn't even involved. But this church didn't run out anything. I want you to watch three little words. The first three words in verse 2, just powerful words: "As they ministered." Oh do I like that. You say, "What's that mean, John?" It means this: they were just doing what they were supposed to be doing, teaching the Word and praying, and when the Spirit's time came the Spirit did what He had designed to do in His own time. You see. And we've going over this principle. It's so important.

Sometimes we get a committee organized and we get a plan and we work and we sweat and we try to find some people and get them to do it and nothing happens at all. Nothing happens, the whole thing goes out the window and then at a later time all of a sudden the Spirit of God begins to move and things begin to happen. Two years ago I felt we needed a program for children so I looked into

the Awana program, just as an example. I thought well let's get that thing organized. So I had a couple of meetings. Nothing ever happened. Nothing ever happened at all.

The other day someone came up to me and said did you know that 40 people met on Wednesday night? The Spirit of God has laid upon their hearts to get involved in a children's program and they're going to use the Awana program. So I said, "Lord, here I go again. Thanks for teaching me." I have learned that lesson so many dozen times that you just do what God's called you to do. You teach the word and you pray and you concern the ministry and as you minister the Spirit of God will move in and He'll separate the people unto Himself that He designed to carry out the ministry that He wants.

You know it's so easy to get so frustrated when you don't need to. "As they ministered to the Lord and prayed." You know I've said this before God doesn't dust off crusty Christians for use in critical ministries. He uses the ones that are already up to their ears involved, right? Who does He want? Which two guys? Barnabas and Saul, the cream of the crop. And there could have been a million arguments. Well Lord, I'm still working on the guy over here, he's not coming along. I can't cut out on him, Lord. I've got to disciple him. Well Lord who's going to handle this deal. I mean that's two-fifths of the pastoral staff You're yanking out of here and after all Manaen and Lucius and Simeon are pretty sharp guys, they're not Saul and Barnabas category Lord, and Saul and Barnabas are our favorite pastors, Lord. See. The Lord always chooses the best men to do the best jobs and He wants prepared men.

"Well as they ministered," I love that. Don't you worry about where you're going to be in the future. You just be being what you ought to be in the now and if you're carrying out your ministry and exercising your Spiritual gift when the Spirit's time comes He will make the moves. Kids come to me and say, "You know John, I don't know God's will. I'm going here and I don't know." And I always say the same thing. "Why don't you just relax? You don't need to know anything but what you are right now. The Spirit of God knows the time to move, you'll move as long as you're sensitive to the Spirit now. You just be the right person. God has no problem pushing the right people in the right places. It's getting unmotivated non-spiritual carnal people going that's really rough. You just be the right person and as you minister God will move you.

So there they were, just maintaining the priorities, not where they could have had absolute spiritual psychosis trying to figure out how to reach the world. Here we are Antioch and we've been commissioned to reach the Gentile world. Well guys what's the first step, see? There wasn't any first step. They just kept doing what they knew was right to do, teach the word and pray and the Spirit of God took all the steps. And you and I sitting here today in Panarama City in 1973, are the result of the ministry of these people the day they left Antioch for they reached the Gentile world and we're that world. And God knew how long it would take, and it took that long, and that's all right because that's God's plan. And usually plans fall apart when you hurry them up and you don't wait for the Spirit of God.

So as they ministered the Spirit says, "Separate Me Saul and Barnabas." No they didn't have a big committee meeting. They didn't have a Madison Avenue guy come and figure out how they could really wing this deal off and have a kickoff banquet and so forth and so on, we're going to win the world contest and all. They didn't do any of that. They just waited until the Spirit of God knew it was time to move. I believe in my heart if more men spent less time planning and more time studying, praying and preaching the Spirit of God would get His work done.

Well in Antioch the whole church was operating under the control of the Spirit and that's the key to everything. He says, "Separate unto Me." Boy I'm so glad that my obligation in the ministry is to the Holy Spirit because you know sometimes people are kind of hard to work for, 'cause they have all varying attitudes and varying desires, but as long as I endeavor to stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit He never gives conflicting orders, and my obligation is to please Him.

So He says, "Separate Me Saul and Barnabas to the work, which I have called them." Now I want to make a note here. You say wouldn't it be wonderful to be called to a work? Don't think that this kind of a calling is some kind of elevation to special grace, or that this is a coronation where you get a super title for life. You know what it is? You know what a call of God is? Now watch. Don't forget this. A call of God is just an assignment. Did you hear that? It's just an assignment. Every one of us is called to use our gifts somewhere. He's just saying, "All right Saul and Barnabas, got new territory for you, got a new assignment." There's no super glory in that. That's an assignment. I feel God called me to Grace Church. I feel the Holy Spirit called me and I don't feel that that's any glorification of myself, I just feel that's my assignment. It's a joyous one, but nevertheless that's my work to which God has called me and I do it as unto the Spirit of God, I trust.

