

~ACTS~

Lesson 41- Paul's Sermon: Salvation to all who Believe

Acts 13:38-49

We are nearing the end of Paul's first recorded sermon as Paul and Barnabas are preaching the Gospel in Antioch Pisidia. In today's lesson we will be looking at Acts 13:38-49 focusing on the final two points in Paul's message as well as the results of the Gospel being preached in this synagogue. As we have seen previously in the book of Acts, there are two reactions when the Gospel is preached... either they will humble or harden. And here in Antioch Pisidia it is no different. We will see many multitudes believe in Jesus, because they are going to receive the Word of God and humble their heart and be saved, but there are also many unbelieving Jews who will harden their heart and blaspheme the Word of God.

Paul's sermon can be divided into four parts, and over the past two lessons we have covered the first two sections, namely: **I**) The Promise of the Messiah, v. 16-23. That the Messiah was promised to come through the Seed of David, and this Savior is Jesus. Then last week we looked at the second part: **II**) The fulfillment of this Promise through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, v. 24-37. And today we will look at the third and fourth parts: **III**) forgiveness of sins and Righteousness is only through Jesus, v. 38-39; **IV**) The coming Judgement of those who would reject Jesus Christ, v. 40-41.

In verse 37, where we left off last week, Paul had just proved the Resurrection to be the fulfillment of the Promise according to the Scriptures and now he will make the statement that because of this, Jesus is the only way to the Promised Salvation. Let's start with verses 38 and 39...

38-39) 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.

Paul's last two points in his sermon are made with two imperative statements in connection with the fact that Jesus is our Promised Savior. He says, "Therefore let it be known to you..." Because Jesus is our Savior, who has come as our Messiah, being sent as the Word of God from Heaven, born from the Seed of David, and because His death and Resurrection fulfilled the Promise of the Father to us His children, **Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins.** Forgiveness of sins only comes through Jesus Christ. This is very different than what they have previously understood. Because up till this point, any Jew thought that the forgiveness of sins came through the sacrificial system of the Law of Moses. But Paul is telling them that the Law of Moses cannot justify and forgive your sins. This sacrificial system in the Law was only a foreshadowing of The Sacrifice, the Lamb of God sent to take away the sin of the world- Jesus Christ.

Paul is driving this point home very emphatically by saying the word καταγγέλλω. We are deeply and intensely declaring this message to you, that through this Man is the forgiveness of sins. That it's only through Jesus Christ that our sins are, ἀφίημι, forgiven, sent away as far as the east is from the west, Ps 103:12. Not just forgiven in the sense that God just looked the other way concerning our sin. This word ἀφίημι, means to be separated away from. So we are separated away from our sin because Jesus Christ bore the wrath and punishment for our sin. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve and He paid the Righteous requirement for our sins, Rom 8:4, and that Righteous requirement for sin was death, Rom 6:23, and He took it out of the way and nailed it to the cross, Col 2:14.

And Paul continues in verse 39... **and by Him** (ἐν τούτῳ in this One) **everyone who believes is justified...** This is Justification by faith alone, and this is major a Pauline thread throughout all his epistles. In fact, this is the first time this word justified, δικαίω, is used in the book of Acts. To be justified means to be declared Righteous by Grace through Faith. This is the core of the Gospel in which Paul wrote a masterpiece called the book of Romans on this topic, **Romans 3:23-26**. But the idea of a Righteous God declaring a sinner to be Righteous is a contradictory statement, but not when the payment for sin has

been Righteously paid for. When we believe in Jesus, our sins are forgiven, sent away from us because they were laid on our substitutionary sacrifice, our propitiation who is Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is just as Paul says, **everyone who believes is justified**, because we are justified through the blood of Jesus Christ, Col 1:14, and we are joined together in Him and His Righteousness, Eph 1:3-14. Notice the prepositions in these statements... **through this One**, διὰ τούτου, v.38, and **in this One**, ἐν τούτῳ, v.39. It is through Him and in Him that we are justified, declared in right standing with the Father.

Then Paul continues to make the contrast with the Law of Moses... **and in this One everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses** (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωσέως). It is only **through Jesus** and **in Jesus** that we are justified. The Law of Moses cannot and does not justify anyone. The purpose of the Law was only to show us the need of a Savior, Rom 3:20; 7:7, but it could never save us from our sins. Paul makes this abundantly clear in his writings, **Galatians 2:16**; Hebrews 7:18; 8:13; 10:4, 8-14; Romans 3:20.

Notice that up until verse 38, Paul had been making a distinction between the Gentile proselytes and the Hellenistic Jews of the seed of Abraham, Acts 13:16, 26, but now in verse 38 he says, "Brethren," and then in verse 39 he makes the statement that **everyone who believes is justified**. Paul is making the universal declaration that everyone who believes, Jew and Gentile alike, is saved. This becomes a major point of contention with the unbelieving Jews as we will see later in chapter 13 because what Paul is saying here is that Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from the works of the Law. That even uncircumcised Gentiles can be justified because the Law has no part in our justification. This is the statement that begins making the split between those who would hear and humble their hearts and those who reject and harden. So by the leading of the Spirit, Paul speaks a Word of conviction in verses 40-41...

