

## **MISSIONS IN ACTION**

### **Acts 13-21**

In the last chapter we looked at missions in the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts. There we saw *Missions Abandoned* as the church at Jerusalem majored on miracles, money, and multitudes. They spent all their time, energy, and money on the church at Jerusalem with no concern for the rest of the world.

In chapters Acts 13-21 we see *Missions Accomplished* as the church at Antioch sends out Barnabas and Saul as the first church-sent missionaries.

#### **I. THE PERSONEL FOR MISSIONS**

##### **Acts 13:1-4**

*13 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

*3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

*4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

##### **A. God calls them**

In these four verses we find how missionaries are to be selected. God does not leave it up to committees, colleges, conventions, or clearing houses to choose His missionaries.

Here in verse 2 we find that a Missionary is to be:

1-called by the Holy Ghost. This is a MUST for every Missionary.

2-Holy Ghost calls them *out of the Church*. God does not reach outside the church to select missionaries. A man that is not actively involved in the church here would have a hard time building churches in another country.

3- He calls them *to a country or culture of people*.

Even though it is not mentioned in this text, it is very clear in Acts 26:16-18 that God called Paul to the Gentiles.

##### **B. The Church sends them**

Not only do we find in this text that God through the Holy Ghost calls them out of a church, to a country; but we also see that the church commissions them or ordains them.

1. *Sent out by the local church.*

2. *Supported by the local churches.*

I am not saying that the missionary cannot receive some support from some of his family members or close personal friends, but God lays the responsibility of their support on the local churches.

Paul did not raise support before he started his missionary journeys as missionaries do today, but the scripture does teach the churches helped him along on his journey.

He mentions in Philippians 4:16 that the church at Philippi sent him financial support again and again.

One of the things the Missionary must learn to do is to look to God for his support, and not just the Pastor and the church. God will supply through the churches, but if the missionary starts looking to the Pastors instead of God, he will become discouraged and \_\_\_\_\_.

Look to God and expect him to provide your support through the local church.

3. *Submitted to the authority of the local church.* The missionary must always remember that the only authority he has is that authority that is invested in him by his local church.

## **II. THE PROGRAM OF THE MISSIONARY**

I am convinced the greatest guidelines for the work of a Missionary are outlined in **Acts 14:21-28**

There are ten simple, but very important principles given in these verses.

These reveal to us the total concept of the life and work of the Missionary.

### **A. PREACHING** (Acts 14:21), ***“And when they had preached the gospel to that city”***

This is the first and foremost job of the Missionary. He is to Preach. I would not want to send a Missionary to the field that has not proven his preaching ability here at home.

### **2. TEACHING** (Acts 14:21) ***“And had taught many”***

The second job of the Missionary is teaching. While this is very closely related to preaching, there is a difference.

What is the difference between teaching and preaching?

Teaching enlarges the \_\_\_\_\_, but preaching lays a demand on the \_\_\_\_\_. All good preaching will contain an element of teaching and all good teaching will contain a small element of preaching.

What does teaching bring? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Preaching brings \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**C. CONFIRMING** (Acts 14:22) ***“Confirming the souls of the disciples.”***

This is not a religious ritual as is practiced by some religions today. Catholics have confirmation. The steps are:

1. You stand or kneel before the bishop.
2. Your sponsor lays one hand on your shoulder and speaks your confirmation name.
3. The bishop anoints you by using oil of Chrism (a consecrated oil) to make the Sign of the Cross on your forehead while saying your Confirmation name and “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
4. You respond, “Amen.”
5. The bishop then says, “Peace be with you.”
6. You respond, “And with your spirit” or “And also with you.”

And you are now an adult in the eyes of the Church.

What is the problem with that and what we believe?

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Strong’s Concordance says the word “CONFIRMING” means: 1) *to establish besides, “strengthen more,* 2) *to render more firm, confirm.* The disciples were strengthening the faith of the young Christians by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

**D. EXHORTING** (Acts 14:22) ***“And exhorting them to continue in the faith...”***

Strong’s Concordance says this word “exhorting” means along with other things: *to call to one’s side, to address, speak to, to admonish, to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort, to encourage, to instruct, to teach.*

This is a definite ministry that the missionary must fulfill before the new church is ready to be left as an indigenous or self-supporting church.

**E. ORDAINING ELDERS** (Acts 14:23) ***“And when they had ordained them elders in every church.”***

“Elders” are spiritual leaders in the church set up to lead the people and minister to their needs.

Ordaining is an important part of the work of the Missionary. The thought that God would save some young man and call him to preach should be in the heart of the Missionary from the very beginning of the mission work. **It is not the missionary’s job to call men to preach.** His responsibility is to pray, preach, and prepare the hearts of his people with a burden for the work.

**F. PRAYING AND FASTING** (Acts 14:23), ***“And had prayed with fasting.”***

After the Missionary has ordained the elders, he must spend time in prayer and fasting with the newly ordained preachers. This will do much to establish the new preachers in the grace of God and in the work of God.

We see the importance of prayer but often overlook the value of fasting.

**Note:**

There is a lot of misunderstanding today about fasting. Some people think it is related to dieting and the body. Others think its purpose is to impress God with the intensity of their desire. Others hope their self-denial will speed up the Lord’s answer. None of these are true.

