

Scripture Reading:

Acts 13: “26 Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. 27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. 28 And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' 34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'

35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'
36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. 38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' "
42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God.”

"Good News for Everyone!"

Last week we considered the sermon that the Apostle Paul gave at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia.

We read again this morning Paul's call to repentance and salvation and we will now begin to consider the results that Luke tells us followed this proclamation of God's Word.

- This week we see the positive response that came from Jews, proselytes and God-fearing Gentiles upon hearing the Good News.
- Next week we see jealousy among the Jews and consider the warnings against allowing a root of bitterness to grow up in the midst of our covenant community.
- And finally, Lord-willing we will study how Luke demonstrates that the Gospel has divided the world just as God said it would in the Garden of Eden.

Paul has been faithful in going to the Jews first as we will see throughout his journeys here in Acts.

We know that Paul had a passion for his people from what he would later write to the Church at Rome:

Romans 9:1 “1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites,...”

We pray often for those who have wandered away from the covenant or rejected the Gospel and Paul certainly shows that our hearts are in the right place and that we should be very passionate about such prayers.

Paul also understood the important role that the Jewish people played in the history of God's redemption as he continues on:

"3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

However, Paul explains in his sermon, that the Jews in Jerusalem rejected the Messiah & along with what we will see next week here in Antioch, it is clear that not all of the Jews were faithful:

- **It is important for us to remember again that this was not a surprise to God...**

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."

But we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves... We will leave the questions of man's free will and God's sovereign choice for the message in two weeks! This morning we want to focus on the fact that people responded to Paul's message: Jews, converts to Judaism and God-fearing Gentiles ALL responded to the Good News.

- **As we saw last week, it is the same message of salvation that is carried to all the world:**
- **Just as Peter proclaimed to the Jews in Jerusalem after the first great miracle performed by the Apostles in the Temple:**

Acts 4: "8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- **Paul has preached the same message when he declared to the Jews and others here in Antioch, "38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."**

- **It is the simple Gospel message that Paul would write to the Romans some years later:**

Romans 1:1 "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ... 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

- As we consider what this means for us today, we should remember again that Luke is writing an orderly account for his friend Theophilus.
- An account that tells the story of how Jesus comes to save His people from their sins,
- How these righteous Saints become the Church which is referred to as the Body of Christ and His Bride
- And how the Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son by filling the earth with His Kingdom through the Church.

Here Paul summarizes these truths in his sermon by reminding them that their sins need to be forgiven, that they can **ONLY** be forgiven through the work of Jesus and that now we are free to live under the blessings of the Law of Moses. It is important that we don't miss that last point: **IF** the Spirit is going to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus, if all the nations of the earth will be brought under subjection to Jesus before His return; Then how do we know what this Kingdom or those nations should or will look like?

- It is going to be a world filled with people and nations who love God and keep His Commandments, or as Paul said, continue in His Grace.

I want to make sure the children understand what we are saying here and as I do it might help the adults as well...

- Paul & Barnabas admonish them to continue in grace, to live by faith and I want us to think about this as the Kingdom road, or the path that Pilgrim followed if you have read Pilgrim's progress!

On the sides of this road or path of faith are two very dangerous ditches As long as the Saints are traveling along the path they are happy and contented, knowing they are going where they are supposed to be going and doing what they should doing along the way.

- If we wonder off into the ditches our lives are full of trouble & strife:
- We can't solve these by trying to reform the ditches; we need to get back on the road or path!

As we think about these ditches, I want you children to learn & understand some new words: Words you may have heard but are not quite sure what they mean.

On the one side of the road is the ditch called legalism... This is the word we use when someone is trying to earn their own salvation by being good enough to please God. Here the Law of God is used in a way that it was never intended: If you keep these Ten Commandments then God will be pleased with you!

We read the Ten Commandments often here at Church of the King and doing so should remind us that this was not how they were intended: When God gave them to His people He did not say, here are some important rules and if you keep them I will be your God and deliver you, did he? No, God said just the opposite which we read each time we read the Law:

- "I AM Jehovah your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

This is a great picture of what Paul has now preached: You were all slaves to sin and God has delivered you through what Jesus has done.

