

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The thirteenth chapter is the beginning of the third part of this book.

The second great center of Christianity comes to the front. It is no longer Jerusalem, but the city of Antioch. The gospel which had been preached in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, which Cornelius and his house had heard, and accepted, is now in a special manner to go far hence to the Gentiles. The city in which the first great Gentile church had been established is the starting point.

Peter, so prominent in the first twelve chapters of our book, is no longer the leading actor. He is mentioned only once in this second part of the Book of Acts. In the fifteenth chapter in connection with the council in Jerusalem, his voice is heard once more.

The special work in connection with the kingdom of heaven, in opening the door to the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2 and chapter 10) had been accomplished by him. Now he disappears from our view, though he continued to exercise his apostleship in connection with the circumcision (Galatians 2:7).

Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, instead appears upon the scene and his wonderful activity is described in the remaining part of the book. The opposition and blindness of the Jews in a continued rejection of the gospel becomes fully evident throughout this section and the book itself closes with the testimony against them:

**“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.”** (Acts 28:28).

Besides this we shall find in these chapters the acts of the Holy Spirit in the call and sending forth of the chosen instruments in the way He guided them, how He filled them, opened doors, and manifested His gracious power in the salvation of sinners and the establishment of the church. We also find the acts of the enemy in opposing the progress of the gospel and in its perversion.

We divide the present chapter into four parts:

- I. The divine choice and call. Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work** (Verses 1-3).
- II. The beginning of the journey and the first events in Cyprus** (Verses 4-12).
- III. The Gospel in Galatia. Paul's address in the synagogue** (Verses 13-41).
- IV. The Gospel rejected by the Jews; they turn to the Gentiles** (Verses 42-52).

#### **I. The divine choice and call. Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work.**

**“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away”** (Verses 1-3).

The time was towards the spring of the year 46. The picture unfolded in these few words is as important as it is precious. The new start is about to be made. The whole assembly was undoubtedly moved by the Spirit of God and impressed with the fact that an important work was now to be begun. The men who are mentioned were some of the gifts of the Lord in the assembly.

Five names are given, the first being Barnabas and the last Saul, but the last, he who delighted to call himself **“less than the least of all the Saints,”** was through the Grace of God to take the first and prominent place.

Then there was Lucius of Cyrene, an evangelist, Simeon, called Niger, who may have been an Ethiopian. Alongside of him stands the name of one who moved in the highest circles, a foster brother of Herod, Manaen. Grace had not only saved them, but had given them gifts **“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:12).

***They were together as a waiting company. Just as in the beginning of this book we behold a waiting company, so in the beginning of the second part we find believers waiting.***

But there is a marked difference. The waiting disciples in chapter 1 waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He came on the day of Pentecost. The waiting ones in Antioch waited, not for His coming, but for the Holy Spirit, who indwelt them, to speak and make His wishes known.

They ministered unto the Lord and fasted. The Greek word for ministering is *“Leitourgia,”* from which comes the word *Liturgy*. Ritualism claims from this the scripturalness in using a set form in service.

It has been stated that the assembled company remembered the Lord, when they were together in this way, and that it was then, when the Holy Spirit spoke.

The argument used from ritualistic sides is the fact that the Greek church still calls the Communion “*The Liturgy*.” From this the conclusion is derived that they were together remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread. This is, of course, far-fetched.

However, it is true that in the Lord’s Supper Christian believers minister to the Lord in the highest sense of the word. Whenever it is done in the power of the Spirit as a true act of worship, it is the exercise of our holy priesthood. We then offer up spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips. While we are comforted in the remembrance of His dying love, He, too, receives a portion from us and beholds then His inheritance in His saints and thus we minister unto Him.

The ministry unto the Lord from the side of the gathered ones here was no doubt praise and prayer. They waited on the Lord. The Lord grant unto every reader this conception of prayer, that it is a ministry unto our blessed Lord in glory, and that He delights to receive such service from our feeble hearts and lips!

They were not in a hurry to rush into the new departure. They had formed no plans, had appointed no committee.