Notice this too, that God wants prepared men. When God chose men, He didn't say, "Now you guys stick here and then I'm going to pick out a couple of green rough characters and we'll shoot them out." When God's got important things to do He picks experienced people, people who have been in the word, people who have been in prayer, people who have been ministering. Paul and Barnabas, by this time, really knew how the church was to function. They'd been in Antioch for a good deal of time. They'd seen a church founded there. They knew what it was to be evangelists; hadn't they traveled around as evangelists? Sure. They knew what it was to be pastors/teachers. They knew the workings of the church. They understood some things about reaching a Gentile world because they were both Jews living in a Gentile society. They were key men.

Now believe me we talk a lot about the importance of seminary, but one of the saddest things I think that ever happens in terms of seminary training for the ministry is that guys go to seminary and come out of seminary and go right into a church never having had any experience. They haven't got the faintest idea what's going on, and they've got a seminary bag of tricks that some professor who lives in an ivory tower gave to them, so often, and it just doesn't work that way, plus every church has a

different personality. And they get a crazy kind of success motivation and they get frustrated because their church isn't as big as the church that's being written up in such and such a magazine and so they send all over the country trying to buy up every possible gimmick to create a monster church and eventually they're sidetracked totally off what their ministry is to be. They've lost the whole point of their seminary training and they're wrapped up in a success drive, which really accomplishes not what the Lord wants to accomplish.

Now I believe there's only one cure for that and that is for men who are going through theological training to be up to their necks involved in the life of the church, and that's our commitment here. By next September, Lord willing, we'll have 25 students in Talbot Seminary all of whom will be involved right here in the ministry so that by the time they graduate they not only have learned from the Word of God and from books and from outstanding men of God, but they will learn what they can learn from the life of the body as it lives in the world. And I think that's necessary.

So they had not only theological preparation; they had years of experience. You know there's no shortcut to experience and there's no substitute. And I'm learning that. I thank God for being raised in a pastor's home, where I had for all the years before I came here, when I was what 29 years old, I had never pastored another church, but I had, by the grace of God, had learned many things by being in a pastor's home for many many years. And all those years were learning years.

So God chooses men who are prepared men, both experientially and in terms of knowledge. And then I think it's exciting too that God always uses His best men. If you really want to be used of God then be choice, be committed fully, and when the time comes God will pick the best men for the best jobs.

Well anyway, He did that and they didn't gripe. They could have really put up a stink about losing the two best guys they had. It was important that the church agree with the Spirit of God, right? Sure. Look at verse 3, "And when they had prayed and fasted they laid their hands on them and sent them away." Isn't that beautiful? There wasn't any battle at all. The church said, "Hey, if the Holy Spirit says He wants Saul and Barnabas, go." They sent them out. I love that kind of spirit. You know what the church's duty is? You think the church called those men? Who called them? The Holy Spirit! You think the church empowered those men? You think the church can commit anything to those men? Absolutely not! It's absolutely ludicrous that a church would think, any church, that it could lay hands on somebody and commit anything unto them. Not at all. The only thing that the laying on of hands, and the only thing the church ever did was just say, "Hey, we believe the Spirit of God has called you and we want to be a part of your ministry. We'll pray for you and we'll financially be behind you." And they put their hands on them as a sign of identification and unity. They said, "If God's called you we're with you." And that's the way it has to be and a church needs to do that.



You know I know there have been churches where young men have been called to the ministry and the church has not supported them. That's sad. I'll never forget my ordination. Ordination is a horrible thing. You come out of seminary and then you get grilled by 300 pastors and theological professors and stuff. It's rough. I got out of seminary and I went before my pre-counsel and first of all they asked me to write about a hundred page thing on theology, my doctrinal position. So I did all that. And then when I finished that I was asked to come before another counsel and talk about church history. So I got in there and they asked me to talk about the reformers and give all the data and so forth and so on. Then I came to a main session and in the main session there were about 350 pastors, or maybe not that many, 300. And they asked me, first of all there were questions, theological questions, practical questions, questions from verses in the Bible and then they threw it open and anybody in the room could ask me anything they wanted, which is terribly unfair, merciless, 'cause everybody there's got his own hobby horse. One guy in the place knows Zechariah 2:3 and somebody else knows I Kings 12:1 and they want to know your interpretation.

