

**Refuge City Church — June 26, 2022**  
**Acts: “Opposition in Open Doors” [Acts 13:1-12]**

**Introduction**

- **Last time:** We looked at the third imprisonment of Peter, and the miraculous release God provided; focusing on the need to pay attention to God’s call and commands in our life.
- **Today:** We see the continuation of Saul’s ministry, and his call to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.
  - **Acts 12:25**, “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.”

**Pubic ministry begins in private [Verses 1-5]**

“Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.”

- The church in Antioch is thriving, and is now being established as one of the centers of Christianity for the early church.
- A few initial reasons for it’s growth.
  - God is building His church!
    - **Matthew 16:18**, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
  - Those following God are found faithful in their obedience.
    - **Acts 1:8**, “...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
    - **Acts 9:15**, “[Saul’s call] for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”
  - Those leading the church were not just enveloping themselves in ministry to others. They were invested in ministry *to the Lord*.
    - Barnabas [member of the original church in Jerusalem], Simeon/Niger [means black or dark; possibly from Africa], Lucius [North Africa], Manaen [brought up with Herod who had John the Baptist killed and tried Jesus], and Saul.
    - Various men of different backgrounds & upbringings, unified in Christ, dedicating themselves to a couple of the most important practices of the church... *Prayer & Fasting*. [Colossians 3:2, “Set your minds on things that are above...”]
- Ministry to the Lord is a practice that we can not neglect. What does this mean?
  - **They were worshipping/praying...** doing what Jesus did on a regular basis. [Luke 2:49, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”]
    - This wasn’t religious practice. It was dependency.

- When Jesus was in the wilderness prior to the start of his ministry, he fasted and prayed.
- When the devil came to tempt him, he used the very things, humanly speaking, that regularly trip up anyone [fleshly desire, power, pride].
- Yet, every response Jesus had for each temptation pointed towards and showed dependency on God.
  - **Matthew 4:4**, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
  - **Luke 4:8**, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”
  - **Luke 4:12**, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”
- In Jesus’ great ‘sermon on the mount’, He presented us instruction on prayer, but more specifically ‘how’ to pray.
  - Prayer is between you and the Lord. **Matthew 6:6**, “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.
  - Prayer is straight forward. **Matthew 6:7**, “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.”
  - Prayer is dependency. **Matthew 6:8**, “For your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”; but this should not hinder us from coming to Him.
- These men were praying and worshiping because they knew they were in the service of the Lord.
  - So prior to serving the Lord, we show our dependency *on* the Lord, so that our public service is completely *for* the Lord.
- **They were fasting...** doing what Jesus did, and he encourages us to do as well.
  - **Luke 4:2**, “And he ate nothing during those days...”
  - Fasting, like prayer, shows dependency and expectancy upon the Lord.
    - Removing what we are dependent upon for strength [food], in order to empty ourselves to be filled by the Holy Spirit, wisdom from God, and the strength only He can provide.
    - **Matthew 6:17-18**, “But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
  - Fasting is not commanded by the Lord, nor did Jesus prohibit it’s exercise.
    - If done, it is to be done in secret, not for man’s eyes. It is something between you and the Lord.
    - We don’t fast for fasting sake...**Isaiah 58:6**, “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?”
    - **QUOTE:** “[fasting] is an expression of the conviction that my ways are wrong and God’s ways are right, whether he does anything for me or not.” [John Oswalt]

- God will use those of us who are seeking Him, and dependent upon Him to do the work He desires done for the expansion of His kingdom, for His glory.
- When we consecrate ourselves to God for His purpose, it is only then that He will use us.
  - We can not have the expectation of answered prayers or productive ministry if we are not ministering/worshiping Him first [Matthew 6:33].
  - If you don't practice in secret with the Lord, don't expect to practice in public with Spirit-inspired sincerity.
- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

### **Open doors will unequivocally lead to spiritual opposition [Verses 6-12]**

"When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."

- **QUOTE:** "Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success." [Charles Spurgeon]
- **1 Corinthians 16:9**, "for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."
- Paul, Barnabas, and Mark venture into their first missionary journey.
  - Determined by God, confirmed by the Spirit, affirmed and sent by the church.
  - They travel to the island of Cyprus [Barnabas' home], and began preaching the gospel across the whole island.
- They encounter an incredible open door to preach the gospel to a Roman official, yet at the exact same time, they encounter spiritual opposition in the form of a Jewish magician/apostate named Bar-Jesus [which means 'Son of a Savior/Salvation'].
  - Paul calls him out for the evil he was doing, calling him 'son of the devil', for trying to persuade the proconsul *not* to believe.
  - Power given to him by the Lord, Paul blinds Bar-Jesus physically, showing how spiritually blind he truly was.

- *Result:* Sergius Paulus believed in the Lord. He witnessed what happened, but was astonished at the teaching of the Lord!
  - **Romans 10:14-15, 17**, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
- We are guaranteed spiritual opposition in this world. As God uses us to accomplish His will, so the devil will coerce some to do his deeds.
  - **Ephesians 6:12**, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
- Jesus spoke to this in His “parable of the tares” **[Matthew 13:24-30]**
  - “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”
    - The good seed: True believers of the gospel of Christ.
    - The bad weed: Counterfeit “Christians” planted by Satan.
    - As followers of Christ, we are to stay awake and continue to bear fruit of righteousness.
  - **Ephesians 4:14**, “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”
  - **Ephesians 5:14-17**, “Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

## Conclusion

- In short, we need to be a people called by God, dependent on God, sent by God, and realize that we don’t approach this world without God.
- A world marked by spiritual darkness, needs to be navigated by those filled with the Holy Spirit and clothed in spiritual armor.
- The miraculous work of God, witnessed by others, is the result of prior discipline practiced in secret.
  - Practice the spiritual disciplines of Prayer & Fasting.
  - Get behind closed doors with a desire to know God and to understand His will.
  - Be faithful in practice, and He will provide the proper timing and direction.
  - Be aware that spiritual opposition will come.