

The Church Establishing Spirit

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Date: 26 September 2021

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[0 : 00] Thanks for welcoming me into your country and among you. It will help you this morning to follow along in Acts chapter 13.

If you're new to the Bible, turn to the last quarter of Scripture, you'll find Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and then the book of Acts. Acts chapter 13 is where we'll spend our time this morning.

I first met BK, I think at a shepherd's conference. My pastor in Sacramento at Emmanuel Baptist Church and BK went to school together, so that's how we first met.

Our church from Sacramento brings you greetings in the Lord, and it's good to be among you. As you're turning to Acts chapter 13, let me just remind you that Luke said he wrote his gospel to give confidence or to give certainty about all that Jesus began to do, all of his life and teaching and ministry.

And so Acts is really just an extension of the gospel of Luke. It's about all that Jesus continues to do from his risen heavenly throne.

[1 : 06] He is on his throne in heaven, and so we can have confidence that Jesus is expanding his kingdom and he is establishing churches. So let me read to you now from Acts chapter 13.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Mana'an, a lifelong friend of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul.

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

So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they had John to assist them.

When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

[2 : 10] But Elimas, the magician, that is the meaning of his name, opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?

And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time. Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.

Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga and Pamphylia, and John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

But they went on from Perga and came to Antioch and Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them saying, Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.

So Paul stood up and motioning with his hand said, Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people, Israel, chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt.

[3 : 37] And with uplifted arm, he led them out of it. And for about 40 years, he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. And after that, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king. And God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years.

And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, I have found in David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will.

Of this man's offspring, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. As he promised before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

And as John was finishing his course, he said, What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.

[4 : 38] Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.

And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

But God raised him from the dead. And for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him, from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news, that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus.

As also it is written in the second Psalm, You are my son, today I have begotten you. And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.

Therefore, he says also in another Psalm, you will not let your Holy One see corruption. For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption.

[5 : 59] But he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known to you, therefore. Brothers, that through this man, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

And by him, everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about. Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish.

For I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you. As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

The next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

[7 : 13] For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord.

And as many as were appointed to eternal life, believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district.

But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Friends, God has spoken to us in his word. Let's respond to him in prayer. Father, we ask that you would send your spirit that we might see your son.

See him working even now from his heavenly throne that you would send your spirit to illuminate our minds and stir our affections and align our wills to all that you have revealed to us in your word.

[8 : 27] Give us confidence in your word and in your spirit that you are establishing churches. And give us joy in being fellow workers. Some go and the rest send, but we are all fellow participants.

We are fellow workers. We fellowship and partner together in the gospel and the spread of your glory as you build a people for yourself, as you save and sanctify.

Help us now, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. In Acts chapter 1, let me just remind you of where we are before we land in chapter 13.

In Acts chapter 1, verse 8, we have sort of a paradigm, a construct, a verse that sets the pattern of the book of Acts. Jesus says in Acts chapter 1, verse 8 to his apostles, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And so let me just catch you up on what's happening from Acts 1 to right where we land in chapter 13. With Acts 1 as sort of a geographic guide, this progress of the word is spreading out of Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus promised would happen.

[9 : 47] And we get these summary verses all throughout the book of Acts, like in chapter 12, where it says, the word of God increased and multiplied. The word is pictured as this living thing, just as Hebrews says, that's spreading, that's doing its work.

And you see, God has chosen his own means. It is the word of God through the people of God that the glory of God is spreading. It is the means that Jesus uses to establish churches.

And so how does this unfold in Acts chapter 1 all the way through 12? Well, Acts 1 to 6 really talks about the establishing of the church in Jerusalem. Just as Paul mentioned in Ephesians, that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles.

That's what's happening in Acts 1 through Acts 6. Jesus' authorized apostles, who are authenticated by himself, are establishing and founding the church in Jerusalem.

And then Acts 6, all the way to chapter 8, starts to show the spread of the word out of Jerusalem into Samaria. In Acts chapter 9, Jesus authorizes his last apostle, Saul turned Paul.

[10 : 54] Paul, the one who's going to launch the Gentile mission. Now we're getting closer to chapter 13. And so right after Paul's conversion, chapter 10 to the rest of the book of Acts is about the Gentile mission.

It's about the word spreading to the end of the earth. In Acts 11, the believers in Jerusalem are persecuted, so they flee to Antioch, which is going to set us right up where we are in Acts 13.

