

HOW DOES GOD WORK?

Acts 13.1-12

Acts 1.8 serves as a thesis for the book and as a charge to all Christians. Jesus declares, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth”.

God works when the church rightly worships

Why does the Church exist? The Church exists to glorify God. Its very existence is a testament to the watching world that there is a body of Christ living unto God. The church is how the abstract is made concrete to the world. We see a principle of “togetherness” (Acts 13.1-2).

Non-Christians think that worshipping God makes life boring. If we do not worship God, we worship something lesser. These lesser things consume us and lead to real destruction. When we practice rightly ordered worship, all other things find their correct place and we find joy.

As the church worshipped corporately, God directed their steps. The Holy Spirit guides His church when the church practices rightly ordered worship (Acts 13.2).

God works to expand His Kingdom

There is a rhythm of people joining the membership of the local church, becoming established in the faith, and being sent-out on mission. In Acts, God has added many members to their fellowship. Barnabas saw the need for the church to be established (Acts 11.22b-26). We also see that their mindset is to reach new areas. The church “equips saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4.12)

The tendency in any church is to maintain the status quo and to preserve a level of comfort. In Acts, direct speech from God routinely encourages movement out into the world (Acts 5.20; 8:26; 9.15; 10.20; 13.2; 16.9; 18.10).

The young church, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, decides to send out their best leaders, Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13.3-4). The church makes sacrifices to see the Word spread.

This provides the template for the vision at Providence. We want to catechize every member with the aim of sending believers out to the mission field.

Saul (a Jewish name) begins to go by Paul, a Greco-Roman name, to best fit his ministry in Gentile contexts. He becomes like those he wants to reach for Christ.

God works through the sharing of His Word

Sergius Paulus represents those seeking truth. He is getting advice from an unhealthy source. There are more people in this category than we are led to believe.

Paul and Barnabas confront bad ideas (Acts 13.10). Paul and Barnabas realize that ideas have consequences and that truth should be proclaimed. We live in a time when we are told to allow everyone to peddle their own ideas. The problem is that some ideas are harmful and to allow them to go unchallenged is not loving our neighbor.

The Spirit of God moves Sergius Paulus and he believes the Word of God (Acts 13.12).

Key Point: God works through a worshipping, missional church.

Small Group Application Questions:

How is the church at Antioch a template for local churches today?

What is the relationship between establishing believers and sending them to the mission field - the marketplace, their neighborhoods, our communities, the nations?

Why does Paul confront Elymas so forcefully (Acts 13.9-10)?

How does this passage set our expectations for opposition to the Gospel?