

## Series: Turning the World Upside Down #1

### The Charge of the Church

Acts 13: 1-5

As we begin this morning I would like to consider a challenging verse: [Acts 17:6 – And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, \*\*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.\*\*](#) As was often the case, Paul and those who traveled with him were once again facing intense persecution for preaching the Gospel and declaring Jesus as the Son of God. The difficulty Paul faced isn't what grabbed my attention, but rather the response of those who opposed him. These would stop at nothing to hinder Paul from preaching Jesus, but we find an interesting fact in this verse. Even though they despised Paul and his message, these were forced to admit they had "turned the world upside down." Adversity seemed present at every stop, but Paul and others were making an impact on the world. They were reaching people for Jesus.

I have read that passage in Acts 17 many times and it always challenges and inspires me. God was using the ministry of Paul in such a way that others were forced to notice. Not everyone received Christ as their Savior, but Paul influenced every society he encountered. I am convinced that is what the Lord desires of us as well. Times have changed, our challenges are different, but our obligation to impact others and reach the world for Christ has not.

As I pondered Acts 17:6 again, I wondered what made the difference in Paul's ministry. What was it that allowed him to make such an impact? Now I know that few have reached the spiritual level Paul did, but God is no respecter of persons. If He was willing to use them in such a way as to turn the world upside down, He is able to do the same through us. In order to understand the magnitude of their influence, we need to go to the beginning of this ministry. Over the next several weeks I want to consider the events that led up to this powerful declaration. I trust this study will challenge and equip us to turn the world upside down for Jesus.

So let's take a few moments to consider the [principles](#) revealed in our text as we think on: [The Charge of the Church](#). Our text reveals the starting point that led Paul to have such an impact. If we are to make an impact, we must follow the biblical examples left for us. Notice:

**I. The Assembly of the Church** (1) – [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.](#) This reveals several simple and yet significant principles in our quest to impact our world for Jesus relating to the church. Consider:

**A. The Location** – In our text Luke references [the church that was at Antioch](#). Now that may seem insignificant, but it reveals a great challenge to me. It was no accident the church was located in Antioch. God had sovereignly placed it there for a purpose. This was a local body of believers gathering together in a local community.

- This serves as a profound reminder of our presence as well. Fellowship is not here by accident. We are here for a purpose. God has placed us within this community to be a witness for Him and provide a place within our community for people to gather together in worship and exhortation through the preaching and teaching of the Word. We are here to impact others for Jesus. We have sister churches, but God has given us a specific work to perform.

**B. The Evaluation** – We also discover that [within the church at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers](#). Simply God had gifted certain individuals with particular gifts in order to carry out the ministry. He had equipped them to be successful in their endeavors. Surely Antioch was different from other churches, but she had what she needed to reach others. God had ensured that through the giving of gifts.

- Many times we hear excuses when it comes to the work of the Lord. If only we had the resources a sister church has. If only we had the talent they have. If only we were better equipped, we could accomplish more. We must look to God through eyes of faith, fully assured that He has equipped us to perform the work He has called us to. Our church is unique, and we have what we need to be successful in ministry if we will only use what God has given us by faith in Him. God has gifted this church to fulfill her mission.

**C. The Cooperation** (1) – [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](#). There are several listed in this single verse. Each had unique gifts, contributing to the ministry in their own way, but they were working together in an effort to accomplish their goals. Each was needful and necessary in the work.

- I know that is very simple, but I fear we lose sight of that truth many times. None of us are the same. We are all unique, possessing different gifts and abilities, but the labor we are engaged in requires a cooperative effort. Never feel as if you are unimportant or have nothing to contribute. If we are to fulfill the work we've been given, it will require a cooperative effort from each of us! [1 Cor.12:14 – For the body is not one member, but many. \[17-18\] If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? \[18\] But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.](#)

## **I. The Assembly of the Church** (1)

**II. The Activity of the Church** (2a) – 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. Here we discover some detail regarding the activity of the church. Notice:

**A. Their Diligence** – We find that they were **ministering** to the Lord. That simply means they were engaged in the work of ministry. They were busy for the Lord. They were not content to sit idly by waiting for others to come to them seeking to know of Jesus; they actively engaged their community with the Gospel. They had received their commission and they sought to fulfill it.

- Many local churches do not make much of an impact because they are not engaged in ministry. We will never fulfill the Great Commission, reaching others for Christ, and impacting lives if we are not willing to labor for the Lord. If we are to endeavor to turn the world upside down for Jesus, it will require some old fashioned work. We must be willing to roll up our sleeves and get busy. There is much to be done. This community may not know it, but they are depending on us. If we don't reach them who will? God blesses active churches. If we want to receive His blessing and help, we must ensure that we are busy in the work He has called us to!

