

## Acts 13:1-3

1. Observation and exposition
2. The take-away for us?

## Discussion questions

1. What is fasting?
2. At what point does not eating become fasting?
3. Besides not eating, are there other types of fasting in the Bible?
4. Are we supposed to (commanded to) fast as Christians?
5. Did Jesus fast?
6. Did Jesus expect us to fast?
7. Have you ever fasted? For spiritual reasons?
  - a. My experience in 2005(?)
8. Do any of you fast on a regular basis?
9. Does the Bible give us any guidelines on fasting?

## Observation and exposition

1. Read the passage
2. Setting
  - a. When?
    - i. A.D. 46 (47) [SLIDE]
  - b. Where?
    - i. Antioch in Syria [SLIDES]
3. Observation and exposition
  - a. Why are Barnabas and Saul in Antioch?
    - i. **11:19-26**
  - b. Where did the prophets come from?
    - i. Possibly in the group that came from Jerusalem in **11:27**, though Agabus is not mentioned here in this list.
    - ii. Believers in the Antiochian church gifted by the Spirit
      1. **Romans 12:6-8**
      2. **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**
      3. **Ephesians 4:11-14**

- c. Were all five men in this list both prophets and teachers? Or are there two different groups lumped together?
- i. We already know from **11:26** that Barnabas and Saul were teachers.
  - ii. Saul takes on a prophetic role in **13:9-11**.
  - iii. Presumably, if Barnabas and Saul are leaving, then the Holy Spirit would not leave the Antioch church without one or more other teachers.
  - iv. Probably, the men in this list are both prophets and teachers.
- d. "What is most obvious is the ethnic diversity of the leadership of this church." Peterson, 374
- i. Barnabas - Cyprus
    1. **Acts 4:36**
  - ii. Simeon called Niger - may have been from Africa
    1. Stott thinks this is the same Simon from Cyrene who carried Jesus' cross in **Luke 23:26**; most other commentators disagree with this position
  - iii. Lucius - Cyrene in northern Africa
  - iv. Manaen (Μανανήν) - brought up with Herod the tetrarch, the ruler of Galilee when Jesus was born (**Luke 3:1**)
    1. "a member of the court" (ESV) - **σύντροφος**
    2. "The title 'foster-brother' was given to boys of the same age as royal princes, who were taken to court to be brought up with them....Herod the tetrarch, to whom Manaen was foster-brother, was Herod Antipas, youngest son of Herod the Great, who ruled Galilee and Peraea as tetrarch from 4 B.C. to A.D 39....It is natural to suppose that Luke's access to information about the Herod family was derived from Manaen. But what a commentary on the mystery and sovereignty of divine grace that, of these two boys who were brought up together, one should attain honor as a Christian leader, while the other should be best remembered for his inglorious behavior in the killing of John the Baptist and in the trial of Jesus!" Bruce, 245
  - v. Saul - Tarsus
- e. "worshiping the Lord and fasting" (2)
- i. Worshiping? As in singing worship songs? Probably not...
  - ii. Worshiping - two possible meanings:
    1. Worshiping, from the Greek participle **Λειτουργούντων** (from the verb **λειτουργέω**) - "generally used of a public service rendered by someone to benefit others....Since *the Lord* is the object of service or ministry here, Luke may be suggesting that corporate prayer is the 'cultic' activity which replaces the sacrificial approach to God which was at the heart of Judaism. Coupled with *fasting*, the

reference is most likely to prayer, though it is also possible that the meaning is 'serving the Lord' with their gifts, as they engaged in prophecy and teaching." Peterson, 375

- iii. In Acts, "fasting" is mentioned specifically only here in verses **2 and 3, 14:23, and 27:9**.
    - 1. Though see **9:9**, where Saul "neither ate nor drank" for three days when he was without sight.
  - iv. **νηστευόντων** - present active participle, "to fast", (νη-, ἐσθίω = not eat)
  - v. "There are indications in the New Testament that Christians were specially sensitive to the Spirit's communications during fasting. On this occasion, the divine message directed the leaders of the church to set Barnabas and Saul apart for a special work to which he had [already] called them. It is perhaps worth noticing that the two men who were to be released for what would nowadays be called missionary service overseas were the two most eminent and gifted leaders in the church." Bruce, 245-246 **[SLIDE]**
  - vi. "Christians are not commanded to fast in the NT, though Jesus gives guidance about how to fast in a way that is pleasing to God (Mt. 6:16-18). Some apparently took over the practice from Judaism, 'partly as self-discipline, partly as a reinforcement to prayer'. In the present context there was probably a commitment to fast as an aid to prayer." Peterson, 375 **[SLIDE]**
- f. "The Holy Spirit said..." **(2)**
- i. Out loud for the group to hear?
  - ii. Through one or more of the prophets?
  - iii. Through an inner conviction of God's will given to one or more of them?
- g. "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **(2)**
- i. "The Spirit's charge...is for the leaders of the church to acknowledge by their actions what God has already decided and revealed." Peterson, 376
  - ii. What actions?
    - 1. Fasting
    - 2. Praying
    - 3. Laying on of hands
    - 4. "Sent them off"
      - a. **ἀπέλυσαν** (from **ἀπολύω**) "to release, divorce"
      - b. Released from their duties in that local church
- h. Who sent them out?
- i. The other three "leaders" in verse 1?
  - ii. Or the entire church?

1. See **14:24-27**
  - iii. The Holy Spirit?
    1. **13:2**
    2. **13:3**
  - iv. A combination of the above, initiated by the Holy Spirit
4. Fasting
  - a. Wikipedia article - overview and examples
  - b. GotQuestions.org articles (1-3)
  - c. "So fasting ...." Grudem, 390-391

### **The take-away for us**

1. "Most western Christians do not fast, but, if we were willing to fast more regularly - even for one or two meals - we might be surprised how much more spiritual power and strength we would have in our lives and in our churches." Grudem, 391

### **Resources**

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce, 1990
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce, 1988
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III
6. *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem
7. <https://www.gotquestions.org/fasting-Christian.html>
8. <https://www.gotquestions.org/prayer-fasting.html>
9. <https://www.gotquestions.org/how-to-fast.html>
10. <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-did-Jesus-fast.html>
11. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting>