

“What’s The Big Idea?”

Acts 13:13-52

July 19, 2015

INTRO: *VIDEO “My Way”*

(The big idea sets guard rails & guidelines for ALL the details & little particulars of our strategies & tactical implementations...

When thus is so... ALL the details (large & small) support the building up of the big idea! - JDP

“Without vision the people perish”

(Action without vision = Ready, Fire, Aim!

ILLUSTRATION:

Parenting of children (like disciplining of Christians) offers a near endless supply, & practical platform, for both good & bad examples...

Spiritual Parallels:

- when helping hurts...
- church "cafeterias"
- legalists & libertines

He who has ears to hear, let him hear... (Rev 3)

PRE-TEXT:

1. Acts "pattern"
2. Gospel to the Gentiles
3. Paul & Barny sent/set out per Spirit
4. Cypress = 1st recorded encounter
5. Get your SWORD for warfare...

PREVIEW:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------------|
| I. | <i>The Setting</i> | (vv.13-16a) |
| II. | <i>The Sermon</i> | (vv.16b-41) |
| III. | <i>The Send-off</i> | (vv.42-52) |

The Setting

¹³ *Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.*

¹⁴ ***But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.***

Further going... Going further (Acts 1:8)

1st go to church... then go to search!

¹⁵ ***After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."***

1 Peter 3:15ff

The Gospel is not intuitive, it is counter-intuitive; it is not natural, it's supernatural; **it is not caught**, the Gospel is taught!

We don't leak out the Gospel, we SPEAK OUT the Gospel!

ILLUSTRATION: Gospel & Gettysburg Address

- Most people don't know either
- "Good enough" IS enough for the Gettysburg Address... BUT, "good enough" is NOT enough when it comes to the Gospel

Only 1 Gospel saves... and FALSE gospels abound

If we truly love the Gospel then we will LIVE the Gospel with all of our heart, soul, mind, & strength!

The Sermon

1. The **WORD** of God (vv.16-25)
2. The **WALK** of God (vv.26-31)
3. The **WAY** of God (vv.32-37)
4. The **WONDER** of God (vv.38-39)
5. The **WARNING** of God (vv.40-41)

The **WORD** of God

(vv.16-25)

¹⁶ *Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:*

VIDEO: “Fear of God”

¹⁷ *"The **God** of this people Israel **(1) chose our fathers** and **(2) made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt,** and **(3) with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.**"*

¹⁸ *"For a period of about forty years **(4) put up with them in the wilderness.**"*

¹⁹ *"When **(5) He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan,** **(6) He distributed their land as an inheritance**—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years.*

²⁰ *"After these things **(7) He gave them judges** until Samuel the prophet.*

²¹ *"Then they asked for a king, and **(8) God gave them (king) Saul** the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.*

²² *"After **(9) He (God) had removed him (Saul), (10) He (God) raised up David to be their king,** concerning whom **(11) He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART,** who will do all My will.'*

²³ *"From the descendants of this man, according to promise, **(12) God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,***

²⁴ *after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.*

²⁵ *"And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'*

The **WALK** of God

(vv.26-31)

²⁶ "*Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and **those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.***

Loving God = “want to”

Fearing God = “know better”

Honoring God = “faithful obedience”

Loving God + Fearing God = Honoring God - JDP

²⁷ "*For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.*

²⁸ "*And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed.*

²⁹ "*When they had carried out **(13) all that was written concerning Him**, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.*

³⁰ "***But (14) God raised Him from the dead;***

³¹ "***and for many days (15) He appeared to those who came up***

with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.

VIDEO: “Abandon: HERO”

The WAY of God

(vv.32-37)

³² *"And we preach to you the Gospel - good news of the promise made to the fathers,*

³³ *that (16) God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that (17) He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'*

³⁴ *"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, (18) He has spoken in this way: (19) 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.'*

³⁵ *"Therefore (20) He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.'*

³⁶ *"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;*

³⁷ *but He whom (21) God raised did not undergo decay.*

NOTE: to be “informed” is NOT to be “inspired”

The **WONDER** of God

(vv.38-39)

³⁸ *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **(22) through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed** to you,*

³⁹ *and **(23) through Him everyone who believes is JUSTIFIED** from all things, from which you could not be justified through the Law of Moses.*

The GOSPEL!

Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement

Doc. of Justification by Faith ALONE

Read: Ephesians 1:3-8a

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **4**For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love **5**he **b**predestined

us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— **6**to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. **7**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace **8**that he lavished on us.

Read: Romans 3:22-25

22This righteousness is given through faith in **h** Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, **23**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24**and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **25**God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness,

VIDEO: *“Meet Bill Hise”*

The *WARNING* of God

(vv.40-41)

⁴⁰ "***Therefore take heed***, (a.k.a. "Watch out!") *so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:*

⁴¹ '***BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR (24) I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.***'"

The Send-off

3 Responses:

The Curious

The Contemptuous

The Coverts

(The "hearers," the "haters," & the "homees")

A. The Curious

⁴² ***As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.***

⁴³ *Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.*

⁴⁴ *The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.*

B. The Contemptuous

⁴⁵ *But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.*

⁴⁶ *Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.*

C. The Converts (a.k.a. "true Christians")

- Christians are **COMMANDED**
- Christians are **COMMISSIONED**
- Christians are **CELEBRATORY**
- Christians are **CAPTURED (by God's grace)**
- Christians are **CATALYSTS & CONDUITS**
- Christians are **CAST-out**
- Christians are **CONTINUALLY (filled)**
- with Joy
 - with the Holy Spirit

Christians are **COMMANDED & COMMISSIONED**

⁴⁷ "For so the (25) Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'"

Christians are **CELEBATORY**

⁴⁸ *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord;*

Christians are **CAPTURED** (by God's grace)

and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Christians are **CATALYSTS & CONDUITS**

⁴⁹ *And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.*

***** More Warfare! *****

Christians are CAST-out

⁵⁰ *But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.*

***** NOTE the RESPONSE *****

⁵¹ *But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.*

Christians are CONTINUALLY (filled)

⁵² *And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

VIDEO: “COTM - Amazing Grace”

Let's Pray!

Study Notes:

THE WESTWARD PROGRESS of the gospel continues as "Paul and his companions" sail northwest from Paphos in Cyprus to Perga in Pamphylia ([v. 13](#)). We are not told whether they preach in that city, though we know that they preached there on their return journey ([14:25](#)). Most of chapter 13 deals with the experiences of these evangelists in Antioch of Pisidia.

Preaching in Pisidian Antioch ([13:13-41](#))

[VERSE 13](#) RECORDS two interesting changes in the missionary team. (1) Paul seems to have taken the prominent role. Prior to this Barnabas was always mentioned first. Now Barnabas is not even mentioned but is included as one of Paul's "companions." Hereafter, except in the description of the proceedings of the Jerusalem Council ([15:12](#)) and the letter it sent to the churches ([15:25](#)), the order is always "Paul and Barnabas." This seems to be Luke's way of saying that Paul has taken over the leadership slot or at least the place of prominence.

(2) John Mark leaves to return home to Jerusalem. Paul later describes this departure as a desertion ([15:38](#)), but we are not told why he leaves. Is he homesick? Has he not planned to be away for so long? Does he find the rigors of travel, especially the prospect of a climb up the mountains to Galatia, too hard on him? Does he resent the fact that his cousin Barnabas is falling into second place? Does he have problems with the bold approach to Gentiles that Paul is developing? We cannot be sure.

From Perga Paul and Barnabas travel inland and northward to the higher altitudes, and they minister in cities of south Galatia. They presumably took the paved Roman highway, the Via Sebaste, from Perga to Antioch. Antioch of Pisidia was an important civil and military center of the

Romans ([v. 14](#)), which lay about 3,600 feet above sea level. The city actually belonged to Galatia, but it was near Pisidia and thus got its name (as there was another Antioch in the same district).

In [Galatians 4:13](#) Paul says that "it was because of an illness that [he] first preached the gospel" in this area. Sir William Ramsay suggests that Paul had caught malaria in the low-lying territory and went to recuperate in the higher altitudes of the north, but we cannot be sure about this. One of the wealthiest business families of Antioch was the family of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, who had been converted ([13:5-12](#)). It is not surprising, then, that an expert on the archaeology of the area, S. Mitchell, writes: "We can hardly avoid the conclusion that the proconsul himself had suggested to Paul that he make [Antioch] his next port of call, no doubt providing him with letters of introduction to aid his passage on his stay."

***** VIDEO*****

“BRIDGE: The Bible Clock”

As was their custom, Paul and Barnabas go to the local synagogue on the Sabbath, and they are invited to speak ([vv. 14-15](#)). We note that Paul addresses both Jews and God-fearers twice, using different designations each time ([vv. 16, 26](#)), and that the message is tailored to suit an audience with a background of knowledge about the Old Testament. While he covers some of the same ground in his historical survey of Israel's history as Stephen, his aim is different. Stephen wanted to demonstrate that the old era with the temple and the law of

Moses had given way to the new. **Paul's aim is rather to show how God's activity in history climaxed in the coming of Jesus.** Thus he talks of how God worked with Israel in Egypt ([v. 17a](#)), in the Exodus ([v. 17b](#)), in the desert wanderings ([v. 18](#)), in the conquest of Canaan ([v. 20](#)), in the period of the judges ([v. 20b](#)), and during the time of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David ([vv. 21-22](#)). From there Paul jumps straight to Jesus the Savior, who came as one of David's descendants ([v. 23](#)). The implication here is that Jesus fulfills Jewish aspirations.