*Alas! all that which is so prominent in our modern day Christian activities is entirely absent in this great book of the beginning of the church on earth, and that which is most prominent in the divine record, dependence on the Lord and definite guidance by the Holy Spirit, is almost entirely absent today.*

In our present day great movements we hear men, money and methods emphasized, and, in great banquets and conventions, an enthusiasm is stirred up, which is but the expression of self-confidence and self-reliance.

In the eyes of the world, the simple gathering in Antioch did not look like a great movement; but it was great because the Holy Spirit was the Person who started it and guided in it. And He loves humility, self-emptiness. If we cannot reproduce all this in our day, let us as individuals, called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, serve and walk in dependence upon Himself, and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The fasting mentioned was most likely specially appointed.

And it was then, while they were ministering to the Lord, that the Holy Spirit spoke.

This is one of the strong passages from which we learn the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Another most important fact is brought here before us. All spiritual Christians long for a continued guidance by the Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, then we are guided by the Spirit. This is a simple truth. And yet often the children of God are perplexed.

Some have followed impressions, or inner voices, which they thought were the voice of the Holy Spirit, but they were deceived.

The important hint here is this “**As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said-**”

*When we cast ourselves in dependence on the Lord, when we wait on Him and minister to Him, then we may expect confidently the Holy Spirit to speak.*

In His speaking here at this occasion we learn that He is on earth to be the guide for the church. He is come to take charge of the affairs of the church. The right to choose for service, to call and to send forth, belongs to Him. This is put into the foreground. The whole transaction rested with the Holy Spirit.

The words He spoke were brief. **“Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”**

Two of the assembled gifts were separated unto Him to undertake a special work. True Christian ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift, which is of the Holy Spirit. The exercise of that gift in a practical way is to be under the control of the same blessed Person. The service rests not in the hands of the servant for self-choosing, nor in the hands of the church, but with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately after the Holy Spirit had thus spoken they acted in obedience to the divine call, laid hands upon them, and let them go.

This action has been wrongly interpreted as an ordination. Hence we have the teaching and practice in evangelical Christendom of ordaining men to go out as missionaries, or ordaining them as pastors of churches or evangelists. Such an ordination is not taught here. It is not taught anywhere in the New Testament Scriptures.

The authority to preach the Gospel cannot be conferred by one man upon another man, but it is **“neither of men nor by man”** (Galatians 1:1).

No man nor set of men, according to the New Testament, can give the authority to preach the Word of God. That is a gift from Him and, we state it again, the gift must be exercised through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the teaching of the New Testament.

How the professing church has departed from this teaching and how much of the confusion and ruin in Christendom about us is the result of this departure, is only too evident. Multitudes of men have entered into and are today in, what is called “the Christian ministry,” ordained by some session or conference, whom the Holy Spirit never called and set apart unto Himself. And the conditions are far worse in the denominations in which ordination in the form of apostolic succession is used to put man into the place of a “priest” in the church.

Now Barnabas and Saul needed no ordination whatever by which they were authorized to fill a certain office and preach the Word.

They were both preachers and teachers. How could they be ordained to an office if they were in it for a good while? If they were to be ordained to something higher than the office of a prophet and teacher, it must have been the place of an apostle. But that could not be, for Paul was already an apostle.

But what did it mean when they laid hands on them? One of their number had uttered that which was the voice of the Holy Spirit. The assembly or church had heard this call. They accepted it as from the Holy Spirit and were obedient to it.

*Then by the laying on of hands they expressed outwardly their fellowship and identification with the two who had been set apart to do the work to which the Holy Spirit had called.*

They had nothing to do with their work but to wish them the blessing of the Lord showing their fellowship in it.

This is seen by the last sentence in the third verse.

“**They sent them away.**” That is “*They let them go.*” The church, or the elders of the church, did not so much send them away, for the very next verse guards against such a thought, for it tells us “**They being sent forth by the Holy Spirit.**” But they did send them with their blessings.

## **II. The beginning of the journey. The first events in Cyprus.**

**“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul (who also is called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord”** (Verses 4-12).

They set forth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who had called them to this service and to Him, and not to men they looked.

