

“LETTING GO”

Acts 13:1-3

INTRODUCTION

We have now come to part two of the Book of Acts. Acts 1-12 primarily concerned the “Acts of Peter.” Part two deals primarily with the “Acts of Paul.” **But all of it manifests the “acts of the Holy Spirit.”**

If we look back at 11:26—believers were first called “Christians” at Antioch. Let us look at some of the signs that this **group had now truly become a “Church.”**

- Barnabas’ mission to them in 11:21-26; cf. “the church that was at Jerusalem” (11:22).
- This church adhered to the “teachings of the apostles” as communicated to them by Barnabas (cf. the formation of the Jerusalem church in 2:42.)
- Fellowship with the Jerusalem church and the sharing of goods (11:29-30; 12:25).
- Maintaining worship services and study groups (13:2; 11:26-27; 14:27).
- Unity in one body of Jews and Greeks (Gal. 2:11-13).
- The church became organized—there was a *body of prophets and teachers*.
- They had independence and a “democratic feeling” (See 11:29-30)
 - 1) They sent relief to Jerusalem.
 - 2) They sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem (15:2).
 - 3) They sent missionaries out to preach (13:3).
 - 4) They sent back Judas and Silas in peace (15:23).
 - 5) They commended Paul and Silas to the grace of God (15:40; 14:26).
 - 6) Paul and Barnabas gave account to them (14:27).
 - 7) A letter from the Jerusalem Council was delivered to them (15:30).

The book of Acts shows that **the local church is God’s ordained institution to carry out His plan for this age:**

YOU NEED TO BE AN ACTIVE AND INVOLVED PART OF A LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH!

In this passage we see : *The Leaders of the church; The Liturgy of the Church; The Leading of the Holy Spirit; The Laying on of Hands; and The Letting Go of the Church’s Best Workers for Missions.*

- I. THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH (13:1)
 - A. Prophets:
 1. *Prophets edified, exhorted, consoled—but also predicted the future.*
 2. Prophets could also function as “elders”. This helps explain the emphasis on prophecy in I Cor. 14.
 - B. Teachers
 - Are the following names divided into two groups?
 - Can’t prove that; possibly all 5 had both gifts.

The Five Names:

1. Barnabas—See previous passages
 - Possibly the other 3 men came into prominence while Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem.
 - Barnabas and Saul had trained other men. It is a good thing they did!
2. Simeon—called “Niger” (“black”)
 - Simeon is a Jewish name. Know nothing more of him.
3. Lucius of Cyrene
 - He is **not** Luke!
 - Cyrene is in N. Africa—cf. Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus’ cross.
 - He is likely one of the men who first preached the gospel in Antioch (11:20).
4. Manaen—brought up with Herod the tetrarch
 - His name is the OT name Menahem, meaning “comforter.” Only here in NT.
 - Herod here is Herod Antipas.
 - The RV has “his foster brother.” This is a title of honor given to boys reared at court with princes as their companions in education.
5. Saul
 - Put last since he was the youngest member of these leaders.
 - Listed separately from Barnabas deliberately; HS would put them together.

Note that these men *are from highly varied backgrounds—all transformed by the power of the Gospel and now served the Lord together in the church of Antioch.*

WHOM HAS THE LORD PUT TOGETHER IN THIS CHURCH? Let us serve Him together!

II. “LITURGY”

A. Ministering to the Lord

- The verb means: “Perform some public service at one’s own expense.”
- In the NT it can mean “to minister as a priest” as in Heb. 10:1)
- Here it means to “minister in the Christian church”—some special public religious service—the worship of God.
- “Liturgy” grew out of this word.
- Came to be used also of service to man.
- Thus, true service to God is also service to men.
- The action to follow was initiated by the 5—but in the name of the entire church.

- B. Fasting—What we might have expected with prayer on such an important occasion as this—sending forth first missionaries. Cf. 14:23—before appointing elders in churches.
1. Dangers: Can lead to doctrinal errors (matter is evil etc.) and spiritual pride, and false ideas of merit and good works to earn divine favor.
 2. Fasting is normal for believers: Mt. 6:16; Jesus said His disciples would fast (Mt. 9:15); Paul fasted (9:9, 12); the church fasted here.

Yes, we should be ministering for the Lord in our local church, and we also must be alert to the **Leading of the Holy Spirit**.

III. LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. He spoke through one of the prophets
Maybe this was a special meeting being held to discuss the sending out of the Gospel to the heathen! They were beginning to sense this responsibility.
- B. He Separated Barnabas and Saul
1. Separation is **to God (“for Me”)**, not just **from the world**.
This shows both **the personality** and the **divine nature** of the Holy spirit.
 2. He picked the **best workers** in the church for the missionary work: Barnabas and Saul. Note whose name comes first here. *These are men already proven in Christian ministry.*
 3. The expression is used frequently for such sacred “setting apart” as *first born; Levites, wave offering, bearers of the sacred vessels, etc.*
- C. He **called** them to this work
- Much Christian ministry fails due to a lack of divine calling.
 - Note that effective ministry is **work**.
 - This was a call in the past which has present implications.
 - Note that the work is **God’s**—He takes the initiative here.
 - God sets apart first; *then the church acts in acknowledgment of God’s will.*
 - The language of the text expresses **urgency** and **earnestness**.

IV. THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

Note the church’s quick and obedient response.

- A. Fasting—solemn and sacred occasion requiring sacrificial dependence on God.
- B. Praying—the urgent need for Divine guidance.
- C. Laying on of hands
Who did this? the teachers and prophets or the Church?
- Paul and Barnabas cannot lay hands on themselves.

- There is a change of subject here to the whole church in the praying and fasting—therefore also the laying on of hands. The church is the subject—in its leaders—in both vv. 2 & 3.
- Yet, the entire church did not lay hands on, nor did the whole church “minister” in v. 2. The leaders did these things on the behalf of the assembly.
- Laying on of hands was done by the church officers.
- Certainly the whole church is involved in what the leaders do.
- Note that when these two men return, they report to the entire church. There was solidarity between the church and its leaders.
- So should it be with us!
- Soon after this these two men were called “Apostles” (14:4, 14). **Sent forth by God—and By the Church!**
- This laying on of hands recognized but did not bestow apostolic authority; no apostles were present here—except Saul!
- These men had already known God’s will—they were awaiting God’s timing, and the Church’s recognition.
- God’s blessing and power is representatively transferred to these men. This is more than merely identifying with Barnabas and Saul to show solidarity.
- The laying on of hands conferred some office, or blessing, and spiritual gift.
- These men perform the works of apostles after this.

V. LETTING THEM GO: “They sent them away.”

The verb means “to loose from”, to “release” them from their obligations at their church, and from the benefits the church would receive from them.

- A. Our Best Workers
- B. Our Own Children
- C. Our Own Lives
 1. For Service
 2. For Baptism
 3. For Salvation

CONCLUSION

YOU NEED TO BE AN ACTIVE AND INVOLVED PART OF A LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH!

And as part of that, you **need to “Give of your best to the Master”**.

- Give your life.
- Give your children.
- Give the church’s best workers.