

Acts 13:13-52

“A Different Direction”

We closed our time last week observing the fact of a certain Jew being blinded while the eyes of a Gentile were opened to the light of the gospel. Which is sort of interesting really because it's the 1st written record of the ministry of Paul the apostle and it sort of sets the tone for his ministry *specifically*, and *really* the entire tone of the going forth of the gospel from this point forward *generally*. Though certainly there will be those of the nation of Israel still responding positively to the gospel, overall we'll begin to see the Jews rejecting it (being as it were; blinded to it) but the Gentiles we'll see receiving it, their eyes being opened to it. So that the work of the Spirit begins really to take a different direction, from the Jew, towards the Gentile.

Something else that it might be worthwhile to point out as we're witnessing this 1st organized concerted effort at missions in the early church is that *of* those whom the Holy Spirit selected to go, it was *out* of those whom were already serving the Lord in some capacity. Or to understand it another way, He *sent*, from among those who *served*.

So often you'll run into (or at least it seems that I do) people who are prepared to serve God in some grand and glorious calling *somewhere-someday-at some point*, and they know that God has big plans for their lives in the future, but for now (or in the meanwhile) the fact is they aren't doing anything. They have intentions to be a pastor one day, or start a ministry of some sort, or perhaps be a missionary, and to hear them speak sounds great, but the reality is that when it comes to serving the Lord in the now, they're doing nothing.

We spoke last week about the danger in doing nothing, and generally speaking God doesn't take of those who are doing *nothing* and use their lives to do *something* grand and glorious. But rather He'll look to those who are being faithful, not despising the days of small things, just *servicing* the Lord out of the overflow of their love *for* the Lord, not concerned about the pat on the back or recognition of men, and He'll begin to raise them up and use their lives. and I just wanted to point that out to you so that you don't get stranded in the snare of thinking that “one day” you'll do something great for God, if the fact of the matter is that today you're doing nothing. Because you'll begin to find that weeks and months, and years go by and you'll still be looking out there to that proverbial day that you enlist yourself in the grand service of the Lord. How much better to simply begin to serve the Lord right where you're at, and then out of that let the Lord raise you up, and move you on, but the bible says that, “...*it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*” 1 Cor 4:2 Remember Matt 25 “You've been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. But if you haven't been faithful with anything, meaning you've never really committed to any aspect of serving the Lord, than how can you expect to suddenly be promoted into some great thing, or be entrusted on a large scale? Vs 1 of ch 13 shows us that the Holy Spirit selected from those who were already busy about faithfully *servicing* the Lord to be among those who were to be sent out *for* the Lord.

So Barnabas, Paul (along with John Mark) and a few others unnamed set out from Antioch to Cyprus, they've traveled from one end of the island to the other and now we catch up with them prepared to set sail once again from the city of Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia.

Vs13

Generally speaking I probably wouldn't stop on a vs like this that just seems to grant us some basic narrative type information. (Map?) But this ultimately makes for a significant transaction in the life of Paul and Barnabas later, because here we find that John Mark pulled the ripcord and went back home to Jerusalem at this point. Now why exactly he did this we're not sure because the bible just doesn't say. Some speculate that perhaps being a young guy he was home sick.

Others think that he got cold feet because of the mountainous terrain that was ahead of them which was notorious for danger, it was countryside that was infested with robbers and thieves (as Paul speaks of all of the perils that he faced there in the book of Cor, some of those things more than likely happened on the path they were taking here.) But maybe the trip was just a bit rougher than what he'd bargained for so he bailed out. There's another subtle thing taking place here that seems to perhaps shed a little light on the situation as well.

Up till this point it's always been "Barnabas and Saul" but here there's a very different transition that takes place. Barnabas isn't even mentioned and the group is referred to as "Paul and *his* party." and It could simply be that Mark didn't agree with the change in leadership with in the group, "Hey uncle Barnabas I like the way you do things, but Paul just sees things different, and if he's leading the group, I'm out of here." Now another thing I'd say about *Barnabas* at this point is again the amazing character that this guy had. He was willing to get behind the obvious authority that God had invested into Paul for the furtherance of the work of the Kingdom even if it meant him serving in Paul's shadow (so to speak). It's like he had the attitude, "Hey Paul, its obvious that God has anointed you for this task, man whatever you want to do I'll get behind you in it." and It's a rare individual who's able to step down in humility and give the reigns over in totality to another individual whom God has gifted in a greater capacity for the same work.

