

## Acts 13 - John Karmelich

1. How do you know when God is talking to you?
  - a) Does he part the clouds?
  - b) Does he speak in King James English? ☺
  - c) Does he have a deep, base voice and uses your full name? ☺
  - d) The answer of course, is that, God does not speak to us audibly, at least in the vast majority of cases (never to me, or anyone I know!)
  - e) God speaks to us by:
    - i) First, His word. That is why we daily study it. We are never to do anything that violates his word.
    - ii) Second, your “instinct”, or a small internal voice may be guiding you to do something. Again, it will never be something that violates his word.
      - a) It will usually be something you enjoy doing anyway and/or have a talent and gift for doing.
    - iii) Third, the results will often tell the action. Is God blessing what you’re doing?
2. Tonight we are going to read about the Holy Spirit in action.
  - a) The Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in this chapter.
  - b) Remember that Luke wrote most of Acts years after the actual events.
    - i) Luke had the advantage of hindsight to see how God was working.
    - ii) That is often the case in our lives. We just go forward, seeking God’s guidance, going where we are blessed, changing directions where God is blocking our actions. Seeing the long-term work of the Holy Spirit is often hindsight.
  - c) This chapter is full of patterns for us to follow as Christians.
    - i) It talks about praying prior to action.
    - ii) It talks about prophecy, in many forms.
    - iii) It talks about how to witness and the importance of knowing your audience.
    - iv) It talks about the enemies of the Gospel and how to deal with them!
3. This chapter also marks the beginning of “Part 2” of the Book of Acts, which is Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles.
  - a) It’s pretty amazing to think about that a few guys, mainly Paul, going on foot from town to town, spread the message of Jesus, and from there, Christianity has reached millions and millions of people over vast continents and many cultures.
  - b) Think of the world-impact of Christianity, especially to non-Jews, and realize that the whole thing started with Paul and a few companions walking from town to town.
4. We have a lot of verses to cover tonight, so I’ll keep my intro short. Consider it a blessing! ☺
5. Verse 1: In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.
  - a) Let me paraphrase this. Here are 5 guys that are part of this growing church in the City of Antioch.
    - i) The original Greek implies that the first 3 are prophets and last 2 are teachers.
    - ii) Somehow, the Holy Spirit told this group to “separate” Baranbus and Saul to go elsewhere and preach the Gospel. “How” they are told this we don’t know, we can only speculate.

- b) OK, why mention these guys? Other than Barnabus and Saul, what is the purpose?
  - i) In Christianity, there are no “important and unimportant” people. Those who pray for the missionaries are just as important as the missionaries themselves are.
    - a) As to “Simeon called Niger”, the word “Niger” is from the Latin meaning black, and he was probably from African decent.
      - (1) He *may* have been the Simeon who was the bearer of Jesus' cross on the way to Calvary (see Luke 23:26).
    - b) We don't know anything about the other two, Lucius and Manaen, other than this verse. The verse implies Manaen was a foster brother of the Herod who had John the Baptist killed.
  - c) One of the things that fascinates me about these 3 verses is *after* the message is received from the Holy Spirit as to “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul”, they *kept on* praying!
    - i) Maybe they wanted further instruction on *what* was their mission.
    - ii) Maybe they were thankful for the Holy Spirit speaking to them.
    - iii) Most probably, the additional prayer was for God to bless the mission that God was now calling Barnabas and Saul upon.
- 6. Verse 4: The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.
  - a) The author Luke really emphasizes the Holy Spirit being involved in their mission.
    - i) We will discover this missionary journey was very successful.
    - ii) Thus, Luke is giving credit to God, via the Holy Spirit. There is something for us to learn as God blesses our lives.
  - b) Remember that the journey was started in Antioch, which is a large city.
    - i) Seleucia is a port town, and a suburb of Antioch.
    - ii) From there, they set sail to the island of Cyprus.
  - c) Why Cyprus?
    - i) There is nothing in the text that states that Holy Spirit specifically told them to go to Cyprus. If God did tell them, it is not stated.
    - ii) What I suspect, along with most commentators, is that they did the logical thing. Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36).
    - iii) That's a good lesson for us. If God is not giving us specific details on *how* he wants us to carry out his plans for our lives, do the logical thing. The logical thing would involve:
      - a) 1. Studying the Bible. God would never call you do something that violates his word.
      - b) 2. Know what your spiritual gifts are and your personal experience.
        - (1) Barnabas knew the geography of Cyprus. He knew where the synagogues were located and where people met. By his experience it would be the right place to go next.
  - d) There is an interesting little footnote at the end of Verse 5: “John was with them as their helper.”
    - i) This is John-Mark, not John the Apostle, nor John the Baptist.
    - ii) Later, we will read of this John deserting Barnabas and Saul in Verse 13.
    - iii) The reason is unknown, but there is lots of speculation in the commentaries.
    - iv) What we *do* know, is that God called Barnabas and Saul, and never mentioned John. My theory (for what that's worth!) is that this was a mistake on their part and a lack of trust in God in the specific instructions they were given.

