

Sermon: “The Birthplace of Missions”

Text: Acts 9:1-16; Acts 13-14

Introduction:

Welcome to the start of a 12-week series that I’ve entitled: “The Irrepressible Gospel.” We are going to travel along with the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey as recorded in the Book of Acts, chapters 15-18.

We don’t use the word “***irrepressible***” very often. The word means: ***Impossible to repress, restrain or control; Full of energy and enthusiasm; Unstoppable.***

I really can’t think of a better word to describe what we see happening in the Book of Acts—as the Gospel message begins to spread from its origins in the city of Jerusalem. It is EXACTLY what Jesus called His disciples to be about in the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

This command is then followed up in Acts 1:8 with a VERY SPECIFIC mandate: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus isn’t talking here about wishful thinking. This isn’t a “what-if” scenario. Notice the language that Jesus uses—He says that YOU WILL BE my witnesses first in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to every corner of this earth. God will accomplish His plan, and nothing is going to stop it. The Gospel (which is the GOOD NEWS regarding God’s great love for the world—and His redeeming work that Jesus accomplished on the cross by giving His life as a sacrifice for every soul) will NOT be stopped. The message of God’s love and Christ’s work WILL BE proclaimed throughout the world.

The Book of Acts is the written account of this irrepressible Gospel. [BTW—I always capitalize the word Gospel. There is nothing higher...nothing greater...nothing more powerful than the Gospel. In my opinion, it DEMANDS to be capitalized!]

The first seven chapters of Acts describe how the message of the Gospel was at work in the city of Jerusalem. Thousands were coming to faith in Christ. BUT THERE WAS GREAT OPPOSITION. In Acts 7, a prominent leader of the early church named Stephen was murdered (martyred)—and we see in Acts 7:58 that the person behind his death was a man named Saul. Little did the early church know that this persecution was actually being orchestrated by God—for we see in Acts 8:1: “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

And little did the 1st century believers know that God was about to USE the very man responsible for the death of Stephen (Saul) to take the Gospel far beyond Judea and Samaria, but to the very ends of the earth. Which is precisely where we pick up the story in Acts 13.

Examination:

- Read **Acts 9:1-16**
 - Back in Acts chapter 7, we see that Saul was responsible for the death of Stephen. In Acts 9:1-2, we see this trend continuing. What are some ways you would describe this vicious man named Saul?
 - What does Jesus do to get Saul's attention? What question does He ask him?
 - When we think about the persecuted church—we often think about the people who are being persecuted and martyred. According to v. 5, who is it that is ACTUALLY being attacked? Who is doing the persecuting?
 - Why do you think Jesus blinded Saul for three days?
 - How do you think Ananias felt about going to pray over Saul?
 - What does Jesus tell us is His plans with respect to Saul? (vv. 15-16) Who, specifically, is Saul being called to take the Gospel to? What can Saul expect to have happen as he does this?

- Read **Acts 13:1-12**
 - Verse one describes five men who were leaders in the church in a place called Antioch (the place where believers were first called Christians!). What two gifts are mentioned with respect to these men? Why do you think that is important?
 - Whose idea was it for Barnabas and Saul to set off on a missionary journey?
 - What do you think it means that God “called” them to set off on this mission?
 - What were these men doing BEFORE the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul? (v. 2) What were they doing AFTER the Holy Spirit called them? (v. 3)
 - Who was the third man that was initially part of this team? (v. 5)
 - What “turning point” do we see in verse 9?
 - What do you make of the fact that Paul did to Elymas the sorcerer (blinded him) is exactly what Jesus had done to Paul when Paul was converted? What impact did this have?

- Read **Acts 13:13-52**
 - Up until verse 13, the team has been described as consisting of Barnabas and Saul. How is the team described now? What do you think that means?
 - What happened to the third member of the team in verse 13
 - Given that Paul & his companions go FIRST to a synagogue (v. 14), we can deduce that this first missionary journey began by trying to reach the Jews. Does this fit with what Jesus said to Paul back in Acts 9:15? Why do you think Paul started with the Jews?
 - Acts 13:46 describes another turning point in Paul's mission. What is it?
 - What do you think it means in v. 48 that “all who were appointed for eternal life believed”?

Application:

Each and every Sunday I (Pastor Jody) exhort you to “Go and live the call”. What do you think this means? What is God's call on your life? What are you doing to “go” and “live” it?