We're in Antioch. And in Acts 12, King Herod kills the apostle James and puts Peter in prison. What's happening here?

We start with Acts 13. If you'll look there, just the first few verses, noting there's all of these prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch. We're down one apostle because James has been killed.

We're down another apostle with Peter imprisoned. So why is it that James is not replaced? This is a question that we have to answer when we open Acts 13.

[11 : 52] I mean, when Judas betrayed Jesus and died, he had to be replaced. In Acts 1, they had to replace. They needed 12 apostles. So why isn't James replaced in Acts 13?

In fact, why, when the rest of the book unfolds in Acts, why are the apostles not affirming any new apostles? They're going to die at some point.

Why do they not keep affirming more apostles? Why in Acts 13 do we get this list of prophets and teachers? And why is one of the apostles, namely Paul, paired up with Barnabas, not an apostle, to be the church's first missionaries?

They even take John Mark as sort of a missionary assistant. Well, friends, Acts 13 is this transitional point in the book of Acts and the point of all of redemptive history, actually. Jesus promised in Matthew 16, I will build my church.

And in Acts 28, when he gives the great commission to his apostles to go and make disciples, he promises, I am with you always. You see, Acts 13 begins to transition us out of the apostolic age into what we might call the missionary age.

[13 : 04] It's still part of the same great commission with the same promises of Jesus that he'll build his church, that he's with us always, but he's transitioning out of the apostolic age. The church has been founded in Jerusalem and now it needs to be built upon that foundation, most notably, the foundation of the scriptures that the apostles were either writing or overseeing.

So Acts 13 is this bit of a transitional point in the book of Acts. You see, Acts 1 to 12 shows how King Jesus founded the church. And Acts 13 and following shows us how Jesus continues to

expand the church to the reaching of the nations, to every tribe and language and it's by using missionaries, not apostles.

In other words, the great commission is now carried on by elder-led churches that send spirit-empowered missionaries to spread God's word. Where God's word goes, he saves and sanctifies a people for himself and the churches are established and strengthened.

So let me give you just one simple main point to hang your thoughts on this morning. If you want to have a lunchtime conversation to meditate over and to think about application together as a congregation, it's this.

Be confident. The Spirit establishes churches. That's the point of Acts 13. Be confident. The Spirit establishes churches. And what we're going to do is just unpack four essentials for how churches are established because that's what I think Acts 13 is unpacking.

[14:31] These four essentials for how the Spirit establishes churches are meant to give us confidence. To bolster our certainty. Yes, Jesus is really with us.

Yes, he will build his church. No matter what's happening around us in the world and the culture and politics and leaders, authorities who can or can't be trusted, all of that, we can be confident in the promises of God's word that the Spirit is establishing churches.

And I think Acts 13 shows us how he does that. How Jesus on his heavenly throne is using the Spirit of God to plant and strengthen churches. So we're just going to unpack those four essentials. First, we should be confident the Spirit is establishing churches by sending servants or sending missionaries. It is people. As amazing as it is, as weak as we are, God has chosen to use people. I mean, he could have chosen to use angels or some other means, but he uses people made in his image to be his servants. We see this, especially in the first four verses where we see in the church in Antioch, there's prophets and teachers and then the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas to be these first missionaries.

[15:43] Notice verse two that the Spirit is the one who directs the church to set apart these men. And notice also in verse four that the Spirit is actually identified as the agent who sends, who sets apart and asks the church to affirm and send out these missionaries.

It is first and foremost the Spirit who is in charge, who is establishing churches. And so I want to just briefly note a few aspects, a few characteristics of these first missionaries.

You know, for a long time, at least in American missions, there's this effort to send the young. If people's hearts are beating and they're healthy and they love Jesus, send them to the mission field and we're reaping the consequences of that kind of mentality.

Let's look at just five aspects of these first missionaries. First, they're seasoned servants. By this point, when the Spirit asked Antioch to set aside Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas has over a decade of ministry experience.

I mean, he was the one in Jerusalem just a couple chapters earlier that the church in Jerusalem said, we've got all these saints that fled because of persecution. They're in Antioch.

[16:54] We need to go strengthen them. They send Barnabas, a decade of ministry experience. He's a good preacher. He's an exhorter. He's a pastor to go help this fledgling church.

