

# ***“Go Get Your Sword!”***

Acts 13:4-12

July 12, 2015

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning...

Did you show up prepared for today? (uncomfortable pause)

Whichever way you answered, how do you know?

Have you ever shown up unprepared? ...Ever?

What’s the worst example you’ve ever had of NOT.....

I can’t help but to remember my first days of boot camp.

Let me describe a little bit of it for you...

NOW... notwithstanding my shock, awe, & unpreparedness...

WHY do you think the Army starts you off that way?

Especially when you consider how lax things get...

ANSWER:        So that you will “BE READY!”

ALSO:        Note how CONTEXT impacts my question/example...

## CONTEXT:

- A. Acts 1:8.... Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, now global!
- B. Barnabas & Paul... from Damascus to Antioch, now global!
- C. Supernaturally **knowing, to** supernaturally **going** global!

## REVIEW:

- Series: *“The Way of God”*
- Acts 1:8
  - Mission from the Messiah
  - Outline of the book of Acts
- Pattern in Acts
  - Person of Christ
  - Promise of Christ
  - Power of the Holy Spirit
  - People of God (a.k.a. the “Proof” of God)
  - Proclamation of the Gospel
  - **Persecution of God’s people**
  - Perseverance of God’s people & passion
- Gospel goes the gentiles... (Jesus’ Great Commission)
  - Scattered (Acts 8:1 in response to Acts 1:8)
  - Sent
    - Philip to the Ethiopian
    - Peter & John to Samaria
    - Peter to Cornelius
    - Now Barnabas & Paul to Cyprus...

**TIMELESS TRUTH:** *The Church was born for war!*

## PREVIEW:

- A. Saved Out v. 1
  - B. Sent-Out vv. 2-3
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- C. Set-Out v. 4
  - D. Spread-Out vv. 5-8
    - a. Speak-Out (vv.5-7)
    - b. Shout-Out (v.8)
  - E. Stand-Out vv. 11-12
    - a. Grace-based blindness
    - b. Grace-based belief

## TEXT: Acts 13:4-12 (NASB)

- I. **Set Out** (God's Word says: "GO!") v.4

<sup>4</sup> So, ***being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went*** down to Seleucia and from there ***they sailed*** to Cyprus.

NOTE:

*There's an eternal difference between  
"being sent" and "setting out!"  
(the difference is obedience)*

It's easy to *make* Christian commitments...  
Eternal blessing depends on if you faithfully fulfill them.

Biblical Examples of "NOT-going" disasters...

- Moses not going into the Promised Land
- David with Bathsheba vs. going to war
- Acts 8:1... persecution needed for obedience

[v. 4.](#) **If the Holy Ghost send them forth, he will go along with them,**

II. **Spread Out** (God's Word says: Witness Everywhere) vv.5-10

- vv.5-7 = Speak Out

- v.8 = Shout Out

<sup>5</sup> *When they reached Salamis, they began **to proclaim the word of God** in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. <sup>6</sup> When they **had gone through the whole island** as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup> who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.*

<sup>8</sup> *But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup> But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, <sup>10</sup> and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"*

### III. **Stand Out** (God's Word says: BE Christ-like) vv.11-12

<sup>11</sup> *"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a*

*mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.*

*<sup>12</sup> Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*

**those who are in any way instrumental to prejudice people against the truths and ways of Christ are doing the devil's work.**

**one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost-a spirit of judgment.( cf. John 7:24) He felt a more than ordinary fervour in his mind, as the prophet did when he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord ([Micah 3:8](#)), and another prophet when his face was made harder than flint**

(Ezekiel 3:9), and another when his mouth was made like a sharp sword, Isaiah 49:2. What Paul said did not come from any personal resentment, but from the strong impressions which the Holy Ghost made upon his spirit.

[2.] He set his eyes upon him, to face him down, and to show a holy boldness, in opposition to his wicked impudence.

[3.] He gave him his true character, not in passion, but by the Holy Ghost, who knows men better than they know themselves, v. 10.

