

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Vaught Sermon Notes: A Study of the Book of Acts

W.O. Vaught Archive

10-7-1982

How the Church Sent Her First Missionaries

W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_acts



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "How the Church Sent Her First Missionaries" (1982). *Vaught Sermon Notes: A Study of the Book of Acts*. 45.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_acts/45

This Sermon Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the W.O. Vaught Archive at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vaught Sermon Notes: A Study of the Book of Acts by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

HOW THE CHURCH SENT HER FIRST MISSIONARIES

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 47
ACTS 13:1-4

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

The conception of the missionary goes back to a previous dispensation. In the first dispensation, from Adam to Abraham, which is called the Age of the Gentiles, all witnessing was accomplished on a family basis. Then with the conversion of Abraham, and the beginning of the second dispensation, which is called the Age of the Jews, we have the first missionary organization. This first missionary was a Gentile by the name of Abraham, and he became a Jew by crossing over a river and was given the name Hebrew, which means to cross over. Abraham, a Gentile, was converted and crossed into Canaan and became a Jew. Thus the Jewish nation became responsible for the custodianship of the Word of God and for the dissemination of the gospel. Jews were responsible for giving out the gospel to other nations and in general they failed and God had to use other means to get his message out to the world. Then the fifth cycle of discipline fell upon the Jews in 70 A.D. and they were scattered to all parts of the world. This discipline of the Jews continues right down to this moment, so today the Jews no longer have missionary responsibility. Then beginning with Pentecost a new organization came along called the Church, and the Church became responsible for the dissemination of the gospel. This is what we have come to here in Acts 13, the beginning of the great World Missionary Movement.

The Principle Of Missions As Related To The Church

1. EVERY TRUE MISSIONARY MUST BE A BORN-AGAIN BELIEVER.

Every true missionary must have personally received Jesus Christ as Saviour, and he must understand how he was saved. Unless he does understand these things, he can muddy up the waters when he gets on the mission field. He must understand that we were born spiritually dead, with an old sin nature. The old sin nature can only produce sin and human good. When Christ went to the cross, he bore all of our sins, even the sins of the whole world. Therefore, sin is no longer the issue but Christ is the issue. We are to tell people that they must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. When the missionary understands this, he comes to realize that his task is the production of divine good and this can only come from the filling of the Holy Spirit, and guidance from the Word of God. Human good, which is the production of the old sin nature in man, was rejected by Christ at the cross. All production of human good is but filthy rags in God's sight. Now there is a place in the plan of God for human good, if first the Christian understands Galatians 3:26 which says, "For we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ". We can crank out human good every day, but unless it is divine good we produce, it is but wood, hay and stubble in God's sight.

2. A MISSIONARY MUST BE PROPERLY INDOCTRINATED.

This means a knowledge of Bible doctrine. The mission field requires many things of the missionary and he must know Bible doctrine in order to be ready for the many challenges of mission service.

3. A MISSIONARY MUST BE ORIENTED.
He needs to know how God's plan operates. He needs to be aware of all the divine assets so he can fall back on them in time of need.
4. A MISSIONARY MUST BE GUIDED BY GOD WHERE TO SERVE.
By prayer, by reading, by a study of the needs of the various fields God gives to the mind of the called missionary definite impressions about the selection of a field of service. God opens doors from time to time and he calls men to enter those open doors.
Illustration--There was a Scotchman, a little boy born near Glasgow, who was sold as a slave to Ireland. He managed to escape back to Scotland, and there he was converted. After being converted he felt led to return to Ireland, and he did. There in Ireland he was instrumental in leading hundreds of thousands to Christ. His name was Patrick. He was so successful the Roman Church adopted him as their own and now all over the world on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated. However, he was not an Irishman, he just happened to work there. The point is this--God's Holy Spirit moved in that land and led the people to have a positive volition toward God, and God used Patrick to be his missionary to bring the gospel to willing listeners.
5. A MISSIONARY MUST BE SEPARATED UNTO GOD.
He must be so well founded and committed to God that he will not be swept away by the cults and customs he meets in some strange culture. This is why it is vitally necessary to give the missionary accurate training and instruction concerning the field where he or she plans to work.
6. EACH TRUE MISSIONARY MUST BECOME ACCLIMATED TO HIS FIELD.
He must learn a new language. He must make adaptation to climate, local cultures and customs, and foreign governments
In this new strange culture he must settle down to the training of new converts.

