

## Scripture Reading:

**Acts 13: “13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. 14 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.' " 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.”**

## "The Sure Mercies of David"

This morning we continue on with the first missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas had been sent on by the Church at Antioch under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We will focus this morning on the sermon Paul gave in the Jewish synagogue and it will give us an idea of what they preached during their first stop on the island of Cyprus where they proclaimed the Word of God in the synagogues at Salamis.

As I mentioned last week, Luke also gives us no details about what happened after the conversion of the Roman ruler of Cyprus and we now have them moving on from the home of Barnabas to the land that Paul would have known well: *[note Tarsus on the map]*

- In verse five Luke mentioned that John Mark had joined Paul and Barnabas and now he informs us that he left when they arrived at Perga and returned to Jerusalem.

There is much speculation as to why Mark left at this time, but Luke does not tell us the reason, so we should be careful not to want to know more than has been revealed. Luke has informed us about Mark's joining and leaving because these actions by Mark will be the source of much trouble between Paul and Barnabas as they prepare for a second trip and we will discuss all of that tension in detail at that time.

The focus here in the middle of chapter 13 is obviously the message that Paul delivered to the Jews as many God-fearing Gentiles listened in. This is one of those weeks where the text pretty much gives us the message: I am always reticent to add much to speeches or sermons given in the Scriptures!

- Lord willing I will be able to add a few insights as we go through the text, with much of the credit going to Saints who have gone before!

One thing it is important for us to note as we review this message in our time is: Who it was addressed too? Paul is preaching in a synagogue with Jews and God fearing Gentiles present. That is why Paul begins by addressing the Men of Israel and you who fear God: There is only one Gospel, only one plan of salvation. There is also only ONE time for salvation: Today! Paul calls both the Jew and Gentile to repentance based on what Jesus has done!

Jesus told the disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, all of Judea and Samaria and then to all the world: The great salvation that God had promised in the Old Testament had been accomplished by the work of Jesus and now people were to repent and be saved: Jew and Gentile alike. This is especially timely as we watch the growing tensions in the middle east where we must remember that what these people need is the Gospel: -- Both the Jews and the Gentiles!

So let us review the important message that the Apostle Paul delivers:

"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."

- Paul begins with a quick review of the history of Israel: Another reminder that we should know our Old Testament well because it is their history AND ours!
- Paul reminds us that God is both our deliverer and caretaker: He delivers them from Egypt with His mighty hand and then even in their rebellion in the wilderness God cares for them as a nurturing mother
- Calvin said, "the mercy of God is expressed in suffering the people whom He knew to be stubborn and disobedient"

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.'

➤ Paul, as Peter and Stephan had done in Jerusalem, focuses on King David the one who foreshadowed the coming Kingdom of Jesus.

➤ We are told that David was a man after God’s own heart and that should give us great hope!

We all know that David was not a perfect man... Far from it. BUT he was a man after God’s own heart who when he fell into grievous sin cried out, “against You and You only have I sinned.” He asked God to create in him a clean heart and he trusted that God would be able to do so...

➤ That salvation, his righteousness would not be of his own making but would come through God’s promised Messiah!

➤ And now Paul reminds his listeners of this truth...

23 “From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior--Jesus—

➤ Paul is there to proclaim that the promised Messiah had come and that His name was Jesus!

➤ The Messiah, as promised, would be announced by God’s greatest and final prophet who the Jews of that day would have been very familiar with:

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.'”

➤ John the Baptist proclaimed the coming Messiah and now Paul would do the same

➤ However, Paul pauses to remind his listeners that this Jesus was the Messiah, the coming Savior for both Jew and Gentile!

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.

➤ Paul will now explain how the events that took place in Jerusalem confirm and accomplish all that was promised in the Old Testament

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.

➤ Those who should have known the Scriptures, those who lusted for power within the Roman Empire and all the forces of hell thought they had gotten rid of this convicting and troubling man from Nazareth.

➤ But God was fully in control of all that happened and after all the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus had been fulfilled God demonstrated His mighty power...

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.

- We see clearly here in the first recorded sermon by the Apostle Paul that his central message was always the resurrection!
- The Good News is that Jesus has saved His people from their sins!

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.'

