

# 1. The First Missionary Journey

Acts 13 Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary trip of the Antioch Church



One day while the leaders of the Antioch Church are fasting and praying ...



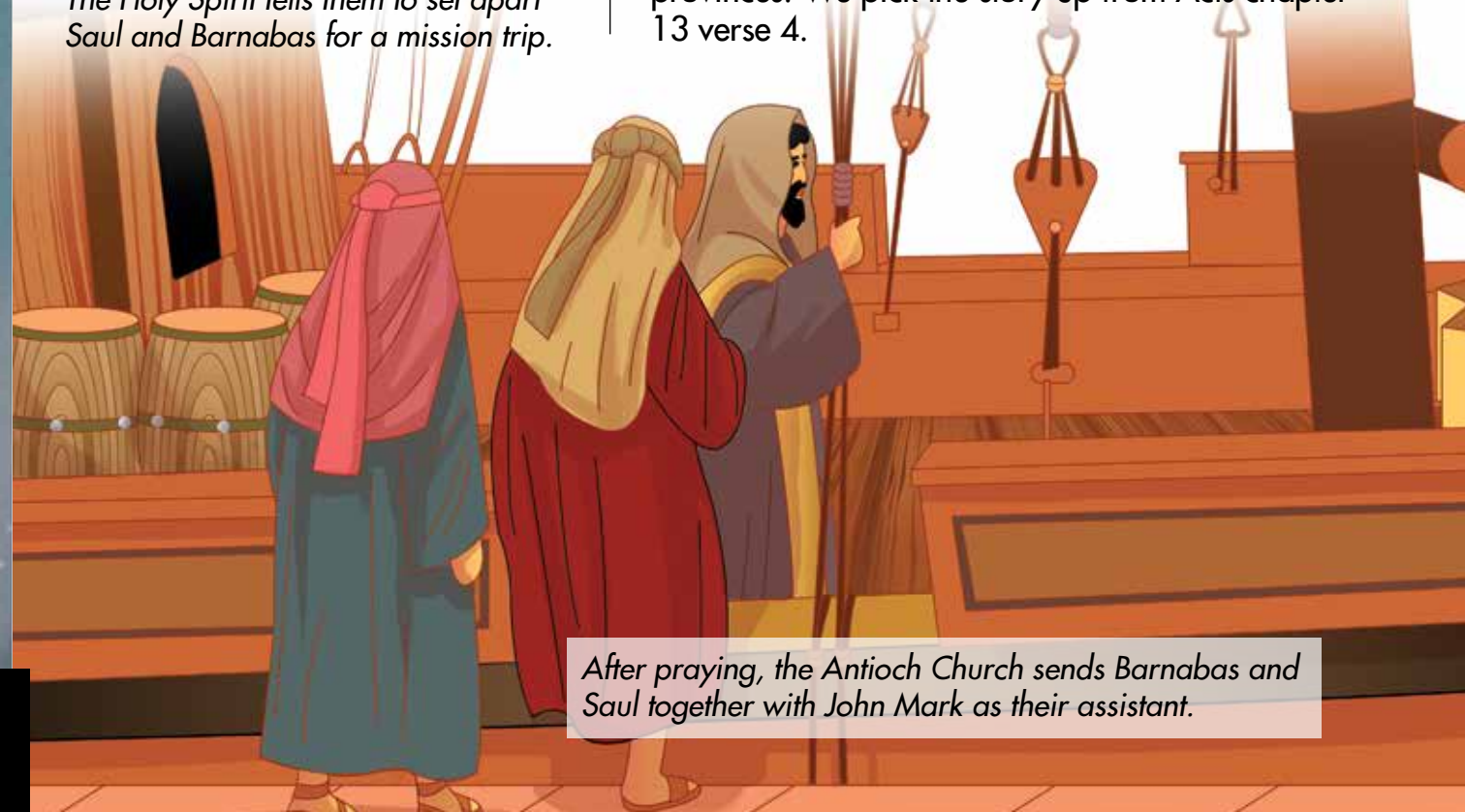
The Holy Spirit tells them to set apart Saul and Barnabas for a mission trip.