He describes him to be, First, An agent for hell;

ever since Cain who was of that wicked one, an incarnate devil, slew his brother, for no other reason than because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Elymas, though called Bar-jesus-a son of Jesus, was really a child of the devil, bore his image, did his lusts, and served his interests, [John 8:44](#).

In two things he resembled the devil as a child does his father:- 1. In craftiness. The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the

field (Genesis 3:1), and Elymas, though void of all wisdom, was full of all subtlety, expert in all the arts of deceiving men and imposing upon them. 2. In malice. He was full of all mischief-a spiteful ill-conditioned man, and a sworn implacable enemy to God and goodness. Note, A fulness of subtlety and mischief together make a man indeed a child of the devil. Secondly, An adversary to heaven. If he be a child of the devil, it follows of course that he is an enemy to all righteousness, for the devil is so.

**NOTE:**

**First, The ways of the Lord are right:**

**Secondly, There are those who pervert these right ways, who not only wander out of these ways themselves but mislead others, and suggest to them unjust prejudices against these ways: as if the doctrine of Christ were uncertain and precarious, the laws of Christ unreasonable and impractical, and the service of Christ unpleasant and unprofitable, which**

is an unjust perverting of the right ways of the Lord, and making them seem crooked ways.

Thirdly, Those who pervert the right ways of the Lord are commonly so hardened in it that, though the equity of those ways be set before them by the most powerful and commanding evidence, yet they will not cease to do it. Etsi suaseris, non persuaseris-You may advise, but you will never persuade; they will have it their own way;

3. Notwithstanding all the endeavours of Elymas to turn away the deputy from the faith, he was brought to believe, and this miracle, wrought upon the magician himself (like the boils of Egypt, which were upon the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses, Exodus 9:11), contributed to it. The deputy was a very sensible man, and observed something uncommon, and which intimated its divine original,

(1.) In Paul's preaching: he was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, the Lord Christ,-the doctrine that is from him, the discoveries he has made of the Father,-the doctrine that is concerning him, his person, natures, offices, undertaking. Note, The doctrine of Christ has a great deal in it that is astonishing; and the more we know of it the more reason we shall see to wonder and stand amazed at it.

(2.) In this miracle: When he saw what was done, and how much Paul's power transcended

**that of the magician, and how plainly Elymas was baffled and confounded, he believed.** It is not said that he was baptized, and so made a complete convert, but it is probable that he was. Paul would not do his business by the halves; as for God, his work is perfect. When he became a Christian, he neither laid down his government, nor was turned out of it, but we may suppose, as a Christian magistrate, by his influence helped very much to propagate Christianity in that island. The tradition of the Romish church, which has taken care to find bishoprics for all the eminent converts we read of in the Acts, has made this Sergius Paulus bishop of Narbon in France, left there by Paul in his journey to Spain.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible.

### *Ministry in Cyprus ([13:4-12](#))*

**VERSE 4 REMINDS us that the Holy Spirit is the one who ultimately sends his servants out.** The first place of ministry for the missionaries was the area Barnabas came from, the island of Cyprus southwest of Antioch, to which they sailed from Seleucia, the port city of Antioch. They began their ministry in the northeastern city of Salamis, preaching first in a synagogue in keeping with the principle of going to the Jews first ([Rom. 1:16](#)). But they soon took a new step, directly approaching a Gentile official who sent for them ([13:7](#)).

Luke inserts a note that "John was with them as their helper" ([13:5b](#)). Some have suggested that the word "helper" here (*hyperetes*) has a restricted meaning similar to synagogue attendant (cf. [Luke 4:20](#)), so that Mark's responsibility was to care for the scrolls of the Scriptures

along with a "sayings of Jesus" collection. But Luke uses this word in the broader sense elsewhere ([Luke 1:2](#); [Acts 5:22, 25](#); [26:16](#)), which seems to be the meaning here. As a resident of Jerusalem Mark may have had an eyewitness knowledge of events in the gospel story, especially relating to the Passion narrative, of which Paul would have availed himself.

