***Preaching to Us Gentiles***

**Summer 2022, Acts 13:4-48 June 26, 20212**

***When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad  
and honored the word of the Lord;  
and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*Acts 13:48**

**On the Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch**

*13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.”*

*16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!”*

Acts 13

1. Our three keys for reading Acts:

-- the Holy Spirit has been speaking, sending and filling, now us Gentiles get included!

-- Pisidian Antioch (one of 17 Antiochs) is the strategic doorway to the Asia and Ephesus

-- Barnabas completes his graceful transition to “companion” (not even really listed)

2. We continue to learn how Paul handles opposition to the gospel

3. Listening to Paul’s sermon

-- this is the first recorded sermon in Acts with us Gentiles a part of the audience

-- listen to this sermon with Galatians open, one of Paul’s first letters back to the churches  
 with a powerful warning to the Galatian believers not get trapped again by legalism

-- read this passage watching for the evidence of eternal life

**Paul’s first recorded sermon**

*16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, 18 he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, 19 he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years.*

*“After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’*

*23 “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. 25 As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’*

*26 “Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was se en by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*

*32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:*

*“ ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’*

*34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:*

*“ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’*

*35 So it is stated elsewhere:*

*“ ‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’*

*36 “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.*

*38 “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. 40 Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:*

*41 “ ‘Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish,*

*for I am going to do something in your days*

*that you would never believe, even if someone told you.’”*

Acts 13

1. Paul presents the Old Testament as the story of God’s graceful dealing with his people

2. The Old Testament (all of it!) was good news, with a surprising fulfillment in Jesus

3. A great sermon will include an “everyone” invitation and a “take care”

**A most Reformed analysis of what happened next**

*42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.*

*44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.*

*46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.   
47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us:*

*“ ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,*

*that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*

*48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

*49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 13

1. The ministry really begins when the “word of salvation” is complete

2. Two necessary pictures of salvation: God appoints and I respond in faith and the fruit of repentance

3. Two necessary signs of eternal life: filled with joy and filled with the Holy Spirit

**Learning from two most important verses**

1) Jesus is when a message of encouragement becomes the word of salvation

***32****“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,* ***33****this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus . . . .”*

Acts 13:32-33

2) This could be the clearest statement in Scripture of God’s initiative and my response of faith

***48****And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* ***49****And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region . . . .* ***52****And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 13:48

**Resources for further studies in Acts**

The Bible Project team has great stuff on Acts at [*https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg*](https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg)

Spurgeon has fewer sermons on Acts available than I would hope at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r\_ac.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r_ac.htm) *.* His “Gospel Missions” sermon is at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols1-3/chs76.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols1-3/chs76.pdf)

Tim Keller has said much on the topic of mission. See “5 Practices” at [*https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/*](https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/)and [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/)

John Piper has an interesting exegetical project on this text at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/the-chosen-choose-god*](https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/the-chosen-choose-god)

I really appreciate J.C. Ryle’s essay on conversion in Acts: *https://www.monergism.com/conversion-j-c-ryle*[*https://www.onergism.com/conversion-j-c-ryle*](https://www.onergism.com/conversion-j-c-ryle)

Deffinbaugh has a helpful introduction at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts*](https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts )  
His Acts series is at [*https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts*](https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts)His sermons on this text are at   
<https://bible.org/seriespage/18-first-missionaries-acts-131-13> and   
[*https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52*](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52)

John Stott’s *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (IVP, 1990) and F. F. Bruce’s work: *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) and *The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans, 1984). For this passage, I also like Kistemaker’s commentary (Baker Book House, 1990).

Harry Boer, *That My House May Be Filled* (Eerdmans, 1957)



# 5 Practices of a Missional Church

### Tim Keller at [*https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/*](https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/)

In the West, for nearly a thousand years, the relationship of European Christian churches to the broader culture was a relationship known as Christendom. The institutions of society “Christianized” people and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior.

British missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, went to India [in 1936]. When he returned to England, some thirty years later, he discovered that the Western church now found itself in a non-Christian society, but it had not adapted to its new situation. While most traditional evangelical churches can win the temperamentally conventional and conservative to Christ, American author Michael Wolff notes that this market is shrinking. If evangelical churches settle the decline in numbers, with the remaining Christian body not becoming missional, they will decline and die. This has instituted an even greater need for “missional” churches, which adopt the following practices:

**1. Speak in the vernacular**

In Christendom, technical biblical terms are well known inside and outside of the church. In a missional church, however, these terms must be explained.

The missional church:

* avoids “tribal” language, stylized prayer language, and evangelical jargon that seeks to set a spiritual tone.
* avoids “we-they” language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs
* avoids sentimental, pompous, “inspirational” talk
* avoids talking as if non-believers were not present

**2. Enter and retell the culture’s stories with the Gospel**

In Christendom, it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to do what they know they should. There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. Often, along with exhortation, there is a heavy reliance on guilt to motivate behavior change.

In a missional church, preaching and communication always assume skeptics are present and consequently engages their stories. To enter the culture’s stories mean showing sympathy towards and deeply acquainting with literature, music, theatre, and other arts expressing the existing hopes, dreams, heroic narratives and fears. To retell the culture’s stories is to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery and embrace-of-the-other without injustice.

**3. Theologically train laypeople for public life and vocation**

In a missional church, laypeople need theological education to “think Christianly” about everything and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know three things: (a) which cultural practices manifest common grace and are to be embraced, (b) which practices are antithetical to the Gospel and must be rejected, and (c) which practices can be adapted/revised.

Christians will have to use the Gospel to demonstrate true, biblical love and tolerance in the public square towards those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which groups with opposing views show towards Christians. The charge of intolerance is perhaps the main “defeater” of the Gospel in the non-Christian West.

**4. Create Christian community that is countercultural and counterintuitive**

In Christendom, “fellowship” is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support, and accountability.

In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a counterculture, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.

* *In sex*. We avoid both the secular society’s idolization of sex and traditional society’s fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different from ours.
* *In money*. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, and the economically and physically weak.
* *In power*. We are committed to power sharing and relationship building among races and classes that are alienated outside of the body of Christ. A missional church must be deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice and deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion.

**5. Practice Christian unity as much as possible on the local level**

It is very important that we do not spend time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That criticism simply plays into the common “defeater” that Christians are all intolerant. While we align ourselves in denominations that share many of our distinctives, at the local level we should cooperate with, reach out to, and support the other congregations and churches in our area. This will raise many thorny issues, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.

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# Acts Timeline (ESV Study Bible)

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**GOSPEL MISSIONS, NO. 76**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 27, 1856**

***BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON***

**AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK**

**ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

***“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”***

***Acts 13:49***

I SHALL not confine myself to the text. It being an old custom to take texts when we preach, I have

taken one, but I shall address you, at large, upon a subject which I am sure will occupy your attention,

and has done for many days and years past—the subject of Gospel missions. We feel persuaded that all

of you are of one mind in this matter, that it is the absolute duty as well as the eminent privilege of the

church to proclaim the Gospel to the world. We do not conceive that God will do His own work without

instruments, but that, as He has always employed means in the work of the regeneration of this world,

He will still continue to do the same, and that it becomes the church to do its utmost to spread the truth

wherever it can reach the ear of man.

We have not two opinions on that point. Some churches may have, but we have not. Our doctrines,

although they are supposed to lead to apathy and sloth, have always proved themselves to be eminently

practical. The fathers of the missions were all zealous lovers of the doctrines of the grace of God, and

we believe, the great supporters of missionary enterprise, if it is to be successful, must always come

from those who hold God’s truth firmly and boldly, and yet have fire and zeal with it, and desire to

spread it everywhere.

But there is a point on which we have great division of opinion and that is as to the reason why we

have had so little success in our missionary labors. There may be some who say the success has been

proportionate to the agency and that we could not have been more successful. I am far from being of

their opinion and I do not think they themselves would express it on their knees before Almighty God.

We have not been successful to the extent we might have expected, certainly not to an apostolic

extent, certainly with nothing like the success of Paul or Peter, or even of those eminent men who have

preceded us in modern times, and who were able to evangelize whole countries, turning thousands to

God.

Now, what is the reason for this? Perhaps we may turn our eyes on high and think we find that

reason in the sovereignty of God, which has withholden His Spirit and has not poured out His grace as

aforetime. I shall be prepared to grant all men may say on that point, for I believe in the ordination of

everything by Almighty God. I believe in a present God in our defeats as well as in our successes—a

God as well in the motionless air as in the careering tempest, a God of ebbs as well as a God of floods.

But still we must look at home for the cause.

When Zion travails, she brings forth children. When Zion is in earnest, God is in earnest about His

work. When Zion is prayerful, God blesses her. We must not, therefore, arbitrarily look for the cause of

our failure in the will of God, but we must also see what is the difference between ourselves and the men

of apostolic times, and what it is that renders our success so trifling in comparison with the tremendous

results of apostolic preaching. I think I shall be able to show one or two reasons why our holy faith is not

so prosperous as it was then.

