

Acts 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Analysis

Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) (Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος, οὕτως γὰρ μεθερμηνεύεται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, Elymas ho magos, houtōs gar methermēneuetai to onoma autou)—Luke provides the Semitic 'Elymas' (possibly from Arabic alim, 'wise one' or 'magician') as Bar-jesus's professional title. The parenthetical explanation suggests Luke's Greek audience needed clarification, emphasizing the man's identity as an occult practitioner.

Withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith (ἀνθίστατο αὐτοῖς ζητῶν διαστρέψαι τὸν ἀνθύπατον ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως, anthistato autois zētōn diastrepsai ton anthypaton apo tēs pisteōs)—the imperfect tenses (ἀνθίστατο, ζητῶν) describe continuous, determined opposition. The verb διαστρέψαι (diastrepsai, 'to distort, pervert, turn aside') reveals Elymas's motive: protecting his influence and income by preventing Sergius Paulus's conversion. This confrontation typifies spiritual warfare in missions.

Historical Context

Court magicians held significant influence in Roman households, claiming access to divine knowledge and providing supernatural counsel. Elymas's position with Sergius Paulus likely included astrology, divination, and interpreting omens—standard services for Roman officials making governmental decisions.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Elymas's opposition—seeking to maintain influence and income—mirror contemporary resistance to the gospel?
2. When have you witnessed spiritual opposition intensify precisely when someone is close to genuine conversion?

Interlinear Text

ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῦ Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος οὗτως γὰρ
withstood But is his Elymas the sorcerer so (for
G436 G1161 G846 G1681 G3588 G3097 G3779 G1063

μεθερμηνεύεται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζητῶν διαστρέψαι τὸν
by interpretation name is his seeking to turn away G3588 G3686 G846 G2212 G1294 G3588
G3177 G3588 G3686 G846 G2212 G1294 G3588

ἀνθύπατον ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως
the deputy from the faith
G446 G575 G3588 G4102

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 3:8 (Faith): Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

Acts 9:36 (Parallel theme): Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org