



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 38 What to Expect when You Embrace Your Call
By Pastor Jody May 06/18/2023

Acts 13:1-12 ESV

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

13 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. ² 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.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶ 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. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ 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? ¹¹ 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. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

[REVIEW/INTRODUCTION]

Last week we saw the Providential Hand of God deliver the life of Peter. We witnessed the **amazement** of the church, we saw the **anger** of Herod when he did not accept the acts of God’s Providence, and in the end witnessed the **affliction** of God as He poured out His wrath on Herod. All of this was to show the different types of responses one can have to the providential work of God. This leaves the



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church rolling like the *BAMA* tide! Peter is freed, James' executioners got payback, and Herod died a deserved death for trying to steal the glory of God. The church has endured persecution, and even in cases of extreme tribulation, as in the death of Stephen and James, the church has grown, look back at **Acts 12:24**:

²⁴ But the word of God increased and multiplied.

Barnabas and Saul, had been visiting Jerusalem to inform them of what was happening in Antioch, saw these events with their own eyes; how God's will cannot be stopped. It is with this story that they return back to the new Gentile base of operations for church expansion, Antioch.

²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

Now we will see the church at Antioch pick up on the cues from Jerusalem as to what their next steps should be. They have seen the willingness of the church fathers to proclaim Jesus and it got them in jail. They have learned that it's not all roses when you take the Gospel into the world. So, they are going to have to learn to manage what we call expectations. - **Wk. 38 What to Expect when You Embrace Your Call**

READ THE TEXT / PRAY

[OPENING ILLUSTRATION] Alright it is Father's Day and growing up that meant absolutely nothing in my home. **My dad always took Sunday off**, that's because my dad learned a trait that served him his whole life, and of which I wish I was better at, and that is **not to procrastinate**.

Procrastination is the act of putting off that which can be done later.

FATHER DAY SECRET - My dad learned the art of mastering that thing that gives us apprehension and robs us of completing tasks.





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He did that by learning the **art of Managing Expectations**. You see Procrastination happens because we have low Expectations, that is whatever we are doing we are not expecting a big/immediate rate of return for the energy put into a thing.

My dad taught me when I was young you get up at first light on a Saturday, you eat and then you get your yardwork done. Why? Because in the Miami heat it's always hot and humid and that never gets better for you once the sun is up. The expectation was you will spend 3-4 hours, sweating, you will get dirty, and then you can have the rest of the day to do what you want. My dad taught me how to look at a job, gage the length of time and difficulty, and then future cast to see the results in the end.

What we all want - By doing yard work I learned a skill set that enables to endure hard tasks for long length of times even when there is no immediate results. Yard work is hard, it is best done fast, BUT the results take time to achieve, therefore if you procrastinate you only enhance the feeling that it is pointless. Having a nice-looking yard is not the product of just grass cutting, it is the product of cutting the grass + watering + fertilizing + weeding + mower maintenance and that sum is multiplied Xs months. Then at the end of a few months you can look at the yard and enjoy the benefits of it.

**The expectation is that what I am doing today will always be hard, BUT
the results of the work I do is what I will enjoy tomorrow.**

DANGER! That's how you manage procrastination. If you only look at something you should be doing in light of a momentary and emotionally fulfilling return you only add to your apprehension and resentment. *Most things we should be doing will not give us immediate results.* But if we manage our expectations and remember to **visualize a future where we enjoy** what we are working for, it will begin to cure your procrastination.

Today I want to talk about one of the areas that Procrastination that stunts church growth and that is when we are **afraid or negligent to share the gospel**. As well the flip side of this, the more you embrace what God will show you today, the more you will tackle procrastination in all areas of your life. So, let's get back to our story.



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Before we even get to the main points this morning, I want you to see a few things.

- First, this church that was to go to the Gentiles were from all different nations. No culture or religion, like the Jews had, to unite them. They were **united through their conversion**, through the receiving of Grace, no prior knowledge of the God of the universe.
- Secondly, they were committed to praying and fasting together. Those two elements show their unique **dependency on God**. They were desperate to understand God’s will.
- Thirdly, they were **all in agreement**, that is they all decided that what they had to do was give up their best (Saul and Barnabas) in order to accomplish what God was asking them to do.

To make these decisions, to **develop right expectations**, here’s what they already know and why they have been praying:

Isaiah 52:10 ESV

¹⁰ The LORD has **bared his holy arm**
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall **see**
the salvation of our God.