In the first place, *we have not apostolic men*. In the second place, *they do not set about their work in*

*an apostolic style*. In the third place, *we have not apostolic churches to back them up*. And in the fourth

place, *we have not the apostolic influence of the Holy Ghost* in the measure which they had it in ancient

times.

**I.** First, WE HAVE FEW APOSTOLIC MEN IN THESE TIMES.

I will not say we have none. Here and there we may have one or two, but unhappily their names are

never heard. They do not start out before the world and are not noted as preachers of God’s truth. We

had a Williams once, a true apostle, who went from island to island, not counting his life dear unto him.

But Williams is called to his reward.

We had a Knibb, who, toiled for his Master with seraphic earnestness and was not ashamed to call an

oppressed slave his brother. But Knibb, too, has entered into his rest. We have one or two still

remaining, precious and treasured names. We love them fervently and our prayers shall always rise to

heaven on their behalf. We always say, in our prayers, “God bless such men as Moffat! God bless those

who are earnestly toiling and successfully laboring.”

But cast your eyes around and where can we find many such men? They are all good men. We find

no fault with them. They are better than we. We ourselves shrink into nothingness compared with them.

But we must still say of them that they are less than their fathers. They differ from the mighty apostles in

many respects, which we think even they would not be slow to own.

I am not speaking of missionaries only, but of ministers too, for I take it we have as much to mourn

over in regard to the spread of the Gospel in England as in foreign lands, and much to regret the lack of

men filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In the first place, we have not men with *apostolic zeal*. Converted in a most singular way, by a direct

interposition from heaven, Paul, from that time forward, became an earnest man. He had always been

earnest, in his sin and in his persecutions. But after he heard that voice from heaven, “Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou me?” and had received the mighty office of an apostle, and had been sent forth a chosen

vessel to the Gentiles, you can scarcely conceive the deep, the awful earnestness which he manifested.

Whether he ate, or drank, or whatsoever he did, he did all for the glory of his God. He never wasted

an hour. He was employing his time either in ministering with his own hands unto his necessities, or else

lifting those hands in the synagogue, on Mars-Hill, or anywhere where he could command the attention

of the multitude.

His zeal was so earnest and so burning that he could not (as we unfortunately do) restrain himself

within a little sphere, but he preached the Word everywhere. It was not enough for him to have it handed

down that he was the apostle of Pisidia, but he must go also to Pamphylia. It was not enough that he

should be the great preacher of Pamphylia and Pisidia, but he must also go to Attalia. And when he had

preached throughout all Asia, he must needs take a ship to Greece and preach there also.

I believe not once only did Paul hear in his dream the men of Macedonia saying, “Come over and

help us,” but every day and hour he heard the cry in his ears from multitudes of souls, “Paul, Paul, come

over and help us.” He could not restrain himself from preaching. “Woe is unto me” he said, “if I preach

not the Gospel. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ.”

Oh! if you could have seen Paul preach, you would not have gone away as you do from some of us,

with half a conviction that we do not mean what we say. His eyes preached a sermon without his lips,

and his lips preached it, not in a cold and frigid manner, but every word fell with an overwhelming

power upon the hearts of his hearers.

He preached with power, because he was in downright earnest. You had a conviction, when you saw

him, that he was a man who felt he had a work to do and must do it, and could not contain himself

unless he did do it. He was the kind of preacher whom you would expect to see walk down the pulpit

stairs straight into his coffin, and then stand before his God, ready for his last account.

Where are the men like that man? I confess I cannot claim that privilege and I seldom hear a solitary

sermon which comes up to the mark in earnest, deep, passionate longing for the souls of men.

We have no eyes now like the eyes of the Savior, which could weep over Jerusalem. We have few

voices like that earnest impassioned voice which seemed perpetually to cry, “Come unto me, and I will

give you rest.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings, but you would not.”

If ministers of the Gospel were more hearty in their work of preaching, if, instead of giving lectures

and devoting a large part of their time to literary and political pursuits, they would preach the Word of

God, and preach it as if they were pleading for their own lives, ah! then, my brethren, we might expect

great success. But we cannot expect it while we go about our work in a half-hearted way, and have not

that zeal, that earnestness, that deep purpose which characterized those men of old.

Then again, I take it we have not men in our days who can preach like Paul—*as to their faith*. What

did Paul do? He went to Philippi—did he know a soul there? Not one. He had his Master’s truth and he

believed in the power of it. He was unattended and devoid of pomp, or show, or parade. He did not go to

a pulpit with a soft cushion in it to address a respectable congregation, but he walked through the streets

and began to preach to the people. He went to Corinth, to Athens, alone, single-handed, to tell the people

the Gospel of the blessed God. Why? Because he had faith in the Gospel and believed it would save

souls and hurl down idols from their thrones. He had no doubt about the power of the Gospel.

But nowadays, my brethren, we have not faith in the Gospel we preach. How many there are who

preach a Gospel, which they are afraid will not save souls, and therefore, they add little bits of their own

to it in order, as they think, to win men to Christ! We have known men who believed Calvinistic

doctrines, but who preached Calvinism in the morning and Arminianism in the evening, because they

were afraid God’s Gospel would not convert sinners, so they would manufacture one of their own.

I hold that a man who does not believe God’s Gospel is able to save men’s souls, does not believe it

at all. If God’s truth will not save men’s souls, man’s lies cannot. If God’s truth will not turn men to

repentance, I am sure there is nothing in this world that can.

When we believe the Gospel to be powerful, then we shall see it is powerful. If I walk into this pulpit

and say, “I know what I preach is true,” the world says I am an egotist. “The young man is dogmatical.”

Ay, and the young man means to be. He glories in it, he keeps it to himself as one of his peculiar titles,

for he does most firmly believe what he preaches.

God forbid that I should ever come tottering up the pulpit stairs to teach anything I was not quite

sure of, something which I hoped might save sinners, but of which I was not exactly certain. When I

have faith in my doctrines, those doctrines will prevail, for confidence is the winner of the palm. He who

has courage enough to grasp the standard, and hold it up, will be sure enough to find followers.

He who says, “I know,” and asserts it boldly in his Master’s name, without disputing, will not be

long before he will find men who will listen to what he says and who will say, “This man speaks with

authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees.” That is one reason why we do not succeed—we have

not faith in the Gospel.

We send educated men to India in order to confound the learned Brahmins. Nonsense! Let the

Brahmins say what they like, have we any business to dispute with them? “Oh, but they are so

intellectual and so clever.” What have we to do with that? We are not to seek to be clever in order to

meet them.

Leave the men of the world to combat their metaphysical errors. We have merely to say, “This is

truth, he that believes it shall be saved and he that denies it shall be damned.” We have no right to come

down from the high ground of divine authoritative testimony, and until we maintain that ground, and

come out as we ought to do, girded with the belt of divinity—preaching not what *may* be true, but

asserting that which God has most certainly revealed—we shall not see success.

We want a deeper faith in our Gospel. We need to be quite sure of what we preach. Brethren, I take

it we have not the faith of our fathers. I feel myself a poor driveling thing in point of faith. Why,

methought sometimes I could believe anything. But now a little difficultly comes before me, I am timid

and I fear. It is when I preach with unbelief in my heart that I preach unsuccessfully.

But when I preach with faith and can say, “I know my God has said, that in the selfsame hour He

will give me what I shall preach, and careless of man’s esteem, I preach what I believe to be true,” then

it is that God rewards faith and crowns it with His own crown.

Again, we have not enough *self-*denial, and that is one reason why we do not prosper. Far be it from

me to say aught against the self-denial of those worthy brothers who have left their country to cross the

stormy deep and preach the Word. We hold them to be men who are to be had in honor. But still I ask,

where is the self-denial of the apostles nowadays?

I think one of the greatest disgraces that ever was cast upon the church in these days was that last

mission to Ireland. Men went over to Ireland, but like men who have valor’s better part, brave bold men,

they came back again, which is about all we can say of the matter. Why do they not go there again?

Why, they say the Irish “hooted” them. Now, don’t you think you see Paul taking a microscope out

of his pocket and looking at the little man who should say to him, “I shall not go there to preach because

the Irish hooted me”? “What!” he says, “is this a preacher?—what a small edition of a minister he must

be, to be sure!” “Oh! but they threw stones at us, you have no idea how badly they treated us!” Just tell

that to the apostle Paul. I am sure you would be ashamed to do so.

“Oh! but in some places the police interfered and said that we should only create a riot.” What would

Paul have said to that? *The police interfering*! I did not know that we had any right to care about

governments. Our business is to preach the Word, and if we must be put in the stocks, there let us lie.

There would come no hurt of it at last.

“Oh! but they might have killed some of us.” That is just it. Where is that zeal which counted not its

life dear so that it might win Christ? I believe that the killing of a few of our ministers would have

prospered Christianity. However we might mourn over it, and none more than myself, I say the murder

of a dozen of them would have been no greater ground for grief than the slaughter of our men by

hundreds in a successful fight for hearths and homes. I would count my own blood most profitably shed

in so holy a struggle.

How did the Gospel prosper aforetime? Were there not some who laid down their lives for it, and did

not others walk to victory over their slain bodies, and must it not be so now? If we are to start back

because we are afraid of being killed, heaven knows when the Gospel is to spread over the world—we

do not.

