

“The Power of the Gospel”
Acts 13:42-52
(Preached at Trinity, June 7, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the previous section Paul boldly preached the Gospel in the Jewish synagogue. Both Jews and Gentiles were present. Would anyone receive Paul's words? Were Paul and Barnabas going through all of their difficulties for nothing? What if no one believed?
2. Paul puts to silence all of these doubts in Romans 1
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
 - A. Paul knew that the power of the Gospel did not rest upon his oratory skills or his power of persuasion. The power of the Gospel rests with God – “for it is the power of God unto salvation”
 1. The Gospel can have a powerful effect upon those who hear
 2. Some powerfully reject the Gospel
 3. Some are powerfully moved upon to receive the Gospel
 4. Paul described it in **2 Cor.**
2 Corinthians 2:15-16 – “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?”
 - B. The preacher of the Gospel need only to be faithful to preach the Gospel.
Acts 13:32 – “And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,”
 1. As we saw last time, the phrase, “declare unto you glad tidings” is from a single word - εὐαγγελίζω – it literally means “to preach the gospel or good news.”
 2. It is the same word used twice in **Romans 10**
Romans 10:13-15 – “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

3. The Gospel when faithfully preached elicits a different response from different people. We saw this earlier in this chapter.
- A. In **Verse 5** we saw that their first stop on their missionary journey was at Salamis.
1. At this city the Gospel apparently had no effect. It seemed irrelevant to them. The lost man has no comprehension of spiritual issues
Satan seizes the Word from this man even before he considers it
 2. The cross of Christ had no value for him
A well man needs no physician.
The cross only has value to those who are perishing
- B. In **Verse 7** we saw that some become inquisitive seekers
Verse 7 – "desired to hear the word of God."
They want to hear more about the Gospel truths but they never apply them to themselves
2 Timothy 3:7 – "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- C. Some actively oppose the Gospel and seek to hinder its spread
Verse 8 – "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by Interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."
- D. Some receive the Gospel to the salvation of their souls
Verse 12 – "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."
1. He was astonished at the teachings (**διδάχη**) concerning Christ
 2. It was the preaching that drew him
Romans 10:17 – "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 3. It was the preaching that astonished him
It was the preaching of Christ that astonished him
4. The Gospel is very divisive. It separates the sheep from the goats.
Matthew 10:34-36 – "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. ³⁶ And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household."
5. In this passage the division is between the Jews and the Gentiles
The difference in they way the Gospel effects sinners rests only in the power of God.
In these verses we find the power of God unto salvation demonstrated.
- I. At first the message of Paul was well received
- A. **Verses 42-43** are difficult to interpret due to the ambiguity of the text
1. The Received Text / KJV states that the Jews went out of the synagogue first and then the Gentiles urged Paul and Barnabas to preach the following Sabbath.
It seems to imply that a group of Jews left even before the meeting was even over.

2. Newer versions are not so clear
The ESV is true to the NA² “and they went out” without any reference to who went out first and the Gentiles are not mentioned at all.
^{ESV} **Acts 13:42** – “As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.”
The NAS and NIV insert “Paul and Barnabas” without regard to the text which is rare for the NAS
 3. If the NA² is correct then it would appear that after preaching Paul and Barnabas were the first to leave the synagogue before the congregation was dispersed and while the Jews were still assembled the Gentiles approached them requesting them to speak again the following week. Then afterward, a group of Jews and Jewish proselytes urged them to return the following week.
- B. The point is, at first the Jews received the Gospel – **Verse 43**
1. You can discern a sense of excitement with these Jews – they were following after Paul and Barnabas seeking to hear more
 2. Some were professing Christ and Paul was encouraging them to continue steadfast in the faith
Acts 13:43 – “persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.”
 3. They were like many who quickly receive the Gospel without understanding the Gospel’s demands
Matthew 13:20-21 – “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”
 4. The Gospel demands first counting the cost - **See Luke 14:27-35**
 5. One of the things that validates our profession is that we continue in the grace of God. The true believer perseveres until the end.
John 8:31 – “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;”
 - a. The fault in today’s evangelism is in our use of a faulty formula that risks giving a false assurance.
 - Those who put their faith in Jesus will be saved
 - You have put your faith in Jesus
 - You are saved
 - b. The problem with this formula is it fails to discern if the individual has genuine faith. The genuineness of a person’s faith can only be determined with time – by his perseverance.
- C. Their faith was only temporary
1. The next Sabbath day the whole city came to hear the Word of God – **Verse 44** – Antioch would have been primarily a Gentile city.
On this Sabbath day the place was packed
 2. But look at the change of heart with the Jews
Acts 13:45 – “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.”

- a. The previous week they had been attracted to the words of Paul. Christ was being presented as the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. He was their awaited Christ.
- b. Now Gentiles were flocking to hear the Gospel. The Jews were filled with envy and anger. They set their hearts upon contradicting Paul.
- 3. In fairness to the text, it is possible that these Jews are not the same ones that followed Paul.
 - a. The KJV gives the possibility of two different groups of Jews.
 - b. Whether or not this is true, the wholesale reaction of the Jews towards the Gospel was that of bitter rejection. This led to Paul's statement in **Verse 46**
- D. We find a clear distinction between the Jews and Gentiles
 - 1. The Jews hated and rejected the Gospel
 - a. In **Verse 45** they spoke against the things spoken by Paul.
 - b. In **Verse 50** they provoked many to rise up to persecute Paul and Barnabas
 - 2. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were excited about Paul's words.
 - a. In **Verse 42** they urged Paul to preach again the following Sabbath
 - b. In **Verse 44** they came in great numbers to hear the Gospel
 - c. In **Verse 48** they were glad that the Gospel included them.
Acts 13:48 – "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord"

II. What can explain the difference between these two groups?

- A. We know it wasn't because of anything in the Gentiles themselves
 - 1. We know they weren't wiser
1 Cor. 1:19-20 – "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. ²⁰ Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"
1 Corinthians 1:26-27 – "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: ²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;"
 - 2. We know they weren't more righteous
Romans 3:10-12 – "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."
 - 3. And we know it wasn't because they had an advantage over the Jews
 - a. To the contrary, the Gentiles were aliens to promises of God
Ephesians 2:12 – "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

- b. In fact, the Jews had all of the advantages
Romans 3:1-2 – “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”
- B. The only explanation is the power of God
1. Luke says the Gentiles believed because God ordained it
Acts 13:48 – “and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”
 - a. It doesn’t say they were ordained to eternal life because they believed
 - b. God has an eternal plan of redemption - God is powerfully saving His own
 2. Paul knew this.
Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
 3. There was no doubt in the mind of Paul that God was saving His own
 - a. He didn’t feel the need to handle the Word of God deceitfully
2 Corinthians 4:2 – “But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully”
 - b. He did not feel the need to soften the edge of Scripture by preaching flattering words
1 Corinthians 2:4-5 – “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
 4. All of the clever methods being used today are actually a testimony to a low view of God’s power to save His own. They feel they need to use clever ways to attract sinners to Christ
 5. God uses simple means that He might receive all of the glory
1 Corinthians 1:27-31 – “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence. ³⁰ But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: ³¹ That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Conclusion:

1. God is powerfully saving His own by His own powerful Word. Only God is able to change wicked hearts to holy hearts. Only God is able to produce faith in the heart of man.
2. And only God is able to preserve His own until the end. God is powerfully accomplishing the salvation of His elect people.