So anyway, I'm there and these guys were firing out questions so finally one fellow stood up and said, "Mr. MacArthur, I'd like to ask you a question. What do you plan on doing if we don't ordain you?" And I didn't really have to think so long and I said, "Well sir, if I man, I'd like to say this, that if you don't ordain me that won't change my life one bit, because I believe God has called me to the ministry whether you recognize it or not." And everybody laughed just like you did, and he said to me, he said, "That's what I wanted you to say." Because you see you have to believe that God is the one that does the calling. But I'll tell you it's exciting when the church then puts its hands on you and says, "We're with you in your ministry."

In a few months or a few weeks Jim Cornelson and his wife are going to Korea and we're going to have a little service and we're going to get together with Jim and the elders are going to place their hands on him and we as a church are going to say, "We're going with you to Korea. We believe in what God's calling you to do." You know we have to be ready to do that, church. We're raising up people in our church right now that are going to be going into spiritual ministries and we're going to have to be ready to put our hands on and put our arms around them and say, "We're with you", aren't we? We're going to have to make those kind of commitments financially and in our prayers.

Well, they didn't do it just glibly. Verse 3, they fasted and prayed. I mean they knew it was serious business and they spent time in prayer, preoccupation with prayer, so much that they didn't even bother to stop to eat. They just lost themselves in prayer over this ministry as these guys were going out to reach the world. Two men were moved out. They laid their hands on them confirming them.

Back in the Old Testament you remember when all the Levite priests were ordained in Numbers 8 that all the representatives of all the other tribes put their hands on them, sort of identifying with them. Remember when Moses was passing on his leadership to Joshua, he placed his hands on him saying, "I believe in what you're doing, I'm with you, I'm behind you." This is the same thing here. The

laying on of hands didn't grant them the Holy Spirit. They were already both full of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that. The laying on of hands didn't commission them to the ministry. They'd been ministering as pastors for years and evangelists. All this did was say; "We're with you in a new adventure, a new task." And so, they set them apart.

Now look at verse 3 at the end, "When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." I love this. The Greek literally is, they let them go. The idea is this: the Spirit had already sent them; all the church could do is cut the cord and let them go. I couldn't help but think of Lazarus. Jesus raised him from the dead. Then He said to the people standing around, what? Loose him and let him go. They didn't have to raise him from the dead. God did that. They just had to cut him loose. The same thing is true in the church. It's not up to us to send people into the ministry; it's up to us to let them go with our love and support when God calls them, right? And I pray He'll just keep calling them, raising them up and that we'll be behind them.

Well so off they went and I love it. Verse 4, so, they being sent by the church in Antioch. No. "They being sent forth by the Holy Spirit departed unto Seleucia; and from there sailed to Cyprus." They went 16 miles downstream, the Eurates River, from Antioch to the port of Antioch-Seleucia, right on the Mediterranean. From the port you could look out a few miles, you could see Cyprus, a little island out there. They got a ship and took off, Paul and Barnabas for Cyprus and they had a helper with them, John Mark. So the little trio sailed away. That little island of Cyprus, 30 to 50 miles wide, 110 miles long, two important cities, one in the southeast corner, one in the northwest corner Salamas and Paphos and the land in-between was going to be conquered for Christ. That's the first new adventure for the Gentile church. What an exciting thing.

McCartney says this; "Compared with this voyage the results and consequences of the voyages of Columbus, Vasco de Gama, Magellan, and the Vikings were of little consequence for this was the commencement of the Christian odyssey. For the gospel had been preached in Judea and Samaria and now it's to be proclaimed in the uttermost part of the earth. More than any ship that ever clefled the ways with its prow that failed craft bound for the shores of Cyprus carried with it a man and an idea, which were to affect the destinies of the human race." And you and I are living proofs that it did. What a monumental verse verse 4 is, sent by the Holy Spirit was the guarantee of success, wasn't it? Off they went to a little island to start. Didn't go to a very big city, just a little island and that's where they began.

Well they got to that island. They landed at Salamas and when they were at Salamas the preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They had also John Mark as their helper. Now there were a lot of Jews in that city, many thousands, enough to keep several synagogues operating. And as Paul's custom was soon to be, he went into the synagogues and there he used the place as a platform. It was a public place where many could gather and it was a great place for preaching and he'd go there and begin to preach. And since he was a Jew he would inevitably have access and as a

former member of the Sanhedrin and so forth and so on they would be receiving him. And there he went and he began. Salamas was principally a trade city, located on the southeast corner of the island of Cyprus. It was the largest city in Cyprus and it had a great large Jewish population. Notice that Mark went along just as a helper. The kind of ministry they were involved in needed somebody like that and there are such people on the mission field today who are support missionaries and their ministry is very important.

