

#### 44. Christ Stopped the Opposition of a Sorcerer

In our last topic, we saw that the Lord wants us to help our physical and spiritual children understand how the Holy Spirit guided the leadership team in the church at Antioch to send out Barnabas and Saul to take the Gospel to other places. We saw that the Lord spoke to the leadership team of the church during a time when they were praying and fasting. We saw that as Barnabas and Saul went to each city, they began by sharing the message of the death and resurrection of Christ in the Jewish synagogues. Today, we will see what the Lord did as Barnabas and Saul met opposition in Paphos.

Barnabas and Saul had begun their ministry in the city of Salamis near the eastern end of the island of Cyprus. Paphos, the city on the western end of the island, was the Roman capital of the island. Acts 13:6-8 says, “Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” Here, we are introduced to a man by the name of Bar-Jesus who was a magician or wise man. He was called by the name of Elymas which is the Arab word for “magician”.

The word translated “sorcerer” means *a wise man or a magician*. The word is used six times in the New Testament. Four times, it is used in Matthew 2 to speak of the wise men from the east that came to visit Christ after his birth. The other two times are in these verses. A magician or wise man could follow either good or evil. In Matthew, it spoke of wise men that followed God and went to see Christ as a young child. However, we see here that Elymas is called a false prophet so he used his knowledge to practice evil. We met a similar man in Acts 8:9-10 where we read, “But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’” Here, we see that Simon had also used his knowledge to practice evil.

The Roman governor or proconsul named Sergius Paulus wanted Barnabas and Saul to explain the Word of God to him. We read that he was an intelligent or prudent man. The word translated “intelligent” means *having understanding, wise or educated*. We read that he gave Barnabas and Saul a special invitation to explain the Word of God to him. However, Elymas did everything possible to resist and oppose the things that Barnabas and Saul were explaining from the Word of God. Because Elymas was a false prophet, he was serving Satan.

We see what happened in Acts 13:9-11 where we read, “Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.” We notice several things in these verses. We see that Saul begins to use

the name of Paul. Saul was a Jewish name and was the name of the first king of Israel. However, Paul is a Roman name and is the name that Paul used for the rest of ministry which would be primarily to the Gentiles.

From this point on, we will see that Paul became the leader of the team instead of Barnabas. Verses 13 says, “Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.” However, the most important thing that we see, in these verses, is what the Lord did in the life of Elymas. Paul was full of the Holy Spirit as he spoke to Elymas. Paul gave a short description of the ungodly character of Elymas. Paul told Elymas that he was full of deceit. The word translated “deceit” means *guile, deceit or craftiness*. It is the opposite of the character of Christ. 1 Peter 2:22 describes the character of Christ and says, “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.”

Paul also told Elymas that he was full of all fraud. The word translated “fraud” meant that he was evil both in his thinking and in his acting. In addition, Paul told Elymas that he was the son of the devil. In John 8:44, Christ told the Jewish religious leaders, “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” We see that Paul said the same thing to Elymas in this verse.

Then, Paul told Elymas that he was an enemy of all righteousness. The word translated “righteousness” means *that which is acceptable and approved by God*. Here, we see that Elymas was an enemy of everything that is acceptable and approved by God. Finally, Paul told Elymas that he was continually perverting the right ways of God. The word translated “pervert” means *to plot to turn a person aside from the saving purposes and plans of God*. Paul later warned the elders in Ephesus that they would have to deal with individuals like Elymas. Acts 20:30 says, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Here, we see that the reason people speak perverse things is due to the fact that they are trying to get people to follow them instead of following God.

Then, Paul told Elymas that the Lord would bring a temporary judgment on him for his sin. Paul told Elymas, “And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” Paul knew what this temporary judgment was like, because he had experienced it in his own life. Acts 9:8-9 says, “Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.” Suddenly, Elymas had to think about something completely different than trying to keep Sergius Paulus from placing his faith in Christ. Instead, he had to begin searching for someone who would lead him by the hand.

We see that no person can prevent the work of the Trinity when the Trinity is drawing someone to Christ. In John 16:8, Christ said about the Holy Spirit, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” Earlier in John 6:44, Christ had said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the

last day.” The Holy Spirit and the Father had both fulfilled their work in the ministry of evangelism. Now it was time for Christ to carry out His ministry in evangelism. Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Now, we see that Christ carried out His work of evangelism in the life of Sergius Paulus.

Acts 13:12-13 goes on to say, “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.” Here, we see that Christ had finished His work of seeking and now the proconsul believed and was saved. Paul and Barnabas had worked with the Trinity by explaining the Word of God. The Holy Spirit convicted the proconsul as he thought about the Word of God. The Father chose to blind Elymas to draw the proconsul to Christ. Then, the proconsul was astonished at the teaching of the Word of God.

This is a key reminder for us in the work of evangelism. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Then, Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Each member of the Trinity carries out His work in the ministry of evangelism when the Word of God is taught. Paul and Barnabas had done what the Lord tells each of us to do. They had shared the Word of God and then the Trinity had worked through that Word. God fulfilled His Word in Isaiah 55:11 which says, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.”

After Paul, Barnabas and Mark finished their ministry on the island of Cyprus, they sailed from there and came to the city of Perga in Pamphylia. Perga was about two hundred miles northwest of the city of Paphos on Cyprus so it would have taken them a few days to sail to that city. That city was also the capital of the Roman province of Pamphylia. Notice that Paul and Barnabas were visiting the key cities in each of the areas where they traveled. That was true throughout the ministry of Paul as we see the various cities mentioned in the book of Acts. At Perga, we also see that Mark decided that he was going back to Jerusalem. His reason for leaving and going back to Jerusalem is not given, but it would later have an impact on all three men as we see in Acts 15:36-41. However, we see that at this point, it did not affect this trip, because Paul and Barnabas knew they were called by God for this work of ministry and they continued to carry out the work God had called them to do. We also want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of carrying out the work that the Lord has called each of us to do in our own service for the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to carry out the work that the Lord has called you to do.