

ACTS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Tonight we will begin the last part of the book of Acts as the Gospel message now goes to the uttermost parts of the earth just as Jesus said in Acts 1:8, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

Also, the focus is now going to be Paul instead of Peter and the Gospel is now going to the Gentiles.

You see, God used Peter to open the door to the Gentiles and once Paul was raised up and ready to be sent out, Peter focused primarily with the Jews. And yet, within the Roman Catholic Church you see Peter as the focus to the Gentiles. But that is not what we read in the Scriptures.

And the reality is; it is not Peter, it is not Paul and it is not even Mary, it is about Jesus. Sorry for that musical flashback there, Peter, Paul and Mary. But you get the picture!

And, as we will see here in the book of Acts, Paul went on three missionary journeys.

His first missionary journey was to Asia Minor in Galatia.

His second missionary journey was primarily to Greece.

And his third missionary journey he went to some of the same areas he covered on his first two missionary journeys, Asia Minor and Greece.

We are also going to see Saul's name change from Saul to Paul and many wonder why? Keep in mind that Saul was his Hebrew name and being a Roman citizen, (Acts 22:28) Paul was his Roman name.

Why would he use his Roman name instead of his Hebrew name? I think the reason is really simple.

His missionary work was going to be primarily to the Gentile world as he said in Romans 11:13, **“For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles . . .”**

One more point regarding his name. The name **“Saul”** means “requested one” and as a Pharisee he was sought after, he was important.

But now that he has come to Christ that has all changed and now his name, **“Paul”** means “little one.” He saw himself in the light of Christ and it was no longer about him, but it was about the Lord. I think both do apply here.

Now, let me say this. As Paul goes forward he must take steps of faith. He did not know everything that he would encounter, but he trusted the Lord and went forward. And so must we.

Let me share this with you because it will show you what we are to be doing, walking! We are told,

As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests . . . shall rest in the waters . . . the waters shall be cut off (Joshua 3:13).

The people were not to wait in their camps until the way was opened, they were to walk by faith. They were to break camp, pack up their goods, form in line to march, and move down to the very banks before the river would be opened.

If they had come down to the edge of the river and then had stopped for the stream to divide before they stepped into it, they would have waited in vain. They must take one step into the water before the river would be cut off.

We must learn to take God at His Word, and go straight on in duty, although we see no way in which we can go forward. The reason we are so often balked by difficulties is that we expect to see them removed before we try to pass through them.

If we would move straight on in faith, the path would be opened for us. We stand still, waiting for the obstacle to be removed, when we ought to go forward as if there were no obstacles. . . .

Faith that goes forward triumphs.

- Streams in the Desert - February 11

How true that is not only in the life of Paul but in our own lives. May we be stirred into action and move forward as God instructs us so the Gospel message can go forward.

As we will see, Paul's first missionary journey covers Acts chapters 13 and 14 and what an adventure it was. It did have its share of difficulties, but that is life. And the Lord will see Paul through this all, just as He will see us through.

As we finished up last time, Acts chapter 12 closed with these words, "**And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.**" Acts 12:25.

Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark were all at the church in Antioch, having returned from delivering a gift of support to the church in Jerusalem.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Acts chapter 13, beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ACTS 13**VERSE 1**

Antioch was located in Syria and besides Jews living there we also see many Arab people as well, besides many Greeks. By this time in their history Antioch was the third most important city in the Roman Empire, behind Rome and then Alexandria in Egypt. The reason it was so important was because of the tremendous wealth that flowed through there and then on its way to Rome. It was, for the most part, a business city.

And yes, like most pagan cultures, immorality ran wild in Antioch, and yet, the church there was growing and making an impact not only on the people, but on the society as well! That is what should happen as people come to know the Lord, the society they are living in should be changed for the better!

What I want you to notice is the diversity of people that were working together at the church in Antioch.

Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus.

Simeon also called Niger which means “black” and thus, he probably was a Black African. And it is possible that he is the man who helped Jesus carry His cross to Calvary.

Then there was Lucius of Cyrene, or from North Africa.

Manaen grew up with Herod Antipas, the one who beheaded John the Baptist. One got saved and the other rejected Jesus. Choices every person will have to make, to come to Jesus or reject Him!

And Saul who was a Pharisee!

How in the world could they all work together? Because of Jesus Christ and thus, they tore down those walls of division, of separation for a greater cause!

Today in the church many build up those walls because of the way a person looks, dresses, the music they like, even what version of the Bible they read, and-so-on.