40-41) 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.'"

Paul is quoting Habakkuk 1:5 from the LXX speaking to Hellenistic Greek speaking Jews and Gentiles, and he begins with another imperative... **Beware therefore**. Beware of the coming Judgement that is sure to come upon all who reject this Word of Salvation. The convicting Word of impending Judgement has to be preached to those who are steeped in their pride and self-righteousness. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. John 16:8- *He will convict the world of sin and of Righteousness and of Judgement*. In Habakkuk's time, Divine Judgement was coming through the Chaldeans, Hab 1:6. Paul is connecting this prophecy to the Day of Judgement coming from the Word of God at the end of this age, John 12:48; Rev 19:11-16; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 11-12. Just as God was pleading with His people to repent and trust in Him back in Habakkuk's time (620BC), so also is Paul giving them this same warning. **Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you**. For those who will not receive His Word, Paul quotes Habakkuk saying, **Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish!** Those despisers, those who, καταφρονέω, think down on people, scoff in their haughty pride and arrogance. In that great and awesome Day of the Lord, they will be filled with astonishment and be destroyed. Their pride will be brought low by the Mighty Hand of God's Divine Wrath, Isaiah 2:10-12.

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... God is working for our Salvation, and He continues to work. This is Romans 8:28, that the all of God is working together for the purpose of good, to those who love God. This is what Jesus said in John 5:17- *My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*. The Trinity has been working to bring us our Salvation, and our Salvation is here. Today is the day of Salvation, but in order to apprehend this Salvation, we must receive it by faith. And because of the Jews hard hearted unbelief, they are made deaf

and blind and refused to believe even **though one were to declare it to you**. This word declare is ἐκδιηγέομαι, to lead out thoroughly or to describe thoroughly. This verb has two emphatic prepositions built into the word. It literally means to detail something piece by piece (διά) and to spread it out (ἐκ). This is what Paul has done in this sermon. He has been so clear that Jesus is the Promised Messiah and Salvation can only come through and in Him, but yet many still reject this Word. So Paul ends with this conviction of Judgement.

After Paul's message, the people in the synagogue depart and notice the two hearts...

42) So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

In the next several verses, Luke makes the distinction between believing Jews and Gentiles, and those hard hearted unbelieving Jews. Here in verse 42 we see the unbelieving Jews who leave the synagogue and the believing Gentile proselytes. The unbelieving Jews don't even speak to Paul and Barnabas, they just ἔξειμι, being extremely mad, their being went out, but the Gentile proselytes are rejoicing and begging that this these Words of Truth might be preached the next Sabbath. Now in verse 43 Luke introduces some of the believing Jews...

43) Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas...

These people with open hearts and ears to hear are so excited they don't want to stop talking to Paul and Barnabas. So Paul and Barnabas give them an encouraging word...

43) ...who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Their admonition to them was hold fast and abide upon the grace of God, ἐπιμένειν τῇ χάριτι τοῦ Θεοῦ. Abide upon and remain upon God's grace. It is God's grace that gave us our Salvation and it's the grace of God that has made us alive in Him, Eph 2:4-6, so Paul tells them to abide in this Salvation. Paul uses this same exact word in his epistle to the **Colossians 1:21-23**. I would suspect that Paul knew there was going to be persecution coming, so he tells them to hold fast and remain in Jesus. This is what Jesus told the persecuted church in **Revelation 2:9-10; 3:10-11**. Remain upon Him, be faithful even until death. Paul knows that persecution is coming, so he tells them to abide upon Jesus and continue in the Grace of God.

Paul and Barnabas leave the synagogue and throughout the course of the following week, before the next Sabbath, it's my conjecture that Paul and Barnabas continue preaching the Gospel outside the synagogue, possibly in the believers' homes and in the streets. And I would also suspect that all the believing Gentile proselytes are going back home telling their uncircumcised Gentile friends about this Gospel message they just heard because when the next Sabbath comes around, look who comes to hear Paul preach...

44) On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God.

These are people with expectant ears to hear. This just shows the transformational power of the Truth. This Galatian area was deeply pagan. In the next chapter we see that the Gentiles from Iconium start calling Paul and Barnabas, Hermes and Zeus after seeing the power of God working through them. But even with these pagan roots, the Word of Truth transformed these Gentiles lives. No longer did a Gentile have to become a Jew to worship the One True God. Salvation is truly by grace alone through faith alone to anyone who would believe. So when the multitudes came to hear this Gospel message from Paul, this infuriated the unbelieving Jews. Look at verse 45...