The first place mentioned is Seleucia.

This was a fortified city, some fifteen miles from Antioch. No report is given of any work done in this city.

The island of Cyprus, visible from the seacoast at Seleucia, the home of Barnabas, was the place they were guided to by the Spirit. The nearest port to Seleucia is Salamis; this they reached. Salamis had a large Jewish population and Barnabas and Saul preached the Word in the synagogues.

John Mark is mentioned as being along as their helper.

Some take it that he was to baptize the converts, but there is no evidence for it. He was simply an attendant, who assisted them in different ways, perhaps in preparing the simple meals and looking after other matters, so that Barnabas and Saul might give themselves unhindered to the preaching of the Word. No record is given of the result of the testimony in Salamis. Nor is there anything said of their labors throughout the island. The Holy Spirit in giving us the narrative did not report their activity in detail, because He wanted the event in Paphos to take the prominent and first place in this first journey of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

And a significant event it was.

There they found a sorcerer, a false prophet, a great instrument of Satan, ready to oppose the Gospel as it now was to be preached to the Gentiles. Such evil persons, the special instrument of the enemy, appear repeatedly in this book and always when the Gospel was carried in some new region.

- In Samaria it was Simon Magus,
- In Macedonia the damsel with the familiar spirit,
- Here it is the sorcerer, Barjesus.

He was a Jew and his name means “*Son of Jesus.*” The Cyprian name he carried was Elymas, which is not Greek and may mean “*The Wise.*”

Paphos was a wicked city of a very bad reputation; Aphrodite, the goddess Venus, was worshipped in a magnificent temple. It was a stronghold of Satan and he had his man there to oppose the messengers of God sent forth by the Holy Spirit. This false prophet with his significant name, a Jew, yet practicing the evil things of Oriental occultism, was in close connection with Sergius Paulus, the deputy of that country. He was most likely attached to the household of the deputy.

Sergius Paulus was a searcher for the truth, for he called for the two Apostles to hear the Word of God from their lips.

Then the Satanic opposition from the side of Elymas was brought out. It was an important moment, for it was the first time that the doctrine of Christ was presented to the Roman world. Satan through Elymas withstood the Apostles in their testimony and sought to keep Sergius Paulus from the faith.

Then Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him. Just in the moment when Satan’s power came into play the Holy Spirit filled the messenger to overcome the wicked devices of the false prophet and pronounce judgment upon him. As in the case of Simon Magus, so here the Holy Spirit uncovers the true character of the impostor. He is a child of the devil and not a “Bar-Jesus,” a son of Jesus, the Saviour. He claimed to be a prophet, in reality he was an enemy of all righteousness. He had perverted the right ways of the Lord and continued in this evil work.

Then divine judgment is pronounced upon Elymas.

**“Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.”**

The judgment was executed at once. A mist and darkness fell on him and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Sergius Paulus then believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. There can be no question but Sergius Paulus was truly converted. If it be said that he was astonished at the sudden judgment, a doubt might be raised, but he was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. Signs are for the Jews, but the Gentile needs no sign.

This false prophet, the Jew Barjesus, Elymas the sorcerer, is a type of apostate Judaism, which has turned away from the truth, rejected the Gospel and perverts the right ways of the Lord. Such Judaism became after rejecting the offer of God’s mercy.

As Elymas tried to keep the Word of God from the Roman Sergius Paulus, so the Jews tried to keep from the Gentiles the Gospel, which they themselves had rejected. The judgment which fell upon the Sorcerer is likewise significant. Blindness has been put judicially upon the Jews and without a leader they are groping around in the darkness.

This judicial blindness was repeatedly predicted by the prophets. We find it mentioned in Isaiah 6:9-10. Their eyes were to be shut. Our Lord quotes this twice and each time in connection with His rejection in Matthew 13:15 and John 12:40. Then the Apostle Paul uses these words for the last time in the New Testament. See Acts 23:25-28.

The Salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles after the Jews refused to accept it, and the Jews were blinded. But the blindness is not permanent.

