



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Paul's First Missionary Journey, Part 3

Paul and Barnabas Turn to the Gentiles

Acts 13:42-52

September 30, 2007

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- ❑ I grew up in a Christian home and we attended church regularly each Sunday. We attended the local Baptist Church, and it was in the church that I was saved, baptized, and even surrendered to full-time vocational ministry. After I left home, I attended college, and then after graduation I began my first job. I was living in another region of the country, and I soon began looking for a church to attend. Through the recommendation of a friend, I attended a church near my new home, and experienced something I never had previously: expository teaching from the pulpit. Although I had heard the gospel before, and was saved, I had never heard the Word of God faithfully *taught, explained, and expounded* from the pulpit like I did at this church. It was through this experience that my hunger for the Word grew like never before.
- ❑ However, I soon learned that this type of expositional preaching was nothing new. In fact, the New Testament is full of expository sermons, especially in the Book of Acts.

I. Paul's Preaching Arouses the People

- ❑ Luke begins this section, stating, in **Verse 42**: 'As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.'
 - 'These things' certainly refer to the elements and points in Paul's sermon.
 - In this short sermon, **Verses 16-41**, Paul had explained:
 - God's sovereign actions towards His people, Israel. God...
 - Chose our fathers
 - Made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt
 - Led them out from Egypt
 - Put up / Cared for His people in the wilderness for 40 years
 - Destroyed the seven nations in the land of Canaan
 - Distributed their land as an inheritance
 - Gave them judges until Samuel
 - Yet, as Paul states, that was not enough for the people. They were not satisfied in what God had done and provided for them. So, they asked for a king.
 - Still, God...
 - Gave them Saul
 - Raised up David [after removing the sinful King Saul]
 - Then, Paul explained that **Jesus Christ fulfilled the Davidic promises of the Old Testament, in His life, death and resurrection!**
 - Specifically, Paul uses three Psalms to demonstrate Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament [Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 55:3; Psalm 16:10].

- After explaining, in detail, Jesus Christ’s fulfillment of the Old Testament, Paul states [**Verses 38-39**]: ‘Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.’
 - In other words, Paul **exalts Christ** and explains that it is because of **who He is and what He has done** that **through faith in Him alone believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified, that is DECLARED RIGHTEOUS!**
- In short, Paul exalted Christ through a careful exposition, or explanation of the Scriptures.
- We do NOT see that he did anything else other than explain the Biblical text.
- This provides us, today, with a model of true Apostolic preaching. It is Biblical, it is doctrinal, and it is faithful to the text that Christ might be exalted.

‘To the question, ‘Should one preach doctrine?’, the Puritan answer would have been, ‘Why, what else is there to preach?’ Puritan preachers were not afraid to bring the profoundest theology into the pulpit if it bore on their hearers’ salvation, nor to demand that men and women apply themselves to mastering it, nor to diagnose unwillingness to do so as a sign of insincerity. Doctrinal preaching certainly bores the hypocrites; but it is only doctrinal preaching that will save Christ’s sheep. The preacher’s job is to proclaim the faith, not to provide entertainment for unbelievers – in other words, to feed the sheep rather than amuse the goats.’

J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*

- Apostolic preaching also demonstrates a profound faith in the sufficiency of the Word of God to accomplish exactly what God intends for it to do. **This includes, but is not limited to, salvation.**
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- Note, as well, the response of the people to Paul’s sermon: they ‘kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.’
 - Then, in **Verse 43**, Paul states, ‘Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.’
 - The two groups that Paul addressed in his sermon, ‘Jews and God-fearing proselytes’; that is, Jews and Gentiles who worshipped the God of the Scriptures, followed Paul and Barnabas.

- It appears that several of these actually believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved, as Paul and Barnabas ‘were urging them to continue in the grace of God.’
 - Perseverance in the faith is one of the marks of a true believer [1 John 2:19; John 8:31; Hebrews 3:14].
- **Verse 44** states, ‘The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.’
 - In other words, the people in Pisidian Antioch did not assemble for any reason, other than to **hear the word of the Lord**. They did not assemble because it was the ‘thing’ to do. They did not assemble because they had nothing else better to do. They assembled for the expressed purpose of hearing the word of the Lord. They could get this nowhere else, so this is why they came to the synagogue.
 - The reason that so many people gathered to hear the word of the Lord is because they had likely never heard that salvation was available to the Jews **as well as the Gentiles**. The Jewish leaders had for so long attempted to keep the Gentiles from knowing the salvation that God had provided for them.
 - The news of Paul’s sermon spread like wildfire throughout the region among the Gentiles.
 - This is also the first of four occurrences of ‘the word of the Lord’ in only six Verses. The emphasis on the power of God’s word is inescapable.

a. The Jews Reject the Gospel

- After the people of Pisidian Antioch had gathered to hear the word of the Lord, Luke states, in **Verse 45**, ‘...when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.’
 - The reason for the jealousy of the Jews seems quite clear: Gentiles had overtaken the synagogue and the assembly of worshippers.
 - According to the Jews, salvation was for them, not the Jews. The Messiah was to be from the Jews, for the Jews. However, Paul was preaching something radically different: the long-awaited Messiah offered salvation to everyone who believes, without distinction of race. Therefore, Jews and Gentiles, according to Paul, were on equal footing and had an equal standing before God.