**B. Their Devotion** – Not only were they busy ministering to the Lord, we also find that they **fasted**. They were completely surrendered to the Lord, committed to the cause. They were burdened for others. They had a genuine desire to see God move in their midst and bless their efforts. They spent time fasting before the Lord. The text doesn't say, but fasting typically goes hand in hand with prayer. They earnestly sought the Lord and their hearts were in tune with Him.

- I said a moment ago that God blesses active churches. That is usually true, but we must ensure that our activity is pleasing to Him. Being busy doesn't always translate into blessing. If we are to impact our world for Christ, we must seek the Lord. We must desire His touch on our lives and in our work more than anything else. This will require sacrifice, but it is essential. A half-hearted, unconcerned effort will not produce a desirable result. We need a burden for our church and the world around us. We need to come before the Lord in heartfelt prayer and commitment, staying before the throne of grace until we experience the presence and power of God.

**III. The Administration of the Church** (2-3) – 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. This is powerful. Consider:

**A. The Supervision of the Spirit** (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.* It is evident to see that the people were committed to following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were not concerned with pleasing men or “doing church” in a way that brought the approval of the world. The Spirit led and directed their work.

- This is one essential that we must comprehend and embrace. If we are to impact our community and even the world, we must be submissive to the leadership of the Spirit. We must be willing to follow as He leads. (The early church couldn’t argue that it had never been done that way. We shouldn’t either.) This will likely involve moving outside our comfort zone, but follow we must. It may involve stepping out in faith and into new areas of ministry, but we must be obedient to the direction of the Spirit. Each of us must be willing to allow Him unhindered access to our lives, completely surrendered to His leading.

**B. The Submission of the Saints** (2-3) – *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.* The Spirit revealed His will for the church and the saints of God responded to His leadership. They submitted to the will of God for their lives. There was no hesitation, just obedience.

- I would never discourage anyone from praying, but there are some things we don’t need to pray about. We don’t to pray about obeying the Word of God. We don’t need to pray about seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. There is nothing wrong in being sure that you have the mind of God in regard to ministry, but when you are assured of His leading, step out in faith without hesitation. Many churches have missed great opportunities due to hesitation. I want to be sensitive to the Spirit and obedient to His call.

**C. The Sending of the Servants** (3) – *And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.* Here you see the biblical model for missions. Missionaries ought to be commissioned of the local church, prayed over, and sent out unto their field. Antioch was burdened about the need for others to hear of Christ. They were actively involved in ministry, praying unto the Lord to be used of Him. God answered their prayer and led them to send missionaries to the field.

- There is a principle here that we need to see. We may not send one of our own to a foreign field, but we must be willing to send those from among us into the field of harvest. We will never impact our world as long as we are content to keep the Gospel within these four walls. Someone has to be willing to go where the lost and needy are, taking the Gospel to them!

## **I. The Assembly of the Church** (1)

## **II. The Activity of the Church** (2a)

## **III. The Administration of the Church** (2-3)

**IV. The Advancement of the Church** (4-5) – In our closing verses we see how the church advanced for the cause of Christ. The obedience of Antioch impacted others. Notice:

**A. The Preparation** (4) – *So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.* There is a key point we need to see in this verse. These were sent forth of the Holy Ghost. They had not simply chosen a new work on their own. They were led of the Spirit, sent forth by Him. As they began their journey, He guided their path. He opened doors of opportunity as they traveled. Paul and Barnabas were following the guidance of the Spirit and He prepared the way ahead of them.

- If we desire to impact our world for Christ, having sought Him in earnest prayer, and are following the direction of the Spirit, we need not worry about the opportunities or the results. If we are in the will of God, the Spirit will go ahead of us, preparing the way. As long as we follow His lead, we can be confident of fulfillment.

**B. The Proclamation** (5) – *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.* Here we find the purpose for their being sent out: to preach the Word of God. They were not sent out on an extended vacation. This was not a leisure trip. Barnabas and Paul were focused on the task at hand, sharing the Gospel with those who had not heard.

- That must be the focal point of all we do if we expect to impact our world for Christ. There are a lot of activities that benefit people in various ways, but the goal of the church is to reach the lost for Christ. We must actively seek ways to share our faith with those who have not heard. That is not to say that we can't minister in various ways, but whatever the avenue of ministry, the goal is to share the good news. The proclamation of the Gospel has the ability to turn the world upside down, but we will never experience that unless we are willing to proclaim it.

**Conclusion:** We have begun our journey to discover how God used Paul and others to turn the world upside down for Jesus. Fellowship, do you desire to impact our world for Christ? Do you have a burden for those who have not heard? Are you willing to follow the direction of the Spirit?

Maybe you are here today and you have never been saved. Maybe, for the first time, you have experienced the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If He has touched your heart and pointed you to Jesus, why not come and allow me to pray with you as you seek the Lord in salvation.