

## **Faith to Discern – Teaching Notes**

(Acts 13:1-12; 12/10/17)

**Introduction:** A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to carry out an assignment, and they were faithful. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to understand and carry out God's assignment for us faithfully.

### **Body:**

#### **Read Acts 13:1-5**

**I. Accept the Assignment.** There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. The Spirit spoke about Barnabas and Saul having an assignment. Barnabas and Saul went on their assignment with John being their helper. Praying and fasting are mentioned.

#### **Applications –**

- **Lessons from the leaders.** Notice in vss. 1-3 that the prophets and teachers were worshipping the Lord, fasting, and praying together. First, the prophets of the text were probably noted for forthtelling (i.e., exhorting people to hear and obey God's word) more than foretelling (i.e., telling the future). This being the case, we should be prophetic or known for telling this world what the Lord has to say. Second, leaders should be examples in the areas of worshipping (i.e., sitting in worship is not the same as worshipping) and praying with the church family. It is sad to see so few "church leaders" known for worship or praying with the church family. Some are only seen when they are on display. Third, "fasting" is associated with seeking God's will and showing sorrow. It is never an instruction to New Testament believers. It should be used to the extent that it helps us understand and obey God's will. If it helps then it should be practiced. If it doesn't help then it is as useless as being baptized with no intention of living by God's word. Fourth, both Simeon and Lucius have African connections. Thus, we see the early church had people of color in the leadership structure. It is inaccurate and damaging to our self-image to think of the early church being composed of only men who look like White people from Italy or California. *Let's live by the lessons associated with the leaders.*

- **Carrying out God's assignment.** Notice in vss. 2-3, 5 that the Holy Spirit called for Barnabas and Saul to carry out a service assignment. First, God is still calling every saved person to carry out service assignments. We should give great effort to understanding and carrying out God's will for using us in ministering to the needs of others. Second, the assignment of the text included proclaiming the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. In like manner, God is still calling us to share His word with the people we meet along our ways. We should be able and willing to share God's word with both our lives and our lips. We should go to where people are, instead of simply expecting people to come to us. Think about how this relates to community festivals and events, Greek and service organizations, and the like. Third, notice that John was not a prophet or teacher. He was a helper. There are so many people who lack the humility and availability to be a helper. But there is such a need for people who are willing to simply do what the leaders need done. *Let's work on carrying out our assignments.*

#### **Read Acts 13:6-8**

**II. Recognize Roadblocks.** Barnabas, Saul, and company travel to Paphos. The proconsul wanted to hear the word of God. Bar-Jesus/Elymas tries to block the proconsul from believing the gospel.

### **Applications –**

- **Religious but ungodly.** Notice in vss. 6-7 that there was a Jewish sorcerer who tried to block the proconsul from believing the gospel. First, there are some people who have a religious exterior, but on the inside, they are far from God. We should be aware of them and make sure that we are not one of them. Our claim to be children of God should be based on accepting Jesus as our savior by faith and striving to live by God's word. Second, there are those who consciously or unconsciously strive to block the word of God. Sometimes they do it, because they feel as if they will not be as important, if the word of God is obeyed. We should remember this, when we see people resisting what God sends to the church through His leader. We should make sure that we don't allow the devil to use us in his demonic plans. *Let's be aware of religious but ungodly people.*

- **Intelligent enough to seek God.** Notice in vs. 7 that the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, was known for his occupation, being an intelligent man, and desiring to hear the word of God. First, there are some people who seek God and His word when they are in low paying jobs but seem to become indifferent about God, when they get high paying and high-status jobs. We should avoid this being our story. No matter what position we gain in this world, we still need to understand and obey the word of God. Second, there are some who are called "intelligent" but have little passion for God. We should strive to use our intelligence to bring the maximum amount of glory to the Lord. The most intelligent thing we can do is draw closer to the Lord. *Let's work on being intelligent enough to desire to live by God's word.*

### **Read Acts 13:9-12**

**III. Counter Conclusively.** Saul/Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. He confronted Elymas. Elymas becomes blind. And the proconsul is described as one who believed.

### **Applications –**

- **Cooperate with God's will.** Notice in vs. 9, 11-12 that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit as God used him as both an instrument of punishment and preacher. First, to be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. We are controlled by the Spirit to the extent that we obey what God's will is for our lives. The best way to know God's will is to prayerfully study and obey God's word. Second, it is still dangerous to oppose what God is doing. Just as God sent blindness in the text, God can send punishment and withhold blessings as His way of getting us to obey Him and furthering His plans. Third, God has a way of getting what He wants – one way or another. Just as the proconsul came to faith, despite the efforts of the devil influenced Elymus, God works all things out for the good of His people, despite the devil and his agent's attempt to stop God's blessings. Therefore, we should never try to block what God is doing. And we should not be distracted by what people do to block God's program. *Let's work on cooperating with God's program, instead of trying to block it.*

**Conclusion:** Let's work on understanding and carrying out God's assignment for us faithfully. God has much for those who obey His will.