By this time, Paul has between 12 and 15 years of ministry experience. These were not young bucks sent to help the young church in Antioch. These were experienced ministers of God.

And then they do take along with them John Mark, but we'll notice that in a minute. So Paul and Barnabas spent a year pastoring this young persecuted church and then the Spirit has this young church with experienced leaders and said, set apart these men.

Set apart your best, if you will. Set apart the seasoned servants for the work. And friends, there's an application here for all of us. That we're always looking around at the work of God in each other's lives.

We're always looking for God's grace in how he's working in people's lives. And then speaking about it, affirming that in people's lives. Even challenging them. I mean, when you start to read the history of missions, some of the most faithful missionaries who lasted decade after decade after decade, they weren't people who just sat down or flipped through their Bible and found a verse and said, I think God's calling me to missions.

[18:15] No, it was other Christians in their church who identified the grace of God in their life and said, I see you in this way. I see God's grace giving you discipline and strength and hospitality and love for people and accuracy with the word.

It was other people identifying the work of God's grace in their lives that challenged them and said, hey, why don't you take your gift and go abroad? We're talking 30-year-olds, 40-year-olds, 50-year-olds, 60-year-olds.

As you start to read missions history, you see even those of us who are over 40 were sent into missions that were faithful, seasoned servants. Well, second, not only are they seasoned servants, these missionaries are spirit-filled servants.

Look at verse 9 where it says, Paul filled with the Holy Spirit and then he confronts the magician. Barnabas is described in the exact same way in chapter 11.

Barnabas is called a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And this idea of filling of the Spirit in Luke and Acts is not primarily about regeneration.

[19 : 23] It's not about sending the Spirit to save someone. This language of filling or empowering or the Spirit coming upon people is for a task.

It's the task of evangelism and discipleship, the Great Commission. I mean, Jesus had promised in Acts 1-8, I remind you again, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Why? You will be my witnesses to the end of the earth. You remember in Acts 4 when Peter and John were released from prison and then they were said, they were told, you cannot speak about the name of Jesus anymore to anyone.

And so the believers were praying for them and they were praying the words of Psalm 2. They literally took their Bibles and prayed Psalm 2 and what were they asking and what happened?

In Acts 4, it says the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness. Friends, missionaries are not perfect Christians.

[20 : 24] But like pastors, they must be exemplary Christians. They must be filled with the Spirit. Be looking in your midst for people that the Spirit of God is working in and using to bless others, to strengthen others.

New Christians on the mission field will not only listen to what the missionaries are saying, they will watch their lives. I mean, this is why Paul told his young son in the faith in 1 Timothy 4, keep a close watch on yourself and your teaching.

Friends, there's an application here for us as well. We're looking for godly people. We're looking for Spirit-filled people. We're looking for where God is pouring out His grace on people to be able to serve and mature others in the faith.

Well, third, not only are these first missionaries seasoned and Spirit-filled, these missionaries, they serve together on teams. They didn't roll solo. They weren't going out all by themselves.

Paul and Barnabas are sent together and yet, they bring along John Mark. Notice verse 5. I mean, John Mark, the Spirit didn't say, hey, take John Mark with you.

[21 : 33] The Spirit said, set apart Paul and Barnabas, but they wanted to take John Mark. We could call him a missionary assistant. In fact, when Barnabas left Jerusalem to go down and help Antioch, he took John Mark with him there as well.

There's over 100 names discussed or named in Acts and on all the letters of the New Testament and 38 of them are called Paul's fellow workers.

38 out of 100 people, Paul's constantly saying, these are my fellow workers. These are my co-workers. These are people laboring with me in the gospel. Friends, Paul was regularly identifying, recruiting, affirming, training, and serving with others.

We like to think of Paul as this solo missionary. He identified men like Timothy and Titus. He invested in them. When the church in Ephesus needed help, he sent Timothy. When the church in Crete needed help, he sent Titus.

Friends, again, there's application here for all of us, especially the elders of this church, but even all of you who are more mature in the faith, who have been walking with the Lord for a while, we all have this privilege, which is a great responsibility, to be identifying God's grace in others, to be challenging others, to walk with the Lord more closely, to serve him more with our time and our resources, to not be comfortable.

[23 : 01] Fourth, these missionaries are also scripture servants. Look at verse 9. It says, filled with the Holy Spirit. What does Paul do? I mean, what is Paul's actual power when he confronts the magician?