7. Verse 6: They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus,
  - a) Before we get into this Bar-Jesus character, notice what was/was not said:
    - i) There was nothing said of any success so far on the island of Cyprus.
    - ii) The text says they went to different synagogues, until they came to the town of Paphos. Remember that the whole time this small missionary group is on an island with many towns.
    - iii) I suspect that so far, there is no luck. Why is that important?
      - a) Remember that these men were specifically called by God to go witness for him. Can you imagine the discouragement they felt so far?
      - b) I can just hear them murmuring “are you sure God called us to do this? Maybe we picked the wrong location!”
      - c) This little lesson is a reminder of God’s timing. Just because God calls you to do something, don’t expect immediate results as *you* expect them. Often, we don’t see the results of our works immediately, and in some cases, our lifetime.
8. Verse 6, part 2: There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus,<sup>7</sup> who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.
  - a) The “proconsul” is a Roman governor. In territories that were part of the Roman Empire and cooperative to Roman, a proconsul was placed in charge of the territory.
  - b) OK, so who is this Bar-Jesus guy? A clue is his name “Like Jesus”.
    - i) Remember what Jesus said: "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Matthew 24:5 NKJV)
    - ii) Some of Christian’s greatest enemies are those *pretending* to be Christians. Most books of the New Testament have at least some warnings about false teachers.
      - a) “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:4 NKJV)
    - iii) I’m sure this guy had magical powers. He may have some fortune-telling ability. He was the governor’s right-hand-man. You don’t get that far unless you had some special powers.
      - a) God specially calls us to avoid any contacts with the demonic world. In Exodus, God calls for capital punishment on anyone practicing sorcery (Exodus 22:18)
    - iv) When it comes to spiritual warfare, I take the view that Satan can’t read our minds, but he is *very* aware of the facts of our lives. I’m sure he was also aware that God called Barnabas and Saul to go preach. Why do I bring this up?
      - a) With Bar-Jesus, we are dealing here with a false prophet. This is a man with access to the spiritual, demonic world. God allows demons power. This is because God wants us to choose him out of free will, and God wants to make the other choices enticing enough to consider.
9. There is good news to all of this. Let’s go back to Verse 7: “The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.”
  - a) This proconsul had probably heard about Barnabas & Saul traveling around the island.
  - b) This leads back to the prayer meeting before the journey began.
    - i) Here was this missionary journey, unsuccessful to date.
    - ii) Now the head-guy of the entire island wants to hear the message!

c) Again, Satan's forces were aware of this, and thus "Bar-Jesus" was sent to try to stop them.

i) How do we, as Christians combat such forces?

a) The primary answer is prayer. The classic Christian expression is that "We and God make a majority". If God's will is being done, there is nothing Satan, nor his forces can do to stop it.

b) Jesus said to Peter "You are Peter, a stone; and upon this rock I will build my church; and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18 The Living Bible)