**“Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”**  
(Romans 11:25).

Corresponding to this is the blindness of Elymas, which was to be **“for a season.”** Israel’s season is this present age. When to this age is over, the judicial blindness, the veil which is upon their hearts, will be removed.

That this incident is the first one reported in the beginning of the great missionary movement is in full keeping with the scope of the Book of Acts.

Of equal significance is it that for the first time, and that in connection with this incident, the name of Paul is mentioned. Some have suggested that he took the name in honor of Sergius Paulus, but that is incorrect.

Paul is a Roman name, and means *“little.”* Later he writes of himself as **“less than the least of all saints.”** He took the lowest place and the name, which signifies this comes now into prominence. Barnabas is taking the second place; not Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas is now the order.

After the significant incident in Paphos, the judicial blindness of Elymas and the faith of the Gentile deputy in the doctrine of the Lord, the Apostle Paul and his company loosed from Paphos.

**“And when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem”** (verse 13).

Paul occupies now the prominent place. As soon as Perga was reached, John the helper, who had gone forth with them from Antioch, deserted them. It was a desertion, for later we find the statement that he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work (Chap. 15:38).

No reason is given why John turned backward. Was it on account of the dangers or the hard labor! Or was it cowardice! The reason of his return was most likely of a different nature. He was still greatly attached to Jerusalem. His Hebrew name is mentioned only in this chapter and not the Gentile, the Roman, Mark. Perhaps he could not fully endorse the complete association with the Gentiles and turned back to Jerusalem to be in fellowship with them who were of the circumcision and **“zealous for the Law.”** No matter what was the motive, he did leave them.

It was failure on his part and for a long time John Mark had evidently little or no service. He was unprofitable. Blessed is the information we receive from the Second Epistle to Timothy by the Apostle Paul. He requested Mark’s presence in Rome.

**“Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry”** (II Timothy 4:11).

He had been restored, seen his error and judged himself. There can be no question, but John Mark is the writer of the Gospel of Mark, in which the perfect servant of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed in His unflinching service. What encouragement we should take from this!

One who failed in service and was graciously restored, then chosen to write the Gospel of the Servant.

### **III. The Gospel in Galatia. Paul’s address in the synagogue of Antioch.**

**“But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on”** (Verses 14-15).

They reached another Antioch. It was situated in Pisidia. The region into which they now carried the Gospel was also known as Galatia.

This district was settled by Gauls, Celtic invaders, who had left about 278 B. C. Southern Europe, and took possession of parts of Asia Minor.

In 189 B.C., they were subdued by Rome and the Kingdom of Galatia was formed, which comprised besides Galatia proper a number of other provinces, including Pisidia.

From the Epistle to the Galatians we know that the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel there and founded the different churches. The record of his visit and work is contained in the 13th and 14th chapter, beginning with Antioch in Pisidia. Antioch had, like other cities at that time, a number of Jews, and therefore a synagogue. To this place they went on the Sabbath, and took their place among the other attendants.

The order of service as carried on in orthodox synagogues of today is about the same as in the synagogues of the first century. The **“Hear O Israel!”** the so-called *“Shema”* (a recitation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9), prayers and the reading of a prescribed portion of the Pentateuch, and a similar portion from the Prophets, called the *“Haftorah.”* After the reading of those portions, exhortation was in order. It was at this point that the rulers requested the visiting brethren, of whom they may have heard as teachers, to speak if they had any word of exhortation. The rulers addressed them as Brethren. Gentiles who feared God had likewise access to the synagogue and a number were present on that Sabbath day.

**“Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is this word of salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.**

**“Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you” (Verses 16-41).**

We have before us an intensely interesting record.

Whether this is a full report or a condensed report of the address of the Apostle we do not know for certain. We incline to the belief that it is a report in full of what Paul spoke. It corresponds in different ways to Peter’s preaching to the Jews, yet it differs from Peter’s message in regard to the Gospel.

*As we have seen Peter’s preaching was addressed to the Jews and he offered forgiveness of sins to them who repent and are baptized. But Paul utters a truth for the first time, which Peter did not declare.*

He said: **“By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”**

It is justification by faith he now preaches.

