

## Bibles???

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

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 13 –

We are in the portion of the book of Acts where the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write some of the details behind Paul's first missionary trip through what is today Turkey.

Over the past two weeks, we have seen Paul and Barnabas being sent out of the church in Antioch, they sailed to Cyprus and then they left Cyprus where they preached the gospel in a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia.

And last week – we covered the condensed version of the sermon that Paul spoke at the synagogue.

In our study this evening, Luke is going to provide details on the reaction to the sermon preached. How did the Jews and Gentiles react to the gospel – and we will also see how Paul and Barnabas reacted to their reaction.

Let's pray...

**[Act 13:42-52 NKJV] 42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.**

I mentioned last time, that in these Jewish synagogues, there was a designated section for those gentiles that were already in the process of converting to Judaism.

These Gentiles were allowed to sit in the reading of the scriptures but they themselves were not allowed to provide any words of wisdom – those were reserved for the educated Jews.

So, after Paul finishes his sermon – after the majority of the Jews had left the building, the gentiles (and by gentiles, Luke is not saying that only the gentiles went up to Paul – the majority of those were gentiles), they go up to Paul and pretty much tell him that he should show up next Saturday and continue to preach about what he had been preaching on.

Now, keep in mind about the message that Paul had preached to them –

Look back at verse 38

**[Act 13:38-39 NKJV] 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.**

Now, imagine you are one of those gentiles – the reason that you find yourself in the synagogue is because you desire a right standing with God.

That is what “justification” is all about – having a right is standing with God.

After all, we have to remember that God is holy – He is just – So we can only stand before Him if we are declared righteous.

So, as you sit in the synagogue, every Saturday, you hear about all the rules that you must keep in order to be justified / to be declared righteous.

You listen to all the Do's and Do not's. Not just the 10 Commandments – but the 613 rules that were adopted.

You listen to all the dietary laws that you would have to abide by –

- No more eating bacon
- No more cheeseburgers
- No more lobster, crab cakes

Then one Saturday morning, a stranger shows up, a Jew. And he gives you the bad news that following rules doesn't lead to justification –

You see church – justification or a right standing with God cannot be achieved by a change within us.

Properly understood, justification has to do with God's declaration about the sinner.

In other words, justification is all about how God sees us.

Turn to Romans 3

**[Rom 3:21-24 NKJV] 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.**

**For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**

We are justified, declared righteous, at the moment of our salvation.

We are declared righteous by God – because when he sees us, He no longer sees our sins – He sees us covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Justification doesn't excuse our sin, ignore our sin or endorse our sin – because we have to remember that our sin is fully punished – as Jesus Christ received the punishment for us, He was our substitute on the cross, and because the wrath of God is satisfied in Christ, we are free from condemnation and therefore He is the one that makes us right in His sight.

This is the message that this group responded to –

So they go up to Paul and say -

“Come back next Saturday Paul – we want to hear more about how we can be justified by Jesus.

**43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**

What does it mean to continue in the grace of God –

Turn with me to the book of Galatians 3 –

I mentioned last week that the church that was established here in Antioch of Pisidia was one of the churches in Galatia that Paul wrote his epistle to – later on.

**[Gal 3:1-2 NKJV] 1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**

Many of those in the early church – as Paul was going from city to city and proclaiming the gospel – many responded to the gospel and embraced that they were saved by grace.

However, as they continued their walk – there were some within the church that reverted back to doing works in order to maintain a good standing with God.

The same thing happens today – a new believer will acknowledge that they have been saved by grace –

Then they might encounter a period of spiritual dryness – maybe they began to backslide – and they desire that fire they had for the Lord before.

so instead of relying on God's grace – they begin to resort to doing works.

“I need to clean my act up before I come back to God”

Church, God wants **grace** to remain as the foundation for our life with Him.

We come to Him by grace but we also live our lives according to His grace – that is what is meant by continuing in God’s grace.

My relationship with God started because I responded to what Jesus Christ did for me. We can never get beyond that.

It’s always what He does for you and me that counts – not what we do for Him.

**44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.**

The Jews that Luke mentions here – is most likely the Jewish religious leaders of the synagogue.

Instead of celebrating the fact that almost their entire city showed up to hear the word of God at their synagogue – they were filled with envy.

Church, whenever there is a powerful move of God, there will always be those that are envious. Why?

Because it isn’t happening under their control – and they will do what they can to put it down.

If another bible teaching church proclaiming Jesus Christ as the One True Savior opens next door – praise God!!!!

We ought to rejoice any time that Jesus Christ is preached and worshipped.

This is something that Jesus preached during His ministry –

**Turn to Luke 9**

**[Luk 9:49-50 NKJV] 49 Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid [him], for he who is not against us is on our side."**

We're all on the same side.

Our competition isn't from other Christian churches, it's against Satan, against the world, and the flesh.

**46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was **necessary** that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and **judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life**, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "**

I had you make a note of the word necessary here in verse 46 –

And the reason is because it puts us on notice that God was not done working among His chosen people.

It was necessary – meaning God was still reaching out to the Jews at this time.

Now, we saw when we studied Revelation that after the church is taken away, God will once again turn His attention back to the Jews and fulfill all His unconditional promises to them.

However, here as the gospel is preached to the gentiles – we see these Jews once again rejected it.

They made a willful decision.

Since no one is really worthy of salvation, what did Paul mean when he said that they judged [themselves] unworthy of everlasting life?

The Jews believed they were worthy of salvation because they were adhering to God's Law.

In their opinion, their works lead to their justification -

Therefore they judged themselves unworthy of salvation by grace.

It was the **method of salvation** they were judging unworthy.