10. Next, the results of prayer are shown in the next 3 verses. Verse 8: But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.<sup>9</sup> Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,<sup>10</sup> "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"<sup>11</sup> Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

a) First of all, Saul, does not inflict the blindness, God did. Saul was given the prophecy of what was going to happen to the guy and Saul announced it.

i) This is the same thing Peter did when Ananias and his wife Sapphira fell dead. Peter announced it, and then the death occurred. (Acts, Chapter 5, Verses 1-10).

b) The next question: Was God being cruel here in blinding this sorcerer?

i) Actually, it shows God's mercy. He was struck blind "for a time" (verse 11), not permanently. As Saul himself learned, being struck blind gives one time to think about the events at hand, and realize who is in charge.

ii) It taught the sorcerer that all power comes from God. His own sorcery power could not overcome being struck blind.

iii) One can preach many sermons on "spiritual blindness" using these verses. Here was a man deep in sin, to the point of being spiritual blind.

iv) Nothing further is said about this man. We can only speculate.

c) This is the first time that the author Luke calls Saul "Paul".

i) Saul was born of Jewish heritage, but was also a Roman citizen and of Greek culture, which was dominant in his home territory of Tarsus.

ii) Most commentators believe that Saul was his given name, and Paul was the name used when he was living and working in Greek culture.

iii) Paul means "little". People suspect he was short in stature. The same way people would nickname somebody "shorty".

a) It also defined Paul's character. The more Paul grew as a Christian, the more he realized his sinful nature before God. As he grew, he thought less of himself and more of God. Notice the progression of Paul's self description in these 3 verses:

(1) "I am the least of the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15:9)

(2) "I am least of all the saints" (Ephesians 3:8)

(3) "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst." (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV)

b) These verses are in chronological order and shows Paul's maturity in his self-opinion.

iv) From this point forward I will only refer to "Saul/Paul" as Paul. This is important as later we are going to discuss King Saul, which is a different person.

11. Meanwhile, back to the pro-council, Verse 12: When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.
  - a) Miracles don't always lead to conversion, but this one did.
  - b) Luke doesn't go into details about his conversion, just that "he believed"
    - i) Early church historians mention that this guy became a Christian.
12. Verse 13: From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup> After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."
  - a) Barnabas, Paul and John are now sailing off the island of Perga, back to the mainland, to a different city.
  - b) A typical Synagogue service consisted mainly of
    - i) A reading from one of the five books of Moses (a.k.a. "The Law")
    - ii) A reading from one of the other books of the Hebrew Bible ("The Prophets")
    - iii) Praise songs, prayers, sermon, etc.
    - iv) Finally, a guest speaker would be free to comment, as Paul was here.
      - a) In Verse 15, Paul was given the opportunity to speak.
      - b) I could just see Paul grinning from ear to ear by the fact he was given the opportunity to preach about Christ. That's a good attitude for all of us to learn from.
  - c) Here (verse 13) is where John deserted them. Again, commentators state lots of theories, but they are just that. Because of Luke's emphasis on the Holy Spirit calling Barnabas and Paul, I believe that God never called John for this trip, and thus the problem.
    - i) We do know some things about John.
      - a) This is John-Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark.
      - b) Again, he is not John the Apostle, nor John the Baptist.
      - c) He was the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10).
      - d) In Acts 15, we will learn that John's desertion caused a split between Paul and Barnabas, and they each went their separate ways.
      - e) Paul's attitude toward John was somehow made better years later, and Paul makes a positive mention of him. (Colossians 4:10)
13. Here comes Paul: Verse 16: Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! <sup>17</sup> The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, <sup>18</sup> he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, <sup>19</sup> he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. <sup>20</sup> All this took about 450 years.
  - a) The first thing you have to notice is the similarity between Paul's speech here and Stephen's speech in Chapter 7. They both begin by reciting Israel's history. Why?
    - i) Part of it is to emphasize the *Jewishness* of Jesus. Paul wants to show the audience that he is a Jew, one of them. In persuasive speech, it is often good to start off with the common bond.
      - a) A mistake Christians make in talking to Jews is to think of Christianity as a separate religion. We worship the same God. A Christian is, in a lot of ways, a Jew who accepted Judaism and the gift of the Messiah, Jesus. A Christian buzz-term is a "completed Jew".
        - (1) Gentiles are "adopted" into God's family (Gal. 4-5, et. al.)