^{1st} they understood **their God wanted to show to everyone that His holy arm (Jesus Christ) was Salvation for the world**. Here’s what else they knew:

Luke 24:47 ESV



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⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins **should be proclaimed** in his name to all **nations**, beginning from Jerusalem

2nd Jesus Himself wants **the need for repentance and the offer of forgiveness to be shared publically** by **word of mouth**, to glorify His Father. Now is there a time frame?

Luke 21:25-28 ESV

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your **redemption is drawing near.**”

3rd Jesus is coming back, it will be for judgment, and at that time the church will **fully be redeemed**. We don't know the exact time, but there is a cut-off, and when it happens that it, no one else on the proverbial ark! The result is you **CAN'T PROCRRASTINATE!**

What they are seeing is The Father desires to glorify the Son (Is. 52:10), the Son desires to glorify the Father (Lk 24:47), that the work will be hard, it will cause waves and not to expect immediate results, because that is based on an unrevealed time (Lk 21:25-28). Antioch now has the right information to develop their expectation, **SO** they stop the procrastination.

Let's answer this question for us before we go any further, why do we procrastinate when it comes to sharing the Gospel?

We think **we have to do the saving**, revealing the **core belief** that we are **inadequate!** But none of the verses I shared said **you are the savior**, they all said **JUST PROCLAIM**, the HS does the saving. Let me tell you this much, Jesus confessed Himself, in John 3 the Spirit does the work of opening the eyes, you can



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read Luke and watch Jesus' amazement at the people who don't believe what He teaches. The **expectation is to share not save my family**, so let's have the long view of this today.

So what we are going to do is look at what they learned so we have proper expectations so we too can:

Stop procrastinating about sharing the gospel.

Stop stunting the growth of the church.

Contribute to the return of Christ.

We are going to learn that by looking at three facts, to modify your expectations, about spreading/proclaiming the Gospel: Some will be open to God's Word, some will not, and out of those a few will embrace it.

1. Some will be open to God's Word.

⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

Just some things to notice **Saul always hits the synagogues first**. I believe seven times in Acts it records when Paul rolls into a town, he hits the Jewish hotspot first. Paul hits up those he knows how to talk too, he goes and offers the Gospel first to those that Jesus came to first, to honor his people, but Saul has realistic expectation of them receiving it, as is shown by Romans 11, but that doesn't mean he doesn't do it. It's hard work, there's no immediate gratification, but he is playing for the long game, he has the right expectations.

From there they run into a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. Luke states he's a false prophet. Theory is he's a court magus, or wise man. His name literally means son of Joshua or a fuller translation would be the Son of God's Salvation, that's definitely a false prophet. What's more he can't be a real prophet for Jews were to have nothing to do with magic:



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Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ESV

¹⁰There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer ¹¹or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, ¹²for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD.

This Bar-Jesus has nothing to do with God, but his presence has opened his master to being ready to hear about God.

Again, we see the providence of God at work. A Jewish magician, using God's name, to build himself a reputation has opened up this proconsul's (local Roman Ruler), Sergius Paulus, to the idea of one God above all. What he meant to lead him astray with, to take from him, God will use to bring him home.

That's how it is with Gospel proclamation. Some will be open to God's Word, and they can come from the worst walks of life, but they still can hear about God from some of the worst sources. God will and can, to work His providence, take the vilest of people with the worst intentions, and spread the Gospel. This models what Paul picked up on later in his career.

Philippians 1:15,18 ESV

¹⁵Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.

¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

The expectation for all of us should be that God has prepared people to hear His Word, God has even used bad teaching, bad people, and bad events to bring people into the knowledge of His Salvation. That is definitely not a reason to procrastinate because we understand the situation, God uses all situations to prepare those that He is calling.

The **call is to proclaim**, the command is to **call for repentance**, the instruction is to **exult His forgiveness**, because God has already been doing the leg work for those He will be calling. This world is full of false teachers, false prophets and



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false messiahs that have lead people astray. But it doesn't mean we don't share the gospel for these same lost sheep having been disappointed by the god of this world have also been prepared to receive the Salvation of a living God. God uses the false truths of this world, the false plans, the false ideologies, to prepare the hearts of His future children to receive the Truth of His Son.

The expectation we battle our procrastination with, is some will be opened to God's Word, and that's all the invite you should need, but there is more.

2. Some will not be opened to God's Word.

⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ 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?"