And folks that should not be. What a great lesson for us to see here and then to apply to our lives, to follow. The cause is Christ and not our own personal feelings.

And it is because of that unity that they had we see the Holy Spirit moving not only in their own personal lives, but the Holy Spirit is going to move them out to the mission field!

VERSES 2-3

They must have felt an urgency upon their hearts which caused them to fast and pray and seek direction from the Lord.

And as you read this it would seem that they were praying for the lost, that they wanted the Gospel message to go forward and God answered their prayer and is sending them out with the Gospel to a lost world!

Also, did you notice that they ministered **“to the Lord”** and not “for the Lord.” Now you may be thinking I am making a big deal and it is not a big deal! I think it is. You see, one is worshiping and the other is working.

Make no mistake about it, our primary purpose according to Revelation 4:11, from the King James Version of the Bible, is to worship God. We are told, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”**

And please understand that it is not that working is wrong, we are also created for good works, but we must begin with worship and that leads us into good works. It is setting priorities in our life.

Now as they are fasting and praying God, by His Spirit, either spoke through the prophets or one of the other members and the call came for Saul and Barnabas to go out, not in a few months, but now!

And as you look at the Scriptures, it seems that this is the first time that a church sent out people to evangelize. They were sponsored, you might say, by the church in Antioch for this work.

And I love this. There were no board meetings, no demographics, no marketing survey's, no worldly ways at all! It was the Holy Spirit who called them, the church then sent them, and they went – that is the way to do it!

Also note that God has prepared work for them to do. It is as Ephesians 2:10 says, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

God not only prepares the work for us, but He prepares us for the work just as He did with Saul and Barnabas. May we be open to His direction for our lives!

VERSES 4-5

Make no mistake about it, no work will ever be fruitful for God unless the Holy Spirit is doing the directing. And that is exactly what we are seeing here!

So, this first missionary journey of Paul begins as they travel some 16 miles to the seaport city of Seleucia.

From there they took a boat to the Island of Cyprus, which is the third largest Island in the Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia.

This Island, Cyprus, was some 100 miles long and 60 miles wide and at this time Salamis was the chief port and commercial center on the east side of the Island.

In Salamis they went into the Synagogues and preached to them the Word of God and pointing them to Jesus. They didn't waste time, they got right down to business and what a great example for us to follow.

We are also told that they had another traveling companion with them on this journey, John Mark. John Mark was the nephew of Barnabas.

Also, keep in mind that John Mark was maybe 12 years old or so when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and John Mark tells us what happened with a personal note in his Gospel, "**Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.**" Mark 15:51-52.

We also know that his mother's house was where the early church gathered so John Mark or Mark grew up with Jesus and around those who loved Jesus and now he is going forth to assist in this work with Saul and Barnabas to spread the Good News of Jesus! (Acts 12:12)

VERSES 6-8

As they travel through the Island of Cyprus, starting out in Salamis, they travel about 100 miles to Paphos, on the other side of this Island.

Keep in mind that Paphos was on the west end of Cyprus and it was the seat of the Roman government. It was also the place where the governor lived.

Also, this was a very wicked city that was in spiritual darkness and needed the light of Jesus Christ to shine down upon them. Of this city, Barclay tells us, “Paphos was infamous for its worship of Venus, the goddess of [sexual] love.”

As they arrive there, Sergius Paulus, the governor, wants Saul and Barnabas to share the Word of God with him, an open door for ministry. Obviously, this man was searching for the truth and God will send His truth to people who are searching.

And I will let you in on what happens to Sergius Paulus, he gets saved and we have evidence, not only for his existence, but his salvation. We are told, “Sir William Ramsay reports that inscriptions bearing Sergius Paulus’ name have been found on Cyprus confirming that he was a Christian and that his entire family became Christians.” (Hughes)

Now, what happens next is interesting. There is a man by the name of Bar-Jesus or Son of Jesus, also called Elymas which means “skillful one,” and he tries to stop Sergius Paulus from hearing the truth, he wants Sergius Paulus to remain in spiritual darkness!

Now this is interesting. The name of this man, Bar-Jesus means “son of salvation” and think about this for a minute. How many false prophets are running around today claiming to be from God, sent by Him to tell them the way of salvation?

If they say that salvation comes by any other name than Jesus, then they are a false prophet!

Now we should not be discouraged if this happens to you as a door seems to open up. Satan will do anything to stop you from sharing your faith and to keep people in spiritual darkness. We must walk by faith and not by sight!

I think Spurgeon sums it up nicely for us as he said, “Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives against his kite.”