“I don't want to be saved by grace – I'm going to continue to do it my way and in doing so, reject God's way”



**48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.**

Verse 48 is one of those verses that people have argued over for a long time.

And the reason that they argue is because of the word appointed.

Some of your bibles may have the word – ordained there.

Who appointed them to eternal life – God did, because God is sovereign.

But then some people will argue and say – “well, that’s not fair – what if I wasn’t appointed/chosen to be saved?”

So the Calvinist will point to Acts 13:48 – and proclaim that humanity has no decision on salvation. That God is the One who appoints.

However, the one thing that is overlooked is the context of this verse.

Because in context – we have just seen the Gentiles accept what was being preached while the Jews opposed it. In context, we are seeing, man’s free will.

We can either accept the message of salvation or reject it.

Dr. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts as a report to Theophilus –

“Theophilus, here is the historical account of the ministry of Jesus Christ and how the gospel was presented to the Gentiles – it is up to you to decide whether you are going to receive it or reject it”

He didn't say – “Theophilus, if you want salvation, you're going to have to sit around and wait for God to choose you”

Does God appoint us for salvation? Yes Do we have free will to choose? Yes.

I have always liked the analogy of humanity dog paddling in the middle of the ocean – along comes God and He throws out enough life preservers for everyone.

Some people will exercise their free will to choose to grab onto the life preserver – while others will choose to swim for it and eventually drown.

To those who chose to grab onto the life preserver – who saved them? Did they save themselves? No.

God saved them.

Did God appoint them to be saved? Yes.

That is how God's sovereignty and free will work.

In the Bible we see clearly both that individuals are given the ability to choose the Lord, as well as the fact that God also chooses us.

The Gentiles are simply exercising their free will to grab onto the life preserver while the Jews are in the process of rejecting it.

**50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

The Jews tried to do everything in their power to try to get Paul and Barnabas out of the region.

They turned the people against them.

Now, I want to point out that the main reason that the Jews opposed the message that Paul and Barnabas was preaching was that they didn't like the fact that they were preaching that the Gentiles no longer had to become Jews first.

That was their main beef.

Because in their mind, they were appointed by God as God's chosen people -

By salvation being made available to Gentiles who had not converted to Judaism, in their eyes – it diminished their standing.

How did Paul and Barnabas respond –

They shook of the dust from their feet –

What does that mean?

Because in the gospels, this is something that Jesus commanded His disciples to do – when He sent them out two by two –

If a city does not welcome you or listen to you – leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony to them. Matthew 10:14 Luke 9:5 Mark 6:11

And what it means is that they were no longer responsible for the level of acceptance by those that they preached the gospel too.

Church –

There are situations in our lives where God calls us to stand firm, proclaim truth, and give patient testimony.

Sometimes we need to continue until we see the results of that testimony. Other times God gives us the freedom to move on – under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We surrender those people to the Lord and emotionally let go.

We shake the dust off our feet – and we continue to the next phase of where God has called us too.

**We are only responsible for our obedience to God, not for the results of that obedience.**

**[Act 14:1-7 NKJV] 1 Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.**

So Paul and Barnabas show up at the next city – Iconium, and once again, we see the first place they go to was a synagogue –

As they were given the opportunity to speak – they would take the scriptures that the local rabbi would read and then Paul and Barnabas would expound on the scriptures and tie it up on how it pointed to Jesus Christ.

And just like in Antioch of Pisidia, we see that there were Jews and Gentiles that responded to the gospel message – Luke tells us that there was a great multitude that responded.

But once again, we see the opposition of the enemy –

Again, every time there is a movement from God – we should expect to be attacked by the enemy.

And the reason for this is because the enemy wants us to be discouraged.

The enemy wanted nothing better than for Paul and Barnabas to stop preaching the gospel.

And it was a tactic that the enemy used back then and one that he continues to use today –

When we are drawing closer to God, whenever we are walking in obedience – when we are being effective in the ministry that God has chosen for us, the enemy will rise up against us in order to stifle what God's word is doing in the hearts of many people.

I had you make a note of these – unbelieving Jews – these were not Jews that were ignorant of the Word – they clearly understood the message that Paul spoke.

These were Jews that refused to believe / they rejected the gospel message.

You see, it is possible to agree to something in principle – you can even say that something is true but still fail to embrace it on a personal level.

Not only did these unbelieving Jews fail to embrace it - they turned around and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles – the word poison literally speaks of embittering them – they caused many to reject the gospel as well.

**[Mat 5:11 NKJV] 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**

This is exactly what is happening here in Iconium as these individuals are stirring up the gentiles to believe these false things about the apostles.

How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the opposition?

How do we respond to opposition? Many times, we go quiet –as we don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to be hated by anyone – so we stop.

But that is not what Paul and Barnabas did.

**3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.**

Instead of backing off and backing down, they stood their ground and spoke boldly.

To speak boldly doesn't mean that they were arrogant in their speech – it means that they were confident, and that confidence came from knowing this was God's will and also by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. 7 And they were preaching the gospel there.**

So here in our closing verse, an angry mob is trying to kill Paul and Barnabas.

Church,

Paul and Barnabas were bold – but they were not dumb.

In the gospel of Matthew 10, Jesus told His disciples, when they persecute in this city – flee to another

And that is exactly what Paul and Barnabas did.

And when they got to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia what did they do?

They preached the gospel once again.

Everywhere we have seen Paul and Barnabas go to – they have faced opposition, in Cyprus, in Antioch and Iconium – but they still continued to be faithful to what God called them to do.

Because they understood that their responsibility was obedience – God is the One who saves.

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.



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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.'



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