- (2) “The opening verse of the New Testament states that Jesus is the “Son of David, the Son of Abraham”. Jews make the mistake of ignoring Jesus as the Son of David (Messiah). Christians make the mistake of ignoring Jesus is the Son of Abraham (Jewish).”
      - (a) Phillip Yancey from the book “The Jesus I Never Knew”
  - ii) Paul’s speech has a lot of similarity to Stephen’s speech in Chapter 7. When Stephen ended that speech, he was stoned to death for making it. Reading that speech, you could sense Stephen’s frustration that nobody was “getting it”, as he changes his tone to anger near the end. (OK John, and your point is? ☺)
    - a) Paul remembered that speech. It did have an affect upon his life. What we have to remember as Christians is that we don’t always get to see the results of our good works for God.
    - b) “So also is my Word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It shall accomplish all I want it to and prosper everywhere I send it.”
      - (1) (Isaiah 55:11 The Living Bible)
  - b) The second thing to notice about Paul’s speech is the emphasis on what God did.
    - i) Re-read this paragraph and notice the “God did this” and “He” did that.
    - ii) It summarizes 450 years of history with an emphasis on God’s action.
    - iii) One of the big themes of Paul’s speech is to set up the necessity of sending Jesus. He is emphasizing the Jew’s failure to keep the law.
      - a) Verse 18 says “he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert “. This was punishment for disobedience.
- 14. Back to Paul’s speech. Verse 20: "After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup> Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. <sup>22</sup> After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’
  - a) Paul brings his history lesson to a halt, and focuses on the time of Samuel the Prophet. At that time, the Jews asked for a king. Reading the story in 1st Samuel, God took this as an insult. God wanted *himself* to be their king and not to focus on an earthly ruler as such. Because God loved them, he gave into their request.
  - b) King Saul was a lousy choice. God picked Saul because he reflected what the people wanted. Somebody who was physically intimidating (i.e., tall, good-looking). (1st Sam 9:2).
    - i) King Saul had a lot of fears. His story in 1st Samuel is one of failure. It reflected the people’s fears of their enemies.
  - c) Next, God, removed King Saul and David was the next king. (I’m summarizing a lot of 1st Samuel. Saul actually committed suicide after he was wounded in battle.) David knew he was anointed to be king. One of David’s greatest attributes was that he waited on God’s timing to remove Saul and never hastened to kill Saul, even when Saul wanted to kill David.

- d) What was the main difference between King Saul & David?
- i) The great lesson to learn from Saul's life is that God desires obedience. The fall of Saul is described in these 2 verses:
    - a) But Samuel replied (to Saul): "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king." (1 Sam 15:22-23 NIV)
    - b) Saul was removed as God's chosen leader (years prior to his death and end of his reign as king) as he had failed to obey God.
  - ii) Paul sums up the difference between Saul and David in the last sentence of Verse 22: "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." (Paul was quoting 1 Samuel 16:22).
    - a) David was "chosen" as a leader. God knew that David would be obedient in all that God asks him to do. (God knows all things)
    - b) This is not to say that David wouldn't sin. It is just that when David *did* sin, he sought God's forgiveness. Saul only sought God's forgiveness out of fear of losing his power.
15. Paul continues, Verse 23: "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.
- a) God made a specific promise to David. It is as follows:
    - i) "When your (David's) days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (2 Sam 7:12-13 NIV)
    - a) To take these verses by themselves, they speak of a king who will reign "forever". In the Bible, the word "forever", literally means "forever".  
☺
    - b) However, the next verse of 2nd Samuel is also interesting:
    - c) "I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. (2 Sam 7:14 NIV)
      - (1) One can see a "double-fulfillment" in this verse.
      - (2) It can refer to David's son Solomon. When he went into idolatry late in his life, God did inflict punishment on him.
      - (3) It can also refer to Jesus bearing our sins.
  - b) In both Judaism and Christianity, there is a style of prophecy called "typology".
    - i) This is where the future is predicted by patterns in the Old Testament.
    - ii) For example, one can study Moses or Joseph as a *type* of Christ, based on the patterns of their life and compare it to Jesus.
    - iii) Even Jewish rabbis, who don't believe in Jesus, acknowledge that much of what they believe about a Messiah comes from patterns of Biblical characters.
    - iv) Because David was "pre-destined" at a young age to be the leader, he is seen as a "type" of the Messiah in prophecy.

