

A PICTURE OF APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Acts 13:1 *“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers ...”*.

- Among these prophets and teachers were Barnabas and Saul/Paul. They were part of the leadership team in the church at Antioch.

v.2 *“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’.*

- The leadership team were ministering to the Lord and fasting, and the Holy Spirit spoke!

v.3-4a *“Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit ...”*.

- Barnabas and Saul/Paul were called and chosen by the Holy Spirit and sent out by the church at Antioch on an apostolic mission.

Acts 14:14 *“When the apostles Barnabas and Paul ...”*. Paul & Barnabas are now called apostles! Their ministries had changed from teacher [Paul] and prophet [Barnabas] to the ministry of apostle.

In Acts 14:21-27 Paul and Barnabas are continuing in their apostolic mission. As we look at these verses, we get a picture of apostolic mission functioning.

1) PREACHED THE GOSPEL

Acts 14:21 *“And when they had preached the gospel to that city ...”*

Jesus said, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt.24:14).*

Jesus had commanded the apostles in Mark 16:15 *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”*.

- The gospel is the gospel of the kingdom of God, and it is to be preached in all the world!

2) MADE DISCIPLES

Acts 14:21 *“...and made many disciples ...”*

Jesus spoke to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 saying *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”*.

A disciple is one who is being taught and who continues in the word. *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (Jn.8:31).*

- Those who believe the gospel that is preached, need to be baptised and be disciplined in the word. The apostles were obeying Jesus by making disciples in every place.

3) ITINERANT MINISTRY

Acts 14:21 *“they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch”*.

Paul and Barnabas had an itinerant ministry. They travelled to various places and then returned to those places to follow-up the brethren in every place.

“Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name” Romans 1:5.

The ministry is to all nations.

- The ministry of the apostles or apostolic ministers is to re-visit places where the gospel has been preached so that the church will be established on the right foundations.

4) STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES

Acts 14:22 *“strengthening the souls of the disciples”*.

The word ‘strengthen’ is translated ‘confirm’ in the King James Bible, and means ‘to make to lean upon, and thus to strengthen through support.’

It is the word of God that will strengthen the souls of the disciples: *“Now Judas and Silas, ..., exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words” Acts 15:32.*

- The brethren in every place are strengthened by the support they receive though the apostolic team as they return to encourage them in the word.

5) EXHORTING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH

Acts 14:22 *“exhorting [the disciples] to continue in the faith”.*

The word ‘exhorting’ means ‘to call near, invite or invoke’. It is used for every kind of calling to a person which is meant to produce a particular effect {Strong’s Concordance #3870}.

The apostles were calling for the disciples to continue in the faith. **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** Romans 10:17.

Jude also exhorts the brethren to contend for the faith: **“... exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”** Jude v.3.

- Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and disciples are called to continue in this word, and not to follow after **“various and strange doctrines”** (Heb.13:9).

6) WARNING THEM THAT THEY WILL NEED TO ENDURE IN TRIBULATION

Acts 14:22 *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”*

There is a warning. Tribulation is a doorway to entering the kingdom!

Jesus said, **“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”** John 16:33

Paul said of the Thessalonians **“we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your**

persecutions and tribulations that you endure” (2Thess.1:4).

- The apostolic message is to warn and to encourage the brethren to endure in tribulation, knowing that **“he who endures to the end shall be saved”** (Mark 13:13).

7) APPOINTING ELDERS

Acts 14:23 *“So when they had appointed elders in every church”*

The work of the apostle is to appoint elders to look after the local work.

Paul, speaking to Titus in **Titus 1:5** says, **“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”**.

Paul instructs the elders in Ephesus to **take heed to all the flock** and to **“shepherd the church of God”** (Acts 20:28).

- The elders are the pastors, who are set in place by the apostles to oversee the local churches.

8) PRAYING AND FASTING

Acts 14:23 *“and prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed”*.

In **Acts 13:2-3** we see that the choosing of Paul and Barnabas to be sent out as apostles was in the context of prayer and fasting. **“Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away”** v.3

- Prayer together with fasting is a way of receiving the Lord’s guidance and

direction in apostolic ministry. The appointing of elders was in the context of prayer and fasting.

9) MINISTRY IS A WORK OF GRACE

Acts 14:26 *“They had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed”*

When Paul and Barnabas were sent out, they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they were to do.

Ephesians 4:7 says **“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift”**. The gifts given by Christ are gifts of grace.

- All ministry is a work of grace, and grace is released to those who receive the apostolic ministers.

10) RETURNING TO HOME BASE AND REPORTING BACK

Acts 14:27 *“Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done”*.

The apostles had been sent out from the apostolic base in Antioch. Now after an extensive trip they have returned to their home base and the whole church gathered to receive their report.

They were able to report how God **“had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”** (v.27).

- The ones sent were accountable to report back to those who had sent them.