What have other missionaries done? Have they not braved death in its direst forms and preached the

Word amid countless dangers? My brethren, we say again, we find no fault, for we, ourselves, might err

in the same manner. But we are sure we are therein not like Paul. He went to a place where they stoned

him with stones and dragged him out as dead. Did he say, “Now for the future I will not go where they

will ill-treat me?” No, for he says, “Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was

I beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck.” I am sure we have not the self-denial of the apostles.

We are mere carpet-knights and Hyde-Park warriors.

When I go to my own house and think how comfortable and happy I am, I say to myself, “How little

I do for my Master! I am ashamed that I cannot deny myself for His truth and go everywhere preaching

His Word.” I look with pity upon people who say, “Do not preach so often. You will kill yourself.” O

my God! What would Paul have said to such a thing as that? “Take care of your constitution, you are

rash, you are enthusiastic.”

When I compare myself with one of those men of old, I say, “Oh that men should be found calling

themselves Christians, who seek to stop our work of faith and labor of love, for the sake of a little

consideration about the ‘constitution,’ which gets all the stronger for preaching God’s Word.”

But I hear someone whispering, “You ought to make a little allowance.” My dear friend, I make all

allowance. I am not finding fault with those brethren, they are a good sort of people. We are “all

honorable men.” But I will only say that in comparison with Paul, we are less than nothing and vanity,

little insignificant Lilliputian creatures, who can hardly be seen in comparison with those gigantic men

of old.

One of my hearers may perhaps hint that this is not the sole cause, and he observes, “I think you

ought to make excuse, for ministers now cannot work miracles.” Well, I have considered that too, and

certainly it is a drawback, but I take it not a very great one. For if it had been, God would not have

allowed it to exist. He gave that gift to the church in its infancy, but now it needs it no longer.

We make a mistake in attributing too much to miracles. What was one of them? Wherever the

apostles went, they could speak the language of the people. Well, in the time it would have taken Paul to

walk from here to Hindustan, we could learn Hindustani, and we go over in a very little time by the

means of travelling that are now provided, so that is no great gain there.

Then again, in order to make the Gospel known amongst the people, it was necessary that miracles

should be worked, so that everyone might talk about it. But now there is a printing press to aid us. What

I say today, within six months will be read across the Alleghenies. And so with other ministers, what

they say and what they do can soon be printed off and distributed everywhere. So they have facilities for

making ourselves known which are not much behind the power of miracles. Again, we have a great

advantage over the apostles.

Wherever they went, they were persecuted and sometimes put to death. But now, although

occasionally we hear of the massacre of a missionary, the occurrence is rare enough. The slaughter of an

Englishman anywhere would provoke a fleet of men-of-war to visit the offense with chastisement. The

world respects an Englishman wherever he goes. He has the stamp of the great Caesar upon him. He is

the true cosmopolite—the citizen of the world.

That could not be said of the poor despised Jews. There might be some respect paid to Paul, for he

was a Roman citizen, but there would be none paid to the rest. We cannot be put to death now without a

noise being made. The murder of two or three ministers in Ireland would provoke a tumult through the

country. The government would have to interpose, the orderly of the land would be up in arms, and then

we might preach with an armed constabulary around us, and so go through the land, provoking the

priests, startling anti-christ, and driving superstition to its dens forever.

**II.** In the second place, WE DO NOT GO ABOUT OUR WORK IN AN APOSTOLIC STYLE.

How is that? Why, in the first place, there is a general complaint that there is *not enough* preaching

by ministers and missionaries. They sit down interpreting, establishing schools, and doing this, that, and

the other. We have nothing to find fault with in this, but that is not the labor to which they should devote

themselves. Their office is preaching and if they preached more, they might hope for more success.

The missionary Chamberlain preached once at a certain place and years afterwards disciples were

found there from that one sermon. Williams preached wherever he went and God blessed him. Moffat

preached wherever he went and his labors were owned.

Now we have our churches, our printing presses, about which a great deal of money is spent. This is

doing good, but it is not doing *the good*. We are not using the means which God has ordained and we

cannot therefore expect to prosper. Some say there is too much preaching nowadays in England. Well, it

is the tendency of the times to decry preaching, but it is “the foolishness of preaching” which is to

change the world.

It is not for men to say, “If you preached less, you might study more.” Study is required well

enough, if you have a settled church, but the apostles needed no study. I apprehend, but they stood up

and delivered out the simple cardinal truths of religion, not taking one text, but going through the whole

catalog of truth. So I think, in itinerant evangelical labors, we are not bound to dwell on one subject, for

then we need to study, but we shall find it profitable to deal out the whole truth wherever we go. Thus

we should always find words to hand and truths ever ready to teach the people.

In the next place, I conceive that a great mistake has been made in not *affirming the divinity of our*

*mission*, and standing fast by the truth, as being a revelation not to be proved by men, but to be believed.

Always holding out this, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be

damned.”

I am often grieved when I read of our missionaries holding disputes with the Brahmins, and it is

sometimes said that the missionary has beaten the Brahmin because he kept his temper, and so the

Gospel had gained great honor by the dispute. I take it that the Gospel was lowered by the controversy.

I think the missionary should say, “I am come to tell you something which the One God of heaven

and earth has said, and I tell you before I announce it, that if you believe it you shall be saved and if not,

you shall be damned. I am come to tell you that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh, to die for

poor unworthy man, that through His mediation, and death, and suffering, the people of God might be

delivered. Now, if you will listen to me, you shall hear the Word of God. If you do not, I shake the dust

off my feet against you and go somewhere else.”

Look at the history of every imposture. It shows us that the claim of authority insures a degree of

progress. How did Mohammed come to have so strong a religion in his time? He was all alone and he

went into the marketplace and said, “I have received a revelation from heaven.” It was a lie, but he

persuaded men to believe it. He said, “I have a revelation from heaven.” People looked at his face, they

saw that he looked upon them earnestly, as believing what he said, and some five or six of them joined

him.

Did he prove what he said? Not he. “You must,” he said, “believe what I say, or there is no paradise

for you.” There is a power in that kind of thing, and wherever he went his statement was believed, not

on the ground of reasoning, but on his authority, which he declared to be from Allah. And in a century

after he first proclaimed his imposture, a thousand sabres had flashed from a thousand sheaths, and his

word had been proclaimed through Africa, Turkey, Asia, and even in Spain. The man claimed

authority—he claimed divinity, therefore he had power.

Take again the increase of Mormonism. What has been its strength? Simply this—the assertion of

power from heaven. That claim is made and the people believe it, and now they have missionaries in

almost every country of the habitable globe, and the book of Mormon is translated into many languages.

Though there never could be a delusion more transparent, or a counterfeit less skillful, and more lying

upon the very surface, yet this simple pretension to power has been the means of carrying power with it.

Now, my brethren, *we have power*. We *are* God’s ministers. We preach *God’s* truth. The great Judge

of heaven and earth has told us the truth and what have we to do to dispute with worms of the dust? Why

should we tremble and fear them? Let us stand out and say, “We are the servants of the living God. We

tell you what God has told us, and we warn you, if you reject our testimony, it shall be better for Tyre

and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.” If the people cast that away, we have done our work.

We have nothing to do with making men believe. Ours is to testify of Christ everywhere, to preach and

to proclaim the Gospel to all men.

But there is one passage in the Bible which seems to militate against what I have said, if the common

translation be true—the passage which says that Paul “disputed in the school of one Tyrannus.” But this

is better rendered in English, he “dialoged in the school of one Tyrannus.” Albert Barnes says that

“disputed is not a happy translation,” for there is no such idea conveyed by the word.

Jesus, when He preached, “dialoged.” When the man came and said to Him, “Master, what shall I do

to inherit eternal life?” He “dialoged” with him. When another said unto Him, “Speak, Lord, unto my

brother, that he divide with me the inheritance,” Christ did not dispute with him, but He “dialoged.” His

usual style was to address the people, and but rarely to dispute with men.

We might give up all the books that have been written in defense of Christianity if we would but

preach Christ, if instead of defending the outposts, we were to say, “God will take care of them,” and

were at once to make a sortie on the enemy, then by God’s Holy Spirit we should carry everything

before us. O, church of God! believe yourself invincible and you are invincible. But stay to tremble and fear, and you are undone. Lift up your head and say, “I am God’s daughter, I am Christ’s bride.” Do not stop to prove it, but affirm it. March through the land, and kings and princes shall bow down before you,

because you have taken your ancient prowess and assumed your ancient glory.

I have one more remark to make here with regard to the style in which we go to work. I fear that we

have not enough of the divine method of *itinerancy*. Paul was a great itinerant, he preached in one place

and there were twelve converted there. He made a church at once. He did not stop till he had five

hundred. But when he had twelve, he went off to another place.

A holy woman takes him in, she has a son and daughter. They are saved and baptized—there is

another church. Then he goes on. Wherever he goes, the people believe and are baptized. Wherever he

meets a family who believe, he or his companion baptizes all the house, and goes about his way still

forming churches and appointing elders over them.

