

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Matthew 28:16–20 | Acts 6:1–8 | Romans 10:13–14

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 01.2025

SUMMARY

At the onset of Paul’s first missionary journey, Luke, the author of Acts, gives us details about the leaders in the church at Antioch. The first was Barnabas, whom he has earlier described as “a Levite from Cyprus” (Acts 4:36). Secondly, there was Simeon, who was of African descent, who was also called Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross for Jesus and who must have become a believer, since his sons Alexander and Rufus were known to the Christian community. Yet a third leader, Lucius of Cyrene, was from North Africa. Along with these leaders was also Manaen, who is called in the Greek the *syntrophos* of Herod the Tetrarch, which suggests that Manaen was a “foster brother” or “intimate friend” of Herod. Lastly, there was Saul (Paul), who came from Tarsus in Cilicia. It’s striking how the church’s leadership is formed by men of great ethnic and cultural diversity—a testament to the rapid spreading of the gospel throughout the known world. To this point, it wasn’t common for the church to send someone out on a mission to evangelize; they were usually sent out to check on the church’s wellness (Acts 8:14; 11:22). The spreading of the gospel was taking place spontaneously, most often in the local synagogue. Yet here, the church at Antioch had an abundance of prophets and teachers and began sending them out to do “mission work.” The church, called by the Holy Spirit, recognized and endorsed God’s previous claim on Barnabas and Saul, and they were thus set apart to do the work to which the Holy Spirit called. It’s important to note these actions were not undertaken at the church’s initiative; the church was the instrument that the Holy Spirit used to carry out his work. “Missions” is God’s work—his initiative. In an act of affirmation and unity of fellowship and purpose in the Holy Spirit, the congregation placed their hands on Saul and Barnabas, and the gospel went out. The spreading of the gospel in the early church was rapid, and it is still spreading today. The principle that the Lord uses to spread his gospel is the Church; he sends out believers who travel near and far to tell people of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Acts 13:1–3.

What is “missions” as you understand it? Is your understanding of missions consistent or different from what the passage in Acts describes? How so?

If God ultimately decides the effectiveness of missions, why should we evangelize?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.