Now we are free to travel along the road living our lives the way God intended us to live: Loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. **IF** we turn from this and think that these laws are the way we can prove to God that we are acceptable...

- Then we end up in the ditch of legalism and are once again slaves to sin with no hope of salvation.

So that is the first ditch, legalism where we try to save ourselves.

- Paul clearly tells these people in Antioch that **NO ONE** has ever been freed by the Law.
- No one can ever save themselves

So what is the other ditch?

- It has an even bigger name, antinomianism!

This is a very big word for being against the Law or being without law, and sadly there are many people in this ditch today: People ignoring God's Law or saying it is not important. This comes from people who do not understand what is said about grace and law in the New Testament. As we would expect there are many warnings in the Scriptures to keep us out of the ditch called legalism:

- This is where most of the religious leaders of that day, spent their time.

They were proud of all the rules they had come up with and wanted people to follow them and expected God to be pleased with them: Think of the proud Pharisee who prayed at the Temple: "God I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get."

So it should NOT surprise us to see warnings against such behavior in the Scriptures and we find one of the most famous is at the beginning of John's Gospel:

" 10 [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' " 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

If we do not clearly understand this as a warning against legalism then we will end up in the other ditch thinking that the Law of God is not important.

The Law cannot save us or as Paul preached NO ONE is justified by the law. Jesus said that Pharisee who prayed his proud prayer did NOT go home justified, but rather the humble tax collector who knew he was a sinner.

- BUT this does not mean that as Christians we are to ignore the Law.

The other verse that you will often hear shouted from this antinomian ditch is "we are not under law but under grace" which comes from the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans

Sadly this verse is almost never quoted in context and so it leads to that other ditch where people think the Law of God is not important in the Christian life. What was the big word for this?

- That's right, antinomianism.

So what is Paul teaching in Romans chapter six?

The context makes it pretty clear:

- We are saved by grace and live by grace, but this does not leave us free to sin.
- But how do we know how God wants us to act?
- What does it mean to live by faith?

We are living by faith when we remember that we are saved by grace and then follow what Jesus gave us as the two great commandments...

Loving God & our neighbor, which Jesus said was how we fulfill the Ten Commandments, which in turn are understood when we study all those case laws that explain them!

Think about that as we now read Paul's statement about grace and law in its full context:

Romans 6:1 "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

Paul has reminded his listeners in that synagogue that no one can be saved by keeping the Law:

- **A message we need to hear and preach today to keep people out of the ditch called legalism.**

But we must also remember Paul's admonition in verse 43 to continue in the grace of God. As Paul would later tell the Saints at Ephesus,

" 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

In avoiding the ditch of legalism we must also be careful not to bounce over into the other ditch of antinomianism thinking we do not need the Law of God.

- **Those stuck in this ditch have no way of knowing what the good works that Christ Jesus has prepared for us to do would even look like. *[note to parents on their responsibility]***

I mentioned last week that we needed to pray for the people in the Egypt and the Middle East remembering that both Jews and Gentiles alike need the Gospel: The Good News!

There has been a lot of talk about freedom this past week as the power in Egypt shifted from a tyrant to the military. We don't know where all of this will end but it should remind us of the challenge that Paul put before these people:

- **Know that through this man Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed and by Him everyone who believes is set free.**

**The same God who brought His people out of the slavery of Egypt has now set them free in all the world
Free to live by faith**

Free to walk in the good works that Jesus prepared beforehand

Free to travel the path of righteousness...

Never again knowing the bondage of the law in the ditch of legalism

Always avoiding the uncertainty of never being sure what we are to do in the ditch of antinomianism.

May we always believe Jesus when He tells us that He has come that we might have life and life abundant...

May we always be those who continue in the grace of God!

Communion Meditation: Psalm 81:10-16:

“1 I will bless Jehovah at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in Jehovah; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify Jehovah with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought Jehovah, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried out, and Jehovah heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of Jehovah encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that Jehovah is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!