

HOW A LOST MAN WAS SAVED
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ACTS 13:4-12 KJV

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

⁶ And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

⁷ Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

⁹ Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

¹⁰ And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

¹² Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

ACTS 13:4-12 NIV

⁴ The two of them [Barnabas and Saul], sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. ⁶ They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰ "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?" ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

This is the story of one of the first conversions during the first missionary journey taken by Barnabas, Saul and John Mark. As you will remember, the church, under the

divine leadership of the Holy Spirit, sent them forth to preach the gospel that Jesus had committed to them. Jesus had told them to go to Jew and Gentile and preach that gospel. The Spirit said, "The time is now!" So, in Jesus' name, they went! They sailed first to Cyprus, landing at the Eastern port of Salamis, and there preaching in the synagogue that Jesus was the Christ. We are not told if there was anyone converted there at Salamis. The first reported conversion would occur at Paphos, on the western end of the island. There the proconsul Sergius Paulus would hear the Gospel and believe. He was a lost man. In this story we see how a lost man can be a saved man.

The story starts with a meeting with Barjesus, or Elymas the socerer, but he is not the main character. He is simply a messenger of satan who tries to thwart people from believing in Jesus. The main character is Sergius Paulus. He is the lost man who heard the gospel and became a saved man. How did it happen?

It happened, first of all, BECAUSE SERGIUS PAULUS WAS AN INTELLIGENT MAN. The King James Translation calls him a 'prudent' man. The New International Version calls him an 'intelligent' man. The NIV is closer to the actual meaning which is "**A man of understanding.**" In the Greek the phrase is *andri sunetoi*. Sergius Paulus was an intelligent man, a man of understanding. We would perhaps even say that he was a wise man. A.T. Robertson writes, "All the more amazing that he should be a victim of Barjesus. He had given up idolatry at any rate and was eager to hear Barnabas and Saul."

There seem to be two factors at work in the life of this intelligent man, Sergius Paulus. First of all, he questioned the religions around him because they really did not satisfy his soul. The idolatry and the polytheism of the Roman world, along with its many religions were not enough for Sergius Paulus. He had no answer for the troubling questions that ran through his incisive mind: the problem of his own sinful nature; the problem of his deep-seated feelings of guilt; the problem of his profound loneliness; the problem of his cosmic grief; the problem of human mortality. The many gods could not give him answers, could not satisfy his mind, could not relieve his anxiety, could not satisfy his soul. A simple mind would shoo away these deep questions, and accept unreservedly the popular religion of the day, but not the mind of Sergius Paulus. However, he seems to have tried to find the answer in a Jewish socerer, a false prophet named Barjesus. But he obviously wasn't satisfied with the answers of Elymas, or Barjesus.

The second factor at work in the life of Sergius Paulus was his hearing about some men who were preaching about Jesus and saying that He alone was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He would not let this opportunity pass him by. He was intelligent in his willingness to grasp the opportunity, for sometimes it only occurs once, and then-- no more. The poet wrote:

*But once I pass this way
And then--no more.
But once--and then the Silent Door,*

*Swings on its hinges,--
Opens ... closes,--
And no more
I pass this way.
So while I may,
With all my might
I will essay
Sweet comfort and delight
To all I meet upon the Pilgrim way,
For no man travels twice
The Great Highway
That climbs from Darkness up to Light
From Night To Day*

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--John Oxenham.

The Bible tells us that the ‘fool hath said in his heart, there is no god.’ But the Bible tells us a good deal about wisdom also, and understanding.

Deu 34:9 KJV And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

2 Chr 1:10 KJV Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

1 Ki 4:29 KJV And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore

Psa 32:9 KJV Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

Psa 111:10 KJV The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Sergius Paulus was saved because he was an INTELLIGENT MAN WHO WANTED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. Acts 13:7 KJV Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

Doubtless someone had told Sergius Paulus about Barnabas, Saul and Mark, two older men and a young man who were all preaching the Word of God. That caused this lost man to ask about him, and further, to request that they speak the Word of God to them. This prudent, this intelligent man, wanted to hear the Word of God. He must have believed in a Creator. He must have believed in a Divine Being. And if these men were authentic, men of truth and integrity, he would hear them.

