

God Calls Barnabas and Paul

(Acts 12:25—13:12)

Pre-Session Warm Up

We have been studying the Book of Acts and we have been learning more and more about the Holy Spirit.

God is three Persons in One: God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. That is hard to understand because we humans are one person, while God is three persons. When Jesus, the Son, returned to heaven, the Father sent the Holy Spirit to come upon the believers. This was on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

As we have studied Acts, we have seen how the Holy Spirit gave believers the power to be brave and teach the Good News about Jesus even in difficult situations.

The same Holy Spirit that we read about in Acts is still working in the world that we live in. When a person hears the message that Jesus died on the cross for their sins, the Holy Spirit shows them that they need to have their sins forgiven in order to have a right relationship with God. The moment you believe that Jesus is your Savior, the Holy Spirit comes and lives in your heart.

It is the Holy Spirit that gives you the power to obey God; that is, to say *No* to sin and *Yes* to God's way. It is the Holy Spirit that helps you to be brave in difficult situations; to stand up and do the right thing or say the right thing even when everyone else is doing the wrong thing.

When you are naughty, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts you that you have sinned and need to confess your sin to God. After your sin is forgiven, it is the Holy Spirit that fills your heart with peace and joy because you know that your relationship with God has been made right again.

Our lesson today continues to teach us how the Holy Spirit is involved in the lives of Jesus followers.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You sent the Holy Spirit. Thank You that He is alive and active in our lives. Even though You are invisible, show us Your power today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
(Ephesians 2:10)

Lesson

In this lesson we pick up the story of Barnabas and Saul. If you remember, two weeks ago, we learned that Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch for over a year, teaching people about Jesus. Many people came to faith. [Teacher, get your Bible map out!]

While they were in Antioch, a prophet named Agabus came from Jerusalem and told the believers that the Holy Spirit told him that a severe famine was going to spread over the entire Roman world.

Acts 11:29-30

So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. (30) This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

Now turn to the end of chapter 12.

Acts 12:25

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them.

John Mark was Barnabas' nephew and he is also the writer of the Gospel of Mark.

Now let's turn to chapter 13.

Acts 13:2-3

*One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” (3) So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.*

What is *fasting*? *Fasting* is removing something from your life (food, TV, video games, etc.) for a time so you can focus more clearly on God and what He wants you to do. God wants to speak to you, but you have to take the time to listen for His voice.

While Barnabas, Paul, John Mark, and the other believers were praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

Sometimes when we can't see something, we wonder if it is real. We cannot see the Holy Spirit and yet He is very real. He is working in the lives of believers so others can see the power of God and come to know Jesus as Savior.

God has prepared work for each of His followers to do. You must tune your ear to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit while you are reading the Bible and praying so you know what to do. He wants to lead you and guide you in the ways He has planned for you to walk in.

God had a work for Barnabas and Saul to do so while they were praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

What did He say? (“Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.”)

Acts 13:4

So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus.

The Holy Spirit was sending Barnabas and Saul to the island of Cyprus to do the work God had planned for them. [Show on map.]

Acts 13:5

*There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish **synagogues** and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.*

In every town they visited, Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark went into the Jewish synagogues to tell the Jews that Jesus was their long-awaited for Messiah. A *synagogue* is a Jewish place of worship. We call our place of worship a *church*.

God's enemy, Satan, hates God and is always at work trying to do whatever he can to keep people from being saved. Let's read how he tried to discourage someone from believing in God.

Acts 13:6-8 [Teacher, read....]

*Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a **Jewish sorcerer**, a **false prophet** named Bar-Jesus. (7) He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.*

Bar-Jesus was bad news! He was a Jew, but he was not obedient to God's laws because we read here that he was a **sorcerer**. When God gave His laws to Moses, He told the Jewish people not to practice sorcery (magic/witchcraft.) This is an evil practice that God warned His people not to have anything to do with. People who practice sorcery are empowered, not by the Holy Spirit, but by evil spirits.

This passage also tells us that Bar-Jesus was a **false prophet**. God's prophets always speak the truth and do not lie. Bar-Jesus was being controlled by Satan and he was telling the governor to not pay any attention to Barnabas and Saul. He was trying to keep the governor from hearing the truth that Paul and Barnabas were sharing with him.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul had wisdom to recognize what Bar-Jesus was up to. Then Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to speak.

Acts 13:9-10

Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. (10) Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord?"

First, notice that **Saul** is also known as **Paul**. Up to this point Saul had been using the Jewish form of his name. Now that he was sharing the Good News with Gentiles, he began to use his Roman name of *Paul*. (Just like the name *John* in English is *Juan* in Spanish.)

Paul knew the power Satan had over his own life before he believed in Jesus. Remember, he had done everything he could to stop people from hearing the message about Jesus. Once he became a believer in Jesus, Paul was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:11

Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

Once the governor heard Paul's message about Jesus and saw God's power to blind Bar-Jesus, he became a believer in Jesus.

Acts 13:12

When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

In this lesson we have learned that although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, He is very much alive. He speaks to people to guide and direct our lives, but we must learn to listen for His voice.

He wants to speak to you today, too. When God speaks to you, He might call you to do something special for Him, just like He called Barnabas and Paul to leave Antioch and go to the island of Cyprus to preach the Good News to the people there.

How should you tune your ear to hear Him? As you read God's word, the Bible, you will become more and more familiar with His voice. He will speak into your heart and you will know that it is Him calling you.

God calls every believer to do a work He has prepared for them to do and the Holy Spirit empowers and enables them to do that work.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You have a special assignment for me to do. I want to be tuned into Your voice so that I can know what You want me to do. Perhaps there is someone You want me to share the Good News with. Please direct my thoughts so that I don't miss hearing Your instructions. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? (God, Third person of the Trinity, Lives in the heart of believers.)
2. What were the Christians doing in Antioch when the Holy Spirit spoke? (Worshiping the Lord and fasting.)
3. What is fasting? (*Fasting* is removing something from your life (food, TV, video games, etc.) for a time so you can focus more clearly on God and what He wants you to do.)

4. Where did Barnabas and Saul go first when they left Antioch? (They sailed to Cyprus.)
5. In each town they visited, where did they go to preach God's Word and share the Good News? (The Synagogue.)
6. Why did Saul start using the name *Paul*? (Because it was his Roman name and he was sharing the Good News with non-Jewish people.)
7. Why did the governor send for Paul and Barnabas? (He wanted to hear God's Word taught.)
8. Who tried to stop the governor from believing in Jesus? (Bar-Jesus, empowered by Satan.)
9. What did Paul do to Bar-Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit? (He caused him to be blind.)
10. How did the governor respond to the power of God? (He believed in Jesus.)