

Sunday, Nov. 16, 2025 | Missio Dei

Week 1 | Acts 13:1-12 | “Missio Dei”

**READ:** Acts 13:1-12 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.**” <sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

<sup>4</sup> So, being sent out **by the Holy Spirit**, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had **John** to assist them.

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> He was with the **proconsul**, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) **opposed** them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup> But Saul, who was also called Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, looked intently at him <sup>10</sup> 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? <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

*Missio Dei* is Latin for “the sending of God.” In theological circles, this term emphasizes the Lord as the *primary* agent from whom all ministries and ministers trace their origin and from whom they receive their directive and abilities (cf. Ex. 4:10-12). While the church has gifted leaders, training others to fulfill the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:16-20), it is ultimately the Lord who raises up workers for the harvest (cf. Lu. 10:2) and equips them for his service (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). This is what Paul meant when, writing to the church in Corinth, he says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, *but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone* [emphasis added]. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Co

12:4–7). God is a *missional* God, actively working according to His own will and purpose. It is the church that joins in *His* mission, not the other way around.

In today's passage, God raises up leaders for a great work. Barnabas and Saul are set apart for a specific purpose, and over the next few years, these men will travel thousands of miles to fulfill that purpose. From their efforts, the church takes root in the most unlikely of places, burgeoning into an international gospel movement. This success wasn't owed to gifted ministers, though they were quite talented. All the glory goes to God who called, sent, and supplied them for the work of the ministry.

**Vs. 1** – In the Church at Antioch, Luke mentions five men with diverse backgrounds:

- 1.) By this point, "**Barnabas**" is a familiar sight. Again, his birth name was Joseph, but he was given the nickname Barnabas, meaning "encourager," because he was known to be a man who edified the church.
- 2.) The second person was "**Simeon**," who, like Barnabas, had a nickname, "**Niger**." Niger is the Latin word for "black" or "dark," indicating that Simeon was from Africa. Despite what some would have you believe (e.g., Hebrew Israelites), Christianity isn't the white man's religion.<sup>1</sup> Before it ever reached countries where pale skin was common, it had been long rooted in cultures where fair skin was the anomaly rather than the norm.
- 3.) The third person mentioned is "**Lucius**," and he was from the North African town, "**Cyrene**." It's possible that he too had a black complexion, but given the fact that there was a sizeable Jewish population in Cyrene, it is far more likely he was a Jew.

Cyrene was the same town from which missionaries traveled to Antioch, evangelizing as they went (cf. Ac. 11:20). Perhaps Lucius was part of that missionary group that evangelized the third-largest city in the Roman Empire.

Some have pegged this man as Luke, the writer of the third gospel. However, given the discrepancy in the spelling—"Lucius" is *Loukios* and, in Col. 4:14, "Luke" is *Loukas*—and the fact that Luke was a Gentile while Lucius was a Hellenist Jew, it is clear Lucius of Cyrene isn't the same man who wrote the Gospel of Luke.

---

<sup>1</sup> Moore, George, "Urban Apologetics: A Brief Summary of Black Hebrew Israelite Beliefs and How to Engage Them," April 21, 2020, *The Jude 3 Project*, <https://jude3project.org/blog/engagingbhi>, [accessed November 13, 2025].

4.) The fourth person mentioned was “[Manaen](#).” His name originates from the Greek *Menahem*, meaning “Comforter.”<sup>2</sup> He is described by the ESV as “[a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch](#).” This was the same Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded (cf. Lu. 9:7-9) and who had a hand in Jesus’ crucifixion (cf. Lu. 23:6-12). Luke uses the Greek term *syntrophos*, which can be translated as “friend” or “foster-brother.”<sup>3</sup> A *syntrophoi* literally means “those who are suckled by the same nurse as babies,” but it has derivative meanings, including being a childhood playmate or a close associate, such as a courtier in a king’s retinue.<sup>4</sup> According to the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, it was used to refer “to those generals who were reared with Alexander (1 Macc. 1:6) as well as for members of court (2 Macc. 9:29).”<sup>5</sup>

All that to say, Manaen was a prominent figure in society.<sup>6</sup> Given his association with Herod, he would’ve been well-connected. Thus, Christianity had already infiltrated even the upper echelons of Roman society.

