



1. Today's passage features two Jewish men who both appeared earlier in Acts. What do we already know about Barnabas (4:36-37; 11:22-24)? What do we already know about Saul (7:58 with 8:1, 3; 9:1-9; 9:18-22)? What was the Lord's calling for Saul (9:15-16)?
2. What do we know about three things Barnabas and Saul had already done together (9:26-28; 11:25-26; 11:29-30 with 12:25)? How might the Lord have used these three events to help build the two of them into a team for Him? What benefits do you see from sending out workers in pairs, as the Lord Jesus did in Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1?
3. Describe the activities the church leaders at Antioch were involved in together (13:1-3). Which activity gets mentioned twice, and what do you think that says to us today?
4. The banner at the front of the Fairhaven main auditorium lists the three key themes we are focusing on in our study of Acts: Holy Spirit, Witnesses, and Prayer. How do we see each of these mentioned in verses 2-5? How else was the Holy Spirit specifically involved in this passage (verse 9)?
5. We are not told how the team decided where to begin this first missionary journey. What hints do you find in Acts that might give us some clues (4:36; 11:20; 13:2-7)?
6. What do we learn about the character of the two men on Cyprus whose names are given (verses 6-12)? What happened to each of them as a result of the team's visit?
7. Why do you think Paul used such strong words when addressing Elymas? Are there times when we should use words like these today? If so, under what conditions?
8. How was the judgment inflicted on Elymas both just and at the same time merciful? How might that have influenced the proconsul's decision to believe? What else influenced the proconsul's decision (v. 12)?
9. What do we know about the team's helper, John Mark, up to this point in the Bible (12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; Colossians 4:10)? From what we know, why do you think he left the team after they had been to Cyprus? If you have ever felt like giving up on some way you were serving the Lord, tell the group what happened and how it turned out.
10. What special work has the Holy Spirit set you apart for? How are you pursuing His calling on your life?



## Holy Spirit Sends Witnesses to Cyprus Leader Notes for Acts 12:25-13:13

Today's passage features two Jewish men we have met before in the book of Acts. Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus, who made a generous gift in the early days of the church (4:36-37), and later was sent to encourage the new Gentile church in Antioch (11:22-24). Saul had persecuted the church (7:58; 8:1, 3), but became a believer when the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus (9:1-9). He was baptized and immediately began to proclaim Jesus (9:18-22). The Lord declared His special purpose for Saul's life in 9:15-16.

The Spirit was building Barnabas and Saul into a team for His service. Earlier Barnabas stood up for Saul when Saul first came back to Jerusalem as a believer (9:26-28). Then Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus when he needed help teaching the new Gentile believers in Antioch (11:25-26), and the two of them taught the new church for an entire year. Most recently they had taken a gift for famine relief to the Jerusalem church (11:29-30), and then returned together to Antioch (12:25), bringing along a young man named John Mark.

The prophets and teachers at Antioch were "ministering to the Lord and fasting" when the Holy Spirit spoke to them. We don't know all that "ministering to the Lord" involved, but it probably included worship, praying, and studying the Scriptures together. This is the only place in the New Testament where that phrase is used. They abstained from food for a time.

How did the new team know where the Lord wanted them to go? Clearly there was prayer involved (v. 3). We also know that Barnabas was originally from Cyprus and that some of the other men who founded the church at Antioch were from Cyprus (11:20). And the Lord knew there was a proconsul on Cyprus who was ready to hear the word of God (v. 7).

The new missionary team started witnessing in the synagogues on the eastern end of Cyprus, where they first landed. At the western end, they met two powerful people, one receptive to them and the other not. Sergius Paulus, the intelligent Gentile ruler of the island, was genuinely interested in hearing God's word. But the Jewish false prophet Bar-Jesus, or Elymas, was a charlatan magician who sensed he might be about to lose his influence over the proconsul (and probably his income), so he actively sought to turn him away from the faith.

Saul, now known by Paul as he began witnessing to the Gentile proconsul, discerned what was happening and told Elymas the brutal truth in no uncertain terms. Luke makes it clear that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit right before he addressed Elymas. Paul told him he was full of deceit and fraud, a son of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. This is not how Paul normally addressed unbelievers, but in this case he needed to take a stand because Elymas was trying to hinder someone else from coming to faith. This is the same kind of language Jesus used with the Pharisees for the same reason in Matthew 23.

Paul by the Spirit told Elymas he would be blind, but just for a time. The Spirit kept him from influencing the proconsul any further, yet mercifully would give him another chance to repent when his blindness would later leave him. We don't know what happened to him.

Meanwhile, the proconsul saw all of this and listened to Paul, being amazed at the Lord's teaching. We are told that he believed, the first Gentile convert on this journey!

Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark then left Cyprus and sailed north to modern Turkey. At this point it seems the trip was too much for John Mark, who returned home to Jerusalem. He may have been homesick, or not ready as a Jew to work with Gentiles, or uncomfortable with the change of leadership from Barnabas to Saul/Paul. We will see more of him later.