Well it was a glorious day because the long awaited plan of God had begun to unfold. And here they were going to conquer Gentile territory for Christ. Now what do you know is going to happen? What is absolutely as inevitable as the darkness after the day Satan? You can't ever move out for God to do anything but that Satan is going to immediately come in and resist. And that's exactly what comes, satanic resistance. Bang! As soon as anything begins to happen here comes Satan.

Well they had a wonderful time there in Salamas. It doesn't say how many got saved, but the Word of God never returns void, and I'm sure they just had one great time in that city. From there they just took off across the whole island. Now watch what happens in verse 6. And I want you to notice something folks. Satan works two ways: outside, inside. First let's look at outside. "And when they had gone through the island to Paphos," here they go 110 miles from the southeast corner to the northwest corner, 110 miles preaching all the way and we don't know how long it took, but they were doing it, they came to Paphos.

Now Paphos was on the west coast. It was the seat of the Roman government. It was the place where the governor, proconsul, deputy, all the same thing, lived. It was really a very famous place because Paphos was the center of the worship of the goddess of love called Venus. Venus was supposedly, according to their tradition, to have been born in the foam of the sea off the shore of Paphos having been born then come to live in Paphos and she was worshipped with the wildest kind of sexual orgies, as were so many of the gods and goddesses of that time. One writer said the city was a pit of sin where people wallowed in moral filth. So here comes two guys and a helper. They are going to conquer Paphos. Here they come, but the Spirit of God is with them.

Well immediately Satan is going to move. Now Satan has been having trouble all the way across the island and he's going to get them in Paphos, so watch the confrontation. Verse 6, "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the deputy of the country, Salamis Paulus," that's the governor, the proconsul, the head man of the whole island, "a prudent man." And this is amazing that Salamis Paulus did this, "who called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God."

Now here you meet Sergius Paulus, a Roman, whose been assigned to be the governor of Cyprus. He was a prudent man, which means he was wise, understanding and intelligent. He was no fool. He was a very intelligent, wise, understanding man. He was a very good leader. He had a very open

heart. He was a seeking searching man. It says here that he called for them because he wanted to hear the word of God. The very fact that he had hired a medium to be his companion was indicative that he was searching for supernatural truth, wasn't it? So he was open.

Incidentally they found a Greek inscription in 1877 on the north coast near Saloy and on that Greek inscription that they found has the name of Sergius Paulus, so we know this is accurate historically.

Well notice in verse 6 that they met a certain sorcerer. His name is Bar-Jesus and this account here is certainly parallel to the account of Simon of Samaria. Remember that they met Simon the sorcerer in Samaria, and it marks another vivid collision of Christianity with satanic powers. Both of those guys were Jewish, both Simon and Bar-Jesus. Both were demon-possessed mediums. You know what a medium is? It's a contact. Men contact this medium who is infested with demons and thus they contacted the demonic world.

The title sorcerer, let me take a footnote on that. The title sorcerer comes from the Greek word magos, from which we get magic. Now watch very carefully. The word initially doesn't have to mean anything evil in its full sense. The word magos is the very word translated in Matthew 2 for wise men magi. It's the same word. In reference to them, remember they came bearing gifts for the Christ child, but in reference to them it has kind of a good sense for they were good men, they were astronomers from Persia and magi became the title of Persian astronomers, Persian scientists.

But some of that Persian science had degenerated into the occult. Astronomy became what? Astrology. And so there were two kinds of Persian scientists. There were magi who were in a rather good sense somewhat scientific and there were magi who were correctly to be translated sorcerers. And though they were Zoroastrian priests to begin with, they rather divided into two kinds, those who were really plugged into Satan and those who were somewhat pseudoscientific. And so the word itself can go either way. But magic really was the art practiced by Persian priests in connection with astronomy. It deteriorated into astrology and now it comes down to what we know today.

And so every kind of fraud and deception and every form of the occult and so forth and so on was going on in the name of magic. And this guy was into it. He was a magician. He was a sorcerer. Now I'm not talking about magic. I'm not talking about pulling rabbits out of hats. That's inconsequential. That's immaterial. That may even prove to illustrate some good principles. We're talking about demonic magic.