But it is remarkable to trace the trajectories of these two men’s lives. Herod was one of the main antagonists in the gospels. Manaen was one of the prominent leaders in the Antiochian church. Herod treated Jesus as a magician. Manaen treated Jesus as Lord. God cares little for a person’s upbringing. Whether raised in a good home or a bad home, he can use anyone who gives their life to him.

5.) Last, but certainly not least, Luke mentions “[Saul](#).” He had been brought by Barnabas to Antioch (11:25-26). The Antiochian church took up an offering to help meet the needs of the Judean church due to a famine and sent the monies by the hand of Barnabas and Saul (11:30). After delivering the funds, Paul and Barnabas took with them John Mark and returned to Antioch (12:25).

He says these men were “[prophets and teachers](#).” This meant that they all possessed the gift of prophecy and teaching. **This passage is also a good example of how NT prophecy can’t be equated with NT preaching**, since there is a noticeable distinction being made here between the two gifts.

---

<sup>2</sup> Chad Brand et al., eds., “[Manaen](#),” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1073.

<sup>3</sup> BDAG (2000), 976.

<sup>4</sup> John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Chad Brand et al., eds., “[Manaen](#),” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1073.

<sup>6</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 439.

We've already discussed the office of prophet in week 12 of Martyrs. The Greek word translated as "teachers" is *didaskalos*, and it is the only occurrence of this word in all of Luke-Acts. Unlike prophets who received spontaneous, inerrant revelations from God, teachers expounded the well-established doctrines of God. They come fifth in the lists of individuals whom the Lord gifted the church for its equipping, after pastors, evangelists, prophets, and apostles (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). Given that the root of *didaskalos* is *didachē*, which means "to teach," their primary function was instructional.

**Vs. 2** – These men were in the process of "[worshipping the Lord and fasting](#)." Worship and fasting go hand in hand here. A fast helps the person express physically something they desire spiritually. To be clear, fasting is not a means by which we force the hand of the Lord. As Samuel reminded Saul, "[To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams](#)" (1 Sam. 15:22). But while we cannot purchase God's approval, we must not think that our discipline is unimportant or inconsequential. We too often fall into the error of assuming the Christian life is merely spiritual. Fasting helps remind us that the Lord is concerned with both the body and the soul. [Fasting helps us focus our attention on spiritual things, as it provides a tangible element to something that can, at times, feel intangible](#). Restricting the body for the sake of one's spiritual health can do more for one's well-being than anything else. When, for a time, we cut away something we rely on, we become increasingly aware of our need to rely on the Lord. [Andrew Murray](#) said of fasting: "[Fasting helps us to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain the Kingdom of God.](#)"<sup>7</sup> This is the sort of attitude that these men embodied. [Their worship wasn't superficial but employed their whole body.](#)

As they were in the midst of worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "[Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.](#)" This is a direct quote from the third person of the godhead speaks. The Holy Spirit speaks. He also has agency. He says, "[I have called them.](#)" The Holy Spirit is the primary mover, but it is worth [noting that Barnabas and Saul were called out from among other highly gifted leaders in the church. The Spirit's choice wasn't random.](#) These men already possessed a godly reputation in the church and had demonstrated their competency in the work of the ministry. A church gets itself in trouble when it's too quick to elevate someone who hasn't proven themselves to be worthy of church work. This is why Paul instructs Timothy, "[Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands](#)" (1 Tim. 5:22). No one doubted the Holy Spirit's selection of these men.

---

<sup>7</sup> Murray, Andrew, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 101.

**Vs. 3** – It’s remarkable that Barnabas and Saul didn’t immediately get up and leave. For the second time, Luke mentions “fasting,” but this time pairs it with “praying.” Perhaps they were seeking guidance. They needed to know more about this “work” that the Spirit had for them to do. However, it is clear that even when the Spirit speaks, it is best to take time to pray and fast before making any hasty decisions. **God is not in a rush, and neither should we be.**

Once they got their answer, the Antiochian church “laid their hands on them and sent them off.” In the OT, the hand, particularly the right hand, represented power (cf. Ex. 15:6; Psa. 17:7; 20:6). So, to lay one’s hand on something was a **symbolic** gesture that conveyed the transference of something such as authority (cf. Num. 27:18-20), blessing (cf. Gen. 48:14), or curse (cf. Lev. 16:8).

