

First to Cyprus.

Acts 13:4,5.

Sunday morning, October 10, 2010.

I. Off to Cyprus.

A. Having been duly called, not only by the Holy Spirit, but also by “the Bride” Rev. 22:17, that is the church, Barnabas and Saul, together with John Mark as their assistant, are off to Seleucia, and from there to Cyprus.

1. The city of Antioch was situated 15 miles inland on the Orontes River in Northern Syria.
2. At the mouth of this river, on the Mediterranean shore, was the city of Seleucia. Standing on the seashore of Seleucia, on a clear day, one could see the tall mountains of Cyprus rising out of the sea some 80 miles to the West.

B. Why Cyprus?

Why not follow the trade routes over land northward and westward, through Asia Minor and into Greece, and from there to Rome itself? That would seem a more natural choice given their mission of taking the gospel to the gentile nations.

1. Barnabas was from Cyprus and his ties with its people and his familiarity with the land and its customs no doubt drew him to bring the gospel first to his own people.
2. John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, Colossians 4:10, so he too had ties in terms of extended family in Cyprus.
3. Do we not have an application here of the principle of “beginning in Jerusalem” in terms of the proclamation of the gospel?
Did not Paul later make use of the same principle as he always went to the local synagogue first in every new city he came to?
4. Is there not an application here of 1 Timothy 5:8 “If anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”
Usually we apply these words to material provisions, which is the context of the verse. But is it not safe to say that we owe gospel truth, and an example of gospel living especially to those nearest to us? Are we not debtors in this sense, Romans 1:14, especially to them?
5. Is not the Lord Jesus Himself the pattern and example in these matters for us as He came first and foremost to His own in coming to earth? John 1:11 and Matt. 15:24.

Application:

Let us be careful that we are imitators of the Lord and the apostles in these matters. This is not always the easiest thing to do, and yet for some this seems the first and most natural thing to do. It seems there are two kinds of people in this regard. We do not know where Barnabas fit in with regards to this.

1. There are people who, in their enthusiasm of their new found faith and walk with the Lord, can't wait to share the good news with their family and friends. They often do so in a naïve kind of way, thinking that their family and friends will share their enthusiasm and will want to follow the Lord just like them once they hear the good news. Instead they are often talked about in words like: “did you hear that so and so has

found religion...?” As though it were some dreadful disease; and indeed, to them it might as well be so. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.

2. Others are much more reluctant to speak of the Lord, especially to those closest to them, and those who know them best.

- In part this can be due to the fear of man, or fear to create unrest or conflict in one’s own family or circle of friends. In the long run this will be unavoidable if you are going to be faithful to Christ.
- In part this may also be flowing from a keen awareness of one’s own many shortcomings, and a sense of being such a poor example of what a Christian is called to be. If you don’t have this sense, your family and friends will probably be happy to help you out here. True humility is key here. Make much of the fact that the Lord should seek out such a one as you in light of your many failings and unworthiness. Also point out that you are going to stick to Him because there is no other hope for you, and that only the Lord, who can not lie, has promised to one day finish the good work He has begun in you.

II. The ministry in Eastern Cyprus.

A. Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark land in Eastern Cyprus, in the city of Salamis.

Salamis had a large Jewish population as it lay almost within eyesight of the shores of the land of Israel, and also as witnessed to by the multiple synagogues of this city where the apostles preached. All other foreign cities had only one Jewish synagogue each.

B. That not much came of this preaching (in all likelihood) is perhaps witnessed to by the following:

1. The fact that the apostles did not spend much time in Salamis but soon seem to have moved along to the city of Paphos in western Cyprus. Nearest to Rome, it was the seat of the Roman government in Cyprus.
2. The fact that there is no mention of a church in Salamis in the NT. This is the only reference to this city in the NT.
3. The fact that this would further illustrate the broader Scriptural principle, cited by the Lord Jesus in all four gospels, that a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, and among his own family. Matt. 13:57.
 - So it went with the Lord Jesus among His own people in Nazareth who sought to throw Him off a cliff. Luke 4:16-30.
 - So it went with the Lord Jesus’ ministry among His own people, the Jews, more generally speaking. John 1:11 and Matthew 8:10
 - So it would go with Paul’s ministry to his own countrymen, beginning in Antioch, and continuing in almost every city until he gets at last to Rome, and there it would be no different from all the other places. Acts 13:45,46 and 28:25-28.
 - So it seems to have gone with Barnabas’ ministry to his own kinfolk.

Application:

Although we should be committed to bearing witness of gospel truth and life first and foremost to our own kinfolk and those nearest to us (as were the Lord and the Apostles), it should not surprise us that it is precisely here that we will often suffer the most hostile opposition.