All right, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet. Now notice this: mediums are very often false prophets. Demon possessed people very often fain to be prophets of God. Example 1. a Jean Dixon, who forever and ever is claiming to get messages from God, who claims to be a Christian, who claims to believe in Christ, etc. etc. and is nothing but a false prophet. In every sense of the word she qualifies as a false prophet. She gets her information from demons, from demon possessed. She's a

medium. But mediums invariably will be false prophets. It's been so throughout all the history of man. Demon infested people try to get in to the life of Christianity and give false information. Believe me that's the ultimate that Satan's going to do, isn't it in the tribulation? Who's the ultimate character of the whole tribulation? Anti-christ. What is he? He's a false christ who is really demon possessed. Satan's been doing the same thing all along, false prophets, false prophets. There's even a guy called the false prophet in the tribulation who is demon possessed.

Now this particular guy was also a Jew. He was a turncoat and his name was Bar-Jesus, which means son of salvation. What a name for a sorcerer. Now he was with the deputy of the country. This guy had hired this guy as a full-time medium. So Sergius Paulus was in control of demons. Now I want you to watch something here. Very important footnote: Whenever the gospel moved into a territory, in the book of Acts so far, immediately there's demonic activity on a face-to-face confrontation. The gospel moved into Samaria and who's the first guy they met? Simon the sorcerer, demon possessed. The gospel moved into Macedonia in the book of Acts the first person they met was a demon-possessed damsel. Bang. The gospel moved here into Cyprus Bar-Jesus. Whenever God begins to conquer new territory Satan moves in to resist. That's a pattern that we've seen and we'll see again.

So Bar-Jesus was going to be the tool of Satan to withstand the spread of the gospel. Sergius Paulus then dabbled in the occult and he had this man with him. And it's interesting the emperor Tiberius, at this particular time in the world, had a whole flock of these occult medium demon-possessed people around him giving him information. Is it any wonder the Roman Empire went out of existence? All the information was coming from the pit.

Let me tell you another interesting footnote. Satan is smart and Satan knows if you control the right people you ultimately control everything. Satan is the prince of this world, right? You know how he controls this world? By controlling the rulers. You see if demons can control Sergius Paulus they can control Cyprus because Sergius Paulus runs Cyprus, right? You go back to the book of Daniel and what does Daniel continually say? Who is running all the nations? Demons, demons behind every nation. You wonder why there's so many problems in governments it's because they're run by Satan. You say, well what about the powers that be are ordained of God? Don't push that too far. What that's saying is that God has ordained government. Government has ordained the police. God has ordained all kind of authorities from a political standpoint to keep the peace, to punish the evildoers, and to take care of the good. That doesn't mean that everybody ruling in the world is godly. It simply means that God is the inventor of government and you need to subject yourself to government because it is of God. But so at the same time within the framework of God's government, which is a good thing, Satan does his evil work. After all God invented the church too and Satan's awful busy there. And Satan gets his demons to infest the leadership, ultimately, of course, anti-christ, the whole world leader and he's just full of demons.

And you see you take today a few years ago we were talking about the possibility of a credibility gap in our own government. That's not a possibility. If you know anything about, you've been watching what's going on it's now become the Grand Canyon of credibility. There's no gap to it. It's obvious to everybody that you can't believe anybody. And I think a great deal of what's going on in our world can be attributed directly to the fact that there is spiritual wickedness in high places and the demons are the rulers of the darkness of this world. Satan puts them in places of position, believe me, and if they're there they control everything underneath them.

And so here you've got demons running the life of Sergius Paulus who is running Cyprus, so demons are in control. Well already the demon territory has been infiltrated as Saul and Barnabas have been moving across the island and bang they come into contact with Sergius Paulus himself, and to make things worse Sergius Paulus sets up an appointment with them and Satan is really getting up tight and he's going to start activating now. And so what happens is simple.

Verse 8, Elymas, the sorcerer, and he has another name Elymas, which comes from an Arabic word, well it could be two words. We really don't know which one it is. One of them means wise and one of the means powerful and perhaps he was both. Anyway, "Elymas, the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation, withstood them." All right Satan puts up opposition to the coming of Saul and Barnabas "seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." Now watch. Sergius Paulus is the battleground; the foes: Saul and Barnabas and Elymas. They're fighting for the soul of Sergius Paulus. It's heaven against hell. It's light against darkness. It's God against Satan. The battle is set and it's an exciting battle, although it doesn't last too long.

You know something people, and I want to add a footnote. I believe in the day in which we live right now, you and I are going to begin to see the kind of warfare that you read about in this chapter. Have you ever read Screwtape Letters by C. S Lewis, you'll notice the demons, that he so graphically illustrates, always function according to the culture.

