

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 13 –

Last week, we began a new section in the book of Acts –

We began to look at the missionary journeys of Paul the Apostle.

For most of the first 12 chapters, it was Peter who was the central figure – now we have Paul being the central figure in the church.

And in our study last week, we saw Paul and Barnabas, under the direction of the Holy Spirit – leave the church in Antioch for a special mission that God had set aside for the both of them.

The first place they went to was the island of Cyprus – which was also Barnabas' hometown.

And while in Cyprus, they were confronted by a sorcerer (by the name of Bar-Jesus / Elymas) who tried to stop their mission.

And we saw Paul pronounce God's curse upon the sorcerer – as he was struck with blindness.

However, the greater miracle that we saw was the governor becoming a believer – as he responded to God's word.

In our study this evening, Paul is going to preach the gospel for the first time to a group of people— and Luke provides us with a condensed version of the sermon.

And the significance of it is that the message is the same one we are called to share.

It is a message of grace - that God is full of grace and has made a way that anyone, anywhere, can be saved from the guilt of their sin.

Let's pray...

[Act 13:13-41 NKJV] 13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

(show map)

I want you to notice that the Holy Spirit inspire Luke to describe the missionary group as “Paul and his party”

A few weeks ago, when we covered chapter 11, we saw that it was the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to go see how the Holy Spirit was moving among the gentiles in Antioch.

It was Barnabas, who saw the great need for instruction among the early church in Antioch – he went over to Tarsus and brought back Saul.

And up to this point, as early as verse 2 and 7 of this chapter, the group was described as Barnabas and Paul.

However, now we don't even see the name of Barnabas.

Paul is the leader now, and from this point on, it will be his leadership and prominence that will be evident as the gospel is spread to the gentile world.

Now, the reason that I believe that this is a big deal is because of what happens at the end of the verse – John departs from them.

This John is not the Apostle John, this is John Mark – the one who will later on write the gospel of Mark.

This was Barnabas' nephew.

Now, we are not told here in this chapter why John departed –

However, in chapter 15, in a few weeks, we will see that there is a big dispute between Paul and Barnabas where they both go their separate ways.

And the dispute had to do with John Mark joining them in their next missionary journey.

Barnabas wanted him to tag along and Paul said no way.

And the language that Paul uses later on – suggests that John Mark abandoned them as a soldier would abandon their unit.

Was John Mark homesick? I don't think so, because when we see him again in chapter 15, he is back in Antioch – not Jerusalem.

So we can speculate that John Mark deserted the group because of the pressures of the ministry or possibly because Uncle Barnabas was no longer leading the group.

In other words, he quit because things were not going his way.

He was spiritually immature –

Turn with me to the epistle of James – we are going to look at a very well-known bible verse.

[Jas 1:2-4 NKJV] 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have [its] perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

The word that James uses here in the Greek for patience literally means, “to remain under”

And the concept is that when the pressure is on, we are to remain under and not bail out. Like John Mark did.

The good news about John Mark is that he eventually matured spiritually.

The Holy Spirit inspired him to write one of the gospels.

And in Paul farewell letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:11, he tells Timothy to - get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

(show map)

Perga is along the coast and Antioch in Pisidia is up in the mountains.

Now, there were a few Antioch's during this time – the Antioch here is not the same one where they began the missionary journey.

And there are two possible reasons why they went straight to Antioch in Pisidia instead of staying in Perga.

1. There was no synagogue in Perga – so Paul goes to the first city with a synagogue.
2. Paul got sick in Perga. You see, the church in Antioch in Pisidia is one of the churches in Galatia – and in Gal 4:13, Paul writes the following **[Gal 4:13 NKJV]**
13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

So many believe that Paul could have gotten malaria while in Perga and went up in elevation to a colder, dryer climate to alleviate his illness.

15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men [and] brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

As I mentioned before, it was Jewish custom to invite educated visitors the opportunity to speak – to expound on what was read or bring a greeting or share any good news.

We see Jesus do this in the Gospel of Luke (4) at the synagogue in Nazareth (Where He gives them a bible study in the book of Isaiah).

And that is exactly what Paul is going to do.

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with [his] hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

So, in the synagogue – you had Jews and then you had Gentiles who had a respect for the Jewish religion – they were not fully Jewish yet, but were in the process of converting.

Now, as we go through this condensed version of Paul's sermon.

I want you to notice two things –

How similar it is to the sermon that Stephen gave back in chapter 7 – and it should be because Paul was there listening to it.

And also, I want you to notice how Paul emphasizes what God has done for Israel.

17 "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. 18 "Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. 19 "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. 20 "After that He gave [them] judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin (this is the only tribe Paul mentions by name – he was from the tribe of Benjamin), for forty years. 22 "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the [son] of Jesse, a man after My [own] heart, who will do all My will.' 23 "From this man's seed, according to [the] promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior--Jesus—

Church, this is the message of grace.

The work is all, entirely of God.

He chose

He exalted

He brought

He put

He destroyed

He distributed

He gave

He removed

He raised up for Israel a Savior – Jesus

In fact, the only thing that we see the people do – was desire a king, and we all know what a disaster that turned out to be.