He speaks to him. It's the power of speaking. In verse 10, he spoke words. Yes, he says, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, but as he goes on to speak, he starts quoting Old

Testament language.

He quotes Proverbs 10 and Hosea 14. He's prophetically speaking, he's ripping off Old Testament language to prophetically speak against this false prophet, Elimus.

Paul's spirit-given power, as the same with others in Acts, is a spirit-given power to speak the word. We get caught up in the miraculous signs and the wonders.

Those were simply to authenticate that these were Jesus' authorized apostles. I'm going to authorize these men. I'm going to authenticate them by all of the miraculous works that they do.

[24 : 09] But it's the power of the word. Well, fifth, these missionaries were also sent abroad. This is a basic point, but I've noticed in the last decade, there's been this kind of push to talk about we're all missionaries or we need to be missional.

And I understand the heart and the motive behind that. It's to say, look, we all need to be faithful in evangelism. But we're not all missionaries in the historic sense of the word. The English word mission or missionary has to do with sending.

We're sending someone geographically to a new language, a new people, a new nation, a new tribe. It's a geographic movement. Let me show you this from this chapter. In verses 3 to 6, and then in verses 13 to 14, it mentions they were sent off.

It mentions they sailed twice. They traveled by land. There's all of these place names, these cities and places they went. We can estimate that Paul traveled something like almost 9,000 miles.

Sorry, I forgot to convert that this morning. Almost 9,000 miles. That's like traveling across the U.S. three times. If we were to add his total travel, sorry, that was just on foot.

[25 : 20] If we were to add all of his travel with sailing and every means of travel, something like 15,000 miles. Paul was traveling. I can't multiply it by 0.6 quickly in my mind.

Friend, if you're a Christian under 40 years old, let's say under 50. If you're under 50 years old and you're not a member of a local church, but you love Jesus, my first encouragement to you is join a healthy local church.

A church where the gospel is preached, the ordinances of the Lord's table and baptism are rightly practiced. Join a church. And if you have any desire to love and serve the Lord, begin praying and thinking how you can be more faithful to the Lord and serving his people.

Whether that's as a sender or someone who goes. If you're a young person here, again, I'm saying everyone under 50, I'm saying is young. You know, my aspiration for mission started around 30 years ago.

When I first came to Christ as a young teenager, I started reading missionary biographies and seeing God's heart for the nations and Paul's desire to go where Christ was not known. And I began praying as a young teenager and here I am in my early 40s.

[26 : 34] Almost 30 years praying and aspiring and desiring that. And then I began formal education around 20 years ago. Beginning, getting the affirmation from others, yes, why don't you pursue this thing of missions and find your gifts here in the local church.

I mean, what are God's gifts in your life? And needing that affirmation from others. And then I began that formal training 20 years ago. And the Lord and his providence and different things and illness and sickness of my wife and myself, he just kept delaying us and yet refining where we would go and the kind of ministry we would do.

Maybe you're not ready to go for 10 or 15 years. That's okay. You're growing, you're maturing, you're understanding his word, you're exercising the grace gifts he's given you in a context of people that can affirm that.

Maybe it takes 10 or 15 or 20 years before the Lord might have you go to another nation, another tribe, another language and serve his people there. But pray, serve, get the training, consider it, ask other people's insight into your life.

So, so far we've just summarized five characteristics explaining this first point about the spirit establishing churches by sending servants, sending people, it's God's means, people with the word.

[27 : 53] Second, we can be confident the spirit establishes churches from churches. Sending individual people from churches, not rogue, not solo.

Yes, it is the spirit who's identified first as the agent and as the sender, as the one who asked the church to set apart these men. But look at verse 2. Here the church is worshiping the Lord, they're fasting, the spirit somehow, we're not told, it doesn't say the spirit spoke aloud and they all heard it, it doesn't say Jesus showed up like he did at Paul's conversion, it just said somehow the

congregation discerned the spirit's leading, and what did they do?

In verse 3 it says, they, the church, sent them off. See, the church is also identified as the sender, as the ones who affirm. In Acts chapter 14, Antioch is said to have commended them for the work. It is the local church that commends, that affirms, that identifies and that sends. Sure, local churches can partner together in that sending, but it is a single local church that affirms someone in their gifts as ready for the work of ministry.