16. Meanwhile, back to Paul's speech. Verse 24: Before the coming of Jesus, John (the Baptist) preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup> As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'
  - a) Remember that Paul is speaking to a knowledgeable Jewish audience (know your audience when you speak!). They knew that a promise is given to them that a descendant of David would be the Messiah.
  - b) OK, then, why bring up John the Baptist? What does he have to do with anything?
    - i) First of all, historians record that John's reputation was well known to Jews.
      - a) He was regarded "by all the people" as a great prophet. (Matthew 21:26)
    - ii) Therefore, Paul uses him as a "witness" that Jesus is the Messiah, as John the Baptist testifies to that fact. (Matthew 3:15-17 et. al.)
17. Paul continues, Verse 26: "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. <sup>27</sup> The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. <sup>29</sup> When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.
  - a) Many, if not most able-bodied Jews travel to Jerusalem every year for Pentecost. I'm sure enough Jews from this island did make the trip and knew about Jesus' death.
  - b) Because Jesus was a "miracle worker", the people looked to him as a Messiah for the purposes of overthrowing Rome. When Jesus was killed, they figured "well, that's the end of that, lets look for someone else".
  - c) The "kicker", as we say in the business world, is the next verse:
18. Verse 30: But God raised him from the dead, <sup>31</sup> and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.
  - a) Let's look at the other major world religions.
    - i) Mohammed never claimed to rise from the dead.
    - ii) Buddha, Confucius, etc. never claimed to rise from the dead.
    - iii) New-Age philosophy acknowledges Jesus as a "great spirit", but never as flesh and blood, raised from the dead to seat at the right hand of God. To do so would be to acknowledge Christianity as authentic.
    - iv) Jews to this day respect and acknowledge Jesus as a great teacher, but not as someone who rose from the dead and is God.
  - b) The question to every person is always "did Jesus do what the Bible says he did?" and "What is our response to this information?"
    - i) The Bible teaches that over 500 people saw Jesus alive (1 Corinthians 15:6). Try getting 500 people to agree on anything!
      - a) One of my favorite pro-Jesus arguments is called "die for a lie".
        - (1) Most, if not all the apostles and early Christians were tortured and painfully killed for their claims they saw Jesus alive again.
        - (2) If you want to crucify, torture and painfully kill me, I'll probably confess to *anything* you ask me, just to stop the pain. The only thing that would stop me is if I was so convinced of "the truth" and *knew* my eternal salvation depended upon it, I would still confess the risen Jesus.