In the NT, laying on of hands was employed in various circumstances from healing (cf. Matt. 9:18), installation into ministry (cf. Num. 27:18; 1 Tim. 4:14), and, as is the case here, commissioning someone for a specific work. **As with its use in the OT, the NT the practice itself conveys no actual power; it is symbolic.**<sup>8</sup> As with fasting, the laying on of hands gives a physical dimension to something that is, by and large, spiritual. Here, the Antiochian Church laid its hands on Paul and Barnabas, showing the moment solemnity and conveying blessing upon them.

### **So, what’s the takeaway?**

Through the church, the Lord **builds up** and **sends out** believers.

### **READ:** Ephesians 4:11-13 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ **may be built up** <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

### **READ:** Romans 10:14-15 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach **unless they are sent**? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

---

<sup>8</sup> Vickers, Brian J., “Acts,” *ESV Expository Commentary*, Vol. IX, John-Acts (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 460.

**Vs. 4-5** – Luke reiterates that Paul and Barnabas were “being sent out **by the Holy Spirit.**”

Although the church had its part to play, it was not the primary agent in the commissioning; the Holy Spirit was. Any new direction or gospel growth comes through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, not through his human agents. As long as a believer is entirely dependent on the Lord's leading, they are saved from the stress of having to manufacture spiritual growth. **Though God uses ministers, it is not the duty of ministers to grow the church. That is God's prerogative (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6-7).**

From Antioch, the men went to the port city of “**Seleucia,**” and then from there they sailed about 60 miles to the Island of “**Cyprus.**” **Cyprus is roughly 3,500 square miles, which is about the same size as Puerto Rico.** Its main exports were copper, oil, wood, and pottery.<sup>9</sup> It had a sizable Jewish population at the time. So it should come as no surprise that when Barnabas and Saul arrived in the coastal city of “**Salamis**” on Cyprus, **they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.**” Paul said in Romans 1:16, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes—to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**” Given that Jesus is the *Jewish* Messiah, the gospel is supposed to be offered to the Jews before anyone else. They are the chosen people of God, and it is their right and privilege to hear about the Kingdom of God **first**. In the words of Bock, “The inclusion of Gentiles does not mean the exclusion of Jews from the gospel message.”<sup>10</sup>

Luke says Paul and Barnabas brought the latter's cousin, “**John,**” aka John Mark. Though the Holy Spirit singled out Paul and Barnabas, it was clear that they needed someone “**to assist them.**” **Even men as great as these needed someone to help, especially one who was most likely an eyewitness to Jesus' life (cf. Mar. 14:51-52).**<sup>11</sup>

**Vs. 6** – These ministers didn't stay in Salamis forever. That was merely their first stop on their island-wide tour. Eventually, after they traveled throughout “**the whole island,**” they ended up on the opposite side of Cyprus from Salamis in a city called “**Paphos.**” The town actually consisted of two cities, Nea Paphos (New Paphos) and Palaipaphos (Old Paphos).<sup>12</sup> According to *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*,

---

<sup>9</sup> Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel, 1988, “Cyprus,” (<https://ref.ly/res/LLS:14.0.40/2023-07-20T02:03:08Z/2613400?len=386>), In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 1:563.

<sup>10</sup> Bock (2007), 443.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, “Paphos,” *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, M-P, (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 2009), 653.

“Palaepaphos was an important religious center during antiquity, especially for the Aphrodite cult. The site where Aphrodite was believed to have come from the sea was nearby. The sanctuary at Palaepaphos became the preeminent place for worshipping Aphrodite in the Roman and Greek world (Maier, “Paphos, Old,” 1). Paphos is one of the few locations in antiquity where the place-name became strongly associated with its cult; Aphrodite was referred to as the Paphia (Maier, Alt-Paphos, 3).”<sup>13</sup>

But, surprisingly, instead of meeting opposition from those who worshipped Aphrodite, Luke says Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark “came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus.” Jesus was a common name during this time. In his writings, Josephus, a first-century historian, refers to twenty different people named Jesus, ten of whom were from the same time period as the Lord.<sup>14</sup> That there was a named son of Jesus isn’t too surprising, but it is ironic.

What was notable was the fact that this man was a Jew who practiced witchcraft. Sorcery was a capital punishment in Judaism (cf. Ex. 22:18), which condemned everything from divination, to conversing with the dead or spirits, to astrology (cf. Deut. 18:10-12; Jer. 10:2). Given that Luke calls him a “false prophet,” perhaps Bar-Jesus made a living by making predictions—e.g., psychics, palm readers, astrologers. Romans were fascinated with what they considered the Eastern Oriental cults—e.g., Isis, Mithraism.<sup>15</sup> So, given the fact that Paphos was safely outside the jurisdiction of Jerusalem, Bar-Jesus saw an opportunity to prey on Roman sensibilities.