We, nowadays, go and settle in a place, make a station of it, and work around it by little and little,

and think that is the way to succeed. No, no! Ravage a continent. Attempt great things and great things

shall be done. But they say if you just pass over a place it will be forgotten like the summer shower,

which moistens all, but satisfies none.

Yes, but you do not know how many of God’s elect may be there. You have no business to stop in

one place, go straight on. God’s elect are everywhere. I protest if I could not itinerate this country of

England. I could not bear to preach. If I preached *here* always, many of you would become Gospel

hardened.

I love to go ranging here, there, and everywhere. *My* highest ambition is this, that I may be found

going through the entire land, as well as holding my headquarters in one position. I do hold that

itinerancy is God’s great plan. There should be fixed ministers and pastors, but those who are like

apostles should itinerate far more than they do.

**III.** But I have a third thing to say which will strike home to some of us, that is, that WE HAVE

NOT APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

Oh! had you seen an apostolic church, what a different thing it would appear to one of our churches!

As different, I had almost said, as light from darkness, as different as the shallow bed of the brook that is

dried by summer is from the mighty rolling river, ever full, ever deep and clear, and ever rushing into

the sea.

Now, where is our *prayerfulness* compared with theirs? I trust that we know something of the power

of prayer here, but I do not think we pray like they did. “They broke bread from house to house and did

eat their meat with singleness of heart, giving glory to God.” There was not a member of the church, as a

rule, who was half-hearted. They gave their souls wholly to God. And when Ananias and Sapphira

divided the price, they were struck with death for their sin.

Oh! if we prayed as deeply and as earnestly as they did, we should have as much success. Any

measure of success we may have had here has been entirely owing under God to your prayers. And

wherever I have gone, I have boasted that I have a praying people. Let other ministers have as prayerful

a people. Let missionaries have as many prayers from the church, and all things being equal, God will

bless them and there will be greater prosperity than ever.

We have not the apostolic mode of *liberality*. In the apostles’ days, they gave all their substance. It

was not *demanded* of them then and it is not now. No one thinks of asking such a thing, still we have run

to the other extreme and many give nothing at all. Men who have thousands and tens of thousands are so

eternally considerate of their families, albeit they *are* provided for, that they give nothing more than the

servant girl who sits next to them.

It is a common saying, that members of Christian churches do not give in proportion to their wealth.

We give because it is genteel and respectable. A great many of us give, I hope, because we love the

cause of God. But many of us say, “There is a poor bricklayer, working hard all the week and only

earning just enough to keep his wife and family, he will give a shilling.

Now I have so many pounds a week—I am a rich man—what shall I give? why I will give half-acrown.”

Another says, “I will give ten shillings this morning.” Now, if they measured their wealth in

comparison with his, they would see that he gives all he has left above his maintenance, while they give

comparatively nothing.

My brethren, we are not half-Christians, that is the reason why we have not half success. We are

Christianized, but I question whether we are thoroughly so. The Spirit of God has not entered into us to

give us that life, and fire, and soul, which they had in these ancient times.

**IV.** But lastly, as the result of the other things which have gone before, and perhaps partly as the

cause of them too, WE HAVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THAT MEASURE WHICH ATTENDED

THE APOSTLES.

I see no reason whatever, why, this morning, if God willed it, I should not stand up and preach a

sermon which should be the means of converting every soul in the place. I see no reason why I should

not, tomorrow, preach a sermon which should be the means of the salvation of all who heard it, if God

the Spirit were poured out. The Word is able to convert, just as extensively as God the Spirit pleases to

apply it.

And I can see no reason why, if converts come in by ones and twos now, there should not be a time

when hundreds and thousands shall come to God. The same sermon which God blesses to ten if He

pleased He could bless to a hundred. I know not but that in the latter days, when Christ shall come and

shall begin to take the kingdom to Himself, every minister of God shall be as successful as Peter on the

day of Pentecost.

I am sure the Holy Spirit is able to make the Word successful, and the reason why we do not prosper

is that we have not the Holy Spirit attending us with might and energy as they had then. My brethren, if

we had the Holy Spirit upon our ministry, it would signify very little about our talent. Men might be

poor and uneducated, their words might be broken and ungrammatical, there might be no polished

periods of Hall, or glorious thunders of Chalmers, but if there were the might of the Spirit attending

them, the humblest evangelists would be more successful than the most pompous of divines, or the most

eloquent of preachers.

It is extraordinary *grace*, not talent, that wins the day, extraordinary spiritual power, not

extraordinary mental power. Mental power may fill a chapel, but spiritual power fills the church. Mental

power may gather a congregation, spiritual power will save souls. We want spiritual power.

Oh! we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual

power, and when they speak they have not the Holy Spirit with them. But we know others, simplehearted

worthy men who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach in their country place,

and the Spirit of God clothes every word with power. Hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are

born again. Spirit of the living God! we want *You*. You are the life, the soul. You are the source of Your

people’s success. Without You they can do nothing. With You they can do everything.

Thus I have tried to show you what I conceive to be the causes of our partial non-success. And now

permit me, with all earnestness, to plead with you on behalf of Christ and Christ’s Holy Gospel, that you

would stir yourselves up to renewed efforts for the spread of His truth, and to more earnest prayers that

His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

Ah! my friends, could I show you the tens of thousands of spirits who are now walking in outer

darkness. Could I take you to the gloomy chamber of hell and show you myriads upon myriads of

heathen souls in unutterable torture, not having heard the Word, but being justly condemned for their

sins, methinks you could ask yourselves, “Did I do anything to save these unhappy myriads? They have

been damned and can I say I am clear of their blood?” Oh! God of mercy, if these skirts are clear of my

fellow creatures’ blood, I shall have eternal reason to bless You in heaven.

Oh! church of Christ! You have great reason to ask yourself whether you are quite clean in this

matter. You say too often, you sons of God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” You are too much like Cain.

You do not ask yourselves whether God will require your fellow creatures’ blood at your hands. Oh!

there is a truth which says, “If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will he

require at the watchman’s hands.”

Ah! there ought to be more of us who are preaching to the heathen and yet, perhaps, we are indolent

and doing little or nothing. There are many of you, yea all of you, who ought to be doing far more than

you are for evangelical purposes and the spread of Christ’s Gospel. Oh! put this question to your hearts,

“Shall I be able to say to the damned spirit if he meets me in hell, ‘Sinner, I did all I could for you’”? I

am afraid some will have to say, “No, I did not. It is true I might have done more. I might have labored

more, even though I might have been unsuccessful, but I did not do it.”

Ah! my dear friends, I believe there is great reason for some of us to suspect whether we believe our

religion at all. An infidel once met a Christian and said, “I know you do not believe your religion.”

“Why?” asked the Christian. “Because,” said the other, “for years you have passed me on my way to my

house of business. You believe, do you not, there is a hell into which men’s spirits are cast?” “Yes, I

do,” said the Christian. “And you believe that unless I believe in Christ, I must be sent there?” “Yes.”

“You do not, I am sure, because if you did you would be a most inhuman wretch to pass me, day by day,

and never tell me about it or warn me of it.” I do hold that there are some Christians who are verily

guilty in this matter. God will forgive them, the blood of Christ can even wash that out, but they are

guilty.

Did you ever think of the tremendous value of a single soul? My hearers, if there were but one man

in Siberia unsaved, and all the world were saved besides, if God should move our minds, it would be

worthwhile for all the people in England to go after that one soul. Did you ever think of the value of a

soul?

Ah! you have not heard the howls and yells of hell. You have not heard the mighty songs and

hosannas of the glorified. You have no notion of what eternity is or else you would know the value of a

soul. You who have been broken by conviction, humbled by the Spirit and led to cry for mercy through

the covenant Jesus, you know something of what a soul’s value is, but many of my hearers do not. Could

we preach carelessly, could we pray coldly, if we knew what a precious thing it is about which we are

concerned? No, surely we should be doubly in earnest that God would please to save sinners.

I am sure the present state of affairs cannot go on long, we are doing next to nothing. Christianity is

at a low ebb. People think it will never be much better, that it is clear impossible to do wonders in these

days. Are we in a worse condition than the Roman Catholic nations were when one man, a Luther,

preached? Then God can find a Luther now. We are not in a much worse state than when Whitefield

began to preach and yet God can find His Whitefields now.

It is a delusion to suppose that we cannot succeed as they did. God helping us we will. God helping

us by His Spirit, we will see greater things than this, at any rate, we will never let God’s church rest if

we do not see it prosper, but we will enter our earnest hearty protest against the coldness and the

lethargy of the times, and as long as this our tongue shall move in our mouth, we will protest against the

laxity and false doctrine so rampant throughout the churches, and then that happy double reformation—a

reformation in doctrine and Spirit, will be brought about together.