In Acts 11, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to help establish the Antioch church. In Acts 13, now it's the church in Antioch, this younger church that has the privilege and joy and weighty responsibility of sending these first missionaries abroad.

[29 : 24] Friends, in the New Testament, it is churches that send missionaries to send, to establish and strengthen churches. And we all participate in that. We all participate in the affirming and in the sending and the identifying and the holding of the rope, so to speak, has been used for a long time.

So, we should be confident that the Spirit establishes churches by sending servants. Second, we should be confident that the Spirit is establishing churches by sending missionaries and it is churches that do that.

But third, third, the Spirit establishes churches through the written word spoken. the written word spoken. I want to just briefly summarize the content of Paul's sermon and then I want to focus on the medium of the message.

How did Paul deliver this message? What did he deliver? That's what I want to summarize briefly. In fact, when you start to compare the sermons in the book of Acts, you'll notice there's a ton of similarity.

It's almost as if the apostles had this similar structure, this outline in their mind and depending on whom they were speaking to, they sort of adjusted or expanded a little more or decreased a little here or a little there but they all seem to follow this basic structure.

[30 : 42] This is not unique to me observing it. It's a five-part gospel outline that I want to commend to you. First, God sent him. Him being the promised savior king and then there's either more or less explanation depending on the context.

I mean, here Paul's speaking to Jews so he starts summarizing whole portions of the Old Testament about judges and kings and the promise of David and Jesus is the fulfillment of David. All of these things. God sent him. They killed him. God raised him. Witnesses saw him and we proclaim him. Let me say that again.

It's a simple gospel outline as you start to compare this to 1 Corinthians 15 to Peter's sermon and Acts. God sent him, the promised savior king. They killed him.

God raised him. Witnesses saw him and we proclaim him. And then of course this call to turn from sin, to turn from our rebellion, to trust in him.

[31 : 43] Right? And that's just the basic gist, the content, the overall message of the sermon. Friends, this is the gospel that we believe in a nutshell.

If you're here and you're not a Christian this morning, this is what makes someone a Christian is believing in this message about God's promise of a savior, of a king. That God made us in his image and yet we've rebelled against him.

We've rejected him. We've not loved him like we should. We've not been the image bearers that he made us to be. That's what the Bible calls sin. This rebellion, this active rejection of our being made in his image to love him and glorify him.

And yet God in his kindness and his love sent his son, fully man, fully God, both Lord and Savior, the one we owe allegiance to and the one we depend upon for our righteousness, for our forgiveness before the Father because he has a just wrath against our rebellion.

rebellion. We turn from our rebellion. We trust in Christ's life and death and resurrection that he's on his throne now and he's the one who intercedes for us before the Father to grant us forgiveness, to give us righteousness that we could never earn or deserve.

[32 : 59] Friends, this is the gospel that we plead with those of you who are not believers to trust in Christ, to turn from sin. And it's the gospel that we continue to preach to ourselves as believers to be strengthened when we do sin and to be emboldened so that we wouldn't sin.

Well, with this basic outline in mind, what I want to do is just, I want to focus on the medium of this message, the written word spoken. God has chosen his own format.

He didn't say make movies, oh, that's anachronistic. They didn't have film back then. They had drama and yet we don't see any sort of commands of dramatizing the gospel. We see commands of reading the word, of preaching the word, of singing the word even. God has his own means. Let's just walk through this passage. In verses 14 and 15, look there at your scriptures.

Paul and Barnabas go into the synagogue and what happens? The written word is read aloud from the law and the prophets. In verse 16, Paul exhorts them and says, listen.

[34 : 10] Now, what is he going to do when he asks them to listen? He's literally going to quote scripture and then explain it. In verse 26, Paul says, this message of salvation has been sent.

How has this message been sent? God didn't command a bunch of rabbis to record little summaries and portions of scripture and just keep passing it along orally.

No, he commanded his prophets to write down Revelation all the way through to the New Testament. Even John in Revelation with these amazing visions.

I mean, John gets to see visually what you and I don't. And what is John told? Write this down. No, this is how God preserves.

This is God's means. So Paul's going to be reading. He's going to be quoting. He's going to be explaining. In verse 27, he says, these utterances, in other words, these spoken words of the prophets are what?

[35 : 15] They're read aloud in the gathering of God's people every Sabbath. And look at verse 29. Paul preaches all of these events of how Jesus is fulfilling.

