

## Acts 13:13-41

### “Man’s Greatest Need; God’s Greatest Deed”

Getting the gospel to the ends of the earth. That seems to be the primary mindset of Acts Ch 13. It’d been (as Jesus had commanded) shared throughout Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria; now the disciples at Antioch set their sights on the ends of the earth. The idea being that the gospel isn’t just for *this* group of people, or *that* particular ethnicity, it’s doesn’t apply only to a certain culture... For God so loved the (what’s the word) “world” that He gave His only begotten Son. There is a universal appeal to the gospel, it’s for *every* tribe, *every* tongue & *every* nation.

All have sinned *against* God; therefore all need the forgiveness of God & that’s where the good news of the gospel comes in! The bible is clear that the wages of sin is death, & Jesus came to the earth, being in every way tempted as we are tempted yet *w/out* sin. He was the sinless, spotless Son of God. & As He laid His life down upon the cross, somehow & in some way He took the sin of the world upon Himself & He died in our place. He was crucified for our transgressions, & 3 days later He was raised for our justification. Forgiveness is available by God’s grace through faith in J.C. who out of love for us paid a debt He didn’t owe because we owed a debt we couldn’t pay.

But how is that message supposed to make its way around the world? There’s good news! Forgiveness is available! You can be reconciled to God through the blood of J.C. One caveat, one glitch in the gearwheel... Before you can *respond* to it, you have to *know about* it... & This is the problem that Paul is processing in Rom Ch 10. He writes, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (The gospel is for everyone) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”<sup>1</sup>

If the gospel was going to get to different places in the world, someone was going to have to “foot” the message, right? So setting all personal ambition aside, that’s what they determined to do in Acts 13. The Holy Spirit led them to separate Barnabas & Saul (who is called Paul) & together w/Jn Mark (who would later pen the gospel of Mark) they set out.

Map They (as you can see) sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to the island of Cyprus where they began preaching the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Ro 10:12-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ultimately; they wound up on the west coast (in Paphos) where they gained audience w/the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. It was an exciting scene to say the least & I would encourage you to download that study from last week if you weren't here to learn what happened. Suffice it to say that at the end of it all he became a believer & their missionary journey on Cyprus came to a close.

### Vs 13

Sometimes I'm fascinated by the nuances of scripture. It's amazing that so much can be going on in one seemingly simple informative Vs. There's actually quite a bit worth considering right here in what this one Vs has to say (or perhaps doesn't say, you'll see what I mean).

Right off the bat (if you're reading through the book of Acts) you'll note a shift in this group of people who are traveling together, taking the message of the gospel throughout the ancient world together. Did you catch it there?

Now we read, "Paul & his party". Previously, up to this point they've been referred to as "Barnabas & Saul". (Again, if you were w/us last week, we noted the "Saul to Paul" transition that took place. Same guy, but now it's as if he releases his Hebrew name & identifies exclusively w/his Roman name, it's like a nod to his ministry to the Gentiles, becoming all things to all men that he might win the more to Christ).

But after the incident w/Sergius Paulus, Saul is no longer the "understudy", or the one following the lead of Barnabas. Now; *Paul* takes the forefront, it's *his* leadership & prominence that become evident.

This is fantastic for a couple of reasons. #1 This is one of the great privileges of our lives in ministry. It's what we *should always* be seeking to do. You & me, we need to always be on the lookout for those gifted individuals in the body of Christ... & When the Lord brings someone He's gifted across our path, we should be looking for ways to raise them up. That is; help them grow to become all that God has called them to be, pouring into them, maturing them, helping them lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of them.

We shouldn't be holding on so tightly to our area of ministry that when one comes along who's obviously gifted of God & would perhaps do what we do better than we do it, that we can't release it & get behind the one whom God has gifted in a great way! We should be able to acknowledge someone's gifting & say, "Hey, it doesn't make sense that I'm leading this when you're here!"

“How about *you lead*, & I’ll get behind *you*? Let me follow you!” We should be stoked that there’s someone who can take whatever particular area of ministry even farther than we could...