Then God knows but what we shall say, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their

windows,” and ere long the shout of Christ shall be heard. He, Himself, shall descend from heaven. And

we shall hear it said and sung, “Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaicwords. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.\_\_

# The Gospel and the Gentiles (Acts 13:14-52)

Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52*](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52)

### Introduction[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P18_6196)

This past week, the headlines informed us of the discovery of a 1700-year-old document called the “Gospel of Judas.” This “gospel” was written by a member of a Gnostic cult known as the Cainites. This group sought to represent Cain, the original bad boy of the Bible (not counting his father, Adam), as a true hero rather than as a villain. (They insisted that he showed real courage when he opposed God.) Why would it surprise us that a member of this group (already branded as heretics in their day) would write a document alleging that Judas (the most prominent “bad boy” of the New Testament) was really a hero as well? Judas, they would have us believe, had more insight and understanding of our Lord’s mission than all the rest, and therefore he betrayed our Lord at His request, knowing that he (Judas) would be “crucified” (figuratively speaking, of course) as a villain for centuries. But in the end, he would be rewarded by the Lord.

For many people, and all too many “scholars,” this will prompt endless hours of study, discussion, and debate. For those who are already predisposed to doubt the Word of God, it will be another excuse to call the canonical (biblical) gospels into question and cause some gullible people to reconsider the authenticity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank God that on this Palm Sunday we are privileged to have the inspired Word of God in our hands. Specifically, we are studying the second volume of a masterful, historical work, divinely inspired, carefully penned, and based on eye-witness testimonies. Together these two volumes (the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts) give us a history of the gospel of Jesus Christ, from the time of our Lord’s birth to the spread of the gospel throughout the known world of New Testament times.

Today we have come to the 13th chapter of the Book of Acts and to the first recorded sermon of the Apostle Paul. It is the Sabbath, and so we find Paul in a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, proclaiming the good news of salvation by faith in the shed blood of the risen Christ. In contrast to “the Gospel of Judas,” which allegedly calls into question the sum total of the biblical gospel, the “gospel according to Paul” does just the opposite. The gospel Paul (and all the other apostles) proclaimed was the consummation of all that the Old Testament promised and anticipated. Paul presented the gospel in such a way that it connected all the dots, reaching the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s only provision for the forgiveness of our sins. In his sermon, which indicts the people of Jerusalem and their leaders for the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, Judas is never mentioned. Judas is no sacrificial lamb, on which the guilt of all mankind can be laid; that is the task that only the sinless Lord Jesus could fulfill. We are all guilty of rejecting Jesus as God’s promised Messiah.

The message that Paul preaches is so compelling that no one in our text is able to dispute his facts, or his theology.[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P24_9806) There is no debate on this particular Sabbath, or on the next, when the entire city comes to hear what Paul has to say about Jesus and Judaism. The rejection of Jesus and of Paul’s gospel is far less sophisticated and intellectual than that, as we shall soon see.

As we approach this lesson, let us do so with joyful and grateful hearts, knowing that we have the sure and faithful Word of God as our text, a Word which is not shaken by newly revealed heresies. And let us look to the Spirit of God to quicken our hearts and minds to respond to the truth as we should.

### The Setting

In our last lesson, we studied the first 13 verses of [Acts 13](javascript:%7b%7d). There we noted how the Holy Spirit designated Barnabas and Saul as missionaries to be sent out with the gospel to the Gentiles. Luke then tells of their ministry on the island of Cyprus. He chooses to focus on one segment of their ministry at Paphos, a leading city on the western end of Cyprus. There they encountered Elymas the Jewish false prophet and magician, also known as Bar-Jesus. Elymas had somehow attached himself to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul residing in Paphos. When the proconsul wanted to speak with Barnabas and Saul to hear more of their message, Elymas did everything he could to hinder this man from coming to faith. Filled with the Spirit, Paul took the lead in condemning the resistance of Elymas, punctuating this with a curse of blindness. Witnessing the authority with which Paul proclaimed the gospel, the proconsul gave heed to the gospel message and came to faith.

#### Passing by Perga [Acts 13:13-15](javascript:%7b%7d)

13 Then Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. 14 Moving on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the law and the prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, “Brothers, if you have any message [literally “a word”] of exhortation for the people, speak it” ([Acts 13:13-15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“**Paul and his companions**” sailed north to Asia Minor, arriving at Perga in Pamphylia. It was here that John Mark left them and returned home to Jerusalem, something which Paul interpreted as desertion or abandoning his post.[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P31_12151) John Mark’s actions here will result in a strong disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, resulting in the split-up of their team, thus forming two teams ([Acts 15:36-41](javascript:%7b%7d)). It would appear that there was no significant preaching here in Perga, but instead the gospel was proclaimed on their return through Perga ([Acts 14:25](javascript:%7b%7d)).

From Perga, the missionaries traveled on to Pisidian Antioch. This is not the “**Antioch**” of Syria, where the first missionary journey began, but the “**Antioch**” of Asia Minor, some 350 miles or so northwest of Syrian Antioch. On the Sabbath, Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue. This became Paul’s normal pattern for introducing the gospel in a town or city (see [Acts 17:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d)). It was also the practice of our Lord:

Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people ([Matthew 4:23](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Then Jesus went throughout all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness ([Matthew 9:35](javascript:%7b%7d); see also 12:1; 13:54).

The synagogues were an ideal place to commence their ministry when Paul and Barnabas arrived at a new city. If there was a synagogue in the city, they would go there on the Sabbath and preach the gospel. Here, one would find Jews and Gentile proselytes or God-fearers, who were at least somewhat devout in their pursuit of Judaism. Paul consistently followed the practice of going to “**the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles**” with the gospel (see, for example, [Acts 3:26; 19:8-10](javascript:%7b%7d); [Romans 1:16; 2:9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The synagogues provided an ideal forum for preaching the gospel. Luke provides us with the most information about the synagogues and how they functioned ([Luke 4:16-30](javascript:%7b%7d); [Acts 13:14-16](javascript:%7b%7d)). From [Luke 4:16-30](javascript:%7b%7d), we see that there was the reading of some portions of the Old Testament Scriptures (on this occasion, it included [Isaiah 61:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus was free to expound on that text, which He did, revealing that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. In our text in Acts, we learn that there was a reading from the Law and the Prophets. There were synagogue officials present who were in charge of the meeting, but they granted the opportunity for men (including visitors) to speak. It was in response to this invitation that Paul spoke at Pisidian Antioch.

Luke does not tell us what the Scripture reading was on this occasion. It would not surprise me if, in the providence of God, the texts were directly related to the message Paul was about to preach. While we do not know the texts that were read, we do know that when Paul preached, he reviewed a good deal of Old Testament history, referring to a number of Old Testament texts in support of his conclusion.

#### From Abraham to Jesus [Acts 13:16-25](javascript:%7b%7d)

16 So Paul stood up, gestured with his hand and said, “Men of Israel, and you Gentiles who fear God, listen: 17 The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay as foreigners in the country of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 For a period of about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. 19 After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan,[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P40_15439) he gave his people their land as an inheritance. 20 All this took about four hundred fifty years. After this he gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing him, God raised up David their king. He testified about him: ‘I have found David the son of Jesse to be a man after my heart, who will accomplish everything I want him to do.’ 23 From the descendants of this man God brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, just as he promised. 24 Before Jesus arrived, John had proclaimed a baptism for repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 But while John was completing his mission, he said repeatedly, ‘What do you think I am? I am not he. But look, one is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the sandals on his feet!’ ([Acts 13:16-25](javascript:%7b%7d))

### Preliminary Observations

*(1) Paul’s message is quite brief.* Some have suggested that Paul’s message was much longer than this and that Luke has provided us with a kind of “Readers Digest” abridgement of that message. This is certainly possible, and it no doubt this is true of some other messages in the New Testament, such as Peter’s message at Pentecost in [Acts 2](javascript:%7b%7d). But I’m not so sure that Paul’s message in the synagogue was much longer than what Luke has recorded. First of all, Paul and Barnabas were newcomers, virtual strangers to the synagogue leaders and people of Pisidian Antioch. While opportunity might be granted to speak at great length later on, this message was to be “**a word of exhortation**.”[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P43_17061) I seriously doubt that they were surrendering the meeting to a complete stranger for a lengthy message.[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P44_17353)

*(2) Second, this message was addressed to Jews and Gentiles alike.* We should note from verse 16 that Paul clearly addressed his words to both Jews (“**men of Israel**”) and Gentiles (“**you Gentiles who fear God**”). This will again be the case in verse 26:

“Brothers, descendants of Abraham’s family, and those Gentiles among you who fear God, the message of this salvation has been sent to us” ([Acts 13:26](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*(3) Paul’s message assumes a familiarity with the Old Testament.* We should further note that whether Jew or Gentile, those addressed were familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. (They should be, since portions of the Law and the Prophets were read each Sabbath in the synagogue.) Paul’s message is one that is adapted to his audience. When Paul speaks to pure pagans, he must approach them differently because of their ignorance of the Scriptures (see [Acts 17:16-31](javascript:%7b%7d)).

*(4) Paul moves through Old Testament history at a very rapid pace.*Paul surveys Old Testament history at a very rapid pace. He covers the 450 years from the call of Abraham to Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land in 3 verses ([Acts 13:17-19](javascript:%7b%7d)). He does not go into any detail in any part of his Old Testament survey. He will go into greater detail when he comes to New Testament history. Let us take note of all that Paul covers in his rapid sprint through the Old Testament.