The team next went to the provincial capital, Paphos, on the opposite (southwestern) side of the island. **In the Roman empire "the peaceful and civilized provinces where no legions had to be quartered—about ten in number—were administered by the senate. A provincial governor had the title of proconsul ([Acts 19:38](#)), that is, 'in the place of consul' or functioning with the power of a consul in that *provincia*." Cyprus was declared a senatorial province in 22 B.C.**

**In Paphos Saul and Barnabas encountered a sorcerer, Bar-Jesus or Elymas, just as Philip and Peter did in Samaria. Like Simon in Samaria, Elymas faced a stern rebuke from the evangelist, because of his adverse influence on the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus ([13:6-11](#)).** Elymas presumably opposed Paul and Barnabas because their ministry jeopardized his standing with the proconsul. Such **[opposition to the gospel for selfish reasons is common in Acts.](#)**

At this stage we are told that Saul "was also called Paul" ([13:9](#)), and from now on this is the name used in Acts (except when he relates the story of his conversion [[22:7](#), [13](#); [26:14](#)] ). As a Jew he would have proudly borne the name of Israel's first king, Saul, who like him was from the tribe of Benjamin ([Phil. 3:5](#)). **Roman citizens had three names: a praenomen, a nomen, and a cognomen. The apostle's first two are not mentioned in the New Testament. Paul (*Paulos*, meaning "little") was his cognomen,** and inscriptions show that often the cognomen of Jews sounded like their Jewish name, as is the case here. **As Paul entered the Gentile phase of his ministry, he would have**

gone by his Roman name. Thus, the view that this name change resulted from his conversion is wrong.

Paul has severe words for Elymas (13:9-11). Luke is careful to say that he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" when he uttered them, indicating that this was not an error on Paul's part.

It is an example of the use of the prophetic gift through which the apostle communicated a direct and specific word of judgment from God.

Verse 12 attributes the belief of Sergius Paulus both to his seeing the miracle and being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

As we will see below, these factors present two key elements of effective evangelistic ministry.

## Bridging Contexts

A LEADERSHIP REFLECTING the diverse population. **It is significant that the church in Antioch had such a culturally diverse leadership in keeping with the diversity of the population of the city (13:1).** Did Luke mention the names and backgrounds of the leaders to highlight this diversity? We cannot make a binding principle out of this one text, but what happened in Antioch was certainly remarkable and may be an example worthy of emulation. I will go so far as to say that fostering leaders from different cultural backgrounds is a goal to work at in all churches that have a diversity in their membership.

**Missionary sending.** From this church's officially sending out "foreign missionaries" we can learn many important principles about the missionary involvement of churches. How the church came to recognize this call of God is instructive. Tannehill shows how three features in this passage are found in two other Lukan commissioning passages: "The beginnings of the missions of Jesus and the apostles are preceded by references to prayer ([Luke 3:21](#); [Acts 1:14](#)), which provides opportunity for action of the Spirit ([Luke 3:22](#); [Acts 2:1-4](#)), and the Spirit leads directly to mission ([Luke 4:14](#); [Acts 2:5-41](#))." **Prayer** here is viewed as a service we do for God ([13:2](#)). To this is added **fasting** ([13:2](#)), which was also associated with the start of Jesus' ministry ([Luke 4:2](#)). Ralph Earle writes that fasting "emphasizes a state of uninterrupted concentration which made it possible to ascertain the will of the Lord. That is the main purpose and value of fasting."

**The message the church received was to release their best for missionary service (13:2), and their earnestness was such that they were willing to do so (13:3). This is typical of churches that have a missionary vision, churches whose main aim is more than survival or maintenance. Missions is so important to them that they willingly take steps that may seem harmful to the church in order for the missionary program to thrive. They have a corporate "others orientation."**

Saul, of course, had already received a call from God to Gentile evangelism (cf. [22:15](#); [26:17](#)). What happened here is that the church, having recognized this call, realized that this was the time for him to

launch out into this task and commissioned the team to pursue it. "This event brings together the themes of personal call and congregational affirmation." It is interesting that though [verse 3](#) says the church "sent them off," the next verse says they were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit." Ultimately the Holy Spirit is the key to the whole missionary enterprise.

