

## Acts 12:25-13:12

### *Undeniable Call, Exceptional Provision*

? What's the longest road trip you've ever taken? What got you through it?

#### Acts 12:25-13:12 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

**13** <sup>1</sup> Now 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. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

<sup>4</sup> The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

<sup>6</sup> They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. <sup>9</sup> Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, <sup>10</sup> "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?" <sup>11</sup> Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun."

**Definition:** A *proconsul* was the highest-ranking official in a Roman province.

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup> When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

#### Sorcery?!

Paul calls out Elymas as a "child of the devil." This suggests Elymas' "magic," is assisted by demonic forces. Magic in this time was practiced by pagans and Jews alike for physical benefits such as healing or material gain, and spiritual goals like cursing others or protection from curses. (ESV: Study Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2007.)

? At the start of this passage, Barnabas, Saul, and John (Mark) returned from Jerusalem only to be sent off again in verse 3. What pattern does this show, and how do you see the Holy Spirit at work in it?



? This map shows the route taken by Barnabas and Paul on their journey. Our passage takes place on the island of Cyprus in Paphos. This was not a normal trip! Have you ever been called to do something unusual or exceptional? Did you answer the call? Why or why not?

? In the passage, there is no indication that Paul and Barnabas expected to be summoned by the proconsul. How do you think they felt when they received the summons? How does this resemble or differ from the summons they received in Acts 4:1-22?

? Have you ever had someone seek you out to talk about Jesus or Christianity? What was that conversation like?

? The false prophet Bar-Jesus (Elymas the sorcerer) tried to block the meeting between the proconsul and the disciples (vs. 8). Why do you think he interfered?

? Have you ever been blocked or opposed by someone when you were trying to share your faith? What happened? Why do you think they tried to stop you from sharing?

? Verse 9 says that Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit.” How do you think this impacted what he said? What is the significance of another mention of the Holy Spirit (also seen in verses 2 and 4)?

? Why do you think Elymas was temporarily blinded?

? The proconsul believed because of the miraculous blinding of Elymas. How do you think you would have responded if you had seen it happen in front of you?

? What truths have you seen in this passage and others throughout Acts that you can apply when you’re in the midst of life’s long journeys?

#### **For Discussion and Accountability**

? In what circumstance or relationship can you rely more on the Holy Spirit for guidance, wisdom or words this week? What one practical step can you take in that relationship or circumstance?

? How will you respond the next time someone directly tries to oppose you sharing your faith or your life journey with Jesus? How can you prepare for that moment this week?