

ACTS 12:25-13:4

PRAY

BACKGROUND

The last time we heard from Saul, he had escaped to Tarsus because some people he had been preaching the gospel to were trying to kill him (Acts 9:30). He went to Tarsus and it seems as though he ministered in and around that city for 6-9 years. Meanwhile, near the end of his time in Tarsus a church had been established in Antioch because believers had been scattered all over due to persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 7). Antioch is north of Jerusalem and it took two weeks of walking to get there.

The church in Jerusalem heard about what was going on at Antioch so they sent Barnabas to check things out (Acts 11:1-30). Barnabas subsequently ministered in Antioch for quite a while and during that time he traveled to Tarsus to find Saul and brought him to Antioch (11:25-26). They ministered together in Antioch for a year. Some time later there was a famine in Judea so the Antioch church raised money and sent Barnabas & Saul to deliver it to the Jerusalem Church (11:27-30). That's the mission that they're referring to in 12:25 in tonight's passage.

The city of Antioch had nearly 500,000 people and the church there was very diverse, as indicated by the list of leaders in tonight's passage. Barnabas was Jewish from the Island of Cyprus, Simeon was called "Niger" (pronounced *ni-Jer*) which means "the black", almost certainly indicating that he was a black African man. Lucian was from "Cyrene" which was in North Africa. He may have been black, but most of the people of North Africa at that time were not. Manaen was either a foster-brother or relative of Herod the tetrarch, and thus was of royal upper class status. And then there was Saul, who was an accomplished academically trained Jewish man who was a former Pharisee.

This is the environment where the first missionaries were intentionally sent out on mission by a local church.

PLEASE READ ACTS 12:25-13:4

SHARE OBSERVATIONS (Who? What? When? Where? Repeating words, phrases, & themes?)

QUESTIONS

1. This church became the first intentional "sending church" in history. Besides the Holy Spirit's leading in v2, what do you think were some additional factors that God used to cultivate a culture of "sending" in this church?
2. Why do you think Luke spends time explaining the diversity of the leaders in v1 and how do you think this relates to the mission of sending out called and qualified leaders?
3. How does this passage apply to us as a small group as we desire to send out leaders to start new small groups in the Dubuque area?
4. In what ways can we be specifically praying in response to this passage and our discussion?
5. What else can we be praying about for each other?