So in one sense, it’s like “Mission accomplished.” Barnabas has been working w/Paul & now Paul is raised up to take the lead. He’s a gifted leader, he’s a gifted orator, he has an unparalleled understanding of scripture, it makes sense.

Btw, I want to point out that we don’t see Paul, jockeying for the position, pointing out what *he* would do, if *he* were leading. The Holy Spirit simply made it evident that he was a gifted leader & Barnabas could see that.

Which leads me to the 2<sup>nd</sup> point. I want to give a shout out to Barnabas here. Because he was flexible. He wasn’t married to a position of power. He wasn’t too prideful to step aside & allow Paul to excel in his calling, he was happy to just be serving & submitted to whatever God wanted to do. There’s not so much as a single word of complaint from him. He didn’t care; he didn’t have to be the man. He modeled the mind of Christ... You say, “What’s the mind of Christ?” That’s your homework. Write it down, read it later Phil 2:3-5.

It wasn’t about Barnabas. It’s not about you, & it’s definitely not about me. It’s about J.C. & Him crucified for the sin of the world. We’re not trying to bring fame to our name, but to the name of Jesus. He’s the One who’s worthy of all honor, all power & all praise. Whatever it is that will keep us moving forward w/that in the most effective manner, that’s what we’ll do...

But... Once they came to Perga, **(Map)** a city in the region of Pamphylia (modern day Turkey), John Mark decided to bounce. Here’s the thing, we don’t know why. People wonder if he was homesick; if he was down when uncle Barnabas was leading but didn’t sign on w/Paul in charge... **Maybe he got intimidated because of where they were heading (the Mt pass through the Taurus Mts was known to be one of the most dangerous travel routes if not in the entire ancient Roman world, certainly in that area. It was notorious for thugs; criminals, thieves & the like nesting in the Mts, robbing &/or killing people & taking their things).**

We don’t know, but for whatever reason he decides to put a big ol’ “done” stamp on this mission trip & head back home. & We’ll discover later on that Paul took personal offense at this & considered it a major disqualifier for him on the next trip.

Here's the thing. Is there ever a time to raise the sails & be done w/something? Of course there is. However, there are also times when we do well to drop anchor & learn to persevere... The bible is clear about how important it is to be dependable, to remain faithful. The proverbs tell us, *"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint."*<sup>2</sup> I'll let you muse on the implications/applications of that.

But it's through tough times that we're refined. Learning to persevere & being made stronger in our faith. Peter said, *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"*<sup>3</sup> Learn to endure when the "heat" is on. Let's not short circuit God's purifying process in our lives by jumping out of the fire, hitting the "eject" button, or "pulling the rip cord" & bailing out.

Of course, I think Jesus the ultimate example in that. There He is, Jn Ch 12, the hour of the cross is weighing heavy upon Him & He's transparent out it. He says, *"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."*<sup>4</sup> He makes it a teachable moment. He's going through it, it's not comfortable, it's not fun, it's stressful, it's crushing down on Him emotionally, mentally, spiritually, & what does He say? "Oh God deliver Me! Why would You allow this to happen to Me?" No. His resolve is, "If God has brought Me to it, He'll lead Me through it, Father, glorify Your name." He purposed not to bail, but to dig in & give God (the Father) His way.

### Vs 14-15

The question comes up; why did they travel up through this treacherous Mt path (Map), 3,600 ft above sea level into the region of Galatia in the 1<sup>st</sup> place? It would seem that when you read Paul's letter to the Galatians that more than likely it was due to an illness (perhaps malaria) that Paul was hit w/in Perga. He reminds them that he preached to them initially because of infirmity, some kind of sickness. It seems that the group may've gone inland & up to higher ground to gain Paul some relief from the ravages of malaria or whatever it was that plaguing him. But again, this was like 135 miles that they're footing up north through the Mts. Maybe Mark was like, "Hey guys, this has been great & all, but I'm out!"