- ii) The 2nd question is if you acknowledge Jesus as God, what are you doing about it?
    - a) Demons believe in Jesus, they just refuse to follow him!
      - (1) This is why Christianity requires you accept Jesus as your Lord, not just your "Savior".
- 19. Paul is now going to start quoting a whole bunch of Old Testament Scriptures for support. Verse 32: "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers <sup>33</sup> he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. '
- a) I always like it when Jesus or Paul interprets the Old Testament for me. It makes my job a lot easier! ☺
    - i) Paul quotes Psalm 2:7: "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."
    - ii) What did Paul quote that reference?
    - iii) The key to understanding the verse is to read it in context:
    - iv) Paul is talking about and arguing for the resurrection of Jesus.
    - v) When God the father says, "today I have become your father", this is about God-the-father resurrecting Jesus. Let me explain it further.
      - a) To give a gift to someone, the transaction is not completed until the person receiving the gift *accepts* the gift.
      - b) When a person buys a product, the sale is not complete until the customer walks away with the merchandise and the price is paid.
      - c) Jesus died for our sins. How do we know God accepted that as payment? The resurrection. This announcement of "I have become your father" is God announcing his acceptance of Jesus' full payment on the cross for our sins.
      - d) Jesus always was, and always will be God (John 1:1-2, Colossians 1:16).
        - (1) He is God, part of the Trinity.
      - e) His "son-ship" was created when Jesus became man for our sakes.
    - b) Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses, who believe Jesus was a created being, and not God-eternal, will use this verse as an argument. They will say "Today I have become your father", therefore God created Jesus.
      - i) The answer is always "A text taken out of context becomes a pretext."
        - a) The subject is resurrection, not the creation of Jesus the son!
  - 20. Back to Paul, Verse 34: The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'
  - a) Paul here quotes Isaiah 55:3. Let me quote you the whole verse:
      - i) "Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you; the sure mercies of David." (NKJV)
      - ii) The key word is "everlasting" covenant. That is how Paul says that the promise of the Messiah will be forever and will not decay.
  - 21. Verse 35: So it is stated elsewhere: 'You will not let your Holy One see decay.'
  - a) This is a quote of Psalm 16:10. The same principal applies here as the Isaiah quote.
  - 22. Verse 36: "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. <sup>37</sup> But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.
  - a) What's Paul's point here? Some people might read these verses and state that God was talking about David, or his son Solomon. Paul is arguing in effect "Look guys, David is dead and his body is decaying. His gravesite is here in Israel. That's how I know God was not talking about David himself, but someone else, who lives forever.

- b) One of the mistakes we make in understanding prophesy is we try to “spiritualize” verses. Liberal interpretations of the Bible will say, “Well, God was talking about Solomon. When the prophets say he will “live forever”, it is just an exaggerated blessing”. Nonsense! It refers to a future king who God literally resurrected to life!
23. Verse 38, Paul gives the closure: "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. <sup>39</sup> Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.
- a) There's the gospel, right in the middle of verse 38:
    - i) “Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.
  - b) Paul's point is that one cannot get salvation by the Law of Moses. What does he mean?
    - i) God is perfect. God's standards for salvation are perfection. There are two ways to make it into heaven. One is to obey every law given by Moses, and never *once* make a mistake. Method #2 is to accept Jesus payment for your sins as stated in Verse 38.
      - a) If you *think* it's possible to obey every point of the law *every time*, try reading Jesus' interpretation of the law in Matthew, Chapters 5-8!
    - ii) A favorite Bible question is always, “Why didn't God send Jesus right after Adam & Eve sinned? Why the long time gap? Glad you asked! ☺
      - a) Part of it was to show the long history of failure on man's part (the Jewish nation) to be able to keep the law. Their failure showed the necessity of sending Jesus. That is one of the points Paul is hammering here.
24. Paul, now finished with the good news, now gives the bad news, Verse 40: Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: <sup>41</sup> “Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.”
- a) Paul closes with a warning. If you don't accept Jesus, you will be condemned. This is what Paul is getting at with this final warning.
  - b) In Verse 41, Paul is quoting from Habakkuk 1:5
    - i) If you read that verse in context, it appears to be talking about something else. Remember that prophecy involves “patterns”, not just direct predictions about the future. This is taught in both Judaism and Christianity.
    - ii) One of the rules of Christian bible study is that the “‘New’ is *revealed* in the ‘Old’” meaning that quotes from the Old Testament are often interpreted directly for you in the New Testament.
  - c) This seems like a strange away to end a speech. Not with the promise, but with the warning of eternal condemnation. Some people respond best to the good news, but others need to hear the bad news as well. To quote Walter Martin:
    - i) “If they won't listen to Jesus, give ‘em Moses!”
      - a) Sometimes preaching the good news is not enough. Preachers can sometimes be guilty of spending too much time on heaven and not enough on hell. Remember that Jesus himself spent more time talking about hell than heaven.