- We confess that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God from all eternity and this does not conflict with that truth
- Paul is confirming that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are what all those promises in the Old Testament were pointing too!
- There is NO future time when Jesus will come to rule the nations from an earthly throne in Jerusalem
- His rule began with the defeat of Satan demonstrated by the resurrection and carried out by the Holy Spirit as He fills the earth with the Kingdom of God
- The Spirit will do so through all those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb...

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.

- King David foreshadowed the coming Kingdom of Jesus, but he was only a man
- When he was dead and buried, he rotted in the grave and he had no power to rule beyond his earthly reign
- Jesus saw no corruption in the grave! He ascended to God's throne after He was raised in power and now rules forever
- Paul goes on to declare that all those present, both Jew and Gentile must NOW make a choice:

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.

- We must be careful to not draw the wrong conclusion about Paul's reference to the Law of God.
- Paul clearly teaches that we are saved by grace through faith in the work of Jesus!

**BUT** neither he nor Jesus wanted to abolish the Law: They both taught that Jesus came to fulfill the law.

Think back to King David, the man after God's own heart: He knew that because of God's grace ALL of his great sin could be forgiven and he could have a new heart and right spirit. This did NOT give him license to sin or cause him to ignore the Law of God. We must remember that the Gospel is simple:

- There is nothing we can do to please God & thus we must completely depend on the work of Jesus!

This Gospel can be believed and save a simple person who knows little about Jesus and all the great doctrines of the Scriptures.

This Gospel can be believed by our very young covenant children who just know that they love Jesus!

**BUT this Gospel must also be believed by those who have great knowledge and have grown mature in the faith: This was forgotten by the Pharisees who condemned Jesus and it is why Paul now warns those here in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia:**

**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 the Apostle to the Gentiles & we will often see in the Book of Acts how his taking the Gospel to the Gentiles is a stumbling block to the Jews.**
- **Paul quotes the Prophet Habbakkuk because in his day most of God's people could not believe God would use the evil Babylonians to judge His people**
- **That is exactly what He did and now Paul uses that same Scripture to warn the Jews of his day about another great move on God's part that would be difficult for them to believe...**

**The blessing of Abraham will indeed go to all the nations of the earth!**

**We will see next week that some of the Jews believed and that the Gentiles were very responsive. Some years later Paul would write a letter to the churches in this region known as Galatia where they would still be struggling with understanding that the same Gospel has gone out to all and that we cannot be saved by the works of the law...Writing in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians Paul says,**

**"23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

- **There are still some today who want to return to some sort of works righteousness where they consciously or even unconsciously depend on something other than the work of Jesus for their salvation...**
- **We cannot earn God's favor by being good, by comparing ourselves to others or even by being baptized in the right church...**
- **We are saved by having faith in the finished work of Jesus!**

**The right understanding of the Gospel helps us to understand both the world and ourselves...**

**It gives us a right understanding and great comfort if we trust and believe what God has revealed...**

**We know that God created all there is and that it was declared very good and then spoiled by Adam's fall into sin.**

**This allows us to appreciate and know the wonder of God's creation but also to understand the sin and suffering that we see all around us.**

**We know that because of Adam's sin we are born in trespasses and sins, able only to choose sin.**

**At the same time we know that God has chosen us for salvation: He has put His name upon us with our baptism declaring that we are fully righteous because of the work done by His Son!**

**Thus we can cry out with Paul "O what a wretched man I am," knowing in our own hearts that we are the chief sinner that we know best, and yet also know that God only sees us in the glory and righteousness of His Son Jesus and that nothing in this world can separate us from that great love!**

- **We truly know and should always remember the sure mercies of David!**

**In closing, we should also reflect on how blessed Paul was to be able to give a sermon very similar to the one he heard Stephan deliver to the Sanhedrin many years before...**

- **At that time he was one of those religious leaders who had hardened his heart against God's Spirit and held the very coats of those who went out to stone Stephen.**

**Paul knew, as he confessed to the Corinthians that he was unworthy to be called an Apostle, or as he told Timothy he thought of himself as the chief of sinners.**

- **Yet now after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus he was a witness for Jesus and His amazing grace!**

**This should remind us to always place our hope in the Lord...**

**Whether we are concerned about staying faithful ourselves or praying for someone with a hardened heart to be turned in repentance...**

- **We must trust the God who is able to change and to preserve the hearts of men!**

**Communion Meditation: Isaiah 55:1-7**

**"1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. 3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- The sure mercies of David. 4 Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. 5 Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the Lord your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you." 6 Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.**