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Pr 25:19]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Pe 1:6-7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 12:27-28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Be that as it may, when they got to Antioch (different Antioch than their launching pad), they entered the Synagogue on the Sabbath & after the opening prayer, the reading from the law/prophets, the leader of the Synagogue recognizing an honorable guest (Paul would've worn the robes of Rabbi) they were invited to give any insight or word of exhortation related to the reading.

& If you ask Paul if he has anything he'd like to say regarding the word of God & the application thereof. You're going to be sitting there for a minute! 😊

### Vs 16

When he says, "Men of Israel & you who fear God", what that tells us is that there were Jews & Gentiles present. Remember the Roman Centurion "Cornelius" who was saved back in Ch 10? He was one who "feared God", not a Jew, but genuine toward the God of Israel nonetheless.

### Vs 17-25

Few things I want to highlight for you here. #1 This is the only sermon of Paul's (Condensed though it may be) that we have in its completion. & It's fascinating to me how similar it is to Stephen's back in Acts Ch 7. Why is that so interesting? Because in Acts 7, Saul/Paul was not on the scene as an eager listener, or one who was wanting to learn anything from Stephen. **He was there as an adversary to the gospel & he held the coats of the people who murdered Stephen, he was consenting to his death! But he heard everything he said & it seems obvious to me that it stuck to him... All these years later, he's still rehearse the same basic outline that Stephen shared (different emphasis perhaps, but same basic approach).**

Listen, never underestimate the power of the word of God. People may lash out because of it, they may all but sleep through it, or act as though they're ignoring it. But if it enters their ears, it will swirl around in their heart. The word of God will never return void, it will *always* accomplish the purpose for which God sends it forth.

**Paul is rehearsing the history of Israel & he begins w/the anticipation & preparation for the coming Messiah (the culmination of course being the coming of Jesus & the condemnation of those who choose to reject Him).**

But there's a couple of things we want to realize as we survey this section. 1<sup>st</sup> of all Paul is calling our attention (not to theology, or philosophy) to real time historical events. What that communicates to us is that nothing is happening just randomly –

But instead it demonstrates the fact that God has a plan for history & it all revolves around Jesus. & As we come *to*, that is, believe *in* Jesus we fall into the flow of God's great plan of redemption.

Now; he's highlighting certain key events & people in their history. He takes them from Egypt, the wilderness wandering, the conquest of Canaan, the time of the judges & then to Samuel the prophet. Once he gets to Samuel he can transition into the kings & he only needs to touch on 2 of them. #1 Saul, because he was Israel's 1<sup>st</sup> king. He was who the people wanted & it didn't work out very well. But then he calls attention to *God's* choice, David.

Did you notice the description of David from God's perspective? "A man after My own heart, who will do all My will." Wow... Would to God He would say the same of you & me, yes? But here's what I want to highlight. Was David perfect? Well; if you count coveting, lying, adultery, deception & murder as perfect, than yes! Of course he wasn't perfect! Far from it! Read of his life; he had some real issues, yet God counted him as a man after *His own heart*, who would do all His will...

**Do you know what that communicates to us; that isn't look for me to be perfect (or He wouldn't have sent Jesus), He's looking for me to pursue His heart w/all that I am. David, didn't do life free from sin, but man he loved God & wanted to do the will of God from the heart & God is always looking to your...heart.**

When Paul got to David, he didn't need to go any farther because everyone knew that God had promised David that the Messiah would be his descendant. (2 Sam. 7:11; Is. 11:1; Ps. 132:11; Ps. 89:3, 4, 33) So once the connection to David was made, he could transition to Jesus (& His forerunner J.B.).

**Paul also sprinkled throughout his sermon the fact that Israel had shown a pattern of rebellion toward the people/plan of God throughout their history. He's preparing them to decide whether they'll receive or reject the Person of J.C. & God's plan of redemption through Him, even now.**

& He calls attention to J.B. (who's fame evidently spread far & wide) who pointed & bore witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world. When John said he wasn't worthy to loose Jesus' sandals, it was his way of saying that for as much as the people respected *him*, Jesus wasn't even in the same ballpark, He was far above John, not even close to the same level.