So, what does Saul do? Let’s read on and see!

VERSES 9-10

Saul tells it like it is, this man was not the Son of Jesus but the Son of the Devil!

How could he say that? Because of the deceit, the lies he spoke as he was trying to keep people from Jesus.

Why is this such a big deal? Because, whoever controls the governor controls Cyprus, so Satan immediately tries to keep the governor from the faith by using this man, Bar-Jesus.

But Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit is not only going to rebuke this man but he is also going to teach Sergius Paulus and the proconsul the things of God. He was not going to let the enemy of God stop him.

The lesson for us, never give up!

Now I am going to use the name “**Paul**” instead of “**Saul**” as the Scriptures will do as well. Keep in mind, like I have said, Saul was his Jewish name which meant “requested one,” but after he came to Christ and saw himself as he really was, the chief of sinners, he uses his Roman name Paul, which means “little one.”

And, as we read on, we will see that Paul is not done with this man called Bar-Jesus!

VERSES 11-12

Because of the wickedness of Elymas and what he tried to do, the Lord caused him to be temporarily blind. Yes, this was a physical blindness, but he was already in spiritual darkness which has eternal consequences.

Of this Morgan tells us, “The severest words of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are reserved for those who stand between men and truth, for those who stand between men and God. . . . It must be the heart that loves Sergius Paulus that speaks in anger to Elymas the sorcerer.”

I am sorry but if you allow false teaching, false doctrine, false teachers to go on because you don’t want to offend them, then you will be hurting someone who will hear that teaching. And the reality is, your love for the false teacher is greater than your love for the Lord!

I think you know me well enough that I will not stand for false teaching, false doctrine to come into this church. Do you know why?

Because I fear the Lord more than I fear man. But that is not all. I love you too much to allow that to happen!

People can be mad at me, they can yell and scream at me, but in the end, they hopefully will realize that I love them too much to let that false teaching to go on! That was the heart of Paul, he loved Sergius Paulus too much to let him fall prey to that false teacher!

Now it says in verse 12 of Acts chapter 13, **“Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”**

Here’s the question. Did this miracle or judgment cause them to believe?

I don’t believe so. And the reason I feel that way is that they were **“astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”**

In other words, Paul taught the Word of God to them!

How true that is today, we need to speak and teach the Word of God to people for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe! Remember what Paul said in Romans 10:17,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

May we not lose sight of that fact!

VERSE 13

Now they sail from Paphos north to the main land, some 200 miles across the Mediterranean Sea and landed at Attalia, the port of Perga, which was a major city in the Roman province of Pamphylia in Asia Minor of what is today Turkey.

Here John Mark leaves them, and we don't know why. There is much speculation, some saying he was homesick, others feel he was mad that Paul took over instead of his uncle Barnabas, others feel he was scared – maybe because of the high rate of malaria in this area and Paul himself may have come down with Malaria. Galatians 4:13 seems to give us a hint, **“You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.”**

Whatever the reason, we are going to see later on that Paul did not appreciate John Mark leaving and he refuses to let him go with them on another missionary journey. Paul was truly on a mission and he was not going to let anyone get in his way, and that can be good and bad, we just need to be careful and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction in these matters.

VERSES 14-15

Keep in mind that Perga was a coastal, harbor city, where the ship from Paphos came to the mainland.

Antioch in Pisidia was about 135 miles inland, to the north.

This general region was known as Galatia, and later Paul wrote a letter to these churches that is included in our New Testament library.

Also keep in mind that this is not the same Antioch they were sent from but this one is in Pisidia, in the highlands away from the marshes and malaria down in Perga and to get there it was very difficult, the terrain was tough.

Some feel that the reason that Paul did not share the Gospel in Perga was he developed malaria in Perga and thus, wanted to get out of that area, traveling to Antioch.

Boice picks up on this as he wrote, "Pisidian Antioch was in the mountains at an altitude of about 3,600 feet. Since Paul mentions in the letter to the Galatians that he had a bodily affliction at this time, some scholars have supposed that Paul caught a disease, perhaps malaria, while living in Pamphylia's lower coastal plains and that he had his party pressed on into the healthier mountain climate because of it."

That is a possibility but the road to Antioch in Pisidia was difficult, as I have said. Antioch in Pisidia was 3600 ft. above sea level, on a plateau up on the Toras Mountains.

It was 100 miles up and through and over the Toras Mountains - certainly not an easy thing to accomplish from a physical standpoint, not to mention the danger from thieves and robbers.