We'll read of Saul and David here in a minute, but Saul couldn't give David the throne, even though he knew God had *called* David and promised it *to* David. He fought to maintain his position till the very end, but Barnabas wasn't that way, he just stepped aside. But at this point Mark wasn't there, he was behind Barnabas, not Paul (as the leader, perhaps) but whatever the reason Paul considered this a major fumble on the field and when it came time to go on their 2nd missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark again, but Paul said "Forget it." He said that Mark didn't follow through the 1st time, and there was no way that he would go with him the 2nd time. and The contention became so sharp that Paul and Barnabas parted ways over the deal, Barnabas took Mark and went one direction, Paul took Silas and headed the other.

Now having said that we realize that whatever the reason for the schism, ultimately reconciliation between Paul and Mark took place. We serve a God of reconciliation, and restoration, later on we find Paul with Mark again when we read in Col 4:10 *“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),”* Perhaps the instructions had to do with the fact that though at one time they didn’t see eye to eye, the Lord had reconciled them so all is well, receive him. and Again when Paul wrote 2nd Timothy he said, *“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”* 2 Tim 4:11

So there are a couple of things that we can glean here as far as practical application for us is concerned and that is #1 God desires that we be reconciled to one another whereas before perhaps there’s been a breach. God has forgiven us, expects that we forgive others, obviously some time went by but ultimately these guys “kissed and made up.” In that same letter to the Colossians Paul told us that, *“...as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”* Col 3:12-13

But the 2nd thing we glean from this is how we serve a gracious God of the 2nd chance, or 3rd chance, or 300th chance. Mark made a mistake, perhaps Paul dealt with it a little harsh, maybe they were both wrong to a degree, I don’t know it’ll be debated I suspect as long the church exist on this side of eternity. But what I do know is that God went on to use both of their lives in tremendous ways. Paul would be the single most used man of God (outside of Christ obviously) perhaps in world history even penning 2/3 of the NT.

Mark, God would use to give us 1 of only 4 gospel accounts to be recorded. So take heart in the fact that we’re all going to make mistakes in this life. But God if we’ll humble ourselves and get right with God, He’ll use imperfect vessels like us in the accomplishing of His perfect will, and He’ll use your life in a tremendous way.

Vs14-15

So they don’t stay there on the coastlands they move on up into the higher grounds of Antioch (not of Syria where they were sent out from) but of Pisidia, there in the area of modern day Turkey. and They’re going to be ministering now in the southern area of Galatia, now somewhere in here is where its believed to be that Paul got very ill, perhaps contracted Malaria in the coastlands therefore heading on up into some higher ground. But when he writes to the Galatians he recounts to them how he came to them because of a physical infirmity, and the trial that he endured in his flesh while he was among them.

But as was their custom they went to the synagogue and when the law and the prophets had been read (perhaps he was there in his formal garb, or they'd made themselves known to the ruler of the synagogue in advance.) Because the custom was that when the law and prophets had been read the ruler of the synagogue would allow for opportunity for anyone who was a learned man to share, and Paul wasn't the kind of guy that you offered a chance to share and he stayed quiet. So he says, "If you guys have a word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Vs16

Super quick, what do we see here? That Jew or Gentile, it doesn't matter, the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ is for you, he calls for everyone who is there, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God" to listen. The Word of God applies to all men everywhere.

Vs17-25

By the way this is the 1st and most complete sermon of Paul's that we have recorded for us, but there are some important things going on here. Paul is pointing out to them key events in their history. The choosing of the Patriarchs, their time spent in Egypt, God's delivering of His people from the bondage of Egypt, the wilderness wanderings, the conquest of Canaan, the time of the judges and the establishing of a Monarchy, but he's bringing them to a very definite conclusion and that is how that it all culminates in the person of Jesus Christ He rehearses their history up to the point of David, he refreshes their memory regarding God's promise, and through that makes the direct transition to its fulfillment in Jesus. What promise is he talking about? We'll get to that in a second but 1st I want to point out a few things in this sermon so far.

1st of all in the presentation of their history and all does it remind you of anything else we've read so far in the book of Acts? Remember Stephens's sermon back in ch 7, there's some striking similarities here. It's interesting that when Paul heard that sermon he was a hater of Jesus, but something about what Stephen said stuck to him, and now here he is all these years later and he's sharing in that same approach that stuck to him. Listen, when you hear something that moves you, sticks to you, and permeates through you; don't be afraid to share that with others. Paul was impacted by what he heard, and he's still using that approach years later.