Timeline: Around AD 46

Acts: 13

From Acts chapter 13 onwards, we focus on the story of Paul, the Antioch church and the churches in the countries outside of Israel. Now the church in **Antioch, Syria** had grown. There were prophets and teachers among their leaders. These included Barnabas, Simeon, Saul of Tarsus, Lucius – from Cyrene and Manaen – a childhood companion of King Herod Antipas.

One day 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." After the leaders and the church prayed and fasted for some time, they were convinced that God had called Barnabas and Saul for a special missionary trip among the Gentile provinces. We pick the story up from Acts chapter 13 verse 4.



After praying, the Antioch Church sends Barnabas and Saul together with John Mark as their assistant.

Acts 13:4 So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. 5 There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant. (NLT)

They travelled from town to town across Cyprus until they reached Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus or Elymas as his name was called in Greek

Elymas kept himself very close to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him because he wanted to hear the message of God.

Now Elymas, was worried that the proconsul would believe in the gospel that Barnabas and Saul were preaching. He would be out of a job if that happened..

So he opposed Barnabas and Saul and tried to convince the governor that they were teaching false ideas. He kept interrupting and objecting to everything that was said by Barnabas and Saul. Finally Saul, filled with the Holy Spirit decided to confront Elymas directly.

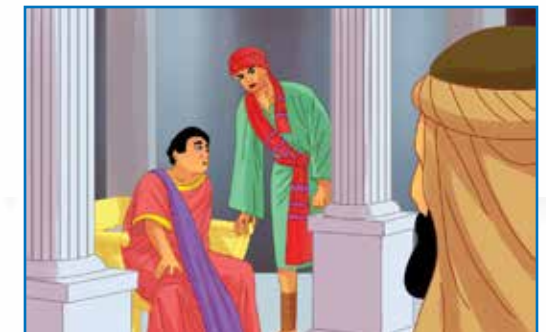
Elymas keeps opposing Saul and Barnabas.



They sail to Cyprus.