From that point on, Paul argues for the validity of his claim in [verse 23](#) that Jesus is indeed the promised "Savior."

John the Baptist had anticipated his coming ([vv. 24-25](#)). Paul's hearers possibly knew more about John than about Jesus.

After proclaiming that this message of salvation has been sent to them ([v. 26](#)), Paul proceeds to expound on the death of Christ with the characteristic apologetic presented to the Jews in Acts:

1. He was innocent and his death fulfilled Old Testament prophecy ([vv. 27-29](#)).
2. Then, as in Peter's Pentecost sermon, Paul gives an extended exposition of how the resurrection was

witnessed by credible people and was in keeping with what the Old Testament said ([vv. 30-37](#)).

Following the exposition of the Christ event is an offer of forgiveness (v. 38) and justification (v. 39).

Verse 39 contains ideas that are typical of Paul's letters: belief, justification, and the inability to be justified by the law of Moses.

Stott adds to these references some others from elsewhere in the speech: death on the tree ([v. 29](#)), sin ([v. 38](#)), and grace ([v. 43](#)). After pointing out that Paul was addressing Galatians here, Stott observes that these ideas provided the foundation stone to his letter to the Galatians, which he would write a few months later.

Paul concludes his message with a quotation from Habbakuk ([Hab. 1:5](#))—a warning of judgment to those who reject God's offer of salvation ([Acts 13:41](#)).

The themes of the displacement of people and God's choice are keys to Paul's sermon.

- A. He speaks of the displacement of the nations and the choice of Israel ([v. 19](#));
- B. the displacement of Saul and the choice of David ([v. 22](#));
- C. the fact that "all the people of Israel" had to go through the sign of conversion to

- Judaism, baptism, if they were to avoid displacement ([v. 24](#));
- D. the displacement of John by Jesus ([v. 25](#));
 - E. and the displacement of the Jews and the choice of Jesus ([vv. 40-41](#); cf. [vv. 46-48](#)).

Paul expresses God's plan of salvation for the world through the progress of history. Beginning with his salvation at the Exodus, he shows how God systematically kept unfolding his purposes until it reached its climax in the Christ event.

The Aftermath of Paul's Sermon ([13:42-52](#))

PAUL AND BARNABAS are invited to speak the next Sabbath as well ([v. 42](#)). In the meantime, "many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism" (*proseluton*) follow them. We can assume that Paul and Barnabas gave themselves to personal ministry with these contacts during the week: They "talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God" ([v. 43](#)). The last expression may not mean that they were converted; rather, they had become open to the grace of God working in their hearts, and they were now being urged to continue along that path.

The Jews probably did not expect to see nearly the whole city there on that day ([v. 44](#)). Their jealousy is aroused, and they oppose Paul's next message with abusive talk ([v. 45](#)). Paul and Barnabas respond to this by stating what became a feature of their ministry and of Paul's theology: They preach to the Jews first, but if their response is unworthy of eternal

life, they go to the Gentiles ([v. 46](#)). Paul backs that step from the Scriptures ([v. 47](#)). While he would have spoken with confidence on this occasion, this phenomenon of Jewish rejection of the gospel hurts him deeply and inflames his desire to yearn and pray for their salvation ([Rom. 9:1-3](#); [10:1](#)).

In [Romans 9-11](#) Paul uses his great theological skill for a profound exploration of the implications of and reasons for this rejection. In fact, a part of [Romans 9-11](#) is in some ways an exposition of [Acts 13:47](#). The receptivity of the Gentiles was remarkable, considering the fact that the imperial cult (public worship of the emperor) was strong in Antioch. There was a temple of Augustus in the center as the city's most prominent building, and this cult dominated the city's daily life and annual calendar.

The Gentiles receive Paul's word with gladness ([v. 48a](#)). The unusual expression "honored (*edoxazon*) the word of the Lord," ([v. 48b](#)) probably means "that they gave glory to the Lord for the word that they had heard."

After considerable emphasis on the human response to the gospel, both positive and negative, Luke redresses the balance by emphasizing God's foundational role in salvation: All those who believed "were appointed for eternal life" ([v. 48c](#)). "It is never merely a person's own choice that saves them, it is always God's love and mercy."

The severity of the opposition to the gospel is such that the team has to leave town ([vv. 49-50](#)). Despite these problems the new believers are "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" ([v. 52](#)). As Paul and Barnabas leave the area, they express their verdict on the Jews by shaking the dust off their feet ([v. 51](#)). David Williams points out that "strict Jews performed this symbolic action on entering the Holy Land from abroad, lest they be contaminated with the dust of profane places." Now, by doing it against Jews, Paul and Barnabas "declared them in effect to be no better than the pagans among whom they lived; these Jews were profane and no longer part of the true Israel."

BRIDGING CONTEXTS:

The progress of history. In Paul's message, he showed how God systematically kept unfolding his purposes, beginning with the Exodus, until it reached its climax in the Christ event. Luke-Acts has a strong emphasis on the concept of the history of salvation. It rests on "the basic assumption that God works out salvation within a special history that is also a part of general world history." In his presentation, "Luke is intent to present the Jesus-event not as just another event in God's special saving history, but as *the* event in that history." The hope of the Old Testament is fulfilled through what happened as a result of Jesus' coming ([Acts 2:16](#)). We will show below that the practice of recounting God's progressive unfolding of his plan for the world in history can be a useful evangelistic methodology even today.

Emphasizing the content of the gospel in evangelism. In my fresh study of Acts for writing this commentary, one of the features that kept coming up is how important the content of the gospel is to evangelism. This is why Luke emphasizes it so often in Acts, as he does here at considerable length ([vv. 16-41](#)). Christianity is essentially a religion of revelation, and Christians are the people of a book. Thus the content of the gospel and arguing for its validity are important to Christianity.

We see evidence of this in the way Paul argues for the validity and attractiveness of the gospel in his speech in Pisidian

Antioch. This speech is a model of persuasive apologetics. The primacy of the content of the gospel to evangelism is also seen in how Luke describes the response to the gospel: The people "gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (v. 44). Those who accepted this word "honored the word of the Lord" (v. 48). "The word of the Lord spread through the whole region" (v. 49). Clearly the word of the Lord, God's truth revealed to humanity, was a primary aspect of the evangelistic process.

The Gentile converts in Antioch did not view Christianity only as an answer to some earthly personal problems of theirs. If that was their attitude, the expulsion of the missionaries from the city would certainly have taken away their joy. Instead, they viewed Christianity as the truth of God, and they were able to rejoice even after the team left (cf. v. 52). True, when people come to Christ, it may at first be in order to have a need met. But they stay on because they believe that the gospel is the truth. When we realize that this is the heart of the gospel, we have a security that can weather the storms of life. And we can even have joy amidst those storms.

Contemporary Significance

ENCOURAGERS HAND OVER leadership. It must not have been easy for Barnabas to hand leadership over to Paul. Paul was in some ways his trainee. Barnabas was probably physically older than Paul—and certainly older spiritually. He was also probably more distinguished looking, for later the people of Lystra called Barnabas Zeus, the chief Greek god, and Paul Hermes, the spokesman of the god (14:12). Commenting on the exchange of leadership roles Bruce cites the rhymester,

It takes more grace than I can tell

To play the second fiddle well.

This is a challenge that all leaders will face at some time. We must be willing to hand over our position if that will benefit the kingdom. And if we do so, we must make it easy for our successors. I am thankful to report that I have often seen this happen in Christian circles, where the senior leader stayed on as a fund-raiser or an advisor to the younger person and where the younger leader benefited from the senior person's experience without being threatened by his or her presence.

In order to let this transition take place smoothly, the senior leader may need to take definite steps in crucifying the flesh. The famous Bible teacher F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) often ministered at D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conference and always drew large crowds to his meetings. Then the younger Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) began to preach there, and his stirring Bible studies began to attract larger audiences than Meyer's. Meyer confessed to some of his close friends that he was sometimes envious of Morgan. But then he said, "The only way I can conquer my feelings is to pray for him daily, which I do." This was a definite step he took to adopt a kingdom perspective over his loss of prominence in the hands of a younger preacher.

If Paul was the speaker, Barnabas must have listened while he spoke. Many top leaders today, given their busy schedules, might think it a waste of time to be listening to junior people preach. But one of the great privileges and joys of leadership is to just "be there" in order to encourage a younger person, as he or she does what we know we too could do very well. My seminary teacher and mentor, Dr. Robert Coleman, used to say that the glory of the teacher is to sit at the feet of the student and learn from him or her. I had the opportunity of preaching a few times when I was a student in seminary. That was a difficult task because in seminaries sermons are critiqued. Dr. Coleman would say, "I'll be there in the Amen corner" —and he always was. When I became

nervous while preaching, all I had to do was to look in his direction and see his beaming face. That encouraged me to go on preaching with zeal.