You know today we see demons doing strange things, appearing, we hear about levitation. We were having prayer in our elder's meeting for a girl who has a problem with astroprojection. Her body goes around the world, at least she imagines this, and she feels demons are carrying her places weird things. Do you know that 35 years ago if you said that to somebody they'd say, "You're out of your mind." And you know what? People don't say that any more today, why? Because you see 35 years ago we were in a rationalistic society. Everything was cut and dry and education and flourishing and all this kind of wonderful stuff and nobody even thought of things like that. And a missionary would come back from China and talk about demon possession and we'd say, "Oh yeah. I've heard about that. I can't imagine." And now it isn't people from China talking about that. People from your block are doing it.

Say, what's happening? What's happened is this: our society, whenever you go into a rational situation you find sooner or later you can't live there because a man puts all of his eggs in a rational box and it doesn't hold them. There's got to be more to life than just what is rational, right? It's got to be something supernatural.

So pretty soon after a little bit of rationality you run out of answers and then you bust into supernaturalism and that's exactly what's happened, right? Kid tripping out on drugs, tripping out on Satan, worship tripping out on the occult, tripping out on Eastern meditation, everybody's going into the supernatural. Demons simply accommodate themselves to that. If you want to go supernatural we'll go supernatural, whamo, so now what you have is very aggressive and very overt and very active demons who are now not hiding anymore and the subtleties of a gray-flannel wool but they're out there in the mod helter skelter world that we live in operating on the level that we think they operate.

And what am I saying? I'm saying you and I are going to have to get ready to realize that you no longer kind of go around talking about demons as if they only lived in China. You're going to have to realize that you and I are libel to running smack face-to-face with this whole world. Some of us have already been on the frontlines of the battle. And believe me they're there.

And I want to show you, just so you don't think this is John MacArthur talking, I want to hear what Paul says in II Timothy 3 and this is very interesting. II Timothy 3. "This know," which would be kind of like I say to you all the time, get this, "This know that in the last days perilous times shall come." Now what time are we talking about here? The last days. The last days of what, the last days of the church. Perilous times are going to come. What's going to happen, verse 8? Watch this. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses." Ooh you mean the last days there's going to be people around like Jannes and Jambres? Remember who they were? The two magicians of Pharaoh who tried to stop the progress of God with Israel. Remember what happened? They were demon-possessed mediums in Pharaoh's court and when Moses came in and wanted to do what God wanted they withstood him. They were just what Simon, the sorcerer was; they were just exactly what Bar-Jesus was, that we're studying this morning. They were demon-possessed people to withstand the purposes of God. But you know who won that contest? Moses. But it says it's going to be like that in the last days. You're going to have some Jannes and Jambres types around. What does that mean? That means overt outward demonic activity squaring against off against the gospel.

Now goes to verse 13 and I'll really show you something. "But evil men and seducers shall become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." I want you to look at the word seducers, goates in the Greek, from the Greek verb goaol. You know what that verb means? It means to utter low mystical tones. You say, "What is that?" It was a word used of a class of magicians who chanted magical formulas in guttural languages.

In the last days, beloved, there is going to be more evil magic. It's what it's saying. The clearest English translation of goates seducers is sorcerers. That's the best translation. So what do you expect in the last days? Not kind of a hidden sneaky that you can't find demonic activity, but blatant overt sorcerers. Are we seeing that today? I think that's one of the confirmations that Jesus is coming. A kind of demonic activity that seems to be reaching a peak as evil men are worse and worse deceiving. Look at how many people are being swept away and they're being deceived because they're going to be damned, these mediums.

I'll tell you something, Christian; you'd better go to Ephesians 6 and get your armor on. This is no time to be running around without your armor. Now I want you to catch another note here, Sergius Paulus sent for Saul and Barnabas. Did you know that sometimes people in the occult are open? Sometimes we think that people in the occult are closed. Oh they're gone. Satan's got them. Don't you believe it. Sometimes they're searching as desperately as anybody. Sergius Paulus was.

Verse 8. "But Elymas the sorcerer withstood them seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." Satan works from the outside. Be ready. You're going to try to present Christ in these days to come and you're going to run into Satan. But you know something tragic? He not only works from the outside, he works from the inside. Look at verse 13 very quickly. "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos," where they finished their work there, we don't know how long they were there. "They came to Perga in Pamphylia." They're progressing in their journeys. And here's the sad note. "And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. You say, "What's so sad about that?" Paul was very upset about that, very very upset. Say why did John Mark leave? There's several possibilities. Some say that he had resentment over Paul becoming the leader over Barnabas. Some say Mark was more attached to Barnabas and Paul, by his very nature, became the leader he was angry with Paul and didn't want to work under him. Others say he was afraid because they were having to go over the Taurus mountains and the Taurus mountains were noted for being perilous. They were terribly fast torrents that was spanned by very weak bridges, and there were also robbers that lurked and the Roman government had tried to get the robbers out of the Taurus mountains but there was so many cracks and crevices and caves they couldn't get them, and so it was a terribly perilous thing to even be in the Taurus mountains. It's interesting, too, that in II Corinthians Paul says, "In my life I've been in the peril of robbers and in the peril of rivers," and it may have been just that when he was talking about when he went to the Taurus mountains on his way.

