

Paul's First Missionary Journey Continues

Acts 13:14-52

Acts 13:14-41: *"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."¹⁶ Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. ¹⁸ Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.*

²⁰ *"After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'²³ From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior - Jesus - ²⁴ after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'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.’”

Background Notes

Paul’s first missionary journey began in the late 40s AD. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were sent out from the church at Antioch in Syria and sailed to Cyprus. After they had preached across the entire island of Cyprus, they sailed to the mainland of what is now Turkey, and stopped at the city of Perga in the Roman province of Pamphilia. Here John Mark left the team and went back home. We don’t know why he left - maybe there were several reasons, including homesickness. In any case, Paul and Barnabas then moved inland over the rough mountains and came to Antioch of Pisidia.

The fact that Paul targeted Antioch, one of the main cities of Pisidia, emphasizes one of Paul’s principles of missionary strategy. This principle for missionary strategy continues today – go for the big cities and let the gospel ripple out from there.

There’s another principle of Paul’s missionary strategy in this chapter. Wherever he went, if possible, he started where he could get a hearing - at the local synagogue. Paul didn’t waste any time in getting down to important matters. He hadn’t come to sightsee but to evangelize, so Paul and Barnabas were at the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Doctrinal Points

1. There should always be an emphasis on *Scripture* when the gospel is presented.

Verse 15: “And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” During the typical 1st century synagogue services, first there were readings from the Scriptures, from both the Law and the Prophets, and then commentary was made. Visiting rabbis or teachers were invited to speak. In essence, Paul gave a three-part sermon in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Part I recounted Israel’s history, and how God was preparing the nation of Israel for the coming of the Messiah (v16-25). Part II dealt with the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, the true Messiah (v26-27). Part III was the application and appeal (v38-41).

Notice that in all three parts of Paul’s message of the gospel, there was an **emphasis on Scripture**. In Part I, Paul recounted Israel’s history from the historical record of the Old Testament **Scriptures**. The seven nations (v19) are found in Deuteronomy 7:1 - the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. The 450 years

span the time from the Patriarchs to the Judges (v20). Notice how Paul stressed the fact that Jesus was in the line of David - according to the **Scriptures** - and that He was proclaimed to be the Messiah by John the Baptist.

In Part II of his sermon, Paul **quoted Scripture** from the prophet Isaiah and the book of Psalms. He **quoted** from Psalm 2, a Messianic psalm, and applied it to Jesus Christ: *“You are My Son, today I have begotten You.”* In verse 34, Paul **quoted** from Isaiah 55:3 applying it to the resurrection: *“I will give you the sure mercies of David.”* Paul’s point was that Jesus was in the line of David, and that He was the Messiah. In verse 35, Paul **quoted** from Psalm 16, another Messianic psalm, *“You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”* David, who wrote the psalm, could not have been speaking about himself in that verse because he died and his body underwent decay. So David must have been speaking prophetically about his “greater son” and descendant, Jesus - because as you know, said Paul, Jesus is no longer dead, and His body is not undergoing decay.

In Part III of the sermon, salvation was offered to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch. Through Jesus the true Messiah, Paul told them that they could have forgiveness of sins - something that the Law of Moses could never do. Paul again quoted **Scripture** and applied it as a warning to his listeners. *“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.”* (Habakkuk 1:5). In other words, “Don’t reject this message of the gospel that I am presenting to you!”

As the apostle Paul emphasized Scripture in his presentation of the gospel to the Jews in Antioch, so we should use Scripture when we share the good news of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:17 says, *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* There should always be an emphasis on **Scripture** when the gospel is presented.

2. There will always be mixed reactions when the gospel is presented.

Acts 13:42-52: *“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. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. 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. 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.’”*

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. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and

Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Notice the mixed reactions to the presentation of the gospel in Antioch of Pisidia. Some folks wanted to hear more on the next Sabbath (v42). It seems that some Jews and some Gentile proselytes actually became believers after this first synagogue sermon (v43). When the whole city turned out to hear the word of God on the next Sabbath, many of the Jews were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict the truth of the gospel that Paul and Barnabas were presenting (v45). In fact, they instigated a persecution of Paul and Barnabas by arousing key men and women of the city, and they drove Paul and Barnabas out of the area (v50).

But many Gentiles rejoiced in the word of the Lord and exercised faith, and thus became part of the elect company of believers (v48). Even though Paul and Barnabas were forced to leave Antioch of Pisidia, the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (v52).

So there was a wide range of responses to the preaching of the gospel in Antioch. So don't be surprised - there will always be mixed reactions when the gospel is presented.

Practical Application

Don't force people to accept the gospel.

Accepting the good news of Jesus Christ is a matter of the will. When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles. The phrase, *“shaking the dust off their feet”* was a sign that the Jews of Antioch would be left to the consequences of their rejection of the gospel.

We should not manipulate people. We should not try to force them to accept the gospel against their will. Our job is to build relationships with people and earn the right to be heard. Then we can present the gospel in friendship, and in terms that the people can understand. We can use persuasion, and invitation, and the techniques of “fishermen.”

But we can't force people to believe! As the old saying goes, “You can bring a horse to water but you can't make it drink!” Belief in Jesus is a matter of the will and faith. So don't try to force people to accept the gospel.