Luke reverted to the old order of "Barnabas and Paul" in his report of the proceedings of the Jerusalem Council ([15:12](#)) and of the letter that the council sent to the churches ([15:25](#)). Barnabas was an esteemed senior leader in Jerusalem, and it was certainly more appropriate for him to take the lead role there rather than Paul. Paul apparently let that happen. In other words, leadership is not an inalienable right to which we cling tenaciously. It is rather a responsibility related to the agenda of the kingdom. That agenda is always more important than our personal prominence and status.

Encouragers are often saddened. In our application of [11:23](#) we noted that encouragers are easily gladdened. But here we see how the generous spirit of Barnabas received a painful blow when Mark left the team ([13:13](#)). Just as encouragers are easily gladdened, they are also often saddened. Some of those we invest in and hope for will not live up to our expectations and achieve the ambitions we have for them. This will bring disappointment and pain because we were genuinely ambitious for these people. It may also result in humiliation since we have taken the risk of backing these persons in public.

To avoid such pain, some leaders play it safe and never get close to people or take the risk of backing them. Sometimes cynicism and suspicion take over, which disqualifies them from the ministry of encouragement. They may avoid pain, but they also avoid having lasting fruit. Paul also experienced much pain and stress because of his deep commitment to people ([2 Cor. 11:28-29](#); [Gal. 4:19-20](#)). But he also bore much fruit. We know, of course, that though the pain of Barnabas's commitment to Mark intensified later ([15:37-39](#)), his hopes about him were well founded as he became an even more prominent person in the history of Christianity than Barnabas as the writer of one of the Gospels. The pain of commitment, then, is well worth taking on, for though some do not make it, others do.

Using the unfolding of God's plan for humanity in evangelism. The unfolding of God's plan of salvation for humanity has been the basis for the outline of several important works in biblical theology. Paul uses the same theme to construct an outline of his evangelistic preaching in Acts. This seems also to be the strategy Jesus used in his heartwarming explanation of the gospel on the road to Emmaus ([Luke 24:27](#)). I suggest that it is an appropriate method for constructing evangelistic messages today. In his message Paul showed how, through the vicissitudes of human history, God was working out his plan for his creation and that this plan reached its zenith in "the Christ-event."

Many people fear for the world as they see it heading toward self-destruction, through moral degradation, war, or ecological irresponsibility. Many live in cynicism and despair as savior after savior fails to satisfy the human thirst for an eternally secure solution to the problems of life. The cyclic view of history, characteristic of Hinduism, which has greatly influenced the New Age movement in the West, adds to this sense of despair, for it does not see history headed for a goal or consummation. Paul's speech, by contrast, clearly shows that the Lord of the universe is not inactive, that he has not abandoned his creation and let it run its own course. Rather, God has acted according to a plan, which has been gradually unfolding. In Christ the desire of the ages is fulfilled. People looking for the meaning of history and thinking that they will have to concede that it is meaningless need not come to that gloomy conclusion. There is hope! The plan of the Creator of the universe is being worked out.

Such a message can bring hope to hopeless people. It can give security to listeners who come to realize that there may indeed be meaning to the puzzle of life. Tracing the hand of God in the history of the human race creates in some people a desire to join in with this most important process in the universe. For this reason, I often use Paul's approach of explaining the unfolding of God's program for the world in my evangelistic preaching with predominantly non-Christian audiences (usually beginning with the creation of the world).

I was part of a group that created a popular evangelistic Scripture booklet consisting of [Genesis 1-12](#) and John. In between these two sections of Scripture, we included a brief summary of God's dealings with the human race between Abraham and Jesus, beginning with the creation of the nation of Israel and leading to the predictions about a coming Messiah by the prophets. It was presented in such a way as to show how God's purposes were fulfilled in history according to a plan, with Christ as the apex of this plan.

Through its experience in trying to reach unreached tribes with the gospel, the New Tribes Mission has developed a course, *Building on Firm Foundations*, that uses what they call the "chronological approach" to evangelism and to teaching believers. They offer a nine-volume set, in which two volumes are for evangelism and six are for teaching. Each series starts with the Old Testament and goes to the New Testament. This approach may well be a key not only to reaching people in non-Christian countries but also in reaching the "post-Christian" West.

Content-centered evangelism. There are three key factors in today's world that impede making the content of the gospel central to the evangelistic process. (1) The dominant philosophy of our age, pluralism, has given the idea of truth a severe bashing. Pluralism denies the importance of objective truth. In such an environment apologetics is regarded as inappropriate and even presumptuous. The pluralist says that truth is subjective—some-thing we learn from our experience. There is therefore no absolute truth that comes from objective revelation. Instead of apologetics they propose dia-logue—by which they mean an exchange of beliefs and experiences that will result in each one enriching the other.

(2) We live in a technological and information era that concentrates so much on action and information that there is little time to think about ideas and truth. Sammy Tippit has said, "Perhaps one of the greatest needs of this generation is for thinking men and women. The advent of the computer has brought artificial intelligence into the world. Many

Christians have ceased to be thinkers in an age of computers and television." When people want refreshment, they go to something that will keep them active (like outdoor recreation) or that will numb their senses (like television). Preachers have an abundance of computer programs available that have done a lot of the thinking they would usually have done. While these have a place, nothing can replace meditation and hard thinking about truth. It is from such lingering with truth that effective apologetics and proclamation emerge. We should use the marvels of technology to make us efficient in doing things and gathering information so that we will have more time to think.

(3) Many Christian groups are oriented to experience. While this is not wrong and is, in fact, desirable, it must never dethrone truth. Sometimes experiences like healing or being slain in the Spirit can become so prominent that people do not associate the gospel with intelligent and demonstrable arguments. Many are not willing to work hard at studying the background of the audience and tailoring the message of what Christ has done for our salvation in order to be relevant, as Paul did. People fast and pray in order to receive the power of God—and that is vital for evangelism. But so is the power of being equipped with God's Word, which requires preparation time. For this power we must both pray and study.

In other words, we must exhibit the power of God's Spirit *both* in experience *and* in the world of thought. In this way we will have a balanced gospel that can withstand the dry spells that will surely come, when God's hand seems withdrawn from us. Christians are not immune to such experiences. Those whose faith is founded on the truth will persevere, knowing that nothing can take away the truthfulness of the gospel. They will have the joy that the Christian disciples in Pisidian Antioch had despite the problems they faced ([v. 52](#)). But those whose faith is founded on experience will flounder when they encounter times of darkness. One would hope that at these times such people will stumble on the more secure and unchanging realities of Christianity.

It is not wrong, then, to attract people to Christianity by presenting them an attractive program that ministers to their felt needs. But that is not enough. We must get people to understand the glory of the truth of the gospel—something deeper and more lasting than experience. Then they will have joy in the gospel, a joy that can withstand the mysterious times of darkness in life.

In order to communicate this vision we must know in our own lives the joy of truth. We must take time to feed our minds with the truth and to meditate on it so that it will glow within us. As a result, those to whom we minister will, by observing us, also acquire a respect and appreciation for the truth. They will catch our enthusiasm over it. In the meantime we too will find ourselves refreshed and fed. This will help us remain fresh amidst the debilitating challenges of ministry. John Stott has said, "Scripture comes alive in the congregation only if it has come alive in the preacher first. Only if God has spoken to him through the Word which he preaches will they hear the voice of God through his lips."

- NIV Application Commentary

Paul's Address to the Synagogue at Pisidian Antioch

13:13–52

The remainder of chap. 13 is set primarily in Pisidian Antioch.

It consists of three main parts:

(1) the journey to Antioch and the setting of the stage for Paul's speech in the synagogue (vv. [13–16a](#)),

(2) Paul's address to the synagogue (vv. [16b–41](#)), and

(3) the final response of the Jews and Gentiles on the occasion of a second visit to the synagogue in Antioch (vv. [42–52](#)).

(1) The Setting

[13:13–16a](#)

Leaving Cyprus, Paul and his party sailed from Paphos northwest to the coast of present-day Turkey.

Their stopping place was Perga, some twelve miles inland. Perga was located in Pamphylia, the land that lay between the Taurus mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The area of Lycia lay to the west and Cilicia to the east. Pamphylia was under Roman jurisdiction, having been a separate province from 25 B.C. to A.D. 43 and then being merged with Lycia into the province of Pamphylia-Lycia from A.D. 43–68. Perga could be reached by traveling seven miles up the Cestrus River from the Mediterranean port of Attalia and then going about five miles west by foot to Perga. The Cestrus is not navigable in this area today, and it may not have been in Paul's day. If not, the missionaries would have landed at Attalia and traveled by foot to Perga. At this point Perga seems to have been only a stopping place on their journey. On their return trip they would preach there ([14:25](#)).

At Perga, John Mark decided to leave them, and he returned home to Jerusalem. Just why he did so has long been a fruitful subject for speculation. Was he intimidated by the prospect of the arduous and dangerous task of crossing the Taurus mountains to reach Antioch? Was he angered that Paul was assuming more and more authority and forcing his cousin Barnabas to a lesser role? Did he contract malaria in the Pamphylian lowlands? Did he disagree with Paul's concept of a law-free

mission to the Gentiles? All of these have been suggested; none can be substantiated. **Luke was simply silent on the reason. He did clarify that it was a serious matter for Paul, serious enough to create a falling out with Barnabas on a subsequent occasion** (cf. [15:37f.](#)).

