



**January 5, 2020**

**Acts 1:8; Acts 13:1-3; Philippians 4:14-19**

## **SCRIPTURE**

Acts 1:8

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 13:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Philippians 4:14-19

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

## COMMENTARY

Acts 1:8

**1:8** The major focus of the Book of Acts is stated in this verse. Jesus said believers would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, empowering them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem first and then spreading to the ends of the earth. Note three things about how this unfolds.

First, the empowering presence is to be the Holy Spirit, not Jesus Himself. Jesus prepared His disciples for the transition when the Holy Spirit would come to be a constant presence in His bodily absence.

Second, the growth of the church would come about through the witness of the disciples. From the beginning, the church is depicted as a community that actively witnesses to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Third, the result of this witness will be measurable, geographical growth. This growth will begin in Jerusalem and then spread through ever-widening concentric circles to other Jewish areas (e.g., Judea), to areas on the edges of Judaism (e.g., Samaria), and eventually to “the ends of the earth,” which may refer to the known world of that time, likely coextensive with the reach of the Roman Empire. As new lands and peoples were discovered in coming centuries, the church understood that it must keep expanding its witness to reach the newfound “ends of the earth.”

Acts 13:1-3

**13:1** Prophets and teachers apparently refer to functions and (possibly) offices within the early church. The teachers continued the apostolic function of transmitting Jesus’ message, while prophets conveyed divine revelation via interpreting the OT or giving new insights (11:27). This is the only reference in Acts to teachers, although the function of teacher is described elsewhere in the NT (1Co 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; 1Tim 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; 2Tim 1:11; 2:24). The group of prophets and teachers was diverse, including people from Africa and Cyrene, and at least one person (Manaen) who was connected to Herod’s household.

**13:2-3** The routine of the prophets and teachers included ministering to the Lord and fasting. This helps to account for their openness to the Holy Spirit, who directed them to set aside Barnabas and Saul for a work to which the Spirit had called them. Barnabas and Saul were confirmed in their calling after a process of fasting, praying, and laying on of hands. This commissioning marks an important turning point in the history of the church, as Saul and Barnabas were selected to extend the gospel message beyond Judea and surrounding regions.

Philippians 4:14-19

**4:14** Sharing is the word for “fellowship” (1:5). Hardship is “tribulations.” Real partners share difficulties.

**4:15** The early days of the gospel refers to Paul's leaving Philippi to continue witnessing in Europe. Shared is, again, "fellowship" (v. 14; 1:5). Others had a one-way relationship, receiving but not giving. You alone reveals one reason why Paul loved the Philippian church. They did what others did not.

**4:16** Paul entered Thessalonica after leaving Philippi, and the Philippian believers' gifts to him began immediately and continued consistently ( several times).

**4:17** With contentment (v. 11) and adaptability (v. 12), Paul did not seek the gift. That would abuse his converts and compromise servanthood. With a higher, spiritual motivation, Paul sought the profit that is increasing to your account. Using financial terms, Paul declared this "profit" accrued from an action. "Increasing" is the interest it would bear to the account of the Philippian believers. Giving, a physical and material act, is a spiritual transaction.

**4:18** Continuing financial language, Paul had received everything in full. Any responsibility to him was paid. What Epaphroditus embodied was an abundance. Their material support was a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice because it met Paul's needs and was pleasing to God (cp. Rm 12:1-2). Giving always benefits those who give more than those who receive.

## **MAIN POINT**

God has a place for you in His plan for your community and the world.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What is the purpose of our church?**

**What responsibility, if any, do we have to the community in which we live?**

**Knowing that Christ loves the church, to what, then, can you attribute as primary reasons why churches become ineffective and decline?**

**When you think of the Great Commission and Christ's command to evangelize the lost, do you think first of your community or faraway places in the world? Why?**

In Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 we read Jesus' charge to His church before He ascended to heaven. The task He left us with, known as the Great Commission, is to spread the gospel around the world and grow the church by making disciples.