### A Sprint through the Old Testament and then to the New

Paul begins with the call of Abraham and the patriarchs and with Israel’s sojourn in Egypt where they became a great nation ([Acts 13:17](javascript:%7b%7d)a). He then briefly mentions their exodus from Egypt ([Acts 13:17](javascript:%7b%7d)b). He covers the 40-year sojourn in the wilderness in 1 verse ([Acts 13:18](javascript:%7b%7d)), and then in another verse, summarizes Israel’s possession of the Promised Land ([Acts 13:19](javascript:%7b%7d)). The period of the judges is covered in half of one short verse ([Acts 13:20](javascript:%7b%7d)b).

Paul is a bit more leisurely (a whole 2½ verses!) when he comes to the time of Samuel and Israel’s first kings ([Acts 13:20](javascript:%7b%7d)b-22). When the people asked for (okay, demanded) a king, God gave them Saul, who reigned 40 years and then was replaced by David, a man after God’s heart. From David, Paul leaps forward hundreds of years to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is David’s offspring (and thus He is often called the Son of David).[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P52_19982)

One must ask why Paul would skip so many years of Old Testament history in order to leap forward in time to the coming of Jesus. There are several reasons, I suspect. *First*, Paul did not have a great deal of time to present this “**word of exhortation**.” *Second*, this was history his audience already knew. *Third*, Paul will soon show that the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of Jesus and the major events of His life and ministry. *Fourth*, after the time of David, things went rapidly downhill until the coming of Jesus the Messiah. *Fifth*, Jesus was the legitimate “**Son of David**,” the promised Messiah. Jesus truly took up where David left off and went far beyond anything David could have ever done. David was a mere man, and a sinner at that. Jesus was the God-man, who was without sin. Jesus was that One who would sit on the throne of his father David forever (see [2 Samuel 7:12-14](javascript:%7b%7d)a).

Paul gives more emphasis to Jesus than to anything or anyone else in our text, and rightly so. He begins with the ministry of John the Baptist. John not only proclaimed a baptism of repentance, he also publicly denied that he was the Messiah. Instead, he designated Jesus as God’s Messiah,[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P55_21232) insisting that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of our Lord ([Acts 13:25](javascript:%7b%7d)).

#### Jesus Is the Promised Messiah [Acts 13:26-37](javascript:%7b%7d)

26 Brothers, descendants of Abraham’s family, and those Gentiles among you who fear God, the message of this salvation has been sent to us. 27 For the people who live in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him, and they fulfilled the sayings of the prophets that are read every Sabbath by condemning him. 28 Though they found no basis for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had accomplished everything that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we proclaim to you the good news about the promise to our ancestors, 33 that this promise God has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son; today I have fathered you.’[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P58_22394) 34 But regarding the fact that he has raised Jesus from the dead, never again to be in a state of decay, God has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and trustworthy promises made to David.’[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P59_22607) 35 Therefore he also says in another psalm, ‘You will not permit your Holy One to experience decay.’[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P60_22723) 36 For David, after he had served God’s purpose in his own generation, died, was buried with his ancestors, and experienced decay, 37 but the one whom God raised up did not experience decay ([Acts 13:26-37](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Once again Paul makes it clear (to his audience and to us) that he is addressing his message to Jews and Gentiles alike when he speaks concerning the salvation that has been sent ([Acts 13:26](javascript:%7b%7d)). It is somewhat puzzling to note that verse 27 begins with the word “**for**.” How does verse 27 serve to demonstrate the fact that salvation has been sent? It seems to me that the argument goes something like this: “We know that salvation has been sent to us because when Jesus did come and present Himself as the Messiah, the Jews in Jerusalem, along with their rulers, did not recognize Him. Thus, in rejecting Him, they fulfilled the sayings of the prophets that are read in the synagogue each Sabbath. They demanded the death of Jesus, although there were no legal grounds for doing so. And when they had put Him to death they buried Him. But God reversed the death of Jesus by raising Him from the dead. The risen Messiah then appeared to His apostles, and they continue to testify to the fact that He is alive. The fact that these things have happened is proof that salvation has indeed come to the people of Israel, and the Gentiles as well.”

Remember that Paul and Barnabas are now in Asia Minor, and not in Jerusalem. These folks were not there in Jerusalem crying, “**Crucify! Crucify!**” ([Luke 23:21](javascript:%7b%7d)) That is why Paul distances the rejection of Jesus by those in Jerusalem from his audience, removed hundreds of miles from Jerusalem. But now they are given the same message, and thus they are being confronted with their own decision regarding Jesus, but Paul’s gospel presentation is not yet complete.

In rejecting Jesus, the people of Jerusalem and their rulers unwittingly fulfilled the words of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, this came as no shock to God, but was only the fulfillment of His purposes. They not only rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they demanded that He be put to death, even though there was no legal basis for doing so. And when Pilate gave in to their demands and crucified Jesus, they buried Him in a tomb.

That would seem to be the end of it, but it was not. Verse 30 begins with the words, “**But God**. . . .” Although the people of Jerusalem rejected Jesus and had Him put to death, God raised Him from the dead. This is no idle claim; Jesus appeared alive to His disciples for many days, and they in turn have testified to His resurrection ([Acts 15:31](javascript:%7b%7d)). What the apostles proclaimed to others, Paul and Barnabas are proclaiming to those gathered in this synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. God’s promise of a coming Messiah – One who will reign forever on the throne of David – has been fulfilled by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

We should recall that our Lord Jesus staked His entire earthly mission on His ability to rise from the dead:

18 So then the Jewish leaders responded, “What sign can you show us, since you are doing these things?” 19 Jesus replied, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.” 20 Then the Jewish leaders said to him, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and are you going to raise it up in three days?” 21 But Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 So after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the saying that Jesus had spoken ([John 2:18-22](javascript:%7b%7d)).

38 Then some of the experts in the law along with some Pharisees answered him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” 39 But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet [Jonah. 40](javascript:%7b%7d) For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights ([Matthew 12:38-40](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies:

The king says, “I will announce the Lord’s decree.  
He said to me: ‘You are my son!  
This very day I have become your father! ([Psalm 2:7](javascript:%7b%7d); cited in [Acts 15:33](javascript:%7b%7d))

“Incline your ear and come to Me.  
Listen, that you may live;   
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  *According to* the faithful mercies shown to David” ([Isaiah 55:3](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, cited in [Acts 15:34](javascript:%7b%7d)).

You will not abandon me to Sheol;   
you will not allow your faithful follower to see the Pit ([Psalm 16:10](javascript:%7b%7d), cited in [Acts 15:35](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The first text cited – [Psalm 2:7](javascript:%7b%7d) – speaks of the divine designation of Jesus as the Messiah, the King who will sit on the throne of his father David to rule over all creation. The second text – [Isaiah 55:3](javascript:%7b%7d) – may not appear to be directly relevant. Notice however that there is a promise being made to one of David’s descendants. This is an everlasting covenant, according to the mercies shown to David. How could such a covenant ever be fulfilled for a dead man? This text implies that the Son of David will live, and thus it implies the resurrection.

The third text is a familiar one to Paul’s audience, who knew the Old Testament. It is also familiar to Luke’s readers, who should recall that a larger portion of this text was cited in [Acts 2](javascript:%7b%7d):

24 But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. 25 For David says about him,

‘I saw the Lord always in front of me,  
  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken.   
26 Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced;   
my body also will live in hope,   
27 because you will not leave my soul in Hades,   
nor permit your Holy One to experience decay.   
28 You have made known to me the paths of life;   
you will make me full of joy with your presence.’

29 “Brothers, I can speak confidently to you about our forefather David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 So then, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 David by foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his body experience decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it ([Acts 2:24-32](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Notice how similar Peter’s argument for the resurrection of Jesus is to that of Paul. It is obvious to Peter and Paul, as it should be to anyone, that David was not speaking of himself, but of another – his descendant, Jesus the Messiah. The synagogue rulers received far more than they asked for. They asked for a “**word of exhortation**” (verse 15, emphasis mine). What they received was a “**word of salvation**” ([Acts 13:26](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine):

“Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the **word****[13](https://bible.org/admin/page_edit_content.asp?page_id=3971" \l "P79_29637) of this salvation** has been sent” ([Acts 13:26](javascript:%7b%7d), NKJV, emphasis mine).

#### Paul’s Conclusion and Application [Acts 13:38-41](javascript:%7b%7d)

38 Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through this one forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by this one everyone who believes is justified from everything from which the law of Moses could not justify you. 40 Watch out, then, that what is spoken about by the prophets does not happen to you: 41 ‘Look, you scoffers; be amazed and perish! For I am doing a work in your days, a work you would never believe, even if someone tells you’” ([Acts 13:38-41](javascript:%7b%7d))

Here, Peter brings his “**word of exhortation**” to its conclusion. Salvation has come, just as God (through His prophets) had promised. That salvation has come in the person of Jesus Christ, through His life, death and resurrection. Now comes the difficult part, for some: this salvation comes through Jesus **for all men**, **apart from law-works**. The Law of Moses could not save, as Israel’s history has proven. The Law’s task was to point men to Jesus, the coming Messiah, just as Paul has demonstrated. Salvation comes by faith in Jesus, and not by keeping the Law. And because it is by grace (not by law-keeping), it is available to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. This “**word of salvation**” is offered to all those to whom Paul is speaking.