Luke's note that they went from Perga to Pisidian Antioch is extremely terse, and one is apt to miss the difficulty of the trek. Antioch lay some 100 miles to the north across the Taurus mountain range.

The route was barren, often flooded by swollen mountain streams, and notorious for its bandits, which even the Romans had difficulty bringing under control. **Antioch itself was in the highlands, some 3,600 feet above sea level. It was one of the sixteen cities named Antioch that had been established around 300 B.C. by Seleucus Nikator in honor of his father Antiochus.** Although referred to as “Pisidian Antioch” to distinguish it from the others, it was actually in Phrygia but just across the border from Pisidia. In Paul’s day it belonged to the Roman province of Galatia and was the leading city of the southern part of the province, having the status of a “colony city” with its privileges of local autonomy and exemption from imperial taxes. The Seleucid rulers had moved many Jews to the city, and there was a large Jewish population there.

13:14–16 As was their custom, Paul and Barnabas went first to the synagogue in the city. The Diaspora synagogue was more than a house of worship. It was the hub of the Jewish community—house of worship, center of education, judicial center, social gathering place, general “civic center” for the Jewish community. If one wished to make contact with the Jewish community in a town, the synagogue was the natural place to begin. It was also the natural place to begin if one wished to share the Christian message. Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah, and it was natural to share him with “the Jews first.” There had perhaps been an arrangement already for Paul to speak that day, as the invitation from the rulers of the synagogue would suggest (v. [15b](#)). Usually a synagogue had only one ruling elder, but evidence suggests that the title was

retained by those who formerly served as well as sometimes being conferred strictly as an honor, which explains why it occurs sometimes in the plural, as here. The ruling elder was responsible for worship, appointing lay members to lead in prayer and read the Scripture lessons. He also would invite suitable persons to deliver the homily on the day's Scripture when such were available. The form of the service as depicted in v. [15](#) is exactly that known from rabbinic sources, the sermon following the readings from the Law and the Prophets. There seem to have been a number of styles of homilies, but one that linked the Torah and prophetic texts together was considered ideal.

One is tempted to try to derive the texts on which Paul expounded in Pisidian Antioch. [Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22](#) for the Torah (*seder*) and [Isa 1:1–22](#) for the prophetic text (*haftarah*) were suggested by Ramsay. More recently J. Bowker has suggested [Deut 4:25–46](#) as the *seder* and [2 Sam 7:6–16](#) as the *haftarah*, with [1 Sam 13:14](#) as the “*proem* text,” that is, the text that links the two together.

(2) The Sermon

[13:16b–41](#)

It is instructive to compare Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch with the other speeches in Acts. It has much in common with Peter's speeches—the emphasis on the Jerusalem Jews' responsibility for Jesus' death, the contrast between the death on the cross and the triumph of the resurrection, the apostolic witness, the proofs from Scripture (even some of the same texts), and the call to repentance. One would expect many of the same emphases. This, as with most of Peter's sermons, was a speech to Jews. Paul's sermons to Gentiles (chaps. [14](#); [17](#)) would be radically different. This sermon has a feature in common also with Stephen's speech—namely, the long introductory sketch of Jewish history. There is a radically different function for the historical sketches in the two speeches, however. Stephen used Old Testament history to depict the

rebelliousness of the Jews toward their divinely appointed leaders. Paul used it to show God's faithfulness to his promises for Israel, promises that were ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

The speech falls into three main parts. Verses [16b–25](#) provide a sketch of Old Testament history that emphasizes God's providence and promise to Israel. Verses [26–37](#) demonstrate by means of apostolic witness and scriptural proof how those promises are fulfilled in Christ. Finally, vv. [38–41](#) issue an invitation to accept the promises and a warning against rejecting God's marvelous deed in Christ.

THE PROMISE TO ISRAEL ([13:16b–25](#)). [13:16b–21](#) Paul was aware of two groups in his congregation and addressed them both—"men of Israel" and "Gentiles who worship God" (vv. [16b](#), [26](#)). It was to the first group that the primary content of the sermon was addressed. It was from the second group that he would receive the most positive response. The keynote of Paul's sketch of Old Testament history was God's mercy to Israel, his acts of lovingkindness. This is particularly to be seen in the verbs he used to depict each stage of history. God "chose" the patriarchs (*eklegomai*, "elected," v. [17](#)). He "made the people prosper" in Egypt (*hypsoō*, "exalted," v. [17](#)). He "led them out" (*exagō*, v. [17](#)) of Egypt. He "endured their conduct," or "cared for them in the wilderness" (v. [18](#)). He "gave the land of Canaan to them as an inheritance" (*kataklēronomeō*, v. [19](#)). He "gave" them judges (v. [20](#)). Upon their request he "gave" them Saul as king (v. [21](#)). Finally, he "made" (literally "raised up," *egeiren*) David as king (v. [22](#)). No point is dwelt upon until we get to David. All the stress is on God's mercy—his election of Israel, his exaltation of his people, his gift of an inheritance in the promised land, his gift of rulers and kings.

[13:22–23](#) The pace slows with David because this is the point Paul wanted to stress. God "raised up" David, a common Old Testament expression for God bringing forth a prophet or ruler to serve his people but also an expression for Jesus' resurrection. The parallelism may not be accidental, for in a real sense David and the promises to him

foreshadow the promise fulfilled in Christ. David was a special expression of God's mercy, a man who fulfilled all God's will for him, a man after God's own heart. David also received a special promise from God, a promise of a descendant who would be God's own Son and with whom he would establish a kingdom that would last forever. This promise was embodied in Nathan's prophecy to David ([2 Sam 7:12–16](#)). It lies behind v. [23](#) with its reference to God's promise. The promised descendant of David was Jesus the Savior. This promise to David had been the goal of Paul's entire historical sketch. It would continue to be the main subject of Paul's sermon as he showed how Christ fulfilled the promise.

[13:24–25](#) The verses dealing with John the Baptist are difficult to place on an outline of Paul's sermon (vv. [24–25](#)). Should they go with the opening sketch of Israel's history (vv. [16–23](#)) or with the section on God's sending Jesus (vv. [26–37](#))? Does John belong with the period of Israel or the period of Christ? The very fact that John was placed between these two major sections of the speech emphasizes his transitional role. John was the eschatological messenger, the last in the line of Old Testament prophets, who heralded the coming of the Messiah. He was the link-figure, joining together the period of Israel and the period of God's new community in Christ. The outline followed here places John with the section on Israel's history because the structure of Paul's speech seems to do so. The key is Paul's address to his hearers ("brothers," etc.). The speech contains three direct addresses (vv. [16](#), [26](#), [38](#)), and each seems to mark a transition to a major division in the sermon.

The references to Jesus' being the "coming" one in vv. [24–25](#) may reflect the prophecy of [Mal 3:1](#), which looks to the sending of God's messenger as a herald to the coming of the Lord. Contemporary Judaism interpreted [Mal 3:1](#) messianically, and throughout the New Testament John is depicted in this role of the herald, the forerunner of the Messiah Jesus. John's message and his baptizing were both aimed at the repentance of the people in preparation for the coming Messiah (cf.

[Mark 1:4](#)). John's denial that he was the Messiah and his statement that he was unworthy to perform even the slave's task of untying the "coming" one's sandals (v. [25](#)) is found in all four Gospels (cf. [Matt 3:11](#); [Mark 1:7](#); [Luke 3:15f.](#); [John 1:27](#)). Here in Paul's speech it appears in wording that is closest to that of John's Gospel (cf. [John 1:20f.,27](#)). Quite possibly Paul's listeners in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch had heard about John the Baptist. A few years later Paul encountered a group of the Baptist's disciples even further to the west in Ephesus ([Acts 19:1-7](#)). Paul wanted his hearers to see John's role in its proper perspective. John was in every way subordinate to the one whose coming he proclaimed. But he was a first bold *witness* to the coming of the Messiah.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED IN CHRIST ([13:26-37](#)). [13:26](#) There may be a distant echo of [Ps 107:20](#) in v. [26](#). In any event, it is a key verse, linked directly with the reference to God's sending the promised "Savior" Jesus in v. [23](#). That had been the whole point of the opening section of Paul's sermon—God's mercy to Israel from the patriarchs to David, especially as epitomized in the promise to David that he would send a descendant whose kingdom would have no end. Now that promise had been fulfilled in the Savior Jesus; now that message of salvation had been sent. Jesus *was* the Son of David; it was above all to David's own people, the people chosen in Abraham (v. [17](#)), the Jews, that God had sent the Messiah and the message of salvation in him. Paul addressed a synagogue consisting of Jewish listeners and devout God-worshipping Gentiles who identified closely with the Jewish faith and looked to the promises given to Israel. The tragedy of this speech would be that the Jews, the very ones to whom the Messiah had first been sent, would ultimately reject this message of salvation ([13:45f.](#)).

[13:27-28](#) Verses [27-31](#) tell the story of Jesus' rejection, death, and resurrection in the basic kerygmatic form already familiar from Peter's speeches earlier in Acts. The people of Jerusalem, and especially their rulers, did not recognize Jesus as their God-sent Messiah. What they did to him was done in ignorance (cf. [3:17](#)). And yet, in condemning him to

death, they unknowingly fulfilled the prophecies that the Messiah must suffer and die (cf. [Luke 24:46](#); [Acts 3:18](#)). The irony of it all was that they were the very ones who should have understood who Jesus was, who read those very prophecies in their synagogues every sabbath (v. [27b](#)). Paul highly compressed his summary. His reference to their finding no real legal basis for the death penalty (v. [28a](#)) recalls Pilate's protest of Jesus' innocence (cf. [Luke 23:4](#); [Acts 3:13](#)).