We have in his first recorded utterance the Keynote of the two great Epistles, dictated by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle Paul; the great doctrinal Epistle to the Romans and the controversial Epistle to the Galatians, the defence of his Gospel.

The discourse of the Apostle contains three parts.

- 1. A historical retrospect, which forms the introduction of his address. Verses 17-25.*
- 2. The proclamation of the Gospel of the Son of God. Verses 26-40.*
- 3. The solemn warning. Verses 40-41.*

He addressed the Jews present as Israel, the covenant Name, and the assembled Gentiles **“ye that fear God.”** He traces rapidly the history of the people Israel, the background of the Gospel he is to preach. God had chosen their fathers, exalted the people, delivered them out of Egypt, He carried them through the wilderness and suffered their manners.

He furthermore destroyed their enemies and gave them an inheritance. In Exodus 4:22 it is written, **“Israel is my son, my firstborn”** and in Hosea 11:1 we read: **“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”**

It is this history of Israel as the firstborn son the Apostle sketches rapidly.

In the promised land they had judges, a prophet and a King. While he mentions Saul, the Son of Cis, reminding them of the failure involved in his case, he speaks more fully of David as the one whom God raised up, in whom He was pleased, who was to fulfill all His will.

At once he mentions Him, who according to the flesh is the seed of David (Romans 1:3). The connection with David is obvious.

The three facts mentioned by Paul concerning David find their fulfillment in the promised Saviour, the Son of David.

- He was raised up by God (verses 23, 30, 33 and 34);
- God gave him testimony “**this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,**”
- He alone could “**fulfill all His will.**”

So Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised One, raised up unto Israel as a Saviour. The preaching of John before this Saviour came, calling all the people of Israel unto repentance is the concluding paragraph of the first part of the Apostle’s address.

In the second part of his address he preached the Gospel unto them.

He addressed the assembled congregation as men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham; the Gentiles present he also mentioned “**whosoever among you feareth God.**”

Then without further delay he uttered the fact of the Gospel, “**to you is the word of this salvation sent.**”

One is reminded of the Lord Himself, when in the synagogue of Nazareth He said: “**Today is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.**” How eagerly the gathered company must have listened to what was about to be announced. The cross of Christ, the death of the promised Saviour and the circumstances of His death are immediately proclaimed. There is no salvation apart from the cross of Christ. The word of this salvation he preached unto them centers not in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in His death on the cross.

Like Peter, the Apostle to the Gentiles emphasizes the fact that they that dwelt at Jerusalem and their rulers knew Him not. The reason of their ignorance was because they knew not the voices of the prophets. Ignorance of the written Word led to the rejection of the living Word. It is still so today in Judaism and Christendom. They read every Sabbath the prophecies concerning the Messiah, His rejection and His work, and they fulfilled these predictions in condemning Him. His death on the cross was therefore a fulfillment of Scripture. No cause of death was found in Him. He was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. All was fulfilled by them, which was written of Him; all the sufferings of Christ as the Lamb of God were accomplished on the tree. \*

\* Peter used the word “**tree**” and Paul writing to the Galatians said: “**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.**” (Galatians 3:13).

He was taken down and laid in a sepulchre. His death on the cross was thus briefly pictured by

the speaker. And then he announced next to the fact of His death, fully proven by His burial in a sepulchre, that God raised Him from the dead.

It is the order Paul follows here which he later writes to the Corinthians.

**“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to Scriptures”** (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

The proofs of resurrection that He was seen many days are also briefly mentioned. Then he declared the good tidings. As an evangelist he announces what had been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ.

It is a beautiful and concise statement of Him, who had been raised up in incarnation, and who is by resurrection from the dead the Son of God. The promise made unto the fathers had been gloriously fulfilled. The Second Psalm had predicted this raising up. God sent His Son into the world. On a certain day He entered as the Begotten One into the world. After He had died He became the First Begotten from the dead, destined as such to be the King upon the holy hill of Zion, and to receive the nations for His inheritance. He could not see corruption. This, too, had been predicted in the Psalms (Psalm 16). The similarity of this first reported evangelistic message of Paul with Peter's is again seen at this point. But he also speaks of Him as the Pious One, the Holy and Gracious One, in whom now are found the faithful mercies of David.