And so perhaps Mark had a little chicken in him. There's a third possibility and that is that the romance of mission work had worn off. Like so many missionaries who go out the first time around, the romance is going and they come back and that's it. But whatever it was Paul was upset and it caused friction. Over in Chapter 15, verse 38, it had a terrible effect. They were going to go on a second missionary journey Paul and Barnabas, and this is, we'll get to this and ooh you'll learn some things there. Look at the difference between this and verse 36, "Let us go again." Um Paul you're



running ahead, right? The last time the Spirit of God said, "Separate Me Paul and Barnabas." Paul said, "Let us go." You know what happened? They didn't go. Paul wound up taking Silas and Barnabas wound up going somewhere else.

But you know what happened? Barnabas determined to take John, verse 37, "But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia and went not with him to the work and so the contention was so sharp that they departed asunder one from the other." You know that leaving of John Mark actually fractured the relationship between Paul and Barnabas? There's a beautiful ending to the story II Timothy 4:11, Paul is closing out his life and he writes and he says, "Only Luke is here. Could you send Mark? He could be profitable to me." Somewhere in the years he and Mark got back together.

But you see here Satan worked on the inside. I went to South America, went up in the mountains, missionary said, "I want to show you something." So we went into a compound, lovely mission compound up in the Andes. Said, "I want to show you an infirmary." Took me into a little hospital with all the finest equipment just beautiful to minister to the physical needs of the native Indians. Showed me a missionary home, showed me a radio station, all of this beautiful thing there and there wasn't one missionary there. Nobody was there. I said, "Where are the doctors? Where are the missionaries?" He said, "Well there aren't any." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well for some reason they couldn't get along with each other and they all have left." That's sad. I imagine that's been reproduced hundreds of times around the world where the best work of God has been halted not by outside attacks by demons, but by inside dissention, disunity, discord, division. See that's exactly what you have here. Mark can't hack it. He's cutting out. Paul and Barnabas are fractured on their next missionary journey. So you see Satan is subtle. Believe me people in these days when we begin to move for God, we're going to get it inside, outside. But just knowing where it's coming from is the beginning of victory isn't it? And you know if you're a good soldier and you're on duty and you're making the watch and you see the enemy coming you don't go out and fight the enemy, you just report to the commander and let the whole army fight.

And so we know what's going to happen and we're telling the commander how he's coming and He knows too and we're ready, I trust. Well so there Satan began to work. So we come to the thing that's so exciting, spiritual men with a spiritual ministry called to a spiritual mission, in spite of satanic resistance will have spiritual mastery. They'll win. Look at verse 9. I like this. It wasn't a shy bone in Saul's body. He didn't know the meaning of embarrassment. "Then Saul, who's also called Paul," that's a beautiful note. He was probably called Paul from his birth, a Gentile name meaning little. You start studying Paul and he doesn't come out very handsome. He's little and sort of blind. One historian says, short, fat and bald. I don't know whether that's true, but nevertheless perhaps if you can think of him in that term you can get a little visual picture. But anyway, Saul called Paul, that means little, and it was his Gentile name. It says he was now beginning his ministry as apostle to the Gentiles. He'd begun to be called Paul from now on. So this is a transition and we'll know him as

Paul.

Filled with the Holy Spirit as always, moment-by-moment, watch this set his eyes on him. You know what he did? He focused eyeball to eyeball with Bar-Jesus. I like that. He was not afraid of that guy even though he had a pipeline to hell. That didn't bother Saul one bit. He set his eyes on him. The Bible says you resist the devil and he'll flee from you, right? You can learn some things about how to deal with humans when you get in here. Don't be afraid. Don't back up. You tell them. You're in that position. The power of the Spirit of God. Notice that you've got to be filled with the Spirit. You do it in your own flesh you're going to be in real trouble. Don't get out in the battle in your own flesh. Not only will you not be able to handle them, they'll handle you, man handle. "Filled with the Holy Spirit he set his eyes on him." Paul doesn't mince words either. I love his vocabulary. It's right to the point. "Oh full of all deceit and all mischief you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" which is known as the direct approach. Really what you have there is the classic definition of the occult. You want to know what God thinks of a medium read that verse again. Anybody who plays around with demons is full of all deceit and mischief. Deceit is dalas. That just means you're in it to hook somebody. It's the Greek word for fishhook. It's not what it appears to be. It looks good, but boy you're hooked. And mischief is easy wickedness, easy wickedness. Here's a vile character.

