

“Penetrating Areas of Darkness” 8/11-12/07 6 p.m., 9 & 10:45 a.m.
Acts 13:4-12

INTRODUCTION

Yesterday’s Modesto Bee had a great feature on the upcoming Harvest Crusade with Greg Laurie. One quote illustrated what we’re going to see in the book of Acts this morning:

“But the thing that really raises Laurie’s ire is ‘seeing kids get ripped off generation after generation, thinking they’re the first ones to discover sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. I’ve seen where that road leads, from Marilyn Monroe to Anna Nicole Smith. You see girls going down the wrong road, and it makes me mad. Guys, too. I want to turn on a light and offer a different direction.”

Who do you know who needs a different direction?

Will you help to turn on the light so they can see Jesus?

OPEN to Acts 13 (**PAGE** 1714)

READ Acts 13:1-12

To penetrate areas of darkness:

I. Take the Light of Jesus to Dark Places (Acts 13:4-6a)

In v. 5 we see Barnabas and Saul go to the synagogues.

And as we move through Acts, we’ll see that this is their strategy when they come to a new town.

They begin in the synagogues, because the Jews believe in the OT Scriptures and God’s promise of a Messiah. So, using the OT Scriptures, they explain how Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

They explain that Jesus had to die for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that He was buried in a rich man’s tomb, according to the Scriptures, and that He rose from death three days later, according to the Scriptures.

The synagogue was a dark place spiritually simply because the light of the message about Jesus had not yet been given to them.

So, Barnabas and Saul go to the various synagogues in this large town of Salamis, telling the Jews about the fulfillment of God's Word, the Messiah has come and the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth.

It's interesting that there is no specific mention of how the people in Salamis responded.

Did they receive the light Barnabas and Saul brought to their dark lives? Reject it?

Did they oppose them?

As we move through Acts we'll see that how people responded to the message is almost always recorded ... 99% of the time!!

Maybe what God is emphasizing is that Barnabas and Saul did what God had called them to do ... they took the light of Jesus to people ... that was their responsibility

And what God calls us to do is exactly the same ... shine the light of Jesus ...

- regardless of how the listeners respond ...
- regardless of our fears ...
- regardless of our concerns about what they may think, say, or do ...
- despite our worries about "getting it right" ...

The part of the process of people believing in Jesus that has been entrusted to us, assigned to us, is shining the light ... simply shining the light:

- sharing what Jesus has done for us
- sharing what Jesus means to us
- inviting someone to join us so they can hear
- trying to answer questions they may have

If you were out camping and got caught in the dark, and you're walking through an unknown area, trying not to trip, trying to find a path, keeping your hand out in front so that you don't walk into a tree or a low-hanging branch ... and then you hear someone coming up behind you, turn and see they have a flashlight, and they're heading your direction ... isn't it a relief? Yes!

That's what we're to do ... take the light of the message of Jesus and shine it so people can see the way.

To penetrate areas of darkness:

I. Take the Light of Jesus to Dark Places

To penetrate areas of darkness:

II. Be Prepared to Battle Spiritual Darkness (Acts 13:6b-11)

The focus of Barnabas and Saul's time in Cyprus is what happened on the other end of the island in the City of **Paphos**:

Back in **Salamis**, the kind of spiritual darkness they faced was lack of knowledge ... the people just hadn't been exposed ... they were unaware.

Now, in **Paphos**, they will face a different kind of darkness, the darkness that comes from the devil and those he controls ... satanic darkness.

Starting in v. 6, we see a man named Elymas Bar-Jesus, Elymas the son of Jesus (Joshua; a very common Jewish name)

v. 6b-7: **Elymas** is a **Jewish false prophet**: saying that he speaks for God and he doesn't. **Elymas** is also a **sorcerer**: someone who is in league with the devil to deceive people through miraculous acts. It is the devil's power at work through him.

And he is the **attendant of the proconsul** (governor), **Sergius Paulus**.

Elymas likely has this position because of his claim to be able to speak for God and tell the future,

and because he works various kinds of signs and wonders, acts of sorcery / witchcraft, which give the impression that his words were also powerful and accurate.

v. 8: We see that Elymas' main work in this passage is to prevent **the proconsul, Sergius Paulus**, from believing the Gospel. (v. 8a: The Arabic word for "sorcerer" sounds like "Elymas.")