## Vs 26-29

Again, the idea being that everything that had happened historically, in reality was the fulfillment of prophecy. The leaders of Israel were fulfilling the very prophecies they were reading! Rejecting J.C., not seeing Him for who He was in truth. That's why they delivered Him over to Pilate, because they saw Him as a blasphemer, the farthest thing from a Savior...

Now they couldn't pin any kind of sin specifically on Him (because He had no sin) but because they despised Him, they delivered Him to be crucified. Is 53, *"He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted."*<sup>5</sup> & In rejecting Him, killing Him, they fulfilled the scriptures written of Him.

& Now this word of salvation has come to you... I should point out that when he calls the cross, "the tree" it's a reference to the wood of the cross. But he's drawing the correlation because the law states (Deut 21:22-23) whoever is hanged on a tree is accursed of God. The idea being that He took our sin upon Himself, He took the penalty we deserve. He was cursed of God so that we could be blessed of God in Him.

## Vs 30-37

Family, at the heart of every message preached in the book of Acts is the resurrection of J.C. Man did his best to fight against God; even killing the Prince of Life, but God is greater than the sin & rebellion of man; Jesus rose from the dead!

Paul says, "Don't take my word for it, there are 100's of eye witnesses you can speak to." (Over 500 actually, 1 Cor) Beyond that he underscores his statements w/scripture. Ps 2, Ps 16 & Isa 55. The resurrection was always part of the plan. "You are my Son, Today I have begotten You." Not from the *womb*, but from the *tomb*, the 1<sup>st</sup> born from the dead.

He says, "& These glad tidings (good news, the gospel) we declare to you." The death, burial & resurrection of Jesus.

Again let's pick up on what Paul's laying down, He's not basing what he's saying on philosophy, or even theology (though it's in there). Essentially, Christianity is the proclamation of facts concerning the truth of what God has done... Now Paul moves toward his application/appeal.

<sup>5</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Is 53:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 38-41

He drops the hammer; believe or be judged... Let it be known to you, brethren, that through *THIS MAN* (which Man?) Jesus, (exclusively/singularly) whom God raised up, is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. (There is no other way).

By *Him* everyone who believes is *justified* from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. You don't find justification in the law, you find condemnation. Because we can't keep the law, we break the law (if not outwardly, inwardly in our heart).

So man's greatest need (forgiveness) becomes God's greatest deed & it's available to all in the Person of J.C. Listen, if forgiveness erases your sin debt, than justification adds credit to your account. The idea is that you're not only forgiven of sin (in Christ) but you're counted (to the positive) as righteous in the sight of God.

You're justified, (just as if I'd never sinned) from *all* things. Not just most things, everything but that one big thing, *all* things. Your sins are just covered, they're cleansed, gone away, washed clean! The gospel isn't about what you *do*, it's about believing in what Jesus has *done*.

Now all that's left is to decide... Beware, therefore... God warns us, because He loves us. The urgency is to *not* reject the message. He quotes Habakkuk. The message is given, one has declared it, now if you refuse to believe it, God considers us to have despised it...

& To reject J.C. is to die in your sin... Salvation or condemnation, there's nothing in between. There's no "undecided" box to check, we have to make a choice.

I would urge you to believe. Turn from your sin, believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved. Amen? Amen.

### Prayer points:

God thank You for Your word, & the wonderful, marvelous message of salvation by grace through faith in J.C. You've done it all, You've made the way, You've placed the focus not on what we do, but what You've done & we praise You for that. Teach us to be a people after Your heart, who want to do all Your will, for the glory of Your name.

You've heard the message, now the choice is yours. You can accept the gospel or reject the gospel. I would urge you to believe. God loves you, Jesus has shed His blood for you, receive it today & leave here a new creation, forgiven, made new, justified in the sight of God.