Dr. Thom Rainer writes, "The reality is that church decline is the collective result of individuals who have decided they will not 'go.' The church thus becomes a religious

country club instead of an obedient Great Commission congregation.” Jesus established and commissioned His followers to take His message to the rest of the world.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

- Ask a volunteer to read Acts 1:8.

**What command did Jesus give His disciples in Acts 1:8?**

**What did Jesus promise them?**

**What does this verse teach you about God’s mission?**

**How would you explain the task Jesus gave to His followers?**

The God who loves the individual is also the God who loves the world. God sent the Holy Spirit to work through us to continue the work of bringing His children home. Rather than occupying one human body—as Jesus did—the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. In this way, God multiplied His efforts to spread the message of how He sent His Son to bring people to Himself.

The Greek word for power is *dunamis*, from which we get our English words *dynamo*, *dynamite*, and *dynamic*. The Spirit fills believers with the “dynamite” of God. He empowers His church to do amazing things. By the power of the Holy Spirit, a tiny handful of believers turned the world upside down as the “gospel earthquake” rumbled from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

**How do we know when the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives?**

“Jerusalem...Judea and Samaria, and...the ends of the earth.” Jesus laid out a deliberate plan of expansion that begins at home and moves outward geographically to include all people. The same Spirit who descended on believers at Pentecost and turned the world upside down for Jesus is alive today in every person who has placed faith in Jesus Christ. He is sending you and me out on a mission. He is commissioning us to go, to be His messengers locally, nationally, and globally.

**What specific means (abilities, opportunities, or relationships) has God given you to carry out the task of being His witness?**

God empowers us to be His witnesses, and as we’ll see in the next passage, He often calls us to go as His witnesses.

- Ask a volunteer to read Acts 13:1-3.

## **Why did the Holy Spirit tell the leaders to “set apart” Barnabas and Saul?**

When we come to Acts 13, the church at Antioch was worshiping the Lord and fasting. Many scholars believe this time of worship, prayer, and fasting was done with a specific goal in mind. The church was developing a heart for evangelism and missions, but how were they to proceed? Instead of just doing what they thought best, they stopped. They prayed and fasted. They fixed their hearts completely on the Lord.

Their hearts were fixed on the Lord, which already had propelled them to advance the gospel (Acts 11:20-21). God responded by giving them specific directions on how they were to carry out a challenging mission for Him. The church at Antioch had gotten serious before God, and they were about to get serious about the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

## **Why should churches pray over and lay hands on missionaries and other ministers?**

### **How can our church best serve missions?**

### **What can we do to intentionally seek God’s guidance?**

God not only calls us to go, but He also calls us to support others as they go.

- Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 4:14-19.

### **What are some keys to giving in a way that pleases God?**

In recounting how the Philippians had helped him, Paul connected financial giving to three things: partnership in the gospel (vv. 15-16), fruitfulness (v. 17), and worship (v. 18).

### **How does giving financially make us partners in ministry, not just contributors?**

Paul had some hard days in Macedonia. He suffered physically in Philippi (Acts 16:16-24). In Thessalonica, the spreading of the gospel met opposition and ultimately led to his departure (17:1-10). No wonder he was so grateful for a church that stood by him during these times. Although it was from a distance, Paul felt the Philippians’ support. If it wasn’t for the generosity of the church in Philippi, he could have been discouraged. Christians should be known as people of generosity, especially when it comes to the spreading of the gospel. We should be known as people who are an encouragement and blessing to others.

### **When has someone’s generosity overwhelmed you?**

We are blessed to be a blessing in return. God has not only given to us so that we may be provided for, but He also wants us to have the opportunity to be a means of provision for others. We should all live as missionaries on this earth with a desire to spread the message of Christ, understanding that all we have is for His glory and the advancement of His gospel.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**What do you need to surrender to the Lord, so that His Holy Spirit is not hindered in working through you?**

**How does God want to use you in missions in your community?**

**How does God want to use you in His mission to the world?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for not leaving us alone, but for giving us His Holy Spirit. Pray for ears to hear the specific way God is calling us to be on mission for Him, and pray for willing hearts to go and serve.