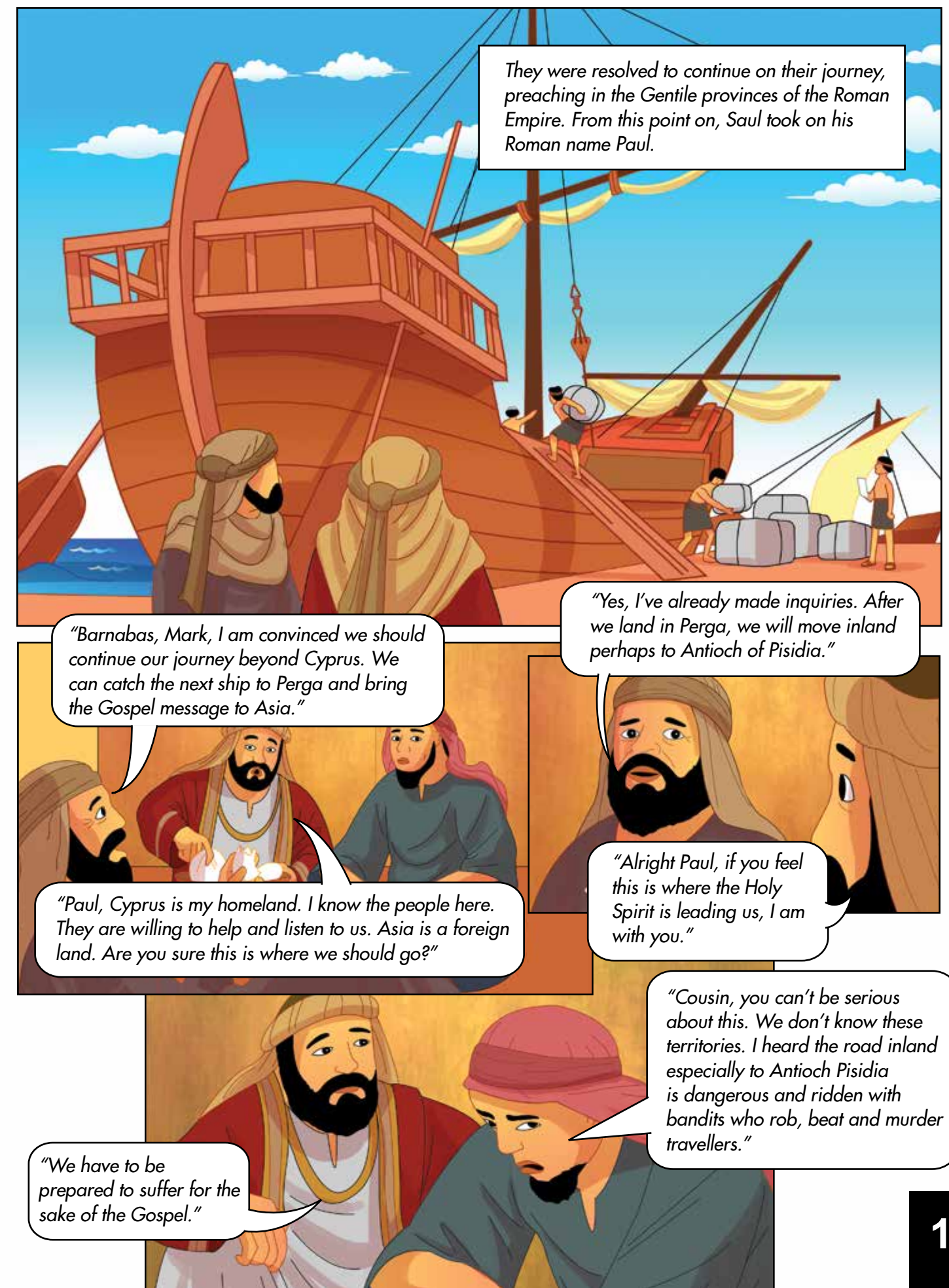
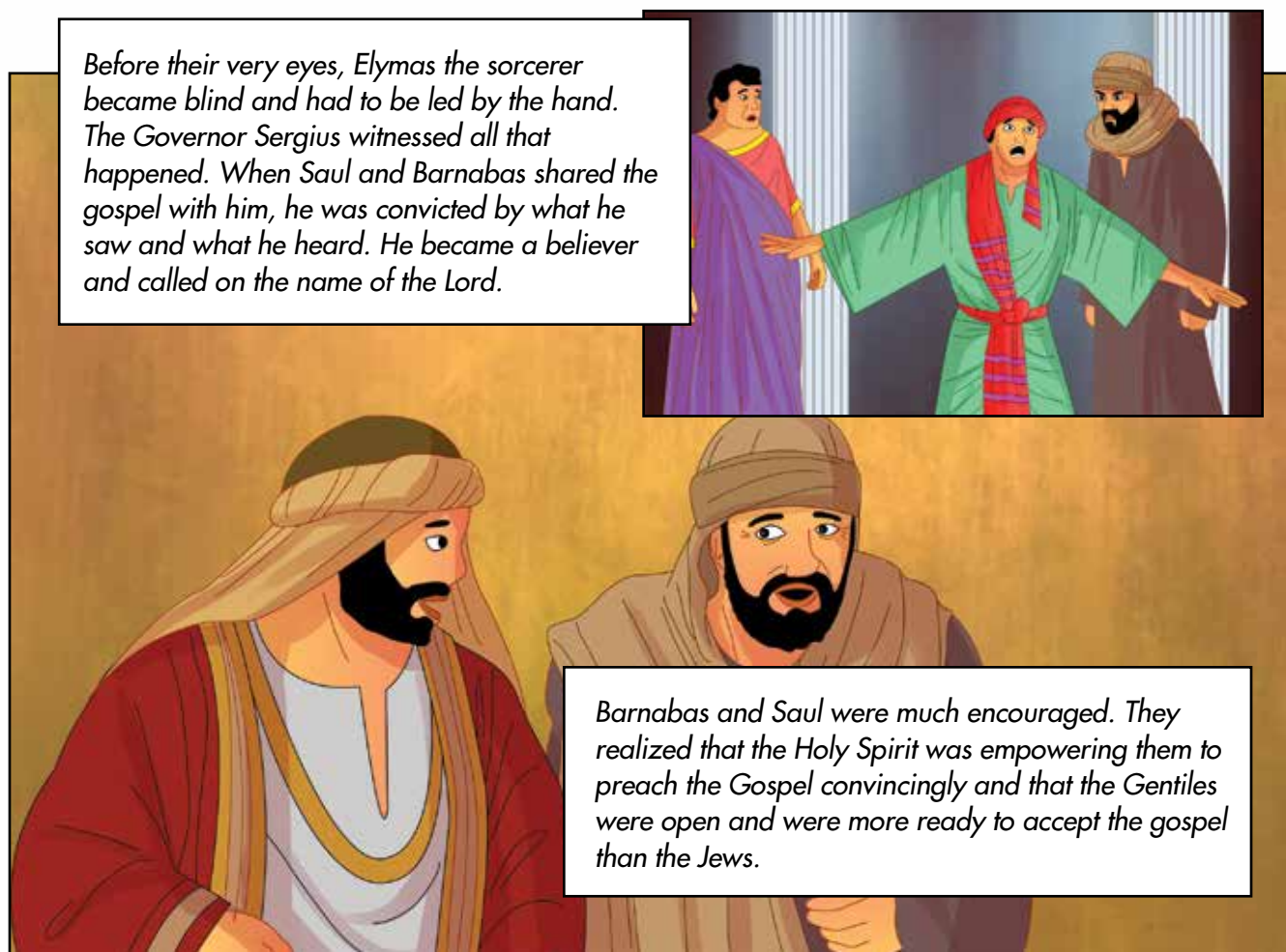
