

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we cover the first missionary journey of Paul. On this first journey Paul deals with success and the false accolades of others. Each of these passages deal with our struggles to keep our pride and ego in check.

Monday, September 28 – Read Acts 12:20-25. This is the passage describing the death of Herod Agrippa. He hears and believes the accolades of the people calling him a god. As a result, he is struck down by an angel and eaten by worms. Each of us dies a little when we take credit for what God has done in our lives. At what times have you been tempted to think you did not need God? How many times did you call on God today?

Tuesday, September 29 – Read II Corinthians 8:1-7. Here Paul describes the devotion and dedication of the Macedonian church. They were begging the opportunity to help in the efforts to help the Jerusalem church. The irony of this passage is that the churches in Macedonia were not much better off than Jerusalem. In what ways are you begging to serve God? Have you served God in some form today?

Wednesday, September 30 – Read Philippians 2:3-5. Paul loves the church at Philippi. Here he reminds them to think of others as better than themselves. This is Paul's guard against pride. For Paul, this was the mind of Christ. Are there those you consider beneath you? Who are they? Why are they beneath you?

Thursday, October 1 – Read I Thessalonians 2:1-12. Paul says, *“Lead a life worthy of God.”* In what ways is your life worthy of God?

Friday, October 2 – Read Galatians 6:1-5. Here Paul again visits the problem of pride, but here he reminds the early followers to *“bear one another's burdens and in this fulfill the law of Christ.”* How does caring for another person help in our efforts to keep our pride in check?



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, September 27, 2009

FOLLOW

STAGES (*Following the Journeys of Paul*), Week 2 of 4

Acts 13:1-3 – The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with 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.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1-3

Except for Paul and Barnabas, little is known of those listed. Efforts have been made to identify Simeon...Niger with Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26) and Lucius of Cyrene with Luke. Manaen, as stated in the passage, was one who had been raised with royalty. These five represent a very diverse collection of leaders. Arguments have been made to associate Barnabas as a Syrian, Paul we know was a Jewish Roman citizen, Lucius or Luke was an educated doctor, Manaen was from wealth and royalty, and Simeon was probably a black African who had come to this area as a slave.

Paul and Barnabas are set apart by the Holy Spirit, whose action has been awaited by fasting and praying. The laying on of hands is a kind of ordination or blessing.

Paul's First Missionary Journey

The “first” missionary journey — Acts does not name the three journeys, but it does definitely separate them — is formally initiated at Antioch when Barnabas and Saul are *“set apart...for the work to which I have called them”* (13:2). John (Mark) accompanies them as far as Perga. Acts chapters 13 and 14 tell much of this story with vivid detail.

The contrast between Paul's sermons to Jews at Antioch (13:16-41) and those to Gentiles at Lystra (14:15-17) is noteworthy. Assuming these sermons were freely composed by the author of Acts, we must admire his skill and the appropriateness of the words he ascribes to Paul.

Scripture Notes on Paul's First Journey – Acts 13:4-14:28

13:4-12 – Paul and Barnabas depart for the mission from Seleucia – the seaport of Antioch. They sail to Cyprus, landing at Salami, an important city on the eastern coast. Paul's practice was to begin preaching in the synagogues to the Jews and then move out to share the gospel with the Gentiles.

John (Mark) accompanies them serving as an assistant or helper, but the nature of his service is not described. From there Paul and Barnabas move across the island to Paphos, the provincial capital. Here Paul comes in contact with a magician named Elymas. Paul confronts the man, and he is blinded by the Holy Spirit. Luke wants to make sure we understand that the Spirit of God has authority over magic powers.

13:13-15 - Leaving Cyprus, the missionaries sail to the southern coast of what is now Turkey. Though the coastal town of Perga is the first stop, Paul and his company go immediately inland to Galatia. At this point, John Mark abandons the group.

Some surmise that the difficult road leading to a more remote area was too much for John Mark. Later in Acts 15:38, we learn that Paul is displeased with John Mark's defection and refuses to allow him to accompany him on future journeys. This decision causes the separation of Paul and Barnabas, who sides with John Mark.

The main city of the southern part of the province of Galatia was Antioch of Pisidia. Most scholars believe the churches founded in this area are those addressed by Paul in Galatians. The rulers of the synagogue were responsible for the oversight of worship. Perhaps Paul's bearing marked him as a Pharisee, but any visiting teacher might be allowed to address the congregation.

13:16-43 — Luke includes this sermon from Paul in this extended passage. Paul makes his case to the Hellenistic Jews, and it is so well received that the discussion continues after the meeting is concluded. Paul and Barnabas are encouraged to address the whole town the next Sabbath.