**Vs. 7** – Luke said Bar-Jesus had embedded himself with the local “proconsul, Sergius Paulus.” Proconsuls were appointed to oversee regions that did not require a standing army to keep the peace.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Judea, which was an imperial province under the direct jurisdiction of the Roman emperor, Cyprus was a senatorial province under the direct jurisdiction of the Roman senate.<sup>17</sup> Bar-Jesus was akin to an assistant to Sergius.

---

<sup>13</sup> Nylund, Jan H, “Paphos,” (<https://ref.ly/res/LLS:LBD/2025-04-29T00:09:20Z/19083736?len=487>), in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Foley Beach, “Christian Churches: What Difference Does the Jewishness of Jesus Make?,” in *Understanding the Jewish Roots of Christianity: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Essays on the Relationship between Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott, Studies in Scripture & Biblical Theology (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 204.

<sup>15</sup> Bird, Michael F., *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 84.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce, F. F., “Proconsul,” (<https://ref.ly/res/LLS:14.0.1/2023-07-20T01:22:06Z/5696375?len=173>), in *New Bible Dictionary*, edited by D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman, 3rd ed., (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 963.

<sup>17</sup> Bock (2007), 444.

Luke says Sergius Paulus was “a man of intelligence,” in other words, he wasn’t a simpleton. This is evident because he “summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.” The men’s fame had reached the highest authority on Cyprus and, rather than brush it off, Sergius wanted to know more. Perhaps, as in Antioch, Christians were making their presence known, and who better to explain this movement than a couple of the movement's teachers?

To enter the kingdom of God, we must come to the Lord as children (cf. Matt. 18:3). The Gospel is, to those who are perishing is folly, “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart’” (1 Cor. 1:19). However, this does not mean Christians are unintelligent. To yield yourself to the Lord is the smartest thing anyone can do. Sergius Paulus was a “man of intelligence” because he honestly “sought to hear the word of God.” One's IQ isn't determined by how much a person knows or how proficient they are at solving problems. Who cares if you could win Jeopardy, but forfeit eternity because you don't put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ? Only the unintelligent will end up in hell.

**Vs. 8** – Luke says, “Elymas the magician opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” Why? Likely because the Word of God threatened his unsavory livelihood. This won’t be the last time that the gospel threatens someone’s unsavory livelihood (cf. Ac. 16:16-18). Wherever the truths of God go, there will always be those who rise up to oppose the word of God. Christianity has never been without opponents. John writes, “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18). Opponents of Christ, whom John calls “antichrists,” are a key characteristic of the last days. This is why Paul warns Timothy,

“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men” (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

As the saying goes, a hit dog will holler. Deceit, deception, and deceivers will not go quietly into the night. They will seek to oppose truth in whatever way they can, using whatever means necessary. They do not play fair. They are liars who are concerned with maintaining their power.

**Vs. 9-10** – Contrary to popular belief, Saul never had his name changed to Paul. Luke says “**Saul, who was also called Paul,**” indicating that the apostle already had two names: his Hebrew one, Saul, and his Greek one, Paul. Due to the area being a melting pot of cultures, it was common to have dual names. The more time Saul spent in the Gentile world, the more likely he would use his Roman name, Paul.

Before Luke relays Paul’s word, he said he was “**filled with the Holy Spirit.**” This is the exact phrase that is used in Lu. 1:41, when Elizabeth greeted Mary, the mother of Jesus. It was used again in Ac. 2:4 on the Day of Pentecost. And again in Ac. 4:8, where Peter spoke before the Sanhedrin. Hence, whatever comes next does not come purely from the mind of Paul; it is inspired by the Holy Spirit himself.

Luke says Paul “**looked intently**” at Bar-Jesus, and addresses his

**Origination.** He says, “**You son of the devil.**” Bar-Jesus was a spawn of Satan.

**Vocation.** He says, “**You enemy of all righteousness.**” Bar-Jesus was the adversary of all that was good.

**Obsession.** He says, “[You are] **full of all deceit and villainy.**” Bar-Jesus was consumed with lies and treachery.

Quoting Micah 3:9, Paul asks Bar-Jesus a question, “**Will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?**” This is the opposite of John the Baptist's message, who proclaimed, “**Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God**” (Lu. 3:4-6). Jesus Christ straightened the hearts of people, while Bar-Jesus made them crooked again.