This is momentous, the man that at one time was zealous for his own righteousness Saul, is now a zealot for the righteousness of Christ - Paul, and he blasts this false prophet for opposing the will of God. God has unleashed his servant, and while the church receives his love, those that oppose the Gospel on purpose, get his wrath.

Luke is good to record that this false prophet is active in trying to lead the Proconsul away from the faith. What Paul is seeing is a demonically controlled man in league with hell working hard at trying to shut out the truth of Christ. Let this be a lesson to us all today, especially you men out there today, we are living in a day where there are those that are not just lost but are actively in league with the devil. What's the clue of that you might be wondering, anyone that wants to replace God with the worship of self and seeks to strategically lead people into confusion, lies, harm, and disillusionment by **influencing those in leadership**.

You see the call to proclaim the Gospel sometimes calls us to call out the powers of darkness, and to curse their work at misleading the lost. No that sounds harsh yes, but that is the expectation you should be developing for this world.



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Sometimes these challenges to doctrine can come from nice sincere people too, who have lost their way a little, and we are still called to confront them as well.

[ILLUSTRATION] This past week I saw Pastor Rick Warren, a long-time pastor and evangelist, be allowed to speak at the SBC convention. His message was to encourage the SBC to allow churches that ordain female pastors to remain in good standing with the SBC for the sake of unity and evangelism. Then I saw one of our old lions, Al Mohler President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, rise up and confront Rick Warren not just to argue why we can't do that but to point out we have always had the BFM2000 that states we shall not do that.¹ His argument was not to mince words about office and use of the word '*pastor*', his argument was to say Rick agreed to it, and he has neglected his commitments.

The point is I don't care about how many books you have written, how many campuses you have, nor how many people you have baptized. When you on purpose, snub your nose at those you have said you have agreed with, it is an issue of integrity, and the motive is to on purpose try to lead astray a whole body of people who had been working together fine before Rick Warren came along. That is not a call to unity that is a quest to break apart. Al Mohler did the right thing, and he did it like a gentleman.

Now is Rick Warren in league with the Devil? I doubt that. Has he fallen into the trap of pragmatism for the sake of church growth? Absolutely. And that philosophy might have been picked up by adhering to his pride a little too much. I can tell you I heard that in his confession of his individual achievements two years ago in Nashville. He has some glaring blind spots from pride.

The expectation is to remember that all will not accept the Word of God, BUT we must still proclaim, and keep the gloves on, like Paul the Spirit will tell you when to take them off.

¹¹ 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.

¹ <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>



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The punishment is this man sought to lead others into a spiritual darkness and now his punishment would be to live in physical darkness. He would have to rely on the kindness of those that he sought to use for his own gain. Pray for your enemies people (Mat. 5:44), for God’s justice is terrible but fair. It is something though that we need to expect, that everyone doesn’t want the Word proclaimed rightly and some would rather destroy it altogether and this is where we need to keep proclaiming for the promise of God will be fulfilled.

3. Some will embrace God’s Word.

¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

We keep preaching, because when the world witnesses the silencing of the false prophets, when the world witnesses the justice of God, people’s ears are open to receive the Gospel. The actions alone are not what saves people, no they need to hear about the good news of Jesus, and this is where we work with the Providence of God.

The LBCF 1689 Chp. 20.4 The Gospel and the Extent of Its’ Grace²

The gospel is the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and it is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. Yet to be born again, brought to life or regenerated, those who are dead in trespasses also must have an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit in every part of their souls to produce in them a new spiritual life.⁸ Without this no other means will bring about their conversion to God.⁹

⁸ Psalms 110:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:19, 20. ⁹ John 6:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6.

1 Cor. 2:14 ESV

² <https://founders.org/library/chapter-20-the-gospel-and-the-extent-of-its-grace/>



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The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

But how does God get them to believe?

Romans 10:17 ESV

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Expectation, it is hard, some will welcome you and some won't, but the call is always the same to **PROCLAIM!**

[CHALLENGE]

1. Expect Spiritual Warfare when you proclaim the Gospel.

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

2. Expect that you will have to be bold to be heard.

Acts 4:29

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

3. Expect the power of the Word to be victorious in all situations.

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 ESV

¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life



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[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has given us the glorious work of proclaiming the eternal value of His strong right arm, His only Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that has gave us the command to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sin in His name.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that gives you the words, and the right expectations, that not all will accept but all should hear about His glory.