2^{ndly} draw attention to the words there in vs 18, "He put up with their ways." Or "Suffered He their manners" if you're reading the OKJV, because this speaks of the patience and provision of our God towards a sin bent and rebellious generation. I'm so thankful for God's provision *for* my life, and patience *with* my life. Because I blow it all the time, say something I shouldn't in a manner I shouldn't, think something I shouldn't, or do something biblically unacceptable.

But I thank God that He's willing to put up with my ways, that He is longsuffering and full of compassion, showing mercy to thousands to those who love Him and seek to be right *with Him*. Because I want to walk in His ways, be obedient to His word consistently, persistently with out fail, but I fail, and I suspect that you do too. But we serve a patient and gracious God who loves us, and is for us and not against us, He looks for opportunity to show

mercy, if we'll just repent He'll forgive and renew with restore our lives. Kinda goes with the idea of reconciliation, as He's just always right there ready to reconcile our relationship to Him once again.

Of course we could talk about the saddest day in Israel's history when they requested a king. Rather than being a Theocracy and having God reign over them they wanted a king so that they could be like the other nations, and sad is the day that rather than have God reign over you, you just want to be like everyone else. But time forbids us to get into too much of that, but we notice the fact in vs 21-22 that which I was mentioning earlier regarding transitions in leadership. God gave them Saul, then He *removed* Saul and *raised up* David, why? Because Saul was pretty much a "blow life" kind of a guy ultimately. He didn't do what God told him to do, then he would make excuses to try and justify his sin. So God removed him, but He found in David (notice vs 22) "A man after My own heart, who will do all My will."

How would you like for God to record that about you? That you are an individual after His own heart who would be faithful to do all His will. Remember what Jesus said, how that He always did those things that pleased the Father. You say, "Wait a minute, the David that I read about had plenty of problems, adultery, murder, deception, how do you reconcile those things?" In this way, Saul always sought to justify himself, David never did, whenever he was confronted with sin in his life David was quick to confess it, repent of it and do what he needed to do to get right with God concerning it. You see David made mistakes, but down in the deepest recess of his heart he longed to be *right* with God, he desired intimate *fellowship* with God, genuinely, Saul put up a façade. But David had a genuine heart, and what's God always looking to? The heart, how's your heart before God today? Ready to do God's will, seeking *after* His heart, wanting to be *in line* with His heart? Or perhaps you brought your bible, sang the songs, maybe you'll even throw in \$10 or \$20 bucks when it comes time to receive the tithes and offerings, but in reality its just a façade, your heart really isn't in it? God is searching our hearts this morning, and it's His business to remove certain people, and raise up others. Promotion doesn't come from the east, the west, the north or the south, but from the Lord. God found in David a man who was willing to do His will.

He made him a promise, and that promise was that there would arise One from his seed that would sit upon the throne of Israel forever. That He would give to David an everlasting throne. David wanted to build God a house, God said that's neat David, but there's too much blood on your hands (David was a man of war God didn't want His house to be identified with bloodshed, warfare, death and dismemberment, but rather life and peace, forgiveness and prosperity, in the purest sense). But God said how about this, "I'll build you a house." and God said to David, "...*your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.*" 2 Sam 7:16 Or to understand that another way, "Messiah will come through your lineage." Look at vs 23.

He shares with them how that J.B. (whom they'd readily heard of) had gone before Him, the people recognizing John as a prophet yet how John debased himself and exalted Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Vs26-27

What's this show us? That just going to church doesn't save anybody, these guys heard the scripture every Sabbath, yet still didn't hear God's voice, or glean the insight or any true understanding of scripture.

Jesus said, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."* John 5:39-40 Going to church and listening to some preacher won't get you anywhere, it's not about coming to church, it's about coming to Christ that you might have life. If you won't come to Christ, it does you no good to come to church, these guys heard the word every week, but they didn't know Jesus, and that my friends is where it's at, knowing Jesus.

Vs 28-31

Notice he doesn't say, "Who *were* His witnesses" most all of them were still alive at that time, over 500 of them we read of in the book of Cor. Real quick there in vs 29, Paul isn't speaking of a literal tree, he's speaking of the cross (in that its wood) as a tree seeking to draw attention to the fact that Christ bore the curse of the Law for us because in the law its written there in Deut 21 that anyone who is hanged on a tree is cursed, and Christ bore the curse for us. and There in vs 28-30 you have the gospel all wrapped up in a nutshell, the sinless life, atoning death, and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ

Vs32-37

We've got to stop here for a second, notice the command, and the working knowledge of the Word of God that Paul had. Understand that if the Word wasn't in his heart like this, than God couldn't be using him in this way, how does this apply to you? That if you want God to use *your* life, you need *His* Word in your heart. That's human responsibility, we speak now and then about Divine initiative and human responsibility, how that God initiates, but its up to us to respond. Well, tucking God's Word away in your heart, is *your* responsibility. Remember David said, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."* Ps 119:11 The hiding away of God's Word in his heart was something *he* did, no one did it for him. It's up to you to spend time contemplating, meditating, and concentrating on God's Word, Paul had it in his heart, and the Holy Spirit was then able to draw it out in powerful, penetrating and irrefutable ways.