13:29–30 Verses [29–30](#) complete the gospel summary, noting that the Jews of Jerusalem fulfilled all that the prophets had written concerning his suffering and death. Like Peter, Paul referred to Christ's crucifixion as hanging on "a tree" ([5:30](#); [10:39](#); [Gal 3:13](#)). His compression of the story is particularly evident in his referring to "their" taking him down from the cross and laying him in the tomb, which could be taken to refer to the Jews of Jerusalem. The reference is, of course, to Joseph of Arimathea ([Luke 23:53](#)) and Nicodemus ([John 19:38–42](#)). The removal of the body and its placement in the tomb underlines the full reality of the death of Christ. He was dead and buried (cf. [1 Cor 15:4](#)). This heightens the contrast with the next statement: God raised him from the dead. The emphasis on the burial also prepares for the explanation of [Ps 16:10](#) in vv. [34–37](#). It is the contrast between the seeming defeat of the cross and the victory of the resurrection so familiar in Peter's speeches: "*You killed him but God raised him*" (cf. [2:24](#); [3:15](#); [4:10](#); [5:30](#); [10:39f.](#)).

13:31 The kerygmatic portion of Paul's speech ends with the familiar reference to the apostolic witness (cf. [1:8](#); [2:32](#); [3:15](#)). It is striking that Paul did not include himself among these witnesses. But here it was not just the resurrection he wished to emphasize but the entire Christ event, embracing the journey from Galilee and the witness to his crucifixion (cf. [Luke 23:49](#), [55](#); [Acts 1:13f.](#)) as well as the whole forty-day period of his resurrection appearances ([Acts 1:3](#)). Above all the Twelve could attest to these events (cf. [Acts 1:21f.](#)). But another "witness" to these things was the testimony of the Scriptures. To these Scripture proofs Paul now turned.

13:32–33a Just as Peter’s sermons to the Jews relied heavily on Old Testament texts that were shown to have their fulfillment in Jesus, so now in vv. [32–37](#) Paul turned to the Scriptures to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled the promise to David. In that generation (“to us their children,” said Paul) God accomplished his promise to David. This he did by “raising up” Jesus. The expression “raising up” could be connected with God’s bringing Jesus onto the stage of history. It is the same verb (*egeiren*) used in v. [22](#) for God’s “raising up” David as king (“made ... king”). In the immediate context, however, the emphasis is on the resurrection of Jesus. By the *resurrection* of Jesus, God demonstrated that he had truly accomplished his promise by bringing forth the Son who abides forever.

13:33b–34 Paul quoted three Old Testament texts that establish Jesus as the one who fulfills the promise. The first is [Ps 2:7](#), a psalm that already in contemporary Judaism was applied to the Messiah and was itself based on the Nathan prophecy of [2 Sam 7](#). God said to the Messiah: “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” ([Acts 13:33](#)). To what does “today” refer? In the context Paul seems to have been implying the day of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus was indeed the Son of God from all eternity and recognized as such throughout his earthly life ([Luke 1:35](#); [3:22](#); [9:35](#)). But it was through the resurrection that he was exalted to God’s right hand, enthroned as Son of God, and recognized as such by believing humans. It was through the resurrection that he was declared Son of God *with power* ([Rom 1:4](#)). Paul’s second Old Testament text, [Isa 55:3](#), also relates to the Nathan prophecy of [2 Sam 7:4–17](#): “I will give to you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.” It is somewhat more difficult to determine the exact purpose of this quotation in the total argument, but Paul gave a key in introducing the verse by saying that it established that God raised Jesus from the dead, never to decay. The “holy and sure” blessings to David are God’s promise that he would establish in his descendant an eternal throne, a kingdom that would last forever (cf. [2 Sam 7:13](#), [16](#)). But God’s promise was not fulfilled in David, who did not himself enjoy an eternal reign.

13:35–37 The final Old Testament text, [Ps 16:10](#), is quoted in v. [35](#) to establish this. The text of the psalm refers to God’s Holy One who will not suffer decay. Peter also cited this same text in his Pentecost sermon ([Acts 2:25–28](#)). Paul applied it in much the same fashion. David could not have been speaking about himself in the psalm because he died, was buried, and his body decayed (v. [36](#); cf. [2:29–31](#)). Only the one whom God raised from the dead escaped death and decay. Paul’s argument had come full circle. Only by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus were the promises to David fulfilled. Jesus is God’s Holy One who saw no decay. He is the one who received the sure and holy promises to David. He is the Son of God whose throne is forever. Paul’s witness was now complete. Apostles and Scripture attested to the resurrection of Jesus in fulfillment of the promises to David. It now only remained for his hearers to accept him as the promised Savior (v. [23](#)).

APPEAL TO ACCEPT THE PROMISE ([13:38–41](#)). **13:38–39** With the third address to his Jewish “brothers” in the synagogue, Paul turned to the final and most important part of his sermon—the call to repentance. Throughout the sermon he had appealed to God’s constant acts of mercy. Now he offered God’s greatest act of mercy, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. The next statement, which is a fuller explication of the forgiveness of sins, could hardly be more Pauline: “Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses” (v. [39](#)). “Through him” recalls Paul’s favorite phrase, “in Christ.” “Everyone who believes” is reminiscent of Paul’s constant emphasis on the sole necessity of faith in Christ. Justification was his favorite term for describing the saving work of Christ. It is a law-court term and carries the idea of being acceptable to God. Through faith in Christ, one is “put right with God” and becomes acceptable to him. The idea is that the law of Moses could never serve as a basis for acceptability to God. Only in Christ is one truly “justified,” forgiven of sin, and acceptable to God.

13:40–41 Having begun his appeal with an invitation, Paul concluded with a warning. His warning took the form of a quote from [Hab 1:5](#),

which originally had warned Israel of King Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power and the threat of an invasion from Babylon if the nation failed to repent. In the present context the threat seems to be that God would once again have to bring judgment upon his people if they failed to accept the mercy and forgiveness now offered to them in Jesus. If they continued in their rejection, they would be rejected. It is remarkable how quickly Paul's warning came to bear. In the ensuing narrative, Habakkuk's prophecy was once again fulfilled—among the Jews of Pisidian Antioch, as they rejected the words of salvation. God did something they would never have dreamed of—he turned to the Gentiles.

(3) The Sermon's Aftermath

[13:42–52](#)

[13:42–43](#) Paul's synagogue audience was at first favorably impressed by what he had to say. On first sight vv. [42–43](#) seem almost to be doublets, but they probably are best viewed as sequential. At the conclusion of the service, as they were all exiting, the congregation urged Paul and Barnabas to return for a further exposition on "these things" the next Sabbath (v. [42](#)). At this point they expressed a somewhat detached interest. When next Sabbath arrived, they would become anything but detached. Others in the congregation showed a genuine interest in the witness of Paul and Barnabas, following them and talking with them as they left the synagogue (v. [43](#)). Among these were both Jews and "devout converts." The latter were undoubtedly proselytes, Gentiles who had become full converts to Judaism. Other Gentiles in the congregation had believed in and worshiped God but had not yet undergone the rites like circumcision, which would qualify them as converts (cf. vv. [16](#), [26](#)). Some of these also may have been among this group who showed a keener interest in Paul and Barnabas's testimony. The two missionaries urged them to continue along the path they had started and to remain open to the grace of God (v. [43b](#)).

13:44–45 When next Sabbath arrived and Paul and Barnabas returned to the synagogue in accordance with the Jews’ invitation, the situation rapidly deteriorated. “Almost the whole city” had gathered to hear the Christian missionaries (v. [44](#)). Because Pisidian Antioch was predominantly Gentile, this would indicate that the Jews were considerably eclipsed by the large numbers of Gentiles who came to hear Paul’s witness. Evidently the “God-fearing Gentiles” who had heard Paul’s sermon the previous Sabbath had understood that the salvation he proclaimed in Christ included *them*. The word had spread like wildfire through the Gentile populace, and they were there en masse. The Jews were filled with jealousy and began to speak abusively against the things Paul was saying, perhaps even blaspheming the gospel itself (v. [45](#)). The reason for their sudden change in receptivity was evident: their “jealousy” was over the presence of all these Gentiles. It was one thing to proclaim the coming of the Messiah to the Jews. It was quite another to maintain that in the Messiah God accepted the Gentiles on an equal basis. To them this was little short of blasphemy, and Paul’s witness to them was over.