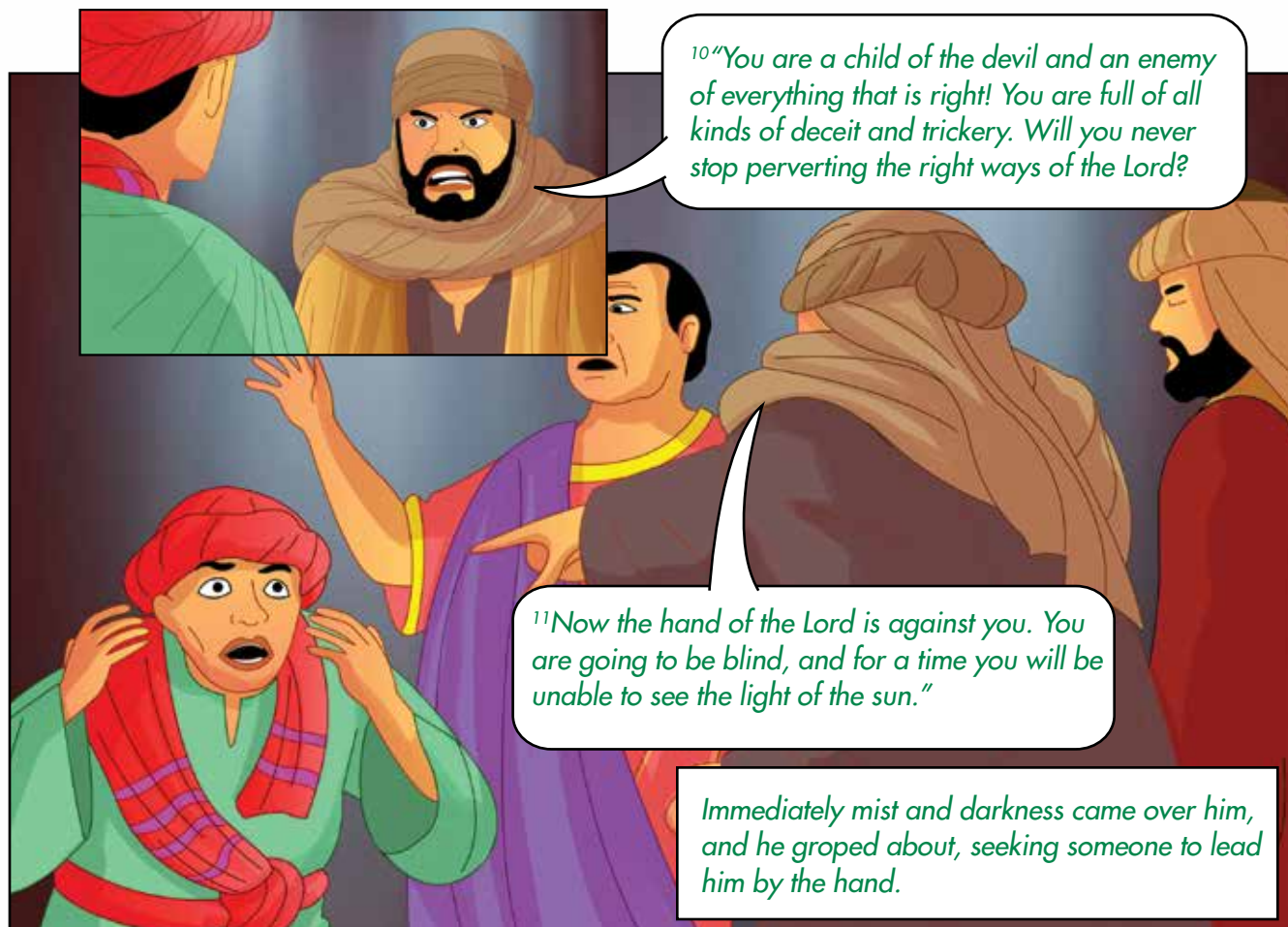