There in Antioch Paul went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day. And the format back then is similar to what happens today. It went like this.

The first thing they do when they come together is the recitation of the Shema – Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Then they offered prayers.

Following the prayer time, then Scripture is read. The portion of Scripture that was read was always from the Pentateuch or the five books of Moses. And this was divided up over a 7-year period. This meant they would read the Pentateuch every 7 years, a little each Sabbath.

Following that there is a reading from the prophets. These are also divided up over 7 years and the passages from the Law and the Prophets usually coincided. (This is the pattern for the orthodox synagogues)

Now following that there would be instruction and teaching and if there was present any competent visiting guest, like a rabbi, he would be invited to speak on subjects relating to the readings.

And that is why Paul was there, to share Jesus with them. And Paul does not hold back, as we will see.

In Paul's teaching here in Acts chapter 13, it can be broken down into three sections.

First, in verses 16-25 we see the anticipation and the preparation for the coming Messiah.

Next, in verses 26-37 we see Paul speak of the rejection, crucifixion and the resurrection of the Messiah.

And lastly, in verses 38-41 we see what any good teacher does, he speaks of the application of these things and then makes an appeal to them to receive Jesus.

So, let's read through this and see the masterful teaching of Paul as he is empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring forth the Gospel message.

VERSES 16-25

Paul is speaking to Jews and Gentiles who have not fully converted to Judaism but were seeking the God of Israel.

And make no mistake about it, the Jews loved their history for they saw the hand of God upon them. That is why Paul starts out with their history and how God brought them out of slavery in Egypt into the Promise Land.

He then speaks of the time of the Judges that lasted about 450 years, until Samuel.

Then God gave them a King, Saul, to rule the nation. But because of his sin, God removed Saul and placed David as King – and it is from the seed of David that God will bring forth the Savior of the world, Jesus!

Then Paul moves to John the Baptist who proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and prepared the people for the Messiah, for Jesus to come!

And Paul's point is simple. God's plan and purpose have come to pass, His hand was upon all this and He brought it forth, even when they were not walking with the Lord, they were in rebellion against Him!

Make no mistake about it, ***ALL ROADS LEAD TO JESUS*** or at least they should. Now don't misunderstand me here because I can see some of your faces being shocked. What I mean is that when we share our faith, it should all point back to Jesus.

You can share about creation, you can share about what is going on in the world, you can share about the one world government or one world religion that is coming, but it all needs to point back to Jesus! That is what I mean when I say that ***ALL ROADS LEAD TO JESUS!***

Paul, looking back over the history of the Jews, did so with the intention of showing them that the Messiah is from the Jews!

Isn't that the goal of history, the **REVELATION** of Jesus in all of His glory as He comes back to set up His Kingdom here on earth and to rule and reign for 1,000 years! Absolutely and thus, may we point people to Jesus!

Thus, these verses, here in Acts 13:16-25 show us the anticipation and the preparation for the coming Messiah.

VERSES 26-37

Now, in this section Paul speaks of the rejection, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus! What is the word of salvation that Paul spoke to the people? He spoke the Gospel of Jesus Christ! What is the Gospel?

Listen to what Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:3-4, **“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”**

That is the Gospel – Christ died for our sins, was buried and on the third day He rose from the dead! And you must repent of your sins and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior!

That is why Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

Yes, the Gospel message brings to us life because it reveals to us Jesus, our Savior!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean.

A Wycliffe Bible Translator, working with a remote tribal group in the Philippines, came to Hebrews 4:12, which says, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”** and he needed a word for **“powerful.”**

His national language helper suggested the word, “magadat”.

“Magadat?” asked the translator. “What does it mean?”

“We use it to describe what happens when a person is bitten by a poisonous snake,” answered the helper. “And we also use it to describe medicine – because many of our medicines are made from extracts of snakes and their venom.”

“Well, how will the reader know whether we’re saying that the Word of God is living and poisonous – or that the Word of God is living and medicinal?” asked the translator.

The language helper hit a home run when he said, “It won’t matter. If you ignore the Word, it will bite you. If you submit to it, it will heal you. Either way – it will affect you!”

How true that is. Thus, just speak it forth and see what God can do for the Word of God is living and powerful and is able to transform lives.

Don’t be ashamed of the Gospel, for it brings people to salvation if they receive it and thus, that is why the enemy tries to get us to stop speaking the Gospel and talk about other things, because they can’t save you, but God’s Word can as the Spirit of God opens up the things of God to your heart!

Now as Jesus was put to death, even though He did not deserve it, God raised Him from the dead on the third day just as the Scriptures tell us.