ACTS 13:1 "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Antioch is now the new headquarters for the early church. Jerusalem had lost out because of legalism. Antioch is the great "Grace" church and Jerusalem had become a legalistic trap. Antioch was a stabilized center from which missionaries could be sent out. God had planned for the church to be a great missionary base, and the Antioch Church could best be used of God at this time in world history to get his work done.

The Success Of Antioch

1. ANTIOCH HAD AN OBSCURE FOUNDING.
We learned from Acts 11:20 that Antioch was not founded by the apostles but by men from Cyprus and Cyrene. Founded largely by laymen who had no tradition and no legalism built on the Mosaic Law.
2. THE FIRST MAN WHO GAVE THEM GREAT LEADERSHIP WAS BARNABAS.
Please remember that the Jerusalem church was trying to get rid of Barnabas. He was a great "grace-hearted" man so Jerusalem decided to send him on an inspection trip to the north to check on Antioch. This was a good way for the Jerusalem church to get rid of Barnabas. Thus they sent him to check on the amazing and exciting things that were happening in Antioch. Barnabas liked what he saw in Antioch and he stayed there.

3. BARNABAS BROUGHT SAUL OF TARSUS TO ANTIOCH.
Barnabas had the gift of prophesy but technically was not a pastor or teacher. And Barnabas was smart enough to realize this. He went to Tarsus and sought out Saul and persuaded him to come to Antioch. (Acts 11:25-26) In this way the Antioch Church became stabilized by the accurate and thoughtful teaching of Saul. The one thing that will sustain a church and make it grow is Bible doctrine.
4. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH LATER ON WILL HAVE TO HELP THE JERUSALEM CHURCH.
Legalism gradually drags a church down and this happened in Jerusalem. Many of the problems in Jerusalem were self-induced, brought on by a legalistic and self-righteous people.
5. ANTIOCH HAD BEEN TAUGHT THE MEANING OF THE GRACE OF GOD FROM THE BEGINNING.
This is declared in Acts 11:23. They knew they didn't get where they were because of their own merit, but because of God's grace.
6. ANTIOCH PROSPERED.
Because of the grace of God, Antioch grew rapidly and prospered.
7. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH WAS VITALLY INTERESTED IN DOCTRINE.
This is stated in Acts 11:26. Because they learned the basic doctrines of Christianity the church was stabilized.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and was a strategic center. They had leading prophets and teachers. Probably they had as many as 100,000 converts in that city. This first verse mentions the men we have come to call "The Antioch Five". They were all great men.

Barnabas His name also was Joseph, and he came from the Island of Cyprus. He was a very wealthy man and had given large sums of money to the Jerusalem church.

Simeon was called Niger. Niger is a Latin word for Black. Acts 11:20 mentions his country. He was an outstanding businessman from North Africa.

Lucius of Cyrene. He was a great leader in the church at Antioch but aside from this we know nothing more about him.

These next two mentioned had the gift of teaching.

Manaen was an aristocrat. He was a foster son of Herod. While in the court of Herod he accepted Christ and became a great teacher.

Saul of Tarsus was the other teacher and was the outstanding believer of the entire world.

ACTS 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." This brings us to the selection of the first missionaries. Barnabas was taken from the Prophetic group and Saul of Tarsus from the teaching group. Please note that while they were ministering and fasting, which simply means they were throwing their best into their work, the Holy Spirit directed the Antioch Church to send Barnabas and Saul forth to the work for which God had called them. Please notice that God's Spirit led in this. This word "separate" means this--from the ultimate source of God a line has been drawn around these men. God is the source of their call and it is God who is really sending them out. Notice the words "Whereunto I have called them". So it is God who calls, it is God who selects the ones called, and it is God who is to thrust them out into the work.

ACTS 13:3 "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." The Holy Spirit appoints missionaries, and the church ordains them for their service. The church simply recognized the appointment God had made in the hearts of these men. The Antioch Church sent them away. Eventually Antioch will lose her place of leadership and the missionary center will move to Ephesus. The real reason for this is that later on Antioch will refuse to support the missionaries that have been sent out. So in this we see the strength and weakness of the Antioch Church.

ACTS 13:4 "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Thus we have the beginning of the first missionary journey. Seleucia is a seaport town about fifteen miles down toward the sea. It was the seaport for Antioch. They went to the Island of Cyprus and here the missionary movement began. This Island is 140 miles long and 60 miles wide at the widest point. It was the center of great civilizations of the past and in 58 B.C. the Romans conquered it and it became a senatorial province of the Roman Empire. Cyprus, right at the time of this missionary visit, was enjoying great prosperity. It was on this Island where the greatest copper mines of that day were located.

So at this little Island the great missionary movement which has meant so much to the world was originated.