Harsh words in evangelistic settings?

We may be surprised to find such harsh words being spoken to Elymas in an evangelistic setting ([13:10-11](#)). Lest we think that Paul made a mistake here, Luke assures us that he was filled with the Holy Spirit when he spoke ([13:9](#)). These words are in keeping with Jesus' harsh statement, "*But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea*" ([Matt. 18:6](#)). Elymas was trying to keep someone else from learning the way of salvation through "*all kinds of deceit and trickery*" ([13:10](#)). The salvation of Sergius Paulus was so valuable that this hindrance had to be rooted out. We too may at times need to speak and act strongly against those who try to keep others from the truth.

**Evangelism through deeds and words.** In our application of [2:43](#) we discussed how the conversion of Sergius Paulus is a good example of the place of signs and wonders in evangelism. He was "an intelligent man" ([13:7](#)), a provincial governor, and from other writings in that period we know that he hailed from "a family which rendered distinguished service to the empire in the first and second centuries." In other words, as some would say, he was not a naive simpleton who would be easily attracted to the supernatural, the type with whom miraculous ministry will be effective.

**This passage shows, therefore, the combination of the various elements of an evangelistic ministry that results in belief. The proconsul believed when he "saw what had happened" (13:12). But that was not the cause of belief. The verse goes on to give the real cause of the belief: "for he was amazed [lit., being amazed] at the teaching about the Lord." Paul's teaching had been faithfully done; that was the foundation of belief. But the proconsul's heart was opened to receive this message through the miracle. It was a trigger for belief, a confirmation of the truthfulness of what was being said (see 14:3).**

**The miraculous, then, was important because it directed people to the truth.**

**Ministries that include the miraculous must ensure that there is also faithful proclamation of the gospel so that people respond to it rather than to miracles.**

**Earnest prayer and missions.** The Antioch church demonstrated earnestness by their prayers and fasting. From the word Luke uses, we know that prayer is service we do for Christ. There are some who ask others to pray, claiming that their calling is to work. But in the Bible prayer is work (Col. 4:12-13).

The **Scottish evangelical preacher Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847)** has said, **"Prayer does not enable us to do a greater work for God. Prayer is a greater work for God."**

The history of missions is replete with great leaps forward that took place when people got together to pray. In the Haystack Meeting of 1806, some students from Williams College, Massachusetts, who had a concern for the spiritual welfare of their fellow students, met twice a week for prayer. Because they were ridiculed, they met outside the college in the countryside. One day five of them got caught in a storm and sought refuge under a haystack. While they waited there they prayed, and their special focus of prayer was the awakening of foreign missionary interest among students. Their leader, Samuel Mills, directed the discussion and praying to their own missionary obligation. He said that unless students dedicated their lives to foreign evangelism, the gospel would not be taken to places like Asia. He exhorted his friends with the words that later became like a watchword for them: "We can do this if we will."

After some discussion these five students offered their lives to foreign missions. This gave birth to the first student missionary society in America. The esteemed church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette has said, "It was from this haystack meeting that the foreign missionary movement of the churches of the United States had an initial main impulse." Someone has described what was set in motion as "a golden chain stretching from the haystack meeting to the greatest student uprising in all history." Urgent prayer arising from a desire for all that God wishes makes us receptive to him and inspires a great leap forward in the history of the church.

## Missions and costly release.

**The Spirit directed Barnabas and Saul to be set apart for reaching the lost. As we noted above, these were the top leaders of the church, and the young church in Antioch presumably had many needs. But when God calls, we must release even those we consider the most important and valued persons. That's how important missions is. One does not have to be brilliant (humanly speaking) to be a missionary. One has to be called, and God often calls "ordinary," unspectacular people to do special things for him (1 Cor. 1:26). But sometimes he sends the most talented.** When brilliant people respond to the missionary call, we may say, "What a waste! Their audience will be uneducated, backward people. Why should the most brilliant go to them?" But throughout history God has called some of the brightest people in their generation to the mission field—for example, Henry Martyn, Stephen Neill, Lesslie Newbigin, and Stanley Jones.