- Yet, not only were the Jews jealous, but they **‘began contradicting the things spoken by Paul**, and were blaspheming.’

- Just as the Sanhedrin had been in Acts 5:17, the Jews, here in Pisidian Antioch became jealous that someone other than themselves was receiving honor and glory.
 - As a result of their jealousy, ‘they began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.’
 - These were clearly not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures clearly indicate that one could never blaspheme and rightfully consider himself a Christian [1 Corinthians 12:3].
 - In other words, the **faithful proclamation of the Gospel** created **conflict**.
 - Often times, this is the result of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This *was* one of its intended purposes. In other words, the Gospel is mighty to save... ‘it is the power of God for salvation for all who believe...’ but it also creates division, separating the sheep from the goats.
 - Paul could have ‘softened’ his message. He could have made it more ‘palatable’ to a broader audience. He could have been more ‘sensitive’ to the feelings of the Jews. He could have preached in such a way as not to offend the Jews. In other words, he could have brought the ‘substance’ and the content of the message down to the ‘lowest common denominator.’ However, had he done that, **he would not have preached the Gospel**.
 - ‘If my Gospel were received in peace, it would have been no Gospel at all.’
Martin Luther
- Yet, despite the anger of the crowds, Paul and Barnabas were in no way intimidated. In fact, in the face of this great opposition, Luke states, in **Verse 46**, that ‘Paul and Barnabas **spoke out boldly** and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’
- Notice, first of all, that Paul did not fear the opinions of these men. He knew what he believed and why he believed it...and he was willing and able to confront the blasphemous attacks from these ungodly men.
 - Yet, it is here that Paul clearly articulates his pattern for proclaiming the Gospel: to the Jews first, then to the Greeks [Gentiles] (Romans 1:16).
 - In fact, this had been God’s plan from the beginning: that it would be through the Jewish people that the Messiah would come...and, as a result, the Gospel would spread **from the Jews**.
 - Going all the way back to Genesis, God called Abraham ‘while he was still in Mesopotamia’ [Acts 7:2]. Then, God ‘gave him [Abraham] the covenant of

circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs' [Acts 7:8]. After Jacob's sons sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt, Jacob rose to prominence, forgave his brothers, and gathered them into the land of Goshen, in Egypt, many years later [in order to escape a famine in Canaan]. After many years in Egypt, a pharaoh came to power who enslaved the Hebrew people. Yet, God later raised up Moses to deliver His people from the land of Egypt. After delivering His people through His servant Moses, God established the Israelites as a nation and gave them His Law while in the wilderness at Sinai.

- It became clear at Sinai that God did not choose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, or the nation of Israel as a whole because of anything that they did.

Deuteronomy 4:37: '[Moses states] Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength.'

Deuteronomy 7:6-8: 'For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.'

Deuteronomy 9:4-6: 'Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.'

Deuteronomy 10:15: 'Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.'

- ❖ **Yet, just as God had chosen the tiny nation of Israel in the Old Testament to foreshadow the people of God in the New, so He had chosen that it would be through that nation that the Messiah, the Savior, would come. Thus, the Gospel would begin with the Jews and spread to the nations.**

Matthew 15:24: 'But Jesus answered and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

Matthew 10:5-6: 'These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: 'Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

Luke 24:47: '...repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

Acts 1:8: ‘...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’

Romans 1:16: ‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.’

- Again, Paul and Barnabas ‘spoke out boldly...’
 - These two men were unwilling to stand by idly when God was blasphemed. It seems that today; however, we are more offended when our traditions are violated than when God Himself is blasphemed. Yet, Paul and Barnabas were not going to keep quiet.
- Paul and Barnabas, then, said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’
 - Thus, according to the two missionaries, the Jews, because of their willful rejection of Christ and His Gospel, ‘**judge themselves unworthy of eternal life...**’

‘The particular antinomy which concerns us here is the apparent opposition between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, or (putting it more biblically) between what God does as King and what He does as Judge. Scripture teaches that, as King, He orders and controls all things, human actions among them, in accordance with His own eternal purpose. Scripture also teaches that, as Judge, He holds every man responsible for the choices he makes and the courses of action he pursues. Thus, hearers of the gospel are responsible for their reaction; if they reject the good news, they are guilty of unbelief.