45) But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

These hard-hearted Jews never had these kinds of crowds gather because of them. And now these Christians come into their town and start filling the city with their doctrine. So they are filled with envy and out of jealousy and pride they begin blaspheming and opposing Paul's teaching. The words "contradicting" and "opposed" are the same Greek word, ἀντιλέγω, to speak against. Literally "anti-logos." They are anti-Christ, against the Logos of Truth and they begin blaspheming the Word of God. This is the spirit of antichrist and is exactly what The Antichrist who is to come will do. Daniel says this Antichrist will cast Truth to the ground and speak blasphemous and pompous words against God, Daniel 8:12; 11:36. In a jealous rage, these antichrist Jews, because of their pride and arrogance, they begin speaking against the Truth. Then look at how Paul and Barnabas respond in verse 46...

46) Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

Israel was God's chosen people to usher in the Messiah, therefore there was an ἀναγκάιος, an urge of necessity to speak the Word of God to the Jews first. This is Paul's method... to the Jew first then to the Gentile, Romans 1:16. But notice Paul's words... **but since you ἀπωθέω, thrust away the Word from you.** Since you violently push away and thrust away the Word from you, Acts 7:27, 39... **[you] judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.** They have made the decision to reject God's Word and as a result judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life. All of us are unworthy of Salvation, this is why we must place our faith in Jesus Christ because He alone is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, Rev 5:9. And in His grace, He bestows the gift of Everlasting Life to those who believe. The Jews believed the opposite. They thought they were the righteous ones because of their own self-righteousness. They judged themselves as righteous by their own good works, but as Isaiah says, *our righteousness is as filthy rags*, Is 64:6. But the one who humbles himself to the Truth is worthy, **Matthew 10:11-14, 37-39**. The one who humbles himself and turns away from sin and turns upon Jesus Christ by faith, this one is worthy of everlasting life.

These unbelieving Jews have turned their back on this Salvation. Notice the element of free will. The Word of Truth was presented to them, but because of their pride, they pushed the Word away. I mention this to make a point that is coming up in verse 48. Therefore, because of their decision to reject the Word of God, Paul says, **behold, we turn to the Gentiles.** Paul was called by Jesus Christ as the Apostle to the Gentiles, Acts 26:17-18; Rom 11:13; Galatians 2:8. But he always had a deep desire for the Salvation of the Jews, Rom 9:2-3; 10:1. And even at the book of Acts we see Paul pleading with the Jews to receive this Salvation, Acts 28:17-28. But because of their hard-hearted rejection, Paul says... **behold, we turn to the Gentiles.** Paul confirms this bold statement in verse 47 with Scripture quoting Isaiah...

47) For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'

Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:6LXX. Here is another prophecy where we see the Father speaking to Jesus, telling Him that He would be Savior of the world, to both Jews and Gentiles alike, **Isaiah 49:5-6**. Jesus is the Light, not just to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles... to all who believe in Him. So that's what Jesus did as the Word of God. He brought the Light of the Words of Life to the world. And now, all who believe in Him have received this Light and we are witnesses of that Light. We are the bearers of this Light because this Light is living in us. Therefore, Paul takes this a step further and says, **The Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'** This

similar to what John said in John chapter 1. We are not that Light, but we are sent to bear witness of that Light, that all who hear us might believe this Word that we preach.

Remember the whole city has gathered together to hear Paul preach and while the Jews are rejecting and blaspheming Jesus, the Gentiles are still standing there listening to these words.

48) Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

These Gentiles heard the Word of Truth and believed and were found worthy of Everlasting Life. That is the progression of Salvation. The Word is preached, those who have ears to hear receive the Word as an act of free will, and then saving faith comes out from hearing and receiving the Truth, and they are born again, Rom 10:17. We just saw that act of free will in verse 46. The unbelieving Jews, out of their own free will rejected the Word of God. But notice how this verse 48 reads... **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed**. From that statement it seems as though saving faith comes only to those who have been pre-appointed to Eternal Life. Is that right? Does God predestine certain people to Eternal Life and others to eternal damnation? Absolutely not! So why does this verse say that? Well, it doesn't. It's a bad translation. The translators reversed the word order from the original Greek. In the Greek it says...

And those who **believed** were being **appointed** unto Eternal Life
καὶ **ἐπίστευσαν** ὅσοι ἦσαν **τεταγμένοι** εἰς ζῶν αἰώνιον.

We believe, then we are appointed. The Greek places faith in the emphatic forward position before being appointed, because faith comes before Eternal Life can be granted. Our salvation was predestined in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4-5, but in order for us to be granted this Salvation, we must receive it by faith. Faith is what connects us to our Salvation in Christ Jesus. Faith has to come first. We all have a choice and Faith is an act of free will just as we see in verse 46.

Notice the result of Paul's message...

49) And the Word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

After the Word of God was preached, and after many had believed and received Everlasting Life, the message of the Gospel began to spread, being carried throughout, διαφέρω, this whole region of Galatia. And many continued to hear the Word and turn to Jesus.

Next week we will continue our study of Paul's first missionary journey as he travels through this region of Galatia preaching the Word of God.