

### **Acts 13:1-5**

*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. 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.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.*

A 5-yr-old was saying grace at family dinner one night, and he said. “Dear God, thank you for these pancakes.” When he finished his prayer, his parents looked curiously at him and asked him why he thanked God for pancakes when they were having chicken. He smiled and said, “I thought I’d see if God was paying attention tonight.”

Throughout Scripture many different prayers can be found. From Moses to David to Daniel, to Jesus; we’re exposed to powerful, earth shaking prayers, and prayers that show us that God does hear us and He does listen. Here, in Acts 13, we have a unique situation. We have several leaders fasting and praying and worshipping God, and they have undoubtedly received God’s attention, but for what?

Let’s look closely at Acts 13:1-3. What did these men pray? It doesn’t tell us what they said. All we’re told is, in response to their prayer the Holy Spirit came and told them to set aside Barnabas & Paul and too set them out on an adventure, an adventure that would change the face of the world forever. We don’t know what they prayed, but they did receive God’s full attention, and the result was the Holy Spirit. I want to be able to pray like that don’t you?

Antioch was a relatively new congregation, but it had experienced enormous growth in a short amount of time. When the leaders at Jerusalem heard of this, they sent Barnabas and Saul, or Paul, to the church to teach these new converts about Christianity. For a whole year, Paul & Barnabas taught a great number of people, and they were very successful, why; because of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 11:26 the believers were called Christians for the first time at Antioch. Antioch was a growing church with powerful teachers & all kinds of potential. So, what could they be fasting and praying about?

A few years ago, when I was preaching at church, I had an uncomfortable feeling that something was wrong in the church. I just didn't know what it was. The church was very stable, attendance was higher than it had been in years, and was continuing to grow, many ministries were being conducted, and yet I felt something was missing.

I believe the leaders at Antioch felt uncomfortable about something. Granted they were a growing church. They had great leaders and showed great potential, but I think they were beginning to suspect there was something wrong.

I believe they believed they could accomplish much more, but they just didn't know what it was or how to do it. They were doing what they believed were all the right things, but something was missing.

That's how I feel here at Landrum. We serve the local community with food, and other means of support. We supply the school with supplies to begin their year. We are opened to the community as a whole, stepping in every chance we have. In addition, there have been all kinds of extra activities going on inside our church. A while back you began to focus on the facility and you took great measures from renovations to construction of a new Family Life Center, but just like the leaders at Antioch I'm beginning to think that there might be something more.

It's not so much what we do or how much we do; I believe it's more about why we do what we do. It's about our workman-ship. That's right our workman-ship. It important to do the things we do, but why we go about doing them is even more important.

If we see something, which needs to be dealt with, and lay out our plan of action and then do it; it may turn out good, but do or did we use the proper tools when we went to work?

I believe part of the reason we're not told what Antioch's leaders prayed in their prayer is because they had no idea what God had in mind. Remember this; the power of prayer is in the one who hears it not the one who prays it. They just knew there was something else they weren't doing yet, something else that God wanted them to do, but when these leaders prayed and fasted, when they opened themselves up completely to being used and directed by God anyway He desired, God responded in a big way. God sent them the Holy Spirit. Did you realize that when they allowed God's Spirit to lead & direct them:

- The world literally was turned upside down
- Antioch became the starting point for world wide revival
- Nearly a dozen new congregations were established in Asia alone
- Paul began a ministry of writing which resulted in the composition of over 1/2 of our New Testament

All of this, because these few people humbled themselves, humbled themselves before God, to seek His will, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Do we seek the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit ever even considered when we do something? If we are not seeking and following the leading of the Holy Spirit there is no way our workman-ship is the best it can be. Not seeking the Holy Spirit in our lives is like going to work without all our tools. All of us have a stake in seeing this church and all churches that are seeking to faithfully carry on the work of Christ. This is why we need to commit our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service to the Holy Spirit. We should be continuing what Christ initiated and the Holy Spirit confirmed, but we cannot continue to exclude the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A man named Carl Bates once wrote: “There came a time in my life when I earnestly prayed: “God, I want your power!” Time wore on and the power did not come. One day the burden was more than I could bear. I asked “God, why haven’t you answered my prayer?” God seemed to whisper back this simple reply: “With plans no bigger than yours, you don’t need my power.” So, I want for us to pray the prayer of Antioch. I want us to pray prayers that receive God’s attention &

leads us to even greater accomplishments than we can ever envision ourselves. So, I've committed myself to spending this week to fasting and praying for this church and its mission, and I'm going to challenge you to pray throughout this week for the same thing. If you feel led by God to fast at least some time during this week, one meal/ one day/ whatever, do so but do so only to humble yourself before God and seek the Holy Spirit.

Now realize something, if you fast, fasts were never really required by God in the Old Testament or the New, but when people fasted in a way which pleased Him, He paid attention. The type of fast God desires is one that humbles us in His presence. What God is seeking is for us to seek Him and His Spirit.

For too long we have been doing things and planning activities and then telling God in our prayers to bless what WE are doing and/or have done. It's time we seek the Holy Spirit in our lives and ask for direction and then take our place behind Him and follow His leading.

There is a story told of a strong, broad-shouldered young man that had just started working at a local construction site. He was obviously one of the strongest men there and he knew it, and he wanted to make sure everyone else knew it too. So, he began to brag that he could out lift anybody on the site. In his pride, he especially made fun of one of the older workmen. After a few minutes, the older worker had had enough. “Why don’t you put your money where your mouth is,” he said. “I will bet a week’s wages that I can haul something in a wheelbarrow-over to that building over there - which you won’t be able to wheel back.” The young man just laughed at the older man and said, “You’re on, old man, let’s see what you got.” The old man reached out and grabbed the wheelbarrow by the handles. Then, nodding to the young man, he said, “All right, get in.”

Ask yourself this question, “How much do I experience God’s power today for sharing the Good News with others and for living an overcoming life? Am I filled with His Spirit? How would my life change if I asked for more of God’s Spirit today? How would the life of the church change if I asked for more of God’s Spirit?”



A Sunday school teacher had taught her class to recite the Apostles Creed by giving each child one phrase to learn. At the Sunday school presentations the class was asked to give their recitation. They began beautifully. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” said Sarah. “I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,” chimed in Rachael. Everything went perfect one after the other and then everything stopped. Finally one little girl spoke up and said, “Uh, the little boy who believes in the Holy Spirit is absent today!”

Do we believe in the Holy Spirit today as a significant part of our individual lives? Are we more like the people of Antioch or do we believe we have all that is necessary to do God’s work? It’s prideful for us to think we know what and where God wants us to go as a church. So, the prayer I ask you to pray this week is a prayer asking God to hold the wheelbarrow for us to get in, and then for Him to wheel us where He wants us to go. Let’s pray and fast – requesting that God leads us to where He wants us to go.

Then and only then can we board the workman-ship. I pray, as a church, we will start praying and fasting and seeking the Holy Spirit to take charge of this church and take it further than it has ever been.

It's the Holy Spirit that makes us work the way we were meant too. When we use the Spirit we can do all things through and for Christ. We need to be filled with the Spirit. With out the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. With Him, we can turn this world upside down and shine God's light into a dark world. When we are filled with the Spirit, we can be Christ in our world. Is your life powered by the Holy Spirit so you can shine God's light in His world? Are you ready to board the workman-ship? Then let's seek the Holy Spirit together.