13:46–48 Paul and Barnabas responded “boldly” (v. [46](#)). The reference to “bold witness” generally appears in contexts that emphasize the inspiration of the Spirit behind the testimony, and that is most likely implied here. Paul was led to a decisive turning point. The Jews had rejected the gospel that embraces all people without distinction. Paul had to focus his attention on those who were receptive—the Gentiles. Since Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled God’s promise to the Jews, it was essential to proclaim the gospel to the Jews *first* (cf. vv. [26](#), [32f.](#)). But the Jews in Antioch had rejected the eternal life that is to be found in Jesus, and Paul had to turn to those who were “worthy” (v. [46](#)). Paul backed his decision to turn to the Gentiles by quoting [Isa 49:6](#), an Old Testament text that was “programmatically” for the Christian mission in Acts ([Acts 1:8](#); [26:23](#); cf. [Luke 24:47](#)). The text of Isaiah, a “servant” passage, originally envisaged Israel’s destiny as being that of a witness to God to all the nations of the world. As Servant-Messiah, Jesus fulfilled this divine destiny. He was to be “a light to the nations.” Now,

the messengers of the Messiah are likewise commanded to be “a light for the Gentiles” (v. [47](#)). The Jews of Pisidian Antioch could not accept a Messiah who embraced the Gentiles. In rejecting Paul’s witness to the Gentiles, they thus rejected their Messiah as well.

Verses [46–48](#) are programmatic for Paul’s mission in Acts, establishing a pattern that would appear again and again. One could view the present statement as definitive: Paul would no longer turn to the Jews; he would now witness only to Gentiles. Such was not the case. In the very next city on his missionary itinerary he would again begin his witness in the synagogue ([14:1](#)). Again and again he experienced the rejection of the Jews and turned to the Gentiles of that town. But he never gave up on his fellow Jews. It was very much the problem he wrestled with in [Rom 9–11](#). In spite of the overwhelming rejection of the gospel by his own people, Paul could not bring himself to believe that the rejection was final and that God had deserted them. His great successes in witness were indeed among the Gentiles, but he never abandoned his witness to Jews. The ambiguity of the witness to the Jews persists to the very end of Acts and is never definitively settled (cf. [28:17–28](#)). The contemporary church can learn from Paul’s persistence. His actions caution against a mission policy that only targets those who are most receptive to the gospel message.

[13:48](#) The *Gentiles* of Pisidian Antioch were those who accepted Paul’s message, honoring (glorifying) the word of the Lord (v. [48](#)). Perhaps it was the specific “word” of [Isa 49:6](#) they praised, with its good news that the light of Christ and his salvation extended to Gentiles such as they. Many of them believed, accepting Christ as Savior. They were those who were “appointed for eternal life.” In this phrase we encounter the same balance between human volition and divine providence that is found throughout Acts. On their part these Gentiles took an active role in believing, in committing themselves to Christ; but it was in response to God’s Spirit moving in them, convicting them, appointing them for life. All salvation is ultimately only by the grace of God.

13:49–52 The Antioch mission ended on a mixed note of both opposition and success. On the one hand, the gospel was well received by the Gentiles and spread throughout the whole region. On the other hand, the rejection by the Jews became even stronger and broke out in outright persecution of Paul and Barnabas. Evidently the opposition was spearheaded by some of the Gentile women who attended the synagogue. Both Josephus and Strabo attested to the fact that many Gentile women were attracted to the Jewish religion in the Diaspora, attending the synagogues and even becoming proselytes. Just who the “leading men” were whom they incited is not clear. Evidently they were Gentiles who had sufficient social standing or political power to force the departure of Paul and Barnabas. In any event, Paul and Barnabas followed the directions given by Jesus for dealing with an unreceptive town: they shook the dust of the city off their feet as they departed. The gesture had a certain irony about it. The rabbis attested to the Jewish practice of shaking the dust off their feet when they returned from a sojourn in Gentile territory, symbolizing their leaving their defilement behind as they stepped on the “holy land” once again. Paul and Barnabas’s dust-shaking symbolized their ridding themselves of all responsibility for the unreceptive Jews. The gesture, however, did not apply to everyone in Antioch. Not all had been unreceptive, and the story ends on a positive note. There were many Gentile converts in Antioch, and these new disciples rejoiced in their experience in the Holy Spirit and their newfound acceptance in Christ.

- New American Commentary

13:13 John Mark ([12:12](#), [25](#)), nephew of Barnabas, left Paul and Barnabas—probably under unfortunate circumstances, and Paul refused

to take him on the next missionary journey ([15:37-38](#)). The Jerusalem church met in the home of John Mark's mother, Mary.

13:14 Antioch in Pisidia actually refers to Antioch near (not "in") Pisidia. Pisidia then was a region of the Roman province of Galatia; Antioch was actually located in the adjoining region of Phrygia. The Greek phrasing in the best manuscripts makes this clear.

13:15 Despite the debate regarding OT canon formation, "the Law and the Prophets" — with the third part, "the Psalms" ([Lk 24:44](#)) — were likely fixed. Josephus ([Against Apion 1](#)) mentions "22 books," and 4 Ezra 14 (c. A.D. 100) mentions "24 books" — perhaps referring to the same body of Scripture. Today these same books are categorized in such a way that there are 39. In the listing of 22 books, the 13 minor prophets were counted as one book. The following pairs of books were counted as one book each: Jdg and Ru, 1 and 2 Sm, 1 and 2 Kg, 1 and 2 Ch, Ezr and Neh, Jr and Lm.

13:16-41 Paul's first public speech recorded in Ac took place in a Jewish synagogue. This speech was probably representative of Paul's evangelistic style: Jesus' coming fulfilled God's promises as revealed in the OT ([v. 23](#)), and His resurrection confirmed His identity ([v. 33](#)).

13:46-47 There is no anti-Semitism here. The Gospel writers emphasized that Jesus proclaimed the gospel to the Jews first. Luke reinforced this in the book of Ac. Paul and Barnabas recognized their duty to bring the good news to Jews first. When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul and Barnabas took the message to the Gentiles (anticipated by [Isa 49:6](#)). Gentile believers received the good news with great joy. Rejection of the gospel by Paul's kinsmen was a source of profound grief for him ([Rm 9-11](#)).

- The Apologetics Study Bible

13:13 No reason is given why John Mark left Paul and Barnabas. Some suggestions are: (1) He was homesick; (2) he resented the change in leadership from Barnabas (his cousin) to Paul; (3) he became ill (an illness that may have affected all of them—see [Galatians 4:13](#)); (4) he was unable to withstand the rigors and dangers of the missionary journey; (5) he may have planned to go only that far but had not communicated this to Paul and Barnabas. Paul implicitly accused John Mark of lacking courage and commitment, refusing to take him along on another journey (see [15:37, 38](#)). It is clear from Paul's later letters, however, that he grew to respect Mark ([Colossians 4:10](#)) and that he needed Mark in his work ([2 Timothy 4:11](#)).

Ministry in Cyprus

The leaders of the church in Antioch chose Paul and Barnabas to take the gospel westward. Along with John Mark, they boarded ship at Seleucia and set out across the Mediterranean for Cyprus. They preached in Salamis, the largest city, and went across the island to Paphos.

13:14 Antioch of Pisidia was a different city from Antioch of Syria, where there was already a flourishing church ([11:26](#)). This Antioch, in the region of Pisidia, was a hub of good roads and trade, with a large Jewish population.

13:14 When they went to a new city to witness for Christ, Paul and Barnabas would go first to the synagogue. The Jews who were there believed in God and diligently studied the Scriptures. Tragically, however, many could not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah because they had the wrong idea of what the Messiah should be. He was not, as they desired, a military king who would overthrow Rome's control but a servant-king who would defeat sin in people's hearts. (Only later, when

Christ returns, will he judge the nations of the world.) Paul and Barnabas did not separate themselves from the synagogues but tried to show clearly that the very Scriptures the Jews studied pointed to Jesus.

13:14, 15 What happened in a synagogue service? First, the *Shema* was recited (this is [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), which Jews repeated several times daily). Certain prayers were spoken; then there was a reading from the law (the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy), a reading from the Prophets intending to illustrate the law, and a sermon. Those in charge of the service decided who would lead the service and give the sermon. A different person was chosen to lead each week. Since it was customary for the synagogue leader to invite visiting rabbis to speak, Paul and Barnabas usually had an open door when they first went to a synagogue. But as soon as they spoke about Jesus as Messiah, the door would often slam shut. They were usually not invited back by the religious leaders, and sometimes they would be thrown out of town!

13:16ff Paul's message to the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch began with an emphasis on God's covenant with Israel. This was a point of agreement, because all Jews were proud to be God's chosen people. Then Paul explained how the Good News fulfilled the covenant. Some Jews found this message hard to swallow.

Barnabas *Every group needs an "encourager" because everyone needs encouragement at one time or another. However, the value of encouragement is often missed because it tends to be private rather than public. In fact, people most need encouragement when they feel most alone. A man named Joseph was such an encourager that he earned the nickname "Son of Encouragement," or Barnabas, from the Jerusalem Christians.*

Barnabas was drawn to people he could encourage, and he was a great help to those around him. It is delightful that wherever Barnabas encouraged Christians, non-Christians

flocked to become believers!

Barnabas's actions were crucial to the early church. In a way, we can thank him for most of the New Testament. God used his relationship with Paul at one point and with Mark at another to keep these two men going when either might have failed. Barnabas did wonders with encouragement!

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem for the first time following his conversion, the local Christians were understandably reluctant to welcome him. They thought his story was a trick to capture more Christians. But Barnabas proved willing to risk his life to meet with Paul and then convince the others that their former enemy was now a vibrant believer in Jesus. We can only wonder what might have happened to Paul without Barnabas.