And then he pressed it all home to their hearts and consciences.

**“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”**

This is the great climax reached. He did not once mention the word repentance. He has nothing to say of baptism. He did not exhort them to do the best they could or to live under that law, which they had.

The Law of Moses could not justify them.

The Epistle to the Galatians, most likely read by those in Antioch who heard Paul speak, enlarges upon this fully. Justification from all things is offered now by faith in Jesus Christ. All that believe are justified of all things is the blessed message of the Gospel of Grace which Paul preached and which is not after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).

How simple the message was. All had been done by Christ. He died the Just One for the Unjust; He who knew no sin had been made sin. Forgiveness of sins and a perfect justification from all things is now ready for Jews and Gentiles from the side of a just God, who can be righteously the Justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus.

And this simple Gospel, this perfect way of salvation is still to be preached. It is the power of God unto salvation; what a model for the true Gospel address Paul's discourse in the synagogue

of the Pisidian Antioch is! Then in the third part, in the concluding words, he gives a solemn warning. This must likewise be attached to every true Gospel testimony. The warning is taken from the Prophet Habakkuk (i:5). It is addressed by the Prophet to “those among the Gentiles.” The passage warns against unbelief. The message may be accepted or rejected. The work which God worked in Habakkuk’s day was judgment by the Chaldean invasion. It came upon them that believed not. Judgment would surely come upon them if they believed not and rejected the offer of the Gospel. A few years later Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the Jews, “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” The destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation was the punitive work God worked for those who believed not. Well does every Gospel preacher if he gives the solemn warning that “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” There is a judgment work coming for all that believe not when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### **IV. The Gospel rejected by the Jews; they turn to the Gentiles.**

**“And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Verses 42-52).**

The offer had been made.

Were the Jews in the dispersion to accept it or to oppose the Gospel and reject its gracious invitation? It seems as if a deep impression was created. How else could it have been after hearing such a perfect and able presentation in the power of the Holy Spirit. The request was made that they would speak again a week later. Many Jews and proselytes followed the two messengers.

The exhortation of the Apostles that they should continue in the grace of God seems to imply that some had accepted the offer of the Gospel.

But during the week the enemy did his work. The whole city came together the next Sabbath. Large numbers of Gentiles, many of whom had never before entered the synagogue, crowded in to hear the Word. This was too much for the Jews. Jealousy and envy filled their hearts. It came to a riotous opposition. Paul was again the preacher, and not alone did they speak against the truth as preached by him, but they contradicted and blasphemed. What Elymas, the sorcerer, had done as an individual, the type of the blinded Jew, the Jews did in Antioch. Once more Paul with Barnabas pronounces the word of condemnation.

The offer of salvation was refused and now the Jews, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life by unbelief, the Apostles said, “**we turn to the Gentiles.**”

Scripture is fully on their side in this action, for the prophet had declared, “**I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.**”

While the Jews blasphemed and rejected, the Gentiles were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

“The Jews had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life; the Gentiles, as many as were disposed to eternal life, believed. By whom so disposed, is not here declared; nor need the word be in this place further particularized. We know that it is God who worketh in us the will to believe, and that the preparation of the heart is of Him, but to find in this text preordination to life asserted, is to force both the word and the context to a meaning which they do not contain.” \*

\* Dean Alford, Greek New Testament.

*All who accept the Gospel by faith are ordained unto eternal life.*

The good news spread rapidly throughout all Galatia. All this brought out still more fully the jealousy and fierce antagonism of the unbelieving Jews. They used certain women of the higher classes, no doubt the wives of the rulers of the city. These women were devout; they went to the synagogue. Through these women and the chief men of the city a successful persecution of the Apostles was raised and they had to suffer. Nothing is mentioned of suffering here, but Paul mentions it to Timothy (See II Timothy 3:11). They were expelled from that region.

The banished Apostles must have known the Word of the Lord about persecutions and shaking the dust off their feet (Matthew 10:14). They did this and passed on to Iconium. The disciples they left behind were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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