Not only was that true but the risen Lord was seen by many people, over 500 witnesses at one time.

Today, in our court system, you can convict someone with the testimony of 1 or 2 witnesses.

Can you imagine sitting in the court room, a person is on trial for a crime he committed, and you bring in the first witness, the second, the third, the 200th, the 300th and-so-on! It would be a slam dunk case and that is the point of the resurrection, eyewitness testimony shows us it is true!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:6-8, **“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”**

Now here we also see Paul quote out of Psalm 2:7 where he says, **“You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”**

Upon hearing that some have come to believe that Jesus was a created being and not God!

The word that is used here for “Son” is **NOT** the word for a child by birth. The Greek word for “a little born one” is “tekno” which is never used of Jesus. It is **NOT** the word for a child by age. The Greek word “paidia” is never used when we read “the SON of God.” The Greek word for “SON” in the phrase “SON” that is used here is the word HUIOS, (hwee-os’) which means “an heir” – the one who receives the inheritance.

Secondly and just as important, that is not what is being said for Paul is speaking of the resurrection. Thus, the point of this Psalm is that God became flesh, dwelt among us and when He was crucified the Lord raised Jesus from the dead before the fourth day when the body saw corruption, as Paul then quotes out of Psalm 16:10 in verse 34 of Acts chapter 13.

You see, David's body did see corruption, it went back to the dust of the earth, but the body of Jesus never saw corruption for He was raised the third day!

What I want you to notice here as we are going through this section is that Paul is not speaking of some lofty theological issue, but he is showing us that what was spoken by the prophets was fulfilled in Jesus, He is the Messiah.

I like the way that Boice sums this up as he wrote, "Christianity is not just a philosophy or a set of ethics, though it involves these things. Essentially Christianity is a proclamation of facts that concern what God has done."

Thus, in these verses, here in Acts 13:26-37 we see Paul speak of the rejection, crucifixion and the resurrection of the Messiah.

VERSES 38-41

Here is the conclusion of the matter, the application and the appeal he makes to the people.

This is radical because the Jews believed salvation came by keeping the Law and now they are being told that keeping the Law can't save you, but you can receive the forgiveness of sins by believing and receiving Jesus Christ into your life.

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”** He is admonishing them to receive Jesus and enter into life with Him.

The thing is, if you don't receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then your sins are not paid for and you will be judged. That is what Paul tells them as he quotes out of Habakkuk 1:5-6.

If you don't embrace the person and work of Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins – judgment is coming!

Of this MacDonald wrote, “The apostle then closes his message with a solemn warning to those who might be tempted to refuse God's great offer of present salvation. He quotes from Habakkuk 1:5 (and perhaps segments of Isa. 29:14 and Prov. 1:24–31), where God warned those despisers of His word that He would bring wrath upon them of such magnitude that they wouldn't even believe it if He told them in advance. In Paul's day this might have applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but it would also include God's eternal judgment of those who reject His Son.”

And Warren Wiersbe wrote, “Paul closed his message with a note of warning taken from Habakkuk 1:5 (and see Isa. 29:14). In Habakkuk's day, the “unbelievable work” God was doing was the raising up of the Chaldeans to chasten His people, a work so remarkable that nobody would believe it. After all, why would God use an evil pagan nation to punish His own chosen people, sinful though they might be? God was using Gentiles to punish Jews! But the ‘wonderful work’ in Paul's day was that God was using the Jews to save the Gentiles!”

Interestingly enough, when Paul writes to the churches in Galatia, in this area, he hits this issue hard once again, that salvation is not of the Law but of Christ. Just a few verses in Galatians to show you what I mean.

First in Galatians 1:8-9, **“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”** Salvation by works or the Law is another Gospel and Paul is saying that you are accursed if you believe that!

Then in Galatians 2:16-21 we are told, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ‘But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

And lastly, in Galatians 3:10-14 we are told, **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”**

I think you get the point, the Law is good, the Law is perfect, the problem is not with the Law, it is with us, we are not good, all our righteousness is like filthy rags and thus, the Law can't save us it can only show us we are sinners separated from God.

Only Jesus can save us, not our good works or good deeds, for Paul makes that very clear as he tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

My pastor put it like this,

But there was more to it than that. Paul could also now announce full and free justification from all things. This was something the law of Moses could never offer.

