

Introduction

1. Over the last couple of weeks, we've begun to see how God promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth through him would be carried out
2. God's plan has always been to save not just the Jews, but gentiles from every nation on earth
3. We got our first glimpse into this with the conversion of Cornelius and his family and friends
4. We then saw how some men from Cyprus and Cyrene took it upon themselves to take the Gospel to gentiles in Antioch, at a time when most in the Church were still focusing on their fellow Jews
5. What we saw next was an explosion of Gentile converts in one of the largest cities in the Roman empire, and the establishment of the church at Antioch which would become one of the most important churches in the 1st century:
 - a. They were personally taught and mentored by Paul and Barnabas
 - b. The Holy Spirit had gifted them with their own prophets and teachers
 - c. They were in tune with the Holy Spirit, sought his leading and obeyed His voice
 - d. And, in spite of any personal loss they would experience themselves, they were prepared to send out their best—Paul and Barnabas—to the work which God had called them

A. Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey (13:13-16)

1. After leaving the island of Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas head into Asia-Minor to the north (READ 13-14):
 - a. Their destination was a city named Pisidian Antioch which was in the Roman province of Galatia
 - b. What Luke doesn't mention here is that getting from Cyprus to Pisidian Antioch was an arduous journey:
 - 1) The first 200 miles of the trip involved taking a boat from Cyprus to the mainland and then walking the seven miles to Perga; there were no passenger boats in Paul's day, so they would have had to secure passage on a cargo ship
 - 2) From Perga to Pisidian Antioch it was another 100 miles and this is where the real fun began
 - 3) By most accounts, the journey would have been an extremely difficult and tiresome one because it involved walking uphill starting at sea level, over some of the most difficult terrain through the Tarsus Mountains, until they reached Pisidian Antioch which was at an elevation of 3600 feet.
 - 4) According to multiple sources, Alexander the Great considered the Tarsus Mountains some of the most difficult terrain he encountered during his conquests due to how difficult it was to navigate
 - 5) Maybe this is why John Mark abandon them and went back to Jerusalem <grin>.
2. After arriving at Pisidian Antioch, they visit the synagogue and are invited to speak (14-15):
 - a. As we learned last week, Paul's pattern when he arrived in a new city was to begin by preaching the Gospel to Jews and God-fearing gentiles at the synagogue
 - b. Paul and Barnabas do that here on the Sabbath, when you would expect the synagogue to be full

- c. A typical synagogue service (<https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/he-went-to-synagogue>):

The service began with several blessings offered to God. The congregation recited the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one." The Torah scrolls would be brought out by the hazzan and would be read in several portions, sometimes as many as seven. Different people were scheduled to read a portion each week. The readings were determined according to a set schedule, so the reader would have no choice of the passage read. Following the Torah portion, a section from the prophets (called the Haphtarah) would be read by the same or another reader. After all readings, a short sermon would be offered, often by the reader of the Torah or Haftarah. However, any adult member of the community was eligible to speak the sermon called the derashah.

- d. We see this reflected in v. 15, except that after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders invite Paul and Barnabas to give the sermon and Paul is more than happy to oblige

A. Paul preaches the Gospel in the synagogue (13:17-41)

1. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Paul wrote this (READ):
 - a. Some interpret these words to mean that Paul wasn't a skilled orator or speaker
 - b. However, nothing could be further from the truth as we will see in a moment
 - c. What Paul was referring to in 1 Corinthians was something that was common with Greek rhetoric—which was that HOW someone said something was more important than WHAT someone said; in other words, speakers would rely on presentation over content to persuade their audience
 - d. Paul rejected such manipulative tactics when he taught, but that doesn't mean he wasn't skilled or that he rejected all elements of Greek rhetoric or style when he spoke and we see that in his synagogue sermon where he follows a common Greek rhetorical format in his speech
2. Paul's sermon:
 - a. Introduction (READ 16):
 - 1) In Greek speeches, the introduction was called the Exordium
 - 2) It was generally expected that you greeted your audience and we see that here when Paul refers to his audience as **"Men of Israel, and you who fear God"**
 - 3) The introduction also generally included an exhortation to listen and we see that here as well
 - b. Paul recounts the history of God's redemptive plan (READ 17-25):
 - 1) The second part of a Greek speech was called the Narratio and it generally laid the foundation for what the speaker was going to address
 - 2) In this case, Paul was preparing to reveal how Jesus was the promised Messiah and fulfillment of God's redemptive plan
 - 3) So, he gives a brief history of God's plan:
 - a) God established Israel's after He called their **"fathers"** (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.) and made them a great nation over 400+ years while in Egypt
 - b) He led them out of Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness (NAS "put up with" is likely better understood as "cared for" as other translations), wiped out the Canaanite nations, and established Israel in the Promised Land
 - c) He then gave them judges and kings, including David, a man after His own heart that would do His will