Paul’s conclusion is the good news of the offer of salvation by faith in Jesus, the Messiah. But there is also a word of warning. The prophets had not only foretold the coming of Messiah; they had also warned that He would be rejected by His own people. Luke selects a verse from Habakkuk which sounds a warning to the people of Jerusalem:

1 The following is the message which God revealed to Habakkuk the prophet: 2 How long, Lord, must I cry for help? But you do not listen! I call out to you, “Violence!” But you do not intervene! 3 Why do you force me to witness injustice? Why do you put up with wrongdoing? Destruction and violence confront me; conflict is present and one must endure strife. 4 For this reason the law lacks power, and justice is never carried out. Indeed, the wicked intimidate the innocent. For this reason justice is perverted. 5 “**Look at the nations and pay attention! You will be shocked and amazed! For I will do something in your lifetime that you will not believe even though you are forewarned**. 6 Look, I am about to empower the Babylonians, that ruthless and greedy nation. They sweep across the surface of the earth, seizing dwelling places that do not belong to them. 7 They are frightening and terrifying; they decide for themselves what is right ([Habakkuk 1:1-7](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

I have included more of the context of Habakkuk’s warning that is sounded in verse 5 (the verse Paul cites in [Acts 13:41](javascript:%7b%7d)). In Habakkuk’s day, the people of Jerusalem had become insensitive to sin, and likewise insensitive to the warnings of God’s impending wrath. Jerusalem was soon to fall at the hand of the Babylonians. Jerusalem would soon be completely destroyed. The same thing was soon to happen to Jerusalem once again, at the hands of the Romans. Paul warned his audience that they dare not reject this “**word of salvation**,” for it was also a “**word of judgment**.” His message was a double-edged sword. To believe in Jesus was to obtain the forgiveness of sins (something the Law was incapable of doing). To reject Jesus was to invite and experience divine judgment.

#### Epilogue [Acts 13:42-52](javascript:%7b%7d)

42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people were urging them to speak about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking with them and were persuading them to continue in the grace of God. 44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city assembled together to hear the word of the Lord. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what Paul was saying by reviling him. 46 Both Paul and Barnabas replied courageously, “It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began to rejoice and praise the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed. 49 So the word of the Lord was spreading through the entire region. 50 But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high social standing and the prominent men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and threw them out of their region. 51 So after they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, they went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit ([Acts 13:42-52](javascript:%7b%7d)).

No “invitation” is given here. I think it is because Paul has given a very brief introductory overview of the gospel. He does not want anyone to make a hasty decision. It was not his place as a visitor to dominate the synagogue proceedings, but only to bring a “**word of exhortation**.” Nearly everyone seemed to want to hear more, and so he was urged to return the following Sabbath and speak further of these matters. A good number of these folks did not seem to need further convincing. They followed Paul and Barnabas, who continued to speak to them, encouraging them to continue in the grace of God.

Word of Paul’s preaching spread throughout the entire city (now that the gospel was for all men, whether Jew or Gentile). When the next Sabbath arrived, it seemed as though the whole city had turned out to hear Paul for themselves. It was the presence of these crowds that angered the Jews. Up to this time, no doubt, the synagogue meeting had been dominated by Jews, with a smattering of Gentile God-fearers attending. Now the Jews were in the minority. (It must have been exasperating to come to the synagogue that Sabbath only to find some Gentile sitting in “my pew.”)

The Jews were filled with jealousy when they saw the crowds. They were not interested in hearing what Paul and Barnabas had to say. They wanted nothing to do with a gospel that invited hordes of unclean Gentiles into the Kingdom of God without first becoming Jewish proselytes. And so the Jews became hecklers that day, who (like Elymas at the beginning of this chapter) sought to prevent the Gentiles from coming to the faith they had rejected. (They didn’t want Jesus as Messiah, but neither did they want these Gentiles trusting in Him either.)

Paul and Barnabas were not intimidated by their opposition. Instead, they boldly spoke out, proclaiming that it was necessary to first preach the good news to the Jews, but now that they had rejected this “**word of salvation**,” the gospel would be preached to the Gentiles. Ironically, the precedent they cited for this was found in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah. Let us look at the verse Paul has quoted in its context:

5 So now the Lord says, the one who formed me from birth to be his servant – he did this to restore Jacob to himself, so that Israel might be gathered to him; and I will be honored in the Lord’s sight, for my God is my source of strength – 6 he says, “Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant, to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and restore the remnant of Israel? **I will make you a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth**.” 7 This is what the Lord, the protector of Israel, their Holy One, says to the one who is despised and rejected by nations, a servant of rulers: “Kings will see and rise in respect, princes will bow down, because of the faithful Lord, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you” ([Isaiah 49:5-7](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

This prophecy concerns Jesus, the Messiah. He was “formed from birth to be God’s servant” (at the incarnation). He came to restore Jacob (Israel – the Jews) to Himself. He was honored in the Lord’s sight. Not only will the Lord Jesus restore Israel to Himself; He will also be a “**light to the Gentiles**,” bringing many of them into the kingdom through faith in Himself as the Messiah. The apostles, as servants of The One True Servant, continue to proclaim this Light to the Gentiles. In this way, salvation will encompass not only Israel, but the whole world ([Isaiah 49:6](javascript:%7b%7d); [Acts 13:46-47](javascript:%7b%7d)). This is completely consistent with our Lord’s words to those gathered at the synagogue in Nazareth ([Luke 4:16-30](javascript:%7b%7d)) and with the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](javascript:%7b%7d); [Acts 1:8](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The Gentiles were ecstatic when they heard these words. They began to rejoice and to praise the Word of the Lord. Luke’s next words have also been the source of great joy to many (but consternation to some):

“. . . and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed” ([Acts 13:48](javascript:%7b%7d)b).

It is difficult to avoid the clear meaning of this statement or its implications: salvation is under control – God’s control. Look at what Luke has to say later on in the Book of Acts:

A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. **The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying** ([Acts 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Lest we think this only to be Luke’s viewpoint, we should remember the words of our Lord:

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day” ([John 6:44](javascript:%7b%7d)).

So Jesus added, “Because of this I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has allowed him to come” ([John 6:65](javascript:%7b%7d); see also [John 8:43; 10:26](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The point of Luke’s statement linking the salvation of many Gentiles with the sovereign work of God in saving lost sinners is that the salvation of Gentiles was not the result of any greater desire for God, or for salvation,[14](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P102_39761) but was the result of a God who sovereignly chose to seek and to save Gentiles.

One of the prominent themes of the Book of Acts is the sovereignty of God, not only in the salvation of men, but also in the spread of the gospel. The missionary movement which was commanded in [Acts 1:8](javascript:%7b%7d) was first commenced in [Acts 8:1](javascript:%7b%7d). This was not due to the missionary zeal of the apostles, or even of the Jerusalem church. It was due to the persecution on account of Stephen’s death that scattered the church. Those few unnamed individuals who proclaimed Jesus to the Gentiles ([Acts 11:20](javascript:%7b%7d)) were the exception. And even the missionary movement that commenced in [Acts 13:1-4](javascript:%7b%7d) was initiated by the Holy Spirit, who instructed the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary activity.

Notice that while the salvation of many Gentiles is, to some degree, the result of the missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas,[15](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P105_40844) Luke emphasizes the role of the Word of God and the working of God’s Spirit in the hearts of men. The gospel is not referred to as “the gospel” in these verses, but three times is referred to as “**the Word of God**” (see [Acts 13:5, 7, 46](javascript:%7b%7d)) and twice as “**the Word of the Lord**” ([Acts 13:44, 48](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It was the success of God’s Word that disturbed the Jews, who then in turn incited the God-fearing women of high society and the prominent men of the city ([Acts 13:50](javascript:%7b%7d)) to stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, so that they were expelled from that region. Unshaken by this rejection, the two shook the dust from their feet and went on to Iconium. The disciples they left behind were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. The opposition did not intimidate these new believers, whose joy was in the Lord, and in whom the Spirit of God now dwelt.

### Conclusion

We have now come to the end of the first recorded sermon of the Apostle Paul. It is undoubtedly typical of the sermons he delivered in the Jewish synagogues of the cities he visited. This sermon therefore is precedent setting in several ways. It sets the precedent for how Paul proclaims the gospel in cities where a synagogue can be found. It sets the precedent for the message that Paul consistently preached to his Jewish brethren (and for the Gentile God-fearers who also went to the synagogue). It establishes the biblical precedent of taking the gospel first to the Jews, and then (after they reject the gospel) to the Gentiles.[16](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P109_42366)

Our text records the message Paul preached, and not a message preached by Barnabas. Luke makes it clear that Paul is now the leader of this missionary team (see [Acts 13:9-13](javascript:%7b%7d)). But while Paul’s leadership is clear to the reader, Luke makes no effort to glorify Paul or to glamorize his gifts or ministry. We are not told how good Paul was at his preaching. What we are told is that the salvation of those at Pisidian Antioch (and by inference, everywhere else) was, in the end, the work of God. Six times in [Acts 13](javascript:%7b%7d) Luke has called attention to the “**Word of God**” (or, the “**Word of the Lord**”).[17](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P111_43240) In verse 48, Luke indicates that those who believed were those “**who had been appointed for eternal life**.” As the Holy Spirit’s ministry is prominent in the Book of Acts, I believe it would be safe to say that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are given the greater credit for the evangelism of the lost.