I believe he wanted to hear them to see if they were truly men of God, or just imposters. He wanted to hear something that would make him a wiser man. He wanted to grow as a man. He wanted to have new insight into the meaning of life. He wanted to know the truth. And he wanted to decide for himself if what they were saying was true.

But there was more than just hearing these preachers and seeing if they were men of truth, and men of God. Sergius Paulus had material possessions aplenty, had material things, had perishable items, and had found that these do not satisfy. Jesus quoting Deuteronomy had the best answer to Satan and to every lost man. ^{Luke 4:4 KJV} “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Somehow Sergius Paulus, like every one of us here today knows, knew that life without the Word of God is empty, meaningless, void, and valueless. He did not know what he needed but he knew that life wasn’t working well as it was. He must have reasoned that this ‘word of God’ could help him to live a fuller, richer, more healthy, more wholesome life than he was presently living. He wanted to hear the Word of God.

^{2 Sam 22:31 KJV} As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.

^{Psa 33:4 KJV} For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

^{Psa 33:5 KJV} He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

^{Psa 33:6 KJV} By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

^{Luke 5:1 KJV} And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

A lost man was saved BECAUSE HE WAS INTELLIGENT, and BECAUSE HE WANTED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. A LOST MAN WAS SAVED BECAUSE OF A PREACHER ALSO. I still think of that statement I recently heard: The only thing worse than being lost is being lost and no one looking for you. While Sergius Paulus was looking for someone with a Word from God, these missionaries were looking for anyone needing the Word of God. They were indeed happy to be invited to speak that word to this proconsul, Sergius Paulus. But there was a problem: His name was Barjesus, or, Elymas the sorcerer. The name Barjesus is fitting indeed, for he was trying to bar Jesus from coming into the heart of Sergius Paulus. He was trying to bar Jesus from being preached by the missionaries. He was trying to bar Jesus from getting any influence in the life of an influential man. And he was doing it just as he tries to bar Jesus from coming into your heart.

He stood against the Word and he opposed both the faith preached and the preachers of the Word. As surely as Satan spoke through the lips of the murderers of

Jesus, just as he speaks through all false prophets, he spoke through Barjesus. We find in verse 8 these words: ⁸ “But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.” He “opposed them,” that is, the missionaries; he opposed the proconsul, Sergius Paulus; and in so doing he opposed God and tried to bar Jesus from His work of mercy, grace, and salvation.

But look at the action of that preacher, then called Saul: ⁹ Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰ “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

After this incident, Dr. Luke never again mentions Barnabas first. Now it is “Paul and his company...” Not Barnabas first, not even Saul, but Paul first. Paul showed such boldness that he instantly became the leader of the missionary journey. Some have suggested that Paul was called Paul by reason of converting Sergius Paulus to the faith. That is not probably the reason since Saul in Hebrew is Paul in Greek, and now Paul will preach to the Greek, the Gentile world.

Preachers need boldness. Christian witnesses need boldness. Listen to these Scriptures: ^{Deu 31:6 KJV} Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. ⁷ And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. ⁸ And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

^{Josh 1:6 KJV} Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. ⁹ Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

^{1 Cor 16:13 KJV} Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

^{Acts 4:31 KJV} And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 13:46 KJV Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

1 Th 2:2 KJV But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

The Church needs its Barnabases who console and help those in need; but the church has to have its Pauls who are fearless proclaimers of the Word of Truth! Though brash and direct their decisive mien and their strength of courage drive the church forward to its destined goal.

But finally, A LOST MAN IS SAVED BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THE WORD OF GOD. He must be both a hearer and a doer of the Word of God! But his eternal salvation depends upon his hearing and Believing the Word of God. I can do no better in explaining this than to quote Paul in Romans 10. Listen:

Rom 10:6 KJV But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) ¹⁰ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) ⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

¹¹ For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. ¹² For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? ¹⁷ So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

How is a man saved? He is saved by hearing the Word of God. He is saved by believing the Word of God. He is saved by confessing that belief. Are you INTELLIGENT and prudent enough to know that you need Jesus? Do you desire to HEAR THE WORD OF GOD that you might find Jesus as your Savior? A PREACHER HAS PREACHED THE GOSPEL UNTO YOU? WILL YOU BELIEVE THE WORD OF GOD AND CONFESS YOUR FAITH TODAY?