Justification is the act of God by which He reckons or declares to be righteous those ungodly sinners who receive His Son as Lord and Savior. It is a legal act which takes place in the mind of God, and by which the sinner is cleared of every charge against him. God can righteously acquit the guilty sinner, because the penalty for his sins has been fully met by the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

On first reading, it might appear that the law of Moses could justify from some things, but through Christ a person can receive justification from many other things. But that is not the teaching at all. The law could never justify anyone; it could only condemn. What Paul is saying here is that through faith in Christ a man can be justified from every charge of guilt that might be brought against him - a clearance that could never be obtained under the law of Moses.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier, Acts 13

I think that is very clear! So, we have seen in Acts 13:38-41 the application of these things and then he makes an appeal for to them to receive Jesus.

VERSES 42-43

From these verses it seems like much fruit was born, many came into a relationship with Jesus, they were born again, they were saved.

How do I know that? Because Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas “**persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**”

Notice, not in the Law but the grace of God, His unmerited favor towards us as He gives us something we don’t deserve, the gift of eternal life with Him!

It is as Paul said in Romans 6:23, “**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” NAS.

VERSES 44-45

As word spread of Paul and Barnabas teaching the Word of God, teaching of the Messiah, almost the whole city comes to the Synagogue to hear them. Great, right? Wrong!

The Jews in the Synagogue saw their popularity decrease, they couldn’t fill the Synagogue except on feast days, and now these out-of-towners have the place packed out and they don’t like it and are opposing them, and thus, they were opposing Jesus! The opposition is motivated from envy and I hate to say it but far too much in Christian ministry is motivated the same way.

I’m sure they also didn’t like the coming together of Jews and Gentiles, they wanted that separation and the same is true today as people separate themselves from others and want all the attention and they will do whatever it takes to make their point, even fight against Jesus by their actions.

“They simply could not accept a teaching that opened such floodgates. For themselves and their adherents they could accept a message as God-sent and tolerate some change in their teaching and practice, but they could not endure that the Gentiles should be made equal with God’s ancient people.” (Williams)

VERSES 46-47

Make no mistake about it, Paul and Barnabas were not easily intimidated. They explained that they were under obligation to declare the message first of all to the Jewish people.

However, since they had rejected the message, and had thus condemned themselves as unworthy of everlasting life, the preachers announced they were turning to the Gentiles with the gospel. And Paul uses Isaiah to show that this door to the Gentiles is to be opened, that the light of God should also shine upon them.

Now, with the Jews rejecting Jesus and God opening a door to the Gentiles, how would the Gentiles receive this Good News? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 48-49

The Gentiles received the Good News with joy, they were so thankful to hear that God loves them and has paid in full the penalty for their sin.

And in spite of the opposition of the Jews, the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the surrounding region.

Make no mistake about it. That is what we are praying for here at Calvary. That the Word of God would spread, that lives would not only be transformed by the power of God’s Spirit working alongside the Word of God, but that people would also come to saving faith.

What a joy it is to be a part of spreading the Word of God!

VERSES 50-52

So the unbelieving Jews, those who could not let go of the Law but held on tightly to it, stirred up the people and got Paul and his men kicked out of town.

And yet, they were filled with joy! How can that be? Because they rested in the Lord, their joy was based in the Lord and not the outward circumstances that they faced.

I like the way that Clarke put it. He wrote, “The happiness of a genuine Christian lies far beyond the reach of earthly disturbances, and is not affected by the changes and chances to which mortal things are exposed. The martyrs were more happy in the flames than their persecutors could be on their beds of down.”

Too often, as we are serving the Lord and persecution arises, and it will, we get upset and we stop working, we stop serving! That is not what we are to do.

Paul and his men moved on to the next city with the Good News of Jesus Christ! That is what we are to be about, serving the Lord, ministering the Gospel and doors will shut, we will get kicked out of places, we will not be asked to come back and-so-on.

But don't let that stop you. Do you really think God is up in heaven and thinking, “Oh my, where am I going to send them now? I didn't realize that door was going to close, I have nothing else for them!”

If you are thinking that way, you are wrong. One door may close but God will open others. Thus, may we have a heart that is full of joy and the Holy Spirit as we serve our Lord, as doors are closed, as doors are opened, no matter what!

So, in being kicked out of Antioch, they travel 8 miles to Iconium, leaving behind two groups of people.

Those who were filled with hate and those who were filled with joy. Those who rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior and those who received Him as their Lord and Savior.

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, **“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”** There is no other choice to make! You are either for Jesus or against Him!

Next time we will continue our study on their first missionary journey in the area of Iconium and see what the Lord brings across their path and what He wants to show us as we study His Word!

