

Acts 13:13-52

Preaching the Gospel in the power of the Spirit.

(What does a Spirit led ministry look like?)

Introduction:

- This passage contains a classic sermon that models the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace in Paul's day.
- We find the basic elements of good Gospel preaching in these verses.
 1. Connecting with the audience through sensitivity to the cultural context. This is done by telling a story that would have been understood and embraced by everyone present.
 2. Showing how Jesus fits into that ongoing story.
 3. Giving attention to the cross and resurrection of Jesus.
 4. Calling the hearers to faith.

Barnabas and Paul put themselves in a place to tell the story.

¹³ Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and 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. ¹⁵ And 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."

- Before Paul would be used by God's Spirit he needed to respond to a number of calls.

Called to follow Christ	Called to be witnesses	Called to a specific mission	Called to speak
Christian	Apostle	Acts 13:1-12	Synagogue officials

- We must be sensitive to the Spirit's leading on several levels. Walking in the Spirit does not stop with 1. being a believer, 2. being a witness, 3. being where God directs you to be, 4. being ready to give an account when asked.

I Pet.3:15 "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

Paul's sermon addresses three basic issues.

1. God's ministry among you – provision and protection.

¹⁶ And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: ¹⁷ **The God** of this people Israel chose our fathers, and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm **He led them out** from it. ¹⁸ And for a period of about forty years **He put up with** them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, **He distributed their land** as an inheritance-- {all

of which took} about four hundred and fifty years. 20 And after these things **He gave {them} judges** until Samuel the prophet. 21 And then they asked for a king, and **God gave them Saul** the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And after **He had removed him, He raised up David** to be their king, concerning whom **He also testified** and said, '*I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.*'

- NOTE: What are we to make of Israel's claim to the land today? In Deut.30 it is made clear that the occupation of the land in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham would be realized after Israel turned to God in repentance. The present occupation does not satisfy the Biblical right to the land.
- Notice the emphasis is on the actions of God (not man).
- The story ends with David. From David we jump to the "Son of David", Jesus.

23 From the offspring of this man, according to promise, **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.'

- Jesus' ministry was going to demand a turning from old ways to new, from self righteousness to the righteousness of Christ.
- John's ministry would identify (through water baptism) those within Israel who were ready and willing to respond to the Kingdom in Christ.
- Why is this important? Paul understands that importance of common ground and a context for the Good News of Jesus. This posture implies a knowledge of his audience and their culture. He affirms both God and his audience with his review of their story. Paul does the same thing in a very different context in chapter 17.

2. Jesus' mission for you - the cross and resurrection.

26 Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out. 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 And when they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But **God raised Him from the dead**; 31 and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. 32 And we preach to you **the good news of the promise made to the fathers**, 33 that **God has fulfilled this {promise}** to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, '*Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.*'³⁴ " {And as for the fact} that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, **He has spoken** in this way: '*I will give you the holy {and} sure {blessings} of David.*' 35 Therefore **He also says in another {Psalm,}** '*Thou wilt not allow Thy 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 God raised did not undergo decay.

- Paul skips over much of Jesus' ministry and focuses attention on the cross and resurrection. This is reflected in the content of the epistles.
- Christians have tended to focus attention on one of two emphases. It is important to respect both but start with the cross and resurrection.

King	Kingdom
Cross and resurrection	Life and ethical teaching of Christ
Soul savers	Body savers
Personal conversion – spiritual maturity	Community - social reform
Epistles	OT and Gospels
Traditional evangelical church	Emerging church

- Paul links the Gospel to the Promise made to the Fathers (through Abraham).

3. Our message to you - The forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ.

The Gospel is **Jesus**

38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him

The Gospel is **forgiveness**

forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

The Gospel is **faith**

39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

The Gospel is **exclusive**

40 Take heed therefore, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon {you} 41 *'Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; For I am accomplishing a work in your days, A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.'*

- Distortions of the Gospel can take place on a number of fronts.
 1. We can think of the Gospel as a style of life where Jesus is but a **chaplain**. *"Its not what you believe but how you behave that defines you as a Christian."*
 2. We can think of the Gospel as social reform where forgiveness is but a small part and Jesus is an **example**. *"It is Jesus special concern for social justice that defines Christian faith."*
 3. We can think of the Gospel as moral probation where Jesus is a **judge**. *"You are saved by faith which must include faithfulness."*
 4. We can think of the Gospel as a call to holiness where Jesus is an **enabler**. *"You are forgiven past sins but must manage your present life without sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit."*
 5. We can think of the Gospel as not exclusive. Grace = acceptance of everyone. In this view Jesus is **permissive**. *"God loves everyone and would not judge anyone."*

A mixed reaction

42 And 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 And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. 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 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For thus the Lord has commanded us, *'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You should bring salvation to the end of the earth.'*" 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they {began} rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jews aroused 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. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet {in protest} against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

- We should not be surprised by the mixed reaction that the Gospel will bring. For some, the Gospel will raise great interest and a hunger to know more. For others it might be threatening.
- The expression "as many as were appointed to eternal life" has drawn much attention in the Sovereignty / Free will debate. There are three issues that effect the debate over the meaning of Acts 13:48.
 - **Meaning of "appointed"**: The Greek word is a military term used with respect to the alignment of soldiers in formation. It means "to arrange or put in place."
 - **Is it reflexive (middle voice) or passive?** The word could be read as either reflexive or causative. "The middle voice has only two tenses peculiar to itself, the future and the aorist. As to the other tenses (in Acts 13:48, past perfect) the passive form is used to indicate reflexive action" Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon p. xx.
 - **Context:** Luke seems to put the response of the Gentiles in contrast to that of the Jews. The Jews "put themselves" in a position of opposition to the Gospel. The Gentiles "put themselves" in a position of reception. This would suggest a reflexive sense rather than a passive voice for the word "appointed". It would thus be rendered, "***as many as had devoted themselves to eternal life believed.***" This finds a parallel in I Cor.16:15.