Something else you should see here is that this reference to Ps 2 there in vs 33 isn't used in the context of Christ's birth, God didn't verify to the world that Jesus was His Son when He was begotten from the *womb*, but rather when He was begotten from the *tomb*. The resurrection is the proof positive that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the book of Romans tells us regarding Jesus that He was, *"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."* Rom 1:4

Paul points out here that the promise not to see corruption couldn't have been applied to David, because David, once he died, his body decayed just like everyone else's. But the body of Jesus Christ saw no corruption because He was resurrected from the dead.

Now one more thing I'll point out before we inch on is there in vs36 "David served his own generation by the will of God." How are you serving your own generation? Are you busy about God's will for you during your time on this earth, I love the testimony that David has here, he served his own generation by the will of God. Allow the Lord to reach your generation with the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified through your life. However He wants to communicate that, in whatever way He'd have you serve, just seek the Lord on what He would have you to do. (Paul gives them the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in vs 38 after giving them the interpretation of scripture he hits them with the application)

Vs38-41

So he brings them to a decision, "You've heard the facts, backed up with scriptural validation regarding the deity of the Savior, along with the foreshadowing and prophecy of the resurrection and now you have a choice to make."

"Justification by faith in Christ Jesus, or perish in your sin." Of course vs 39 is the root of Paul's writing to both the Romans and the Galatians, that justification comes only by faith in Jesus Christ not by the works of the law for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. So the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf grants us a 2-fold benefit in Him, forgiveness, and justification. You might understand it like this, forgiveness wipes our debt clean, justification puts a credit on our account. So that even as forgiveness implies guilt, justification implies innocence, if you're justified you're not guilty, if you're guilty you need forgiven. So that as I come to Christ I need forgiveness, but by they grace of God, being found in Christ, I'm justified, found just as if I'd never sinned at all. As Paul said, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" Rom 5:1

Vs42-43

Underline those words, "Continue in the grace of God." Every bit as important as *beginning* in the grace of God, is the need to *continue* in the grace of God. These guys would come to struggle with that, so when Paul wrote Galatians he rebuked them. He said, "*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" Gal 3:3 Of course the answer is "No!" You're not going to improve on the work of the Spirit in the efforts of your flesh. Having begun in God's grace, how important it is to *continue* in the grace of God.

Vs44-47

So we see immediate exponential growth, these guys were spreading the word like wildfire, “Man you’ve got to come and hear the message.” and Nearly the whole city turned out, what a rebuke to us today, that we’ve become so disenchanted (if you will) with the message of the Word of God that we rarely even invite people to come and hear the Word of God with us. These guys were excited and the whole city caught wind and turned out. God help us to be excited about the word of God, and just on fire for Him, telling everyone about it.

But notice vs 46, this is that which we’ve pointed out before, whenever we make a judgment concerning Jesus Christ in reality we’re making the judgment on ourselves. They thought that they were making a judgment to reject Jesus Christ but in reality they were making a judgment upon themselves to be rejected *by* Jesus Christ judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

Obviously none of us are worthy in and of ourselves, but Christ imputes His righteousness to our account when we receive Him thereby making us worthy on the basis of the finished work of the cross.

Then Paul says, “That’s it, we came to your 1st and that was only right,” Jesus came to Israel 1st, they needed to have priority in hearing the message. But once they rejected it, they moved on, Paul didn’t spend much time trying to persuade hardened hearts, now certainly he prayed for them (Rom 10:1) but he placed his *focus* on those who’s hearts were open, ready, willing and wanting to hear the message. So when you run across those people who forcibly really don’t want to hear it, that’s fine, find those who do and focus on them, be a light to them that you should be used for salvation to them.

Vs48-52

What we do or don’t do, justifies us in nothing before God, what Jesus Christ has done will justify from all things before God. If you want to be justified before God, given the righteousness of Jesus Christ If you’re willing to repent of your sin and place your faith in Christ than today forgiveness can be yours.

Prayer points: That we would continue in the grace of God, thank You that You not only provide for us but are patient with us.