What is he fulfilling? He's fulfilling written revelation. The promises of God that were recorded in writing. In verse 32, he says, we bring you the good news that God promised.

Where? Where did God promise? I mean, how do we have access to God's promises? It's not by oral passing on. It's not by faulty memories. It's by the writing of God's revelation.

In verse 34 now, we start to get in, sorry, verse 33. He even says this explicitly. He says, he has fulfilled, look at verse 33, what is written, and then he quotes Psalm 2.

In the next verse, he says, he has spoken, you see this written word that goes oral, the speaking of the written word, and then he quotes Isaiah 55. In verse 35, Paul quotes Psalm 16.

[36 : 19] And then in verses 40 to 41, Paul warns his listeners regarding what is, quote unquote, said in the prophets. That is, what is written and then now spoken to you.

The enduring written word of God that's spoken. In verse 41, Paul quotes from the written word in Habakkuk 1. In verse 42, here's the people saying, you know, we want more teaching.

What are they going to get? They're going to get more teaching of the written word proclaimed. In verse 44, it says, almost the whole city gathered. And what were they gathering? To hear the word taught.

That is, the written word explained. In verse 47, I'm sorry, in verse 46, he says, we are now turning to the Gentiles. They're going to go about preaching the written word.

And even writing, Paul, remember, Paul is a new covenant apostle, a new covenant prophet. He's getting direct revelation from God that is now being written. This is why Luke's with him to write it down.

[37 : 22] In verse 47, even Paul's justification, did you notice that in verse 47? Look again at verse 47. Paul's whole reason for going to the Gentiles, where does he pull it from?

From Isaiah 49. I mean, you and I like to go back to Isaiah in that section and say, this is all about Jesus. Yes. Well, this is all about Israel. Yes. How does that all work out?

Another time. But here's Paul taking Isaiah 49 and saying, this is my justification for going to the Gentiles because there's this promise.

Paul, an ambassador for Christ, an apostle of Christ, the promised Savior King. He quotes Isaiah 49.

And in verse 48, the Gentiles are, notice what they're rejoicing. Look again at verse 48. What do they rejoice? They rejoice and glorify the word, the word of God as it's taught.

[38 : 24] And besides direct quotes that I've just all mentioned to you, Paul summarizes whole portions of Old Testament scripture. He's just constantly summarizing the whole narrative of the Old Testament.

Friends, what if God's money and God's people and God's time and God's resources that he loans to us were spent on God's strategy?

Sending servants with the written word which is translated into the local language so that it can be read aloud and preached and prayed and sung and yes, seen.

Actually, God has given us a means of a visual display of the gospel. It's not the Jesus film. It's baptism and the Lord's table. That is the drama of the gospel that God has ordained.

That is the means. That is the method he's given us. The churches need the word. I mean, this is what we do. When we gather together as a local church, God gives us commands for what to do when we get together.

[39 : 28] In 1 Timothy 4, we're commanded to read the word aloud. In 2 Timothy 4 and so many other scriptures, we're commanded to preach the word. In Colossians 3, we're even commanded to sing the word.

Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we're instructing one another. It's not mainly about the people who are leading up here, although that's wonderful to get us going. It's about congregational instruction.

We're singing to one another. Yes, we're praising the Lord, but we're instructing one another. We even have prayers in scripture so that we know how to pray, which is why the disciples are saying, Lord, teach us to pray.

We have these model prayers in the whole book of Psalms, which are both prayers and then put to song so that we know how to pray to God and how to sing to God. Friends, you cannot have a church without the word of God and a language that you understand.

Remember Matthew 28, that great commission. Go and make disciples of all nations and baptize them and teach them to observe what? All. All that I've commanded.

[40 : 31] And friends, where are we today? 7,387 languages and only 713 have a full translation of God's word.

Less than 10% of the world's languages have a full translation of God's word. Friends, we've seen three essentials for establishing churches.

This last point will be very brief. The Spirit uses churches to send missionaries who speak and translate the word. Fourth, the Spirit establishes churches by saving sinners.

God gives us a work to do to take the word, to translate it, to speak it, to preach it, but God has to do his work. God has to save sinners. And this is very brief.

It's in verses 48 to 52. As many as were appointed to eternal life believed. We don't know who he's appointed. So we just have to proclaim and broadcast the gospel and trust that he will save those he has appointed.