What is the real value of fasting?

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**G. COMMENDING THEM** (Acts 14:23) ***“They commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”*** **The job of the Missionary basically is to work himself out of a job.** He goes to a place and begins the work as has been described in this section. After a while, his ultimate goal is to see God establish a self-sufficient, self-supporting church.

**H. Returning**

**Acts 14:24-26**

*24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.*

25 *And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:*  
26 *And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.*

Vs 24-26, When these missionaries have finished their journeys, they returned home to their sending church. A missionary needs to stay in close contact with the home church, and all supporting churches by sending prayer letter updates---at least every three months.

### **I. REPORTING** (Acts 14:27)

*“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”*

We still practice this today. When the Missionary returns from the field he visits his sending and supporting churches and reports to them what God has done.

What is one of the main tragedies of denominational missions?

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### **J. RESTING** (Acts 14:28) *“And there they abode long time with the disciples.”*

This is where we get the idea of missionaries taking a furlough. It is a time of reunion, reporting, and resting from the strenuous work on the mission field.

### **III. THE PROBLEMS OF THE MISSIONARY**, Acts 13-16

There are many problems that the missionary faces. Different fields have their own different problems. In these chapters of the book of Acts, we discuss four of the major problems that Missionaries face.

First, in Acts 13:6-12 we see they experienced

#### **A. Opposition by craft.**

The Devil does not like when the missionary invades his territory. He will fight every way he can.

#### **B. Opposition by conflict**

##### **Acts 13:13**

*13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.* Here John Mark for some unknown reason departs from the missionaries and returns home. We do

not know what the conflicts. It might have been \_\_\_\_\_ or it may have been \_\_\_\_\_.

We do know that when Paul and Barnabas started to take the second missionary journey Barnabas wanted to take John but Paul did not want him to go, Acts 15:37-40.

What was the conflict over planning their next missionary journey?

Verses 39-40

We must realize sometimes even good men disagree and must go their separate ways.

The third problem the missionaries faced was:

C. *Opposition by culture*, Acts 15. This is a hard obstacle for a lot of people to overcome. The Judiazers want the gentiles to be circumcised and brought under the Law of Moses.

Missionaries do not go to the field to change the culture, but if the culture is contrary to the Word of God, they must remain true to God's Word.

The fourth problem the missionaries experienced was:

**D. Opposition by covetousness**

**Acts 16:16-24**

The damsel was bringing financial gain to her masters by her soothsaying or trying to tell the future through some supposed supernatural means. When Paul cast the unclean spirit out of her, she stopped her soothsaying. When her masters realized they had lost their income, they had Paul and Silas thrown into prison. Before we leave this study, we must remind ourselves that even though missionaries do have problems, **God is greater than all the problems.**

No mission field is problem free.

#### **IV. THE PLACING OF THE MISSIONARY Acts 16:6-10**

*6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,*

*7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.*

*8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.*

*9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*

*10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*

### **1. The Holy Ghost closes some doors, Vs 6-7**

Notice in these verses, *the Holy Ghost closes some doors*. “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”

Here we have a classic example of the placing of the Missionary. After Paul and Barnabas separated from each other Paul immediately chose Silas as his partner and endeavors to go to Asia. While Paul was making plans to go to Asia the **Holy Ghost interrupted his plan and closed the door**.

Also note that Paul did not strive to go against the Holy Spirit's leading.

### **2. The Holy Ghost opens some doors, Vs 9-10**

After the Holy Spirit closed the doors to Asia and Bithynia, Paul went to bed and went to sleep. This is the best thing to do when you do not know what to do.

During the night the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul through a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for help. By morning Paul was fully persuaded that the Holy Ghost had opened the door for him to take the gospel to Europe.

A great motto in every aspect of the Lord's work is, “Where God guides, God provides.” If we open doors for ourselves, we will have to provide for ourselves. But, if we go into that door God opens, He will supply.

### **V. THE PURPOSE OF THE MISSIONARY, Acts 16-20**

There are many things today that are called missions. In the study of Acts chapters sixteen through twenty we see clearly the purpose of missions and the missionary is to start churches.

This is done in a very simple manner. The man of God, filled with the Spirit of God, goes to the place where God sends him and starts preaching the Word of God.

Churches must be born before they are formed. You can form an organization, but an organism must be born. Starting churches is clearly set forth as the primary purpose of Paul's mission work. Study the following examples of this in the Scriptures.

- A. In Acts 16, the Church at Philippi was started
- B. In Acts 17, the Church at Thessalonica was started
- C. In Acts 17:11, the Church at Berea was started
- D. In Acts 18, the Church at Corinth was started

E. In Acts 19-20, the Church at Ephesus was started

A good example of the Lord starting a church is found in I Thessalonians chapter one.

Here we see that *God calls a man, God confirms his message, and God collects the members*

*5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*

*6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*

There are some missionaries to prisons and other situations where churches cannot be organized. Such missionaries should work closely with the local Bible-believing churches and pastors.

They should try to get local pastors involved in discipling the new converts and channel the converts into the local churches when they are released from prison. There are also some mission works that are “helps ministries,” but I still contend **the primary objective of Biblical missions is starting churches.**