It was Barnabas who encouraged Mark to go with him and Paul to Antioch. Mark joined them on their first missionary journey but decided during the trip to return home. Later, Barnabas wanted to invite Mark to join them for another journey, but Paul would not agree. As a result, the partners went separate ways, Barnabas with Mark and Paul with Silas. This actually doubled the missionary effort. Barnabas's patient encouragement was a huge boost for the effectiveness of Mark's eventual ministry. Paul and Mark were later reunited in missionary efforts.

As Barnabas's life shows, we are often presented with situations where there is someone who needs encouragement. Our tendency, however, is to criticize instead. It may be important at times to point out someone's shortcomings, but before we have the right to do this, we must build that person's trust through encouragement. Will you take the opportunity to encourage those with whom you

come in contact today?

Strengths and accomplishments

- *One of the first to sell possessions to help the Christians in Jerusalem*
- *First to travel with Paul as a missionary team*
- *Was an encourager, as his nickname shows, and thus one of the most quietly influential people in the early days of Christianity*
- *Called an apostle, although not one of original 12*

Weakness and mistake

- *Like Peter, temporarily stayed aloof from Gentile believers until Paul corrected him*

Lessons from his life

- *Encouragement is of the most effective ways to help*
- *Sooner or later, obedience to God will involve risk*
- *There is always someone who needs encouragement*

Vital statistics

- *Where: Cyprus, Jerusalem, Antioch*
- *Occupations: Missionary, teacher*
- *Relatives: Aunt: Mary. Cousin: John Mark.*
- *Contemporaries: Peter, Silas, Paul, Herod Agrippa I*

Key verses

"When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were

brought to the Lord" ([Acts 11:23-24](#)).

Barnabas's story is told in [Acts 4:36-37](#); [9:27-15:39](#). He is also mentioned in [1 Corinthians 9:6](#); [Galatians 2:1, 9, 13](#); [Colossians 4:10](#).

13:23-31 Because Paul was speaking to devout Jews, he began by reminding them about the covenant, Abraham, David, and other familiar themes. Later, when speaking to the Greek philosophers in Athens ([17:22-32](#)), he would begin by talking about what he had observed in their city. In both cases, however, he centered the sermon around Christ and emphasized the Resurrection. When you share the Good News, begin where your audience is—then tell them about Christ.

13:38, 39 This is the focus of the Good News: Forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt are available through faith in Christ to all people—including *you*. Have you received this forgiveness? Are you refreshed each day by the thought that you are right with God?

Ministry in Pamphylia and Galatia

Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark left Paphos and landed at Perga in the humid region of Pamphylia, a narrow strip of land between the sea and the Taurus Mountains. John Mark left them in Perga, but Paul and Barnabas traveled up the steep road into the higher elevation of Pisidia in Galatia. When the Jews rejected his message, Paul preached to Gentiles, and the Jews drove Paul and Barnabas out of the Pisidian city of Antioch.

13:42-45 The Jewish leaders undoubtedly brought theological arguments against Paul and Barnabas, but Luke tells us that the real reason for their hostility was that "they were jealous." When we see others succeeding where we haven't or receiving the affirmation we crave, it is hard to rejoice with them. Jealousy is a natural reaction. But how tragic it is

when our jealous feelings make us try to stop God's work. If a work is God's work, rejoice in it—no matter who is doing it.

13:46 Why was it necessary for the Good News to go first to the Jews? God planned that through the Jewish nation *all* the world would know of God ([Genesis 12:3](#)). Paul, a Jew himself, loved his people ([Romans 9:1-5](#)) and wanted to give them every opportunity to join him in proclaiming God's salvation. Unfortunately, many Jews did not recognize Jesus as Messiah, and they did not understand that God was offering salvation to anyone, Jew or Gentile, who comes to him through faith in Christ.

13:47 God had planned for Israel to be this light ([Isaiah 49:6](#)). Through Israel came Jesus, the light of the nations ([Luke 2:32](#)). This light would spread out and enlighten the Gentiles.

13:50 Instead of accepting the truth, the Jewish leaders stirred up opposition and ran Paul and Barnabas out of town. When confronted by a disturbing truth, people often turn away and refuse to listen. When God's Spirit points out needed changes in our lives, we must listen to him. Otherwise we may be pushing the truth so far away that it no longer affects us.

13:51 Often Jews would shake the dust off their feet when leaving a Gentile town on the way back to their own land. This symbolized cleansing themselves from the contamination of those who did not worship God. For Paul and Barnabas to do this to Jews demonstrated that Jews who rejected the Good News were not truly part of Israel and were no better than pagans. Jesus had told his disciples to shake from their feet the dust of any town that would not accept or listen to them ([Mark 6:11](#)). The disciples were not to blame if the message was rejected, as long as they had faithfully presented it. When we share Christ carefully and sensitively, God does not hold us responsible for the other person's decision.

- Life Application Study Bible.

13:13 **John** Mark (son of Mary, [12:12](#)) **left them** at **Perga** and went back to **Jerusalem**. No reason is given for his leaving, but it must have seemed unwarranted to Paul, for on the second missionary journey Barnabas suggested that they take John along, but Paul refused, pointing out that John had previously abandoned them ([15:37-38](#)).

13:14 There were some 16 cities named **Antioch** in this era, and so Luke says **in Pisidia** to specify which "Antioch" is in view. This Antioch was technically just across the border in Phrygia rather than Pisidia, but ancient readers would have known this.

13:14-15 Paul continued his pattern of visiting the local Jewish **synagogue** on the Sabbath. He was invited to bring a **message of encouragement** largely due to the fact that opposition among unbelieving Jews had not yet been stirred up on that town ([v. 45](#)).

13:16-41 This is Paul's first public speech and his first missionary speech in the book of Acts. It is the longest speech by him in a Jewish synagogue, and it probably represents a style of speech he used on many such occasions. Paul recounted the history of Israel to place the coming of Jesus Christ in historical perspective. He made it clear that the coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise ([v. 23](#)), as His resurrection confirmed ([v. 33](#)).

13:22-23 **According to the promise** refers to [2Sam 7:12-16](#), where God promised through the prophet Nathan that He would raise up from David a descendant whose throne would be established "forever."

13:27 Though the **prophets** were read in synagogues **every Sabbath**, those in Jerusalem did not recognize that these words were fulfilled in Jesus. They instead condemned Him, their only hope.

13:30-31 The resurrection of Jesus was confirmed by **witnesses** who had followed Him **from Galilee to Jerusalem**. Luke frequently emphasizes the role of eyewitnesses ([1:3](#); [Lk 1:1-4](#)).

13:33 Jesus' resurrection confirmed that God had fulfilled His promise (citing [Ps 2:7](#)).

13:34-35 Others who had been raised from the dead would **return to decay**, for they were still subject to death. Not Jesus. He destroyed "the one holding the power of death" ([Heb 2:14](#)).

13:38-39 Through Jesus is offered **forgiveness of sins**, something **the law of Moses** can never accomplish ([Rm 3:20](#)).

13:41 Paul cited [Hab 1:5](#) as a fitting conclusion to his speech. This passage from the prophet referred to the work that God was doing and recognized that some people would scoff and refuse to believe what God was doing, even if it was explained to them.

13:42-43 Whether due to the speech's novelty or their genuine spiritual hunger, the people wanted to hear more. It was probably in the "downtime" outside the synagogues, in small groups or individual meetings, that Paul and Barnabas accomplished their most effective teaching.

13:44-45 Keen interest sprang up over the gospel message everywhere Paul and Barnabas went, whether for or against. Jesus foretold the opposition the evangelists would face ([Mk 13:13](#)).

13:46-47 The NT consistently says the gospel message came first to the Jews (e.g., [Mk 7:27](#)), though the Gentiles were anticipated as eventual recipients. Acts shows the same pattern. Early in their missions work, Paul and Barnabas recognized that their duty was to bring the good news to the Jews **first**. But Jewish rejection of this message warranted their taking it to the **Gentiles**.

13:48 This verse expresses one of the great enigmatic truths of Scripture: **all who had been appointed to eternal life believed**. This touches both on God's election ("appointed") and the human responsibility to choose ("believed").

13:49 **The whole region** was predominantly Gentile. Thus those who were historically "outside" God's people were coming to overshadow and redefine God's people.

13:50 Seeing that the gospel was gaining wide acceptance, the Jewish leaders incited both **men** and **women** of status to reject Barnabas and Paul. This was a familiar tactic ([Mt 27:20](#)).

13:51 **They shook the dust off their feet**, obeying Jesus' command to His disciples ([Lk 10:11](#)).

13:52 **Joy** is the outward expression of the work of the **Holy Spirit** within a believer.

- HCSB Study Bible.

13:13 *came to Perga in Pamphylia.* Perga was a major city in the Roman province of Pamphylia, in Asia Minor—some 200 miles north across the Mediterranean Sea from Cyprus. *John, departing from them.* Whatever reason John Mark gave for leaving, Paul didn't accept it ([15:38](#)). While his desertion did not hamper the mission, it did later create dissension between Paul and Barnabas ([15:36-40](#)). This was finally resolved (cf. [Col. 4:10](#); [2 Tim. 4:11](#)). *See note on [12:12](#).*

13:14 *Antioch in Pisidia.* Not to be confused with Antioch in Syria, the location of the first Gentile church. This Antioch was located in the mountains of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

13:15 *reading of the Law and the Prophets.* The reading of the Scriptures. This occupied the third part in the liturgy of the synagogue, after the recitation of the *shema* ([Deut. 6:4](#)) and further prayers, but before the teaching, which was usually based on what had been read from the Scriptures. *rulers of the synagogue.* Those who had general oversight of the synagogue (*see note on [6:9](#)*), including designating who would read from the Scriptures.

