

Mission Possible

"The Great Adventure"

Acts 13:1-13 NIV

When we say "Yes" to Jesus, no matter what's happening in our life, we are literally on a great adventure. If we were to watch only the mainstream-media news, we would think that the sky has fallen and the end of "democracy" had come. But, there's actually some *good* news going on. Just last week, it was reported that 4,500 students were seeking Jesus at Purdue University and thousands who gathered there to hear the Gospel received Christ as their Savior and were transformed as God was being exalted.

Also, thousands more gathered together in Times Square in New York City to worship Jesus Christ, and still more good news was that Franklin Graham held an event in Ethiopia, preaching the Gospel to 437,000 people, and thousands of them surrendered their hearts and lives to Christ. In Korea, a reported 1.1 million Christians came together to pray for their nation. God is working everywhere all over the world and we need to be celebrating the wins!

Yes, things are hard, crazy, and goofy in the news, but, at the end of the day, we need to look and see what's happening in the *Kingdom*, because the Kingdom of God is right-side-up and the world is up-side-down. President Ronald Reagan said, *"Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the Rule of Law under God is acknowledged."*

Psalms 33:12 NIV

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD."

"In everything we do, my administration will be inspired by a strong pursuit of excellence and unrelenting success. We will not forget our country. We will not forget our Constitution, and we will not forget our God." - President Donald J. Trump (from his 2nd inaugural address)

We should appreciate having a president who is not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but it won't happen from the top down - it happens starting with *us* - around our kitchen tables with our *families*. It also happens as we reach out to our adult children, even if we didn't speak of biblical things when they were young. But *now*, we can offer to pray for them because it's not too late - it's not over yet.

President Trump, at age 77, received the Lord as his Savior, making Jesus Christ Lord of his life. If it's not too late for him, it's not too late for *them*. We're all part of an ongoing journey and a great adventure. In our own community, we just experienced a hard thing with the fire that has so far burned nearly ten thousand acres, but miracles have happened in the midst of it as people of faith started to pray. Something *happens* when the Church prays!

In Acts 12:5 the Church was praying for Peter and an angel of the Lord showed up and miraculously set him free from prison. We need to pray for Israel, for revival, for our nation, for the persecuted Church around the world - for our city and our own community. *Something happens when the Church prays!*

Mission Possible - The Great Adventure

Acts 13:1 NIV84

"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."

The Holy Spirit was coordinating a very specific and strategic missionary plan and was saying, *"Get ready to go!"* as the church at Antioch worshipped the Lord and fasted. They were magnifying, honoring, and exalting him in their worship, and they were *fasting*, which is not just a hunger strike to get God to move, but, actually is putting off something very primal to us. When we get control of our appetite, we can pretty well control *anything*. We literally push aside that time to focus - fasting is *focus*.

They were all worshipping, fasting, and focusing, and the Holy Spirit began to speak. The same God who spoke then *still* speaks. The question is, are we *listening* for his voice? Are we *expecting* to hear his voice? We can literally bathe in, invoke, and enjoy the presence of God when we worship him (and he enjoys *us*). He then *inhabits* the place wherever we are - he inhabits the praises - the worship - of his people. Psalm 22:3 says, *"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel."*

Acts 13:2 NIV84

"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.'"

He spoke to them, giving them their marching orders and clear direction - he had something specific for them to do. It's so important that the Holy Spirit speaks to us as well because he has something for *us* to do - something we *get* to do as we partner with Christ and co-labor with him to advance the Kingdom.

Acts 13:3 NIV84

“So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

There was an amazing fellowship between them - a dialog and a relationship as they commissioned Barnabas and Saul. They imparted grace, power, and anointing to them, to prepare and equip them with instruction and direction.

Acts 13:4,5 NIV84

“The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John (Mark) was with them as their helper.”

The "John" mentioned in Acts 13:5 refers to John Mark, who is also known simply as “Mark”. He was a companion of Paul and Barnabas during their missionary journeys and served as their assistant. John Mark is identified as the son of Mary, whose house in Jerusalem was a meeting place for early Christians (Acts 12:12). He was also a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and later became the author of the Gospel of Mark.

Acts 13:6,7 NIV84

“They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 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.”

God also doesn't see *us* where we are now, he sees what we can *become* - he sees the *finished work*, the end from the beginning - he sees who we are *becoming*. Whatever tests we find ourselves in now, as we pass them, it will bring us one step closer to our destination - our destiny in God - and he will put us in places we never dreamed we'd be.

Acts 13:8 NIV84

“But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.”

The Bible says that when we're doing what God's called us to do, we *will* be opposed and resisted. When we preach the Gospel, speak the Gospel, and *live* the Gospel - when we *pray* for people at Walmart, HEB, the winery or a restaurant - when we're living this out - opposition *will come*. That's why we've been given the *armor of God*.

Ephesians 6:13-17 NIV

“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Acts 13:9-11 NIV84

“Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘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? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.’ Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.”

That wasn't very “nice” of Paul - but God didn't save us to make us *nice*, or soft as believers. He wants us to have strength, leadership, and power. Ephesians 4:15 NIV says, *“Instead, speaking the truth in [because of] love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”* There might be people in our sphere of influence and orbit that are about to drive their life off a cliff. Would we not say anything to *them* for the sake of kindness and niceness?

Paul gives us an example of what it means to confront and deal with the evil that was there. Any time we give way to evil, taking ourselves out of the equation, the enemy will back-fill that void in a nano-second. That's why the Church has retreated from the public square for so long and the enemy has back-filled every step that we backed up. But the Church is beginning to move forward and to grow again. Young men are purchasing Bibles. Gen Z is beginning to adopt conservative and biblical beliefs. There's hope on the horizon right now, and we need to re-take the ground that we let go, but it might not always look “nice” when we have to speak the truth.

Acts 13:12 NIV84

“When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.”

He saw the power of the Gospel and it stirred faith in him.

Acts 13:13 NIV84 - In Pisidian Antioch

"From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John (Mark) left them to return to Jerusalem."

There was a plan being worked out but there were bumps and ditches along the way. It wasn't over for John Mark because he would later become one of the four Gospel writers even after he bailed out in fear here. There was restoration and reconciliation ahead for *him ...so we shouldn't give up either.*

Prayer

Father, we thank You that following Jesus is a wild ride and a great adventure - and we get to do this!

Lord, give us boldness and courage as we stand in our spheres of influence out in the culture where we do life - every day where we live, where we work, and where we play. Give us boldness and courage to speak the Truth because of love, just like Paul who had to confront the sorcerer who was resisting the Gospel. As Paul had to say what needed to be said, may we say what needs saying in our own spheres of influence.

Lord, let us grow up and get past the idea that Christians must be soft and passive. You have called us to be warriors. You don't give armor to non-warriors and Your Word says that we're to put on the whole armor of God. Holy Spirit, seal Your words in our hearts and minds and bring them to our remembrance as we need them. We love You and worship You!

In Jesus' name Amen