**Vs. 11** – Then Paul performs his first recorded miracle. Paul says, “**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.**” Ironically, one who was a seer of magic can no longer see.<sup>18</sup> Someone who likely looked at the stars to foretell events could no longer see the sky.

---

<sup>18</sup> Vickers (2019), 461.

As harsh as this may seem, this blindness was a blessing. As Paul knew all too well (cf. Ac. 9:8-9), blindness was an effective tool to help one see the light of the gospel. Notice too that this blindness was only “for a time.” How long that may have been is unclear. Though we’re not told, perhaps, as Zechariah regained his voice (cf. Lu. 1), Bar-Jesus may have repented and, in doing so, regained his sight.

Regardless of Bar-Jesus’s fate, it is clear that there is no contest between magic and the Lord. Luke even says that after Paul cursed the man, “Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him.” The mighty magician is humbled. But notice Luke says, “He went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.” One wonders if he ever found someone to help? Seeking to be led but not being able to find a hand to guide him.

### So, what’s the takeaway?

Christians aren’t **combatants** nor **cowards**; they’re **contenders** for the faith.

A person may take issue with Paul’s harsh rebuke. However, remember that his words were inspired by the Holy Spirit. As Peter harshly confronted Simon the Magus (cf. Ac. 8:20-23), so Paul confronted Bar-Jesus the Magician. While speaking out of 1 Tim. 4:6–9, John MacArthur said, “What do we do to evaluate a pastor’s heart? What do we base that on? Listen, a pastor’s heart is not manifest in how good a man is at petting sheep. A pastor’s heart is manifest in how capable a man is at protecting them from wolves. That is a pastor’s heart.”<sup>19</sup> It is the duty of those who are entrusted with the gospel and tasked with shepherding the flock of God that false teaching not be tolerated. In Rev. 2:20, Jesus criticized the pastor of the church in Thyatira, who tolerated “that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.” That pastor was failing because he didn’t confront false teachers.

Admittedly, we must be careful about how we speak to unbelievers. A pastor’s “speech [must] always be gracious [emphasis added], seasoned with salt, so that [he] may know how [he] ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:6). Paul tells Pastor Titus, “To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle [emphasis added], and to show perfect courtesy [emphasis added] toward all people” (Titus 3:2). Peter admonished the church that when they’re persecuted, “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with

---

<sup>19</sup> MacArthur, John, “Qualities of an Excellent Servant, Part 1,” September 14, 1986, *Grace to You*, <https://www.gty.org/sermons/54-30/qualities-of-an-excellent-servant-part-1>, [accessed November 14, 2025].

*gentleness and respect* [emphasis added], having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

But do not mistake being gracious, gentle, courteous, and respectful for timidity, cowardice, non-confrontational, or fearfulness. Those who bear the truths of Scriptures are ***not*** doormats. Yes, we are peacemakers, but that does not mean we're pushovers. Sometimes, making peace requires ***contending*** for the faith (cf. Jude 1:3). John Calvin famously said, “The pastor ought to have two voices: one, for gathering the sheep; and another, for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ himself spoke tenderly when it came to the woman at the well (Jn. 4). He was winsome when he talked to a judgmental Pharisee while dining at his house (Lu. 7:36-50). But he did not mince words when it came to religious hypocrisy (cf. Matt. 23:13-36). He was both the tender shepherd, calling wayward sheep to return, and the courageous shepherd, defending his herd from ravenous wolves.

**Vs. 12** – What was the result of all this? Luke says, “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” When confrontation cannot be avoided, a Christian must stand their ground. And it is often in the arena of debate, argumentation, and discussion that Christianity shines the brightest. Sergius Paulus not only “believed” because he saw Paul strike Bar-Jesus with blindness, he also believed because of the “teaching of the Lord.” The miracle would’ve been pointless without the message.

*soli Deo gloria*

---

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, John, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, Crossway Classics Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 184.

**Video Description:**

**Missio Dei | Week 1 | Acts 13:1-12 | “Missio Dei”**

There

**Sermon Manuscript:**

---

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: [info@GracePointeLife.com](mailto:info@GracePointeLife.com)

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

Give here: <https://www.gracepointelife.com/give/>

**Podcast Details:**

Season 42 | 1