[41 : 35] In verse 49, the missionaries are spreading the word, but they're trusting the Spirit to do what only he can do, to regenerate, to convert. In verse 52, it is God, the Spirit, that grants faith.

Friends, this is the missionary task. We obey God's instruction to preach, to pray, to disciple, to teach, and that we trust God to do his work. We've seen four essentials for establishing churches. It is the Spirit who sends servants from churches, who speak the written word, and then God saves sinners. Let me just close with a final application here.

In Romans 15, Paul says, I make it my ambition to preach the gospel. And then he quotes Isaiah 52. He said, here's why I have an ambition to preach the gospel, so that those who have never heard will understand.

And I just want to ask you, what is your ambition? What is your ambition for the Lord? We can have all sorts of ambitions that are not directly sinful.

[42 : 48] It's not something that God has said, don't do this. Thou shalt not murder. Yeah, I don't have an ambition really to murder. But even the things of the world that God gives us in joy and permits us to enjoy in life and creation, we can be so ambitious about these things and have no ambition for the Lord to be a more faithful husband or wife, a more faithful mother or father, a more faithful discipler and evangelist.

Maybe even dare say it, a missionary or just a more faithful sender. What is your ambition for Christ? Maybe at lunchtime with your family or those you're having over from the church and talk together and just share ambitions or confess that you haven't had an ambition and ask for others to pray and think about those things together.

I mean, why not think about going? Maybe it does take a decade or two for the training and the affirmation. Maybe it takes a decade for you to discover gifts that you don't even know you have today.

But out of love for the body, for Christ, for the maturing of the saints, you're just seeking to love people and all of a sudden the Spirit of God is working in you in a special way to love and build up others in the faith and all of a sudden your gifts are being fruitful, they're visible, people, they're tangible, people can see them and hear them.

According to Romans 10, yes, I realize we're not all goers. Some of us stay and send. There's those who go and those who send and we're both partners.

[44 : 17] We're both, this is Paul's point in Philippians, this idea of fellowship, it's partnership. Whether we go or whether we send, we're all faithful together as goers and senders.

But let me ask you a couple verses here just to reflect on over lunch. You can jot these down and have a conversation today. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul says, godliness with contentment is great gain. And he doesn't just leave it there. He starts to flesh out what contentment should be. He says in verse 7, we brought nothing into the world, we can't take anything out of the world, but if we have food and clothing, with these we'll be content.

Contentment with less equals more time, more affection, more space in our hearts and lives to be doing spiritual things, to be loving people, growing people, reaching the lost.

There's a very similar principle that he addresses in 2 Corinthians. Also in chapter 6, he says, we have spoken freely, Corinthians, our heart is wide open, he says.

[45 : 28] In verse 12, 2 Corinthians 6, you are not restricted by us, you are restricted in your own affections. Your own affections.

When your affections are on all these other things of the world, then our affect, we don't have room in our heart, we don't have space to be content with less, to be freed up with more affection, more desire, more love for Christ, more love for God's people, more love for the lost.

There's this correlation there with our contentment, with food and shelter, and the space and affection and desire in our hearts and our wills are just tagged right to our affections and our affections are just coming right out of our desires, our mind and our heart.

So I want to just encourage you. That's not meant to guilt trip you into anything. It's meant to encourage you to think about this ambition. Our confidence is that King Jesus is on his throne, he's building his church, and this confidence comes as we encourage one another in the promises of God.

Yes, as we also challenge and confront one another to have this cruciform-shaped life, this life that even accepts suffering and accepts less and is simple and content in order that we might be freed up to have the privilege and the joy to participate, whether that participation is as a goer or as a sender.

[46 : 56] Friends, it's all of our participation. We identify God's grace at work in each other and we cooperate together in a local church and across churches to send, to identify, to train, to affirm.

Well, let me conclude. God's word gives us confidence. God's word gives us confidence. King Jesus really is on his throne. He is establishing his church.

He's expanding his kingdom and he does this by his spirit who sends servants from churches who speak the written word and trust God to save sinners.

Let's pray. Father, you are the God of peace. You raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. He is a strong shepherd and we are weak sheep.

We ask that you would send your spirit to equip us with everything good to do your will. We ask that you would work in us what is pleasing in your sight through Christ, our Savior, our King.

[48 : 01] We ask for his glory and for the good of your people in every tribe and language. In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.