Then he says, "You son of the devil," and that's a play on words. His name was son of salvation. He says, "You're no son of salvation, you're son of the devil Bar-Jesus, Bar-Satan, bar meaning son. Then he calls him an enemy of all righteousness. He feigned that he was righteous, prophet, Jew, all that. He says, "You're an enemy of all righteousness. You're an enemy of God. Everybody in that stuff is an enemy of God. You get that? They're deceitful, they're wicked and you and I have nothing to do with them whatever. "Will you," he says, "Will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Apparently this guy had twisted the truth about God around for satanic purposes. And that's exactly what false prophets always do.

Well you'd think a tongue-lashing was sufficient, but no, presented with that watch 11. And now he starts calling out a little judgment. "And now behold the hand of the Lord is upon you and you will be blind not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell upon him a mist and a darkness and went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." He was blinded and Luke uses all medical terms in there. Luke is the writer of Acts and he uses all medial terms. The guy was struck with a disease and he was stone blind right on the spot, just like that. That's how God reacted to him. You know it's a beautiful thought here, and it's just a thought. I speak this not by inspiration. He says you'll not see for a season. He doesn't say it will be permanent.

You know Paul knew about that because he was blind once, wasn't he, for a season. And he got his sight when he recognized Christ and committed everything to Him and was filled with the Spirit. It just might be that in that very statement is the indication that someday Bar-Jesus, a demon-possessed

medium, will awake to the reality of Jesus Christ. And beloved I don't know this and I don't have much information other than just that little statement, "for a season," but I wouldn't be a bit surprised when I get to heaven to find Bar-Jesus up there because this was not a permanent judgment. But it was for the moment victory. Do you know something? Do you know the demons can't handle you in the power of the Spirit? They cannot handle you at all. Mastery!

Well the mastery was not only negative, it was positive. Here's ol' Bar-Jesus roaming around asking for somebody to lead him around while he's banging into everything. He's finished. It's over. Satan lost the battle, and now the whole of the island of Cyprus is going to come under the control of the Holy Spirit. What a victory. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, what's the next word, believed! You say oh it doesn't say he was saved. You can believe and not be saved. That's right. You could. But it doesn't say he believed and wasn't saved either. So how are you going to qualify the word believe?

Well, look at the next statement. "Being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." You know if had said, "And he believed being astonished at the miracle of blindness, then I would say uh oh, that's weak because there were a lot of people in the gospels who saw a lot of miracles, right? And they believed the miracles and Jesus didn't commit Himself to them. But it doesn't say he was astonished at the miracle, it says it was astonished at what? At the doctrine! Now I like that. It wasn't the miracle that got to Sergius Paulus; it was the doctrine of the Lord. How is a man saved? If he confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes. I believe that he was astonished at the doctrine. How would they know that unless he verbalized that, which means he believed and confessed with his mouth the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ? I believe he was saved. In fact there may be a wonderful companionship in heaven between Bar-Jesus and Sergius Paulus on a whole different basis going on right now. I hope I find them both there. That's somewhat speculative, but that's my opinion.

Well the victory was complete, right? Negative to Satan positive to Sergius Paulus. There it is. You know what happens in a church where you have spiritual men with a spiritual ministry? I'll tell you what happens. God calls them to spiritual missions. And you know what happens? Satan will resist, but you know what will happen in the end? Spiritual mastery. People, I pray that our church will be that kind of church, and I pray that you will be that kind of individual, because it all boils down to you, doesn't it? If you'll be filled with the Spirit and follow the pattern you'll begin the process. The end of it will be reaching the world for Christ.

Our Lord we are grateful that You have placed within us the Holy Spirit to make these things reality. Father we do pray that we might accept our responsibility as soldiers of Christ, as soldiers of the cross to carry the gospel, to go out and do battle with the enemy over the souls of men. Father help us not to be easily deterred. Help us not to quit when people resist or when Satan resists, but help us to fight. Help us to call it what it is, to denounce Satan, even as Paul did, with words of rebuke and words of judgment. Father help us to live lives so filled with the Spirit that we are the masters of

demons for Your glory through Your power. Father make of this church of spiritual men and spiritual ministries and call from us spiritual missions. And even when Satan tries to stop give to us the spiritual mastery that comes to those who yield to Thee. Father this is our prayer. May it begin with us as individuals in our commitment to the Spirit in our lives. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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