Man without Christ is a guilty sinner, answerable to God for breaking His law. That is why he needs the gospel. When he hears the gospel, he is responsible for the decision that he makes about it. It sets before him a choice between life and death, the most momentous choice that any man can ever face...When we preach the promises and invitations of the gospel, and offer Christ to sinful men and women, it is part of our task to emphasize and re-emphasize that they are responsible to God for the way in which they react to the good news of His grace.’

J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

- Therefore, Paul and Barnabas said, ‘we are turning to the Gentiles.’
 - God had ordained [before the foundation of the world] that Gentiles would be saved through the [Jewish] Messiah. He had ordained these ends; yet, **He had also ordained the means by which the Gospel would spread to the Gentiles: the rejection of Christ and the Gospel by the Jews.**
 - Another place where this truth is powerfully revealed is in the trials and crucifixion of Christ Himself. He was perfect in every way; however, He did not fit the ‘picture’ of what the Pharisees and Sadducees in mind. As a result,

the Jewish leadership rejected Christ, having Him crucified. Yet, it is through the death of Christ on the cross that salvation has come to the Gentiles.

- Yet, another place where the Jews' rejection of the Messiah led to the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles was at Pentecost. It was here that the Holy Spirit descended on the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and they began to speak in **foreign, Gentile languages!**

'God does seem to begin His Church among the children of Abraham, and, that done, to reach out His hand to the Gentiles, that they may both make one Church by one consent of faith. But Paul does in such sort cite the prophecy, as if it could not be fulfilled unless the Jews had been cast off. For he signifies that the light of Christ was lighted to the Gentiles, after that they were cast into the darkness of death.'

John Calvin

- ❑ After articulating his decision to turn to the Gentiles, Paul justifies his actions with an Old Testament passage, **Isaiah 49:6**:

'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES,
THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'

- ❑ This is the Second Suffering Servant Song in the Book of Isaiah. It is significant, as well, that in the context of this passage, it is Israel, as a nation, that is the Servant of Yahweh. Verse 3 reads:

'You are My Servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory.'

- ❑ Concerning this Old Testament prophecy of the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentile world, F.F. Bruce writes, 'But Israel as a whole was a disobedient servant, and the prophecy was to find its particular fulfillment in one who is in some sense the representative or embodiment of Israel, yet distinguished from the nation, to which indeed his mission is first directed, as well as (thereafter) to the Gentile world.'
- ❑ In fact, in the New Testament, Simeon of Jerusalem, upon holding the baby Jesus in his arms in the Temple complex, rejoiced and said the following [Luke 2:29-32]:

'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,
And the glory of Your people Israel.'

- ❑ It is, therefore, clear that Simeon was associating Jesus ultimately with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 49.

- ❑ Yet, F.F. Bruce again adds, ‘But if the faithful Servant, through suffering and consequent triumph, accomplished the saving work single-handedly, his mission was henceforth shared with his followers, as they spread the gospel light in his name throughout the nations.’
- ❑ In fact, the Apostle Paul echoes Isaiah 49:1 in Galatians 1:15-16, stating, ‘God...was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I should preach him among the Gentiles.’

b. The Gentiles Embrace the Gospel

- ❑ Luke, then, states, in **Verse 48**, ‘When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.’
 - It is noteworthy that many of these Gentiles were ‘God-fearers’, that is Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel, read the Greek translation of the Old Testament, attended synagogue services; yet, refused to undergo the circumcision required to become a full proselyte to Judaism.
 - Therefore, many of these Gentiles would have read Isaiah 49 likely many times before this. Yet, this would most likely be the first time that they had ever heard that Isaiah 49 applied to them as Gentiles! Consequently, it led to incredible joy on the part of the Gentile hearers...that salvation was opened to them on the same terms as the Jews.
- ❑ After speaking of their joy, Luke states that they were ‘glorifying the word of the Lord...’
 - This could certainly mean that they were glorifying, specifically, Isaiah 49:6.
- ❑ Then, Luke writes, ‘...as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.’
 - This is a passage that is **very clear**. It is not one of the ‘obscure’ passages in Scripture that one often wrestles with for a great deal of time.
 - The word, here, for appointed is the Greek *tasso* [τᾰσσω], which is used in ancient manuscripts and papyri in order to mean ‘to inscribe’ or ‘to enroll.’
 - In other words, this is most likely a reference to ‘those written in the [Lamb’s] Book of Life’ [Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19].
 - Further, however, this passage is straightforward and consistent with other passages of Scriptures:

John 6:65: ‘And He [Jesus] was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.’