13:16 *who fear God.* *See note on [10:2](#).*

13:19 *seven nations.* *See note on [Deuteronomy 7:1](#).* *by allotment.* A better reading would be, “as an inheritance.”

13:20 *about four hundred and fifty years.* This phrase immediately follows [verse 19](#) in the better Greek manuscripts and refers to [verses 17-](#)

[19](#). Four hundred years of captivity in Egypt, forty years wandering in the wilderness, and about ten years from the crossing of the Jordan River to the division of the land ([Josh. 14:1-5](#)). *Samuel the prophet*. The last judge who anointed Israel's first king, Saul (see Introduction to 1 Samuel; see note on [3:24](#)).

[13:21](#) *Saul*. See note on [1 Samuel 9:2](#).

[13:22](#) *a man after My own heart*. See note on [1 Samuel 13:14](#). Some would question the reality of this designation for David since he proved to be such a sinner at times (cf. [1 Sam. 11:1-4](#); [12:9](#); [21:10-22:1](#)). No man after God's own heart is perfect; yet, he will recognize sin and repent of it, as David did (cf. [Pss. 32](#); [38](#); [51](#)). Paul quoted from [1 Samuel 13:14](#) and [Psalm 89:20](#).

[13:23](#) *according to the promise*. OT prophecy points to Messiah as a descendant of David (cf. [2 Sam. 7:12-16](#); [Ps. 132:11](#); [Isa. 11:10](#); [Jer. 23:5](#)). Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies of the coming Messiah ([Matt. 1:1](#), [20](#), [21](#); [Rom. 1:3](#); [2 Tim. 2:8](#)).

[13:24](#) *baptism of repentance*. Cf. [1:22](#); [10:37](#).

[13:26](#) *who fear God*. See note on [10:2](#).

[13:27](#) *rulers*. The supposed experts in the OT, including the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests.

[13:28](#) *Pilate*. See notes on [3:13](#); [Matthew 27:2](#).

[13:29, 30](#) *tree... tomb... God raised*. The OT predicted the Crucifixion of Christ on a cross ([Deut. 21](#); [Ps. 22](#)), at a time when this particular form of execution was not used. His burial in a "tomb" was also prophesied ([Isa. 53:9](#)), yet victims of crucifixions were commonly tossed into mass graves. The climax of Paul's message was the Resurrection of Christ, the ultimate proof that Jesus is the Messiah, and the fulfillment of three specific prophecies (see notes on [vv. 33-35](#)).

13:31 *witnesses*. More than 500 (cf. [1 Cor. 15:5-8](#)).

13:33 Quoted from [Psalm 2:7](#).

13:34 Quoted from [Isaiah 55:3](#)

13:35 Quoted from [Psalm 16:10](#); *see note on 2:27*.

13:39 *justified from*. This is better translated “freed from.” *you could not be justified by the law of Moses*. Keeping the law of Moses did not free anyone from their sins (cf. [Rom. 3:28](#); [1 Cor. 1:30](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:11](#); [Phil. 3:9](#)). But the atoning death of Jesus completely satisfied the demands of God’s Law, making forgiveness of sins available to all who believe ([Gal. 3:16](#); [Col. 2:13, 14](#)). Only the forgiveness Christ offers can free people from their sins ([Rom. 3:20, 22](#)).

13:41 Quoted from Habakkuk [1:5](#).

13:43 *devout proselytes*. Full converts to Judaism who had been circumcised. *continue in the grace of God*. Those who are truly saved persevere and validate the reality of their salvation by continuing in the grace of God (cf. [John 8:31](#); [15:1-6](#); [Col. 1:21-23](#); [1 John 2:19](#)). With such encouragement, Paul and Barnabas hoped to prevent those who were intellectually convinced of the truths of the gospel, yet had stopped short of saving faith, from reverting to legalism rather than embracing Christ completely.

13:46 *to you first*. God offered the plan of salvation to the Jews first ([Matt. 10:5, 6](#); [15:24](#); [Luke 24:47](#); [Rom. 1:16](#)). Although the thrust of Paul’s ministry was to Gentiles, he had a desire to see Jews saved ([Rom. 9:1-5](#); [10:1](#)), preaching to them first in many cities (*see note on v. 5*). *we*

turn to the Gentiles. This was because the Jews rejected the gospel. But God never planned salvation as an exclusive possession of the Jews ([Isa. 42:1, 6](#); [49:6](#)).

[13:47](#) Quoted from [Isaiah 49:6](#).

[13:48](#) *appointed to eternal life.* One of Scripture's clearest statements on the sovereignty of God in salvation. God chooses man for salvation, not the opposite ([John 6:65](#); [Eph. 1:4](#); [Col. 3:12](#); [2 Thess. 2:13](#)). Faith itself is a gift from God ([Eph. 2:8, 9](#)).

[13:51](#) *shook off the dust from their feet.* The Jews' antagonism toward Gentiles extended to their unwillingness to even bring Gentile dust into Israel. The symbolism of Paul and Barnabas's act is clear that they considered the Jews at Antioch no better than heathen. There could have been no stronger condemnation.

[13:52](#) *filled... with the Holy Spirit.* See notes on [2:4](#); [Ephesians 5:18](#).

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

v.13: Their departure from the island of Cyprus. It is probable that they did a great deal more there than is recorded, where an account is given only of that which was extraordinary-the conversion of the deputy. When they had done what they had to do,

1. They quitted the country, & went to Perga. Those that went were Paul & his company, which, it is probable, was increased in Cyprus, many being desirous to accompany him. Those that were about Paul loosed from Paphos, which supposes that he went too; but such an affection had his new friends for him that they were always about him & by their good will would be never from him.

2. Then John Mark quitted them & returned to Jerusalem, without the consent of Paul & Barnabas... we shall hear of it again.

When we come together to worship God, we must do it, not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God. The bare reading of the Scriptures in public assemblies is not enough; they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of them. This is helping people in doing that which is necessary to make the word profitable, to apply it to themselves. Every thing is touched upon in this sermon, which might best prevail with Jews to receive and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah. And every view, however short or faint, of the Lord's dealings with his church, reminds us of his mercy and long-suffering, and of man's ingratitude and perverseness. Paul passes from David to the Son of David, and shows that this Jesus is his promised Seed; a Saviour to do that for them, which the judges of old could not do, to save them from their sins, their worst enemies. When the apostles preached Christ as the Saviour, they were so far from concealing his death, that they always preached Christ crucified. Our complete separation from sin, is represented by our being buried with Christ. But he rose again from the dead, and saw no corruption: this was the great truth to be preached.

Paul's Discourse at Antioch: Part 2 ([13:32-37](#))

The resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God. It was not possible he should be held by death, because he was the Son of God, and therefore had life in himself, which he could not lay down but with a design to take it again. The sure mercies of David are that everlasting life, of which the resurrection was a sure pledge; and the blessings of redemption in Christ are a certain earnest, even in this world. David was a great blessing to the age wherein he lived. We were not born for ourselves, but there are those living around us, to whom we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference; Christ was to serve all generations. May we look to Him who is declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, that by faith in him we may

walk with God, and serve our generation according to his will; and when death comes, may we sleep in him, with hope of a blessed resurrection

Paul's Discourse at Antioch: Part 3 ([13:38-41](#))

Let all that hear the gospel of Christ, know these two things: 1. That through this Man, who died and rose again, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and they may be so without any injury to God's honour. 2. It is by Christ only that those who believe in him, and none else, are justified from all things; from all the guilt and stain of sin, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. The great concern of convinced sinners is, to be justified, to be acquitted from all their guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight, for if any is left charged upon the sinner, he is undone. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge but by him as the Lord our Righteousness. What the law could not do for us, in that it was weak, the gospel of Christ does. This is the most needful blessing, bringing in every other. The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners, is designed to awaken us to beware lest it come upon us.

It ruins many, that they despise religion. Those that will not wonder and be saved, shall wonder and perish.

He Preaches to the Gentiles & Is Persecuted by the Jews ([13:42-52](#))

The Jews opposed the doctrine the apostles preached; and when they could find no objection, they blasphemed Christ and his gospel. Commonly those who begin with contradicting, end with blaspheming. But when adversaries of Christ's cause are daring, its advocates should be the bolder. And while many judge themselves unworthy of eternal life, others, who appear less likely, desire to hear more of the glad tidings of salvation. This is according to what was foretold in the Old

Testament. What light, what power, what a treasure does this gospel bring with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual, [Rom 8:30](#). As many as were disposed to eternal life, as many as had concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God has treasured up that life, and who is the only Way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. It is good to see honourable women devout; the less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their own souls, and the souls of others: but it is sad, when, under colour of devotion to God, they try to show hatred to Christ. And the more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face difficulties in the profession of godliness.

- Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.