This reminds us of Ephesians 6:12 **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”**

So, we have Barnabas and Saul presenting the light of the truth, and Elymas opposing them, wanting darkness to continue to reign, especially in the life of the governor.

v. 9-11: Now the story gets even more interesting:

READ v. 9-11

Paul confronts Elymas with the truth of who he is. Elymas is not a prophet for God, nor is his power the greatest power.

Paul shines the light of the truth of God upon the dark lies of the devil.

God also leads him in an act of His power that will completely overpower Elymas: he blinds him for a period of time:

The servant of darkness with the message of darkness and the power of darkness, is blinded ... *put into physical darkness*.

The light of the message of God and the light of the power of God is put clearly on display.

This was especially important for **Sergius Paulus** and the others who were there to see the power of God overpowering the power of darkness.

It is clear that both the message about **Jesus** and the power of **Jesus** are superior.

Let's pause here for a moment and ask the question, *“How does this apply to us?”*

How can we be prepared to battle spiritual darkness?

A. Walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (v. 9)

When Paul spoke, he was full of the Holy Spirit. That is, he had surrendered his life ... words, actions, attitudes, everything ... to the Lord. So, the Holy Spirit was free to fill his mind, emotions, spirit.

Eph. 5:18: “**be filled with the Spirit.**”

It’s an act of surrender to how God has called us to live.

B. Grow in your knowledge of God’s Word (v. 10)

Without having a good grasp of God’s Word, you will likely begin to believe lies because there is not enough light in your heart and mind to expose them as lies!

Sometimes lies seem rational, they seem to make sense:

Business: some consultants or seminars designed to get in touch with your “inner guide” or a “spirit guide.”

This actively opposes God and His Word.

Why? Because there are only two sources of spiritual guidance: Divine and demonic.

And, there may be very intelligent people who are responsible for this and participate in this ... just as **Sergius Paulus** was “**a very intelligent man,**” but had not yet been exposed to the light of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION

One man told me recently of a training exercise given at his former place of employment.

All the employees were required to go through the training. Throughout the day the consultant moved through a progressive process:

- Become one with your spirit,
- focus in on your inner spirit
- become one with yourself and your surroundings,
- releasing your energy,
- transferring your energy to others, and asking if the participants were feeling the other person’s spirit or inner self,
- copying other people’s energy

False spirituality / replacing God’s truth with new age spirituality.

Schools: there have been times in the past, and may still be going on in some places, when children are taken through an exercise to invite a spirit friend to come in them, guide them and be their friend.

If you are growing in your knowledge of God's Word, and you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will be sensitive to when the lies of darkness cross your path.

Spend time with God in His Word on a daily basis! Be in worship services weekly!

Get in a small group where there is discussion about the Bible and figuring out how to apply it to your life!

B. Grow in your knowledge of God's Word (v. 10)

C. Exercise the spiritual authority you have in Christ (v. 11)

1. Confronting evil spirits. You may never experience this. But, it is important that you know the authority that is yours in Christ, so that you do not live in fear of the devil.

2. Sharing how you came to know Christ. Your "testimony." The Bible says one of the ways we overcome the devil is by **the word of our testimony.** (Revelation 12:11)

When you share your testimony, you are shining God's light into a spiritually dark place.

D. Put on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff)

Ephesians 6:13 **"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground ..."**

v. 14-18: - belt of **truth,**

- breastplate of **righteousness,**
- **readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace,
- shield of **faith,**

- helmet of **salvation**,
- **sword of the Spirit, (Word of God)**,
- **prayer.**

“Put on:” 1) pray it on 2) walk in it

Put on Jesus Christ

Walking in this way places us in a position to be effective witnesses wherever we may be.

To penetrate areas of darkness:

III. Trust God to Open People’s Hearts and Minds to Christ (Acts 13:12)

READ Acts 13:12 **“When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.”**

Our responsibility is to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, take the message about Jesus to people, and be prepared to battle spiritual darkness.

God has said that He will draw people to Christ, the Holy Spirit will convict of sin and open spiritual eyes so that people can believe.

CONCLUSION

Have you opened your life to the light of Jesus? Have you asked Him to forgive you for going your own way instead of His? He will forgive you when you ask and entrust your life to Him.

Will you choose to walk in the light, full of the Spirit, so the light of Jesus will shine through you?

“Father in Heaven, thank You for sending Jesus to be the light of our lives. Please shine through me and use me to dispel the darkness in people’s lives. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”