This is not to minimize the essential role which men play in preaching the gospel, for it is Paul himself who has written,

12 For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses all who call on him. 13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 How are they to call on one they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in one they have not heard of? And how are they to hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How timely is the arrival of those who proclaim the good news” ([Romans 10:12-15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The sovereignty of God in the salvation of men should not be misinterpreted in such a way as to discourage our participation in the proclamation of the gospel. How encouraging it is to go forth with the gospel knowing that God has already chosen some who will believe, and that His Spirit convicts and converts men. We know that evangelism is not the result of human devices or clever manipulation, but it is the manifestation of God’s power:

For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God ([2 Corinthians 2:17](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Therefore, since we have this ministry, just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged. 2 But we have rejected shameful hidden deeds, not behaving with deceptiveness or distorting the word of God, but by open proclamation of the truth we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience before God ([2 Corinthians 4:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d)).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ([Romans 1:16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment – 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned ([John 16:7-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).[18](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P119_45875)

There are several excellent sermons in the Book of Acts, and each has its own contribution to make. Let us take a moment to consider the unique contribution of this sermon (besides the fact that it is Paul’s first recorded sermon). In [Acts 2](javascript:%7b%7d), we have Peter’s great sermon at Pentecost. There he answers the question, “**What do these things** [the supernatural and spectacular phenomena associated with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost] **mean?**” His emphasis is on the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and of the judgment that is soon to come. He connects this Old Testament theme of judgment with the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by those in his audience. He demonstrates that Jesus has risen from the dead, and he urges these Jews to repent and be baptized in order to avoid the coming wrath of God on this unbelieving generation. In many ways, Peter’s sermon in [Acts 3](javascript:%7b%7d) is an expansion on this same theme, but with more emphasis on the promised blessings that will come to those who trust in Jesus by faith.

Stephen’s sermon in [Acts 7](javascript:%7b%7d) is a scorching review of Israel’s history, with an emphasis on the fact that Israel has persistently rebelled against God and against His appointed leaders. Stephen makes no appeal for his own life, and neither does he appeal to those in the Sanhedrin to repent and believe. Their day of judgment is now rapidly coming. This is a message of condemnation, boldly driven home by a man who is about to die at the hands of his audience.

Paul’s sermon in [Acts 13](javascript:%7b%7d) also contains a review of Israel’s history, but it is intended to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (the promise God made to David that his Son, his descendant, would forever rule on his throne). He indicts the Jews of Jerusalem and their leaders for rejecting Jesus, and for demanding His death, in spite of His innocence. Paul presents his case in such a way as to call his audience to take sides, either with the Jews who rejected Jesus, or with Jesus the Messiah.

This sermon shows that when all the “dots” of the Old Testament are connected, they point to Jesus. The emphasis here is upon the sovereign grace of God, by which both Jews and Gentiles can be saved, apart from works. It is the offer of justification by faith. In Jesus, one can obtain the forgiveness of sins, something that the Law could never do.

Paul knows nothing of the pluralism of our day. He does not present the gospel as one of many different ways to God. He does not present the gospel as something to think about from time to time. He presents the gospel as a matter of the greatest urgency, and as a decision that one must consciously make. Those who hear the gospel as Paul preaches it have only two options: (a) believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah and obtain the forgiveness of sins, or (b) reject Jesus and suffer the penalty of God’s eternal wrath. When Paul preached the gospel, he used both the “stick” (warning of judgment to come) and the “carrot” (the offer of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life). His was not a “toothless” gospel, “gummed” in hypocrisy. It was a bold confrontation which emphasized the monumental decision one must make between heaven or hell, between grace and law, between faith and works. Any honest declaration of the gospel should include both of these elements, for those who reject Jesus will suffer the eternal consequences of hell.

Finally, I wish to speak for a moment about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is Palm Sunday. Next Sunday will be Resurrection Sunday, the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the core of Paul’s message here (as in Peter’s messages in [Acts 2](javascript:%7b%7d) and 3) is the central truth of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Every Sunday we celebrate communion at the Lord’s Table. There, in the partaking of the bread, we celebrate the incarnation of our Lord. In the birth of Jesus, undiminished deity took on sinless humanity. This qualified Him (and only Him!) to die in our place, and to bear the wrath of God which should have fallen on us. In taking the cup, we celebrate the death of our Lord when He bore the penalty for our sins by dying in our place.

This celebration would be meaningless apart from our Lord’s resurrection. The resurrection demonstrates God’s approval and acceptance of the sacrifice of His Son, and our Lord. I am reminded of one of my favorite Old Testament statements:

“Tell him the one who puts on his battle gear should not boast like one who is taking it off” ([1 Kings 20:11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We say it a little bit differently: “Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched.”

When we celebrate the Lord’s Table (communion), we do it knowing that the Lord has, so to speak, taken His armor off. On the cross, Jesus proclaimed, “**It is finished!**”[19](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P132_50731), and so it is! The battle has been won, and Jesus is the Victor. We are eternally safe in His keeping. Those who reject Him will endure eternal punishment.

I must ask you this, my friend: Where do you stand with Jesus? Are you with Him or against Him? Have you forsaken all your efforts to win God’s favor, casting yourself on the work of Jesus alone for your salvation? Or are you still striving to please Him by your efforts? Are you seeking to gain eternal life by your good works? You cannot remain neutral. The Old Testament and New Testament writers all agree that Jesus is the promised “**Son of David**.” Will you trust in Him today?

[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P16_5293) Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible. The NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION, also known as THE NET BIBLE, is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It was completed by more than twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide an electronic version of a modern translation for electronic distribution over the Internet and on CD (compact disk). Anyone anywhere in the world with an Internet connection will be able to use and print out the NET Bible without cost for personal study. In addition, anyone who wants to share the Bible with others can print unlimited copies and give them away free to others. It is available on the Internet at: [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P18_6197) Copyright © 2006 by Community Bible Chapel, 418 E. Main Street, Richardson, TX 75081. This is the edited manuscript of Lesson 19 in the *Studies in the Book of Acts* series prepared by Robert L. Deffinbaugh on April 9, 2006. Anyone is at liberty to use this lesson for educational purposes only, with or without credit. The Chapel believes the material presented herein to be true to the teaching of Scripture, and desires to further, not restrict, its potential use as an aid in the study of God’s Word. The publication of this material is a grace ministry of Community Bible Chapel.

[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P24_9807) Compare Stephen’s powerful preaching in [Acts 6:8-10](javascript:%7b%7d).

[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P31_12152) See [Acts 15:38](javascript:%7b%7d).

[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P40_15440) See [Deuteronomy 7:1](javascript:%7b%7d).

[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P43_17062) As indicated in the text of verse 15, the original text would more literally be translated “**a word of exhortation**.” This is the way the majority of translations render the expression.

[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P44_17354) Further supporting the “short message” view is the fact that many of those present asked (begged) Paul to return the next week to teach them further. Paul did not give them as much as they desired, and they wanted more. Also, we see that Paul continued to work with those who embraced his teaching, outside the synagogue ([Acts 13:43](javascript:%7b%7d)).

[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P52_19983) See, for example, [Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 21:9](javascript:%7b%7d).

[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P55_21233) Much as the prophet Samuel designated Saul and then David as God’s chosen king.

[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P58_22395) [Psalm 2:7](javascript:%7b%7d).

[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P59_22608) [Isaiah 55:3](javascript:%7b%7d).

[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P60_22724) [Psalm 16:10](javascript:%7b%7d).

[13](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P79_29638) In both [Acts 13:15](javascript:%7b%7d) and 13:26, many translations, including the NET Bible, render the Greek word *logos* “message.” I prefer the much more common translation for this word – “**word**.”

[14](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P102_39762) Note Paul’s words in [Romans 9:30](javascript:%7b%7d): “**What shall we say then? – that the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith, . . .**”

[15](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P105_40845) See [Romans 10:14-15](javascript:%7b%7d).

[16](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P109_42367) When Paul preaches to the Jews in the synagogues, he also speaks to Gentiles as well, offering both salvation by faith alone, in Jesus alone. But when the Jews reject the gospel and resist Paul’s preaching, he moves on to the Gentiles, as we see in our text ([Acts 13:45-48](javascript:%7b%7d)).

[17](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P111_43241) See [Acts 13:5, 7, 44, 46, 48, 49](javascript:%7b%7d).

[18](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P119_45876) See also [1 Corinthians 2:10-13](javascript:%7b%7d).

[19](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-gospel-and-gentiles-acts-1314-52" \l "P132_50732) [John 19:30](javascript:%7b%7d).