

## Acts 13:1-5 Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work

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### Acts 13:1-5

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

What I believe God wants me to focus on this morning and what it is he wants to speak to us about is found in verse 2

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Barnabas and Saul were called to a work.

That is God had given them a specific task or ministry to complete.

It would be easy for us to say to ourselves that unless we are called to this same sort of work that somehow whatever we do now is second rate, inferior, or not spiritual.

I believe God wants us to let go of this attitude and see that we all have callings and vocations that we are presently engaged in that matter to him.

The direction we receive may be nowhere as dramatic as what we see here, but it is not any less important.

For many of us I fear that we are in danger of not taking our work as divinely directed as we can and should.

Those who are studying at secondary school or University - your work is important to God and it should be to you.

Those who are working for an employer and building a career - your work is important to God and it should be to you.

Those who are looking after children and a home - your work is important to God and it should be to you.

Those who are running your own businesses - your work is important to God and it should be to you.

Our work, callings and vocations matter to God. He wants them to matter to us.

But can I encourage all of us to also not think of our work as somehow separate from church life or family life. These three areas make a unified whole.

You will often hear me going on about this, but I feel I have to keep reminding us of this important truth as the enemy will do everything he can to destabilize our wholeness while Jesus has come that we may have life and life more abundantly.

The devil wants to segment and divide our lives centered on ourselves while Jesus wants to connect and unify our lives centered on him.

It is important that we know we are called to our work and if we are unsure we need to seek God to make sure otherwise we are going to do a whole lot of misplaced work and waste a whole lot of time.

I'm going to talk about a practical way we can do that this week but before I do I want to look at three things that can distract or sidetrack the focus we should be placing on our work.

You might be saying at this point in time why is Tony talking so much about work when we should be talking about God's love and grace?

The two go hand in hand and are not in opposition to each other.

Paul said:

**1 Corinthians 15:10**

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

For Paul God's grace was seen as integral to all of his life and not just that special gift that saved him. To him it was the supernatural power that fueled his working life and it should be the same for us as well.

I now want to highlight just three things that can divert or sidetrack us in the work that God has called us to and we presently have before us.

## 1) Being idle when we should be working

### 2 Samuel 11:1-27

1 In the spring of the year, **the time when kings go out to battle**, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when **David arose from his couch** and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.

3 And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going.

8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"

11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."

12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

13 And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die."

16 And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men.

17 And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting.

19 And he instructed the messenger, “When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king,  
 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, ‘Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?  
 21 Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?’ then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’”  
 22 So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell.  
 23 The messenger said to David, “The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate.  
 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”  
 25 David said to the messenger, “Thus shall you say to Joab, ‘Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.’ And encourage him.”  
 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband.  
 27 And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

## 2) Guard your heart

### Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

One of the greatest distractions I believe Satan uses is to get our hearts all troubled and focused on our lives.

Listen to me very carefully when I say the following:

***The truly wise and mature among us are not the ones with the most knowledge or the ones with the most experiences in God, but the ones who guard their hearts with the most diligence no matter what level of knowledge or experience they have.***

These are the ones that get over offenses quickly

These are the ones that are quick to love, forgive and keep moving

These are the ones who are more interested in the kingdom advancing than in the advancement of their own hurts, disappointments, disagreements or factions.

If we don't guard our heart with all diligence we became sidetracked and the work God has called us to suffers as a result.

### 3) Realizing we exist for God's mission and we are the mission

The mission is not just out there but also on our doorstep

#### **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

If we fail to grasp the truth of this passage then the whole of our lives can become distorted and disjointed and get us of mission.

We are all new creations whom God has given each of us the portfolio of foreign minister - ambassadors for Christ

This happens wherever we are and whatever we are called to do.

Russ hit the nail on the head two weeks ago when he said that if we were to just be with Jesus and that's all then he should kill us know so we could be with him to face to face as Paul said for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So in finishing up this morning I believe that some of us need direction, some of us need work and some of us need to begin seeing our work the way God sees it.

To help us as a church do all of this I want us to put aside this next week until next Sunday in worship and fasting.

Our strategic prayer time this Tuesday at 7:30 pm at Russ and Sue's place will be a time of worship with prayer but predominately worship. I believe that out of our attitude of fasting with worship that God is going to speak to us.

This fasting can be food but could also be anything that takes up a lot of your attention and focus such as social media, the TV, the newspapers. Whatever it is let's as a church limit the time we spend on these and devote ourselves to fasting and worship.

Let's pray.