13:44-52 — The synagogue could hardly accommodate almost the whole city. The crowd who had gathered to hear Paul would have spilled out of the synagogue and into the streets. The Jews who had at first openly received Paul, now overtly worked to drive them out of the city. Paul and Barnabas leave praising God, filled with joy. The comment implies that their success was measured in their faithfulness rather than results.

14:1-7 — Paul, Barnabas and their companions now travel to Iconium, an important commercial center located 80 miles east of Antioch of Pisidia. Though its inhabitants considered themselves Phrygians, the city had been part of Lycaonia and by then belonged to the Roman province of Galatia.

The description of this part of the journey is abbreviated. The pattern of entering the synagogue first is repeated. The word translated *together* can also mean that they carried on the mission *after the same manner* as in Antioch. That they remained for a long time is surprising in view of the action of the unbelieving (literally "disobedient") Jews.

The results are the same in Iconium as in Antioch of Pisidia. The preaching of Paul and Barnabas is met with overwhelming acceptance. Great crowds come out to hear them. The Jewish leaders conspire to turn the city leaders against them, and they are run out of town. In this case, there is an attempt to stone them as they escape just in time to save their lives.

14:8-20 — The missionaries flee to Lystra, 20 miles south. The healing of the cripple is similar to Peter's cure of the man at the temple in 3:2-10. Both had been lame from birth, the healer looked intently at them, and they sprang up and walked.

The effort to identify the apostles as gods in the likeness of men rests on a legend in which Zeus and Hermes once descended to this area. The identification of Barnabas as Zeus could suggest that something about his bearing suggests that he is leader of the mission. More likely stress is placed on Paul as Hermes, the patron of oratory, so that Paul can be presented as the chief speaker — an emphasis which provides the occasion for his sermon.

Paul and Barnabas rebuke the people for comparing them to the gods. Their humble response, giving credit to God, is in contrast to Herod's reluctance to give God the credit in Acts 12:20-23. In Paul's claim "***we also are men,***" he points away from himself to give credit to God. Herod on the other hand, is struck dead for allowing the people to give him credit for what God has done.

In spite of Paul's protest, the people continue to offer sacrifices to them. The adoration turns to persecution when Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrive to turn the crowds against them. Paul is stoned and left for dead until his companions come to rescue and revive him. From there they travel 30 miles to the southeast to Derbe.

14:21-28 — From Derbe, they retrace their steps to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. The missionary journey ends with these words from the book of Acts, "***After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.***"

Sermon Focus and Guiding Questions

In this first missionary journey, we see Paul and Barnabas following the lead of God in their lives. They face both great success and rejection. They are tempted by the accolades of those who witness the power of God, and they are persecuted and hounded. Yet, through everything, they never waiver in their continuing devotion to God. In each circumstance, no matter

what the results, they give glory to God. They never lose a sense of whose they are.

There are many bridges we can build to the 21st century. There is one primary bridge that guides us as a follower of Christ.

Paul and Barnabas always gave the credit of their success to God. Their lives were intimately connected to following what God wanted. While we see the vivid demise of Herod (in chapter 12) for his pride and self importance, Paul and Barnabas (in chapter 14) refuse to let the accolades of the people draw them away from their task or their relationship with God.

Our life in the affluent suburbs is a constant temptation to take credit for what God has done in our lives. For the most part, we are well educated, well spoken, and highly successful in our lives. We have the ability to travel, vacation and relax. For most of the world, we are like gods. We have the ability to follow our own way.

The question for us is: do we allow all this to get in the way of our relationship with God? Who gets the credit? How do we keep our egos and pride in check? How do we make sure our lives are connected to what God wants?

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying. ***Remember... someone is praying for you.***

This morning, let the spirit of God lead you in your prayers. Some prayers will come immediately to mind because of a known need. Let other names come to mind, pray for these persons even if you do not know why God is leading you to pray for them. Spend time counting your blessings and giving thanks to God for all God's good gifts. If there is a difficult situation in your life right now, we invite you to release it to God during this worship service. It will be there after the benediction.

Please consider including these prayer concerns in your morning prayers:

The sick, the bereaved, the lost, the absent, and those in crisis;

Those who are out of work;

Those who are serving in our military;

Those who are serving our local, state and national government.

Please consider the following needs in our church:

That God will lead our congregation into unity as we consider the possibility of building a Family Life Center to develop and expand our discipleship ministries;

That God will give our pastors and staff wisdom, courage and grace;

That God will inspire our congregation to great levels of generosity in these difficult economic times;

Please join with others in our worship today by praying the following:

I pray for our Church —

That God will lead our church deeper into prayer

That God will lead each person here into a deeper relationship with Christ through worship and Bible study

That God will lead every participant into a deeper walk with Jesus.

Lord lead me closer to you in all I do. In Jesus' name, Amen.