**Is this happening today too?** I can think of many sharp people, young and old, who are on the mission field today. But I also see a hindrance to this happening. **The church has been influenced by worldly standards of success, and going to the unreached is low on this status scale.** The pastor of a church of 2,500 people may be considered a powerful person. If that person was called to go to the lost, he may at first have only two people in his church—himself and his colleague. For this reason many opt for the big church instead of answering God's call to missions.

**Paul also encountered these wrong values in the church. Towards the end of his life he wrote that no one was with him in his trial because they all had deserted him (2 Tim. 4:16). Perhaps there was no status in associating with Paul. He himself often spoke of how he was, humanly speaking, abased. But today he is a hero and one of the most admired persons in the history of the world. Usually**

heroes are admired only from a distance, not when they are doing their great work. In their own time they were often regarded as fools or failures. Their heroism made them give up earthly glory, so that earthly people did not admire them.

**May we not be reluctant to challenge all—the brilliant and the ordinary—to consider missions. And when such are called, may we release them wholeheartedly for this work. May we place missions high up in our list of priorities.**

As David Livingstone said, "God had only one son and he was a missionary." May we encourage those with an interest in missions. And may those who feel called to missions share this vision with their churches so that they can be sent away for this task by a group that is committed to them and will pray for them.

## **Paul's approach to Elymas in an age of tolerance.**

**Ours is an age of tolerance, where pluralism mandates that since there is no absolute truth, different ideologies are equals in the universe of faiths. We cannot pronounce one wrong and the other right.**

This attitude is well expressed in the statement coming from the heir to the British throne about being "defender of the *faiths*" rather than "defender of the *faith*." (The king or queen of Britain is the titular head of the Church of England.)

Today sorcerers, like Elymas, have equal status with ministers of the gospel in many surroundings. Governments want to be fair to all the ideologies represented by their citizens. In countries (like ours) where Christians are a minority, we appreciate that.

**But let us remember that the church remains under the authority of a normative revelation. It therefore has a commitment "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). This task gains a high level of urgency when it views its mandate as being to "snatch others from the fire and save them" (Jude 23). If the gospel is indeed the only way to salvation, then our task becomes urgent—as urgent as it was to Paul when he said, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).**

*Influenced by the pluralistic mood, many view evangelism as a mere exchanging of views among people of different ideologies. Instead, we should view the gospel we preach as holding the key to eternal salvation.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS:

If a father sees a man trying to peddle heroin to his little son, he will not seek to enter a discussion with the man on the merits and demerits of heroin or politely request him to stop doing that. He will take urgent and decisive action.

If a mother sees her daughter about to accept an attractive piece of candy into which has been injected the deadly poison cyanide, she will not simply share her views on the subject. She will take urgent action.

If a hotel employee dis-covers a fire in a room, realizes that the fire alarm has not gone off, and knows that hundreds of occupants might be killed, she does not calmly go her way, not wanting to disturb the sleeping people. She will take urgent action.

If such drastic action is taken for temporal problems, how about a problem that has dire consequences for all eternity?

One who loves humanity will not calmly stand by when he or she sees the eternal salvation of a person for whom Christ died jeopardized through the deception of a false teacher.

## The place of miracles in conversion.

When non-Christians are confronted with the message of Christ, most will at first have moral and cultural blocks to even considering it seriously. It is a costly message for it involves renouncing one's past life and embracing Christ as Lord. Thus, unless there is some compelling evidence that will move their hearts, people will not regard it as worthy of consideration.

God often uses actions of Christians—such as deeds of kindness, miracles, and blameless lives—to incline the hearts of people favorably toward the gospel.

Once the heart is open, it is possible for the will to be oriented to accepting the gospel. People will be able to regard its teaching for what it is worth without their earlier prejudices and fears. They will realize it is something worth committing their lives to.

*Acts 13 emphasizes that both deeds and words are important elements in the evangelistic process. Though ultimately people put their trust in Christ based on the words they hear, deeds often act as a trigger to open them to considering the words.*