Church, it's not what we do for God, but what God does for us.

That is because when we try to take God's work into our own hands, and we stop relying on Him for direction and strength, things go from bad to worse.

Salvation is not based on what we do for God, because we can't do anything worthy of salvation.

Salvation is based on what God does for us.

He alone has the answer to our problems.

24 "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 "And as John was finishing his course, he said,

'Who do you think I am? I am not [He]. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

Paul makes reference to John the Baptist in his sermon because John was considered by the Jewish people as a prophet, on the same order as the prophets of old – Isaiah and Jeremiah.

We are going to get a little deeper into the ministry of John the Baptist this Sunday morning -

John said his ministry was to prepare for the Messiah who was coming next & that the people should look for Him.

He pointed to Jesus & said He was the One they were to follow

26 "Men [and] brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

Just as John pointed to Jesus as the Savior, Paul was now pointing to Him as well.

27 "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, **have fulfilled [them] in condemning [Him].**

The religious rulers, the ones who paid attention to God's word, reading it every Saturday as they gathered in the synagogue – they didn't pay attention to what they

were reading about – and when it came to the prophecies regarding the Messiah, they completely missed it.

And as they rejected Jesus as their Messiah – as they conspired to have Him killed, they were actually fulfilling some of the prophecies that proved even further that Jesus was the Messiah.

[Isa 53:3 NKJV] 3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, [our] faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

28 "And though they found no cause for death [in Him], they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29 "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took [Him] down from the tree and laid [Him] in a tomb.

Why did the religious rulers go to Pilate to put Jesus to death?

In the gospels, we see time and time where the Jews tried to kill Jesus.

They wanted to stone Him.

The religious rulers stoned Stephen, why couldn't they do the same to Jesus?

And the reason is that the prophecies of the Old Testament – all pointed to a crucifixion.

The serpent on the pole in Numbers 21 –

The Children of Israel were complaining against God and God sends fiery serpents – and Moses intervenes on behalf of the people,

[Num 21:8-9 NKJV] 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery [serpent], and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

This is a picture of the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross – all we have to do is look to Him for our salvation.

Psalm 22 – A Psalm of David – written 400 years before crucifixion was even invented – refers to the crucifixion.

And the reason that Paul states that they took Jesus down from a tree instead of the cross is because of what is spoken of in Deut 21 -

[Deu 21:22-23 NKJV] 22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you [as] an inheritance; for he who is hanged [is] accursed of God.

Jesus Christ hung on the tree instead of us.

We were the ones deserving of death - but He took our place.

30 "But God raised Him from the dead.

Who raised Him from the dead? God

Once again, we see God doing the work.

Notice again the contrast between what the people did, and what God did.

The people desired for Pilate to kill Jesus.

The people took Jesus down from the cross and buried Him.

But God raised Him from the dead.

Man did his best to fight against God – even to kill Him – but God was greater than man's sin and rebellion, and Jesus rose from the grave, winning over sin and death.

31 "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

In 1 Corinthians – Paul will write that over 500 people saw Jesus after the resurrection.

32 "And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up

Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

God's promises are fulfilled by God, fully and on His own.

We benefit from them, and He may use human beings as vessels for His purposes (that, by itself, is another example of His grace), but it is His power and His ability which accomplish all these things.

34 "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' 35 "Therefore He also says in another [Psalm]: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.' 36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 "but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

The Psalms of David are the most consistent witness to the Resurrection.

Paul points out David could not have been referring to himself as the subject of resurrection since his grave was well known. David was in a tomb – his body saw corruption – it decayed over time.

David was speaking of his greatest descendant – the Messiah. Jesus Christ

So we see God's promised fulfilled at the resurrection.

38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

By faith Abraham was made righteous.

By faith the people were spared from the Death Angel on the first passover.

By faith David defeated the Giant.

This first audience of Paul's, these Jewish individuals, thought that by following their interpretation of the Law they could earn God's favor.

All the while, God was freely pouring out His grace to deliver them.

The Law could only condemn them.

I made the point this past Sunday that the Law cannot change us it only communicates to us that we are not living to God's standards.

It couldn't justify them. But the Lord made the way so that any and all of them could be saved.

Up to this point, we read of the Apostles teaching that faith in Jesus resulted in the forgiveness of sins.

This is the first time we've seen spelled out that right standing before God is based in faith, not the law.

For those Jews who'd tried to find a close relationship with God through the law, this would be good news.

But for those Jews who saw the law as a way to prove themselves better than others, Paul's message would be infuriating.

40 "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' "

As Paul preached, he knew that some listening were hardening in their opposition while others were being brought to faith.

He warned those who were hardening to the message.

So he quotes here from Habakkuk 1

And when we read Habakkuk – we read that Judah was a mess – and God tells

Habakkuk to warn Judah– to tell the people that He is about to do something that they will not believe even if they were told – and that is exactly what happened as He uses the Babylonians / the Chaldeans to bring judgment upon them.

So Paul's message to those hardening their hearts against the gospel is – God is going to do a work of judgment upon those who don't believe.

One can either put their trust in Jesus, live in His grace or reject Him and face God's judgment.

The same choice that is placed before everyone today.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