25. Verse 42: As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.
- a) Paul didn't end with "all of you who believe in Jesus, come leave this synagogue and follow me". That wasn't Paul's intention. He knew that this message was difficult for Jews to accept. He wanted them to think about it.
  - b) Some people did follow Paul and Barnabas out of the synagogue and wanted to hear more. These verses hint that, but don't state that they believed in Jesus, as Paul and Barnabas told them to "continue in the grace of God".
    - i) I take that as a view not to abandon Judaism, but to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah and believe in him (some commentators disagree with this view).
26. Verse 44: On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup> When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.
- a) Word spread quickly. Let's go back to the beginning of this chapter. A group of guys prayed for Paul and Barnabas. We don't read of much success during their missionary visit until this sermon. We had the governor of the island who was impressed with their message. At the end of Paul's sermon, he and Barnabas just left. Now what?
    - i) The place was packed with people wanting to hear more!
  - b) This is a great lesson for church growth. Forget the church marketing plans. The best method for church growth is preaching the Word of God, preaching it systematically, and taking it seriously. God will bless that and the crowds will come.
  - c) Success also brings the enemy around. Here the leaders of the church were jealous. They were losing their power base to someone else.
    - i) Unfortunately this happens in church congregations too. I've seen the growth of a bible study group out of a church, and the leaders ask the guy to leave.
27. Success of Christian growth and people becoming Christians will almost always bring out the spiritual enemies. We can see this from the rest of the chapter. Verse 46: Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'
- a) Paul was not addressing all the Jews in the synagogue, just those who rejected the message of the Gospel.
  - b) Paul takes the view that the Gospel *must* be preached first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Romans, Chapters 9 and 10 lay this out. It is the view that the Messiah would be promised to Israel and he would also be a "light to the Gentiles".
  - c) Paul quotes Isaiah as his support for the idea of "Preach to Jews first, then Gentiles".
    - i) "I, the LORD, have called you (Messiah) in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people (first) and a light for the Gentiles (second) (Isaiah 42:6 NIV)
28. Verse 48: When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.
- a) This verse has a great balance in the debate between "pre-destined by God" and the "free-will choice" by man.
    - i) "Pre-destined": "appointed for eternal life";
    - ii) "Free-will": "believed".

- iii) I believe the Bible teaches both. I reconcile it by the fact that God knows all things, and he exists outside of time. We exist *within* time, and therefore, by our understanding, it is our choice. Since God knows all things, he knows who chooses to believe the Gospel.
  - b) In my bible, the word “all” is underlined. The word “all”, in Greek, means “all”. ☺
    - i) That means, no matter how bad your sin, no matter what your opinion of yourself is, you are eligible for this salvation!
  - c) Notice the Gentiles “honored the word of the Lord”. That means they *believed* what Paul said. Acceptance of the Gospel message is to believe it and act upon it.
29. Verse 49: The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. <sup>50</sup> But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. <sup>51</sup> So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.
- a) I can just picture the Jewish leaders of this synagogue talking to the leading men and women of this town: “Are you going to listen to these nuts? We’ve been studying the Bible all our lives. We know this stuff. We graduated from the best Hebrew universities. These guys are nobodies. Besides if you believe them, you’ll lose your prestige, power and establishment in this town. Remember that you’re the *leading* men/women. Without us, you’ll lose that!”
    - i) Unfortunately this happens in Christianity too. The “tyranny of the status quo” is a dangerous thing.
  - b) For Paul and Barnabas to