Colossians 3:12: ‘So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved...’

2 Timothy 2:10: ‘For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen...’

Titus 1:1: ‘Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God...’

2 Thessalonians 2:13: ‘But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation...’

1 Peter 1:1: ‘Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered..., who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...’

Ephesians 1:4-5: ‘...just as He [God the Father] chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world...In love He predestined us to adoptions as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...’

Revelation 13:8: ‘All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the dragon and the Beast], everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.’

Robert Reymond writes, ‘Luke teaches here that, unlike the blaspheming Jews who repudiated the Word of God and *judged themselves unworthy* of eternal life [reflexive action], the reception of the Word of God by the believing Gentiles was due to the fact that they *had been appointed* unto eternal life [passive voice]. When this passive voice is interpreted actively, it is apparent that Luke traced the Gentiles’ believing reception of the Word of God back to their divine election as the ultimate source from with their faith originated.’

- ❑ Yet, ultimately, the reason we must preserve a conviction in God’s sovereign freedom and choice is because it exalts God as the author of our salvation and gives us no basis whatsoever to boast that we had anything to do with our salvation. Indeed, it was an act of grace alone!

‘[God’s] sovereignty is not grist for the mill of controversy, it is GOSPEL for sinners who know that their only hope is the triumph of sovereign grace over their rebellious wills!’
John Piper

‘Now, if God’s election, whereby He ordains us unto life, be the cause of faith and salvation, there remains nothing for worthiness or merits. Therefore, let us hold and mark that which Luke says, that those were ordained before unto life, who, being in-grafted into the body of Christ by faith, do receive the earnest and pledge of their adoption in Christ.’
John Calvin

- ❑ As the Gentiles rejoiced and were being saved, Luke writes, **Verse 49**, ‘And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.’

II. Paul and Barnabas are Persecuted

- Then, Luke adds, in **Verse 50**, ‘But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their city.’
 - As is quite typical among sinful men, when the Jews could not stop Paul and Barnabas from speaking the TRUTH, they resort to inciting others.
 - It certainly seems that the vast majority of church splits and divisions within local bodies occur this way. Certain individuals cannot gain the ground they desire and often times turn to instigating and inciting others.
 - As a result of the work of the angry Jews, Paul and Barnabas were, in fact, driven from the city.
 - Later, in 2 Timothy 3:10-11, Paul will tell Timothy of his sufferings and persecution ‘in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.’

- However, Luke writes, in **Verse 51**, ‘But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.’
 - Iconium is modern-day Konya and was about ninety [90] miles east-southeast of Pisidian Antioch.
 - Concerning the idea of ‘shaking the dust off their feet,’ Jesus speaks of it in Luke 10:10-12 when He sends out the seventy [70]: ‘But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.’
 - The idea behind this act [of ‘shaking the dust off your feet’] was that the town from which the disciples left was doomed for utter destruction and that the destruction would be so thorough and complete that it included the very dust of the earth. Therefore, even the dust had to be removed.
 - Also, the gesture indicated that the Jews believed that the Gentiles were so unclean that even the dust from their territories could not be brought into Israel. If it was, they asserted, the land would be defiled from the ‘unclean’ Gentile dust.
 - Therefore, the act by Paul and Barnabas of ‘shaking the dust off their feet’ indicates that, from the perspective of the two missionaries, the Jews of Pisidian Antioch were no more ‘clean’ than the pagan, ‘unclean’ Gentiles that they [the Jews] so hated. In other words, Paul and Barnabas chose not to ‘cast their pearls’ any longer ‘before swine.’

- Often times this may be the appropriate response that we should have towards men and women who blaspheme the Gospel as we attempt to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ to them. That is, we, at times, would be wise to move on, proclaiming the truth of the Gospel as we go.

III. The New Disciples Rejoice

- Finally, Luke concludes this section, in **Verse 52**, with the short statement: ‘And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.’
 - These were the new, predominately Gentile, disciples who remained in Pisidian Antioch.
 - Therefore, Paul and Barnabas left in that town two groups of people: (1.) God-hating Jews; and (2.) God-fearing, believing Gentiles.
 - Further, this passage reveals a timeless biblical truth spoken of by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.’ John 16:20-22

- Again, God did not simply replace their weeping with joy, He transformed their weeping into joy!
- In other words, the very source of the disciples’ grief [the truth of the Gospel] became the source of the disciples’ joy!

And so it is with our sovereign Lord: He has chosen to use the foolishness of the Gospel as the instrumental means for salvation for all who believe! The world does not like the truth of the Gospel, in fact, the world hates the Gospel. To the world, it is narrow-minded and exclusive [and it certainly is]; but, it is the only source of life and true, eternal joy!