- d) Then, as promised, after John the Baptist pointed the way, God brought them a savior, Jesus, through the offspring of David
- c. The third part of the Greek speech was called the Propositio which is what Paul does next (26):
 - 1) You might notice this word sounds a lot like our English word proposition, and that's pretty much what it is
 - 2) At this point, the speaker would give a small summary of what he was going to speak about or address, especially as it related to the foundation he just laid in his narration; in other words, he would propose something which he was intending to now prove or support in the rest of his speech
 - 3) Paul's proposal to his audience at this point was that he and Barnabas were there as messengers of the salvation God brought through Jesus (READ 26)
 - d. Paul provides the evidence (27-37):
 - 1) This is what the Greeks referred to as the Probatio which referred to the explanation and examination of the evidence
 - 2) So, what's the evidence that God sent Jesus as the promised savior, and that Paul and Barnabas were His messengers?
 - a) The first evidence is that those who killed Jesus fulfilled what the Prophets foretold (READ 26-28)
 - b) The second evidence is that God raised Jesus from the dead—and there are witnesses! (READ 29-31)
 - c) The third evidence is that God fulfilled what He promised (READ 32-37)
 - e. In the fifth and final portion of his sermon, Paul exhorts his readers to not reject the forgiveness and justification being proclaimed to them (38-41):
 - 1) This section of the Greek speech was referred to as the Peroratio and it's where the speaker would plead with his audience or exhort them to action
 - 2) That's exactly what Paul does here (READ 38-41):
 - a) He declares that God is offering them both forgiveness and justification through Jesus:
 - **“through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you”** (39)
 - **“through Him everyone who believes is freed (lit. justified) from all things”**—something the Law could not free (justify) them from
 - b) He then exhorts them to heed the warning of the Prophets (40):
 - The verse that Paul quotes is from Habakkuk when the prophet warned Israel about the rise of Babylon and the coming judgment of God
 - Many scoffed and refused to believe Habakkuk and as a result Israel was conquered by Babylon and carried off into exile
 - Paul warns his listeners to not be like those who scoffed at Habakkuk, but instead to recognize that God was doing an amazing thing in their midst
3. Takeaways:
 - a. The Gospel isn't all that complicated; it's relatively simple

- 1) First, it's based on what God promised beforehand in the OT—essentially, that He would rise up the nation of Israel and bring salvation to Jew and Gentile alike through Israel by sending a savior through the line of King David
 - 2) Second, it's based on God fulfilling this promise by sending His Son, Jesus, having Him suffer and die, and then raising Him from the dead in order to offer forgiveness and salvation to all who accept Him
 - 3) It really is that simple
- b. When Paul shared the Gospel, he relied heavily on God's Word:
- 1) He summarized the OT
 - 2) He repeatedly quoted the Word:
 - a) V. 22: 1st Samuel
 - b) V. 33: Psalm 2
 - c) V. 34: Isaiah 55
 - d) V. 35: Psalm 16
 - e) V. 41: Habakkuk
 - 3) I think this is the perfect model for us to follow when sharing the Good News:
 - a) Tell them what God promised and why
 - b) Tell them what God accomplished through Jesus
 - c) And use the Word to make the case
- c. The Gospel demands a response—if one accepts it there is forgiveness and justification; if one scoffs at it there is only judgment

<p>B. Many respond with a desire to hear more (READ 13:42-43)</p>

1. The response to Paul's message is remarkable but somewhat unclear
 - a. On the one hand, Luke wrote that as Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people were "**begging**" them to return the following Sabbath so they could hear them again (he uses the imperfect tense here implying the ongoing nature of the pleading)
 - b. Luke also records that "**many of the Jews and God-fearing proselytes**" physically followed them out the door
 - c. So, it seems at first that many had accepted the Gospel, but it's interesting that Luke doesn't come right out and say that
 - d. Another scenario is that these folks weren't quite ready to accept the Gospel, but were expressing a genuine interest and wanted to know more before responding
 - e. Some take Luke's comment that Paul and Barnabas were "**urging them to continue in the grace of God**" as proof that they were saved, but this could also be understood as encouraging them to continue considering the truth of what Paul just preached (e.g. not reject it, but remain open to hearing more next Sabbath)
 - f. Further evidence of the latter comes from verses 44-52 (next week) where we discover that the Jews ultimately reject the Gospel and it's only the Gentiles who accept it
2. Takeaway: interest isn't the same as acceptance:
 - a. Many are interested in spiritual things; some even claim to be religious or even Christian
 - b. But interest isn't the same thing as commitment

- c. We see many in our passage today that expressed interest one week, but opposition the next week
- d. This reminds me of what we see in the Gospels:
 - 1) Many were interested in Jesus, but ultimately rejected Him
 - 2) It's reminiscent of the Parable of the Sower:
 - a) Some hear the Gospel but the devil takes it away
 - b) Others receive it with joy, but when affliction or persecution comes, they fall away
 - c) Others also seem to receive it, but ultimately abandon it for what the world offers them
 - d) It's only a few that that actually accept the Gospel

Conclusion