In Paphos of Cyprus, they meet the governor Sergius Paulus ...



... and his Jewish Sorcerer Elymas.









They travel to Pisidian Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas were determined to go further inland travelling by a dangerous road to Pisidian Antioch.

On the Sabbath, they went to the synagogue. After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the synagogue invited Paul and Barnabas to share any word they might have with them.

Paul took this opportunity to give them an eloquent and convincing speech.

He explained to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles present that God had chosen the nation of Israel to reveal Himself and be a channel of blessing to all nations. He told how the Law and the Prophets had pointed to the coming of God's Messiah who would come as a descendant of King David.

Paul explained, "The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah whom all the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned Him to die on the cross and in doing this they fulfilled the words of the prophets, which we read every Sabbath.

Acts 13:29 When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup>But God raised him from the dead! <sup>31</sup>And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel."

Paul explained that salvation and the way back to God was only possible through Jesus the Messiah and that this good news was for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Acts 13:38 "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for our sins. <sup>39</sup>Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God ..."

Paul tells them Jesus is the only way back to God.



Paul preaches to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles.



He preaches the gospel to them.



He tells them about the death and resurrection of Jesus.







The people ask him to return and preach again the next week.



Paul agrees and returns the next week.



But this time they argue against everything Paul has to say.

The people begged Paul and Barnabas to speak to them again the next week. Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas who continued to teach them about God's grace made available through Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:44 On the next Sabbath almost all the people in the city came together to hear the word of the Lord.<sup>45</sup> When the Jews there saw all these people, they became very jealous.

Shouting insults, they argued against everything Paul said.<sup>(ERV)</sup>

<sup>46</sup>But Paul and Barnabas spoke very boldly. They said, "We had to tell God's message to you Jews first, but you refuse to listen. You have made it clear that you are not worthy of having eternal life. So we will now go to those who are not Jews."

<sup>46</sup>"This is what the Lord told us to do: 'I have made you a light for the other nations, to show people all over the world the way to be saved.'"<sup>(ERV)</sup>

When the Gentiles heard this they were glad and felt blessed. Many of them believed in the word of the Lord and received salvation. When the Jews saw so many Gentiles following Paul and Barnabas, they became even more jealous.

They stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city and incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of the city.

Acts 13:51 So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium.<sup>52</sup> And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. There was now a small church in Antioch of Pisidia.



Paul and Barnabas shake the dust of their feet before they leave.

### Understanding the Story

1. The church of Antioch Syria is led by the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas on this historic missionary trip. The Gospel now is taken to Gentile countries being led by the Holy Spirit.
2. When the Gospel message is rejected by the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas decide to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Saul started using his Roman name Paul?  
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2. Why do you think John Mark left them and how do you think Paul and Barnabas felt when John Mark left them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What lessons can we learn and apply from this story?  
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### Interesting Information

#### Antioch of Syria

Syrian Antioch was built around 300 BC by Seleucus Nicator one of the generals of Alexander the Great. In 64 BC it was annexed to Rome by Pompey. Syrian Antioch became the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. It was a cosmopolitan city strategically located for trade between the West and East of the Mediterranean.

Seleucus Nicator had settled a number of Jews in the city, granting them equal rights with the Greeks. Syrians, Greeks, Jews and later Romans, made up the main people groups. It was here that the followers of Christ were first called 'Christians'.

Iconium  
Lystra Derbe

Antioch in Pisidia

Attalia Perge

There is a small church in Antioch of Pisidia.





Antakya - Modern Syrian Antioch - today, lies just within the border of Turkey.

Photo by: Rev Dr Lim Kar yong

Refer to Epic of the Apostles Volume 1 pg.86 for more information on Antioch Syria.

### John Mark left them

Luke only makes a simple remark that John Mark left them without any comments. However, from Acts 15:38 Luke shows us that Paul had regarded this return to Jerusalem by Mark as something very serious. We are not told the exact reasons why John Mark left them. We can deduce that Paul was very unhappy with Mark's departure because later, he described this incident as a "desertion" and refused to bring Mark along in his next journey. However, Bible scholars have given other possible reasons.

### Pisidian Antioch

Pisidian Antioch is in Asia Minor. Many wonderful things happened while Paul and Barnabas were there. There was a synagogue there where they preached to Jews and Gentiles. Some Bible

scholars have commented that Paul may have been suffering from malaria at that time because of the swampy marshes in Perga. This was a well documented fact that many who suffered from malaria then would go to recuperate on the higher lands. However, the road to the higher inland towns like Pisidian Antioch was also dangerous because of robbers.

### Shook the dust from their feet

Luke records this statement to show the apostles were only following what their Master had told them to do. In his earlier writing found in Luke 9:5 he quoted Jesus saying, "If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." These words are also found in Matthew 10:14 and Mark 6:11.

## Epic of the Apostles Vol.2 - Paul and the Early Missionary Journeys

# 2. Galatian Chronicle – Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel

Acts 14 Paul and Barnabas establish a church in Galatia c. AD 47-48

Side-story: Somewhere In The Corridors Of The Rulers in Jerusalem.

News reached Jerusalem of what Paul and Barnabas had accomplished in Cyprus and that they were now in Asia Minor. While the Christians rejoiced to hear of their success, the Jewish priests and members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council, became concerned that Paul was making their people turn away from their traditional ways.

We introduce three fictitious characters who represent how the Sanhedrin would have reacted to the news of Paul's missionary work among the Jews and the Gentiles. Bar Caiaphas, Samuel and Barzillai are very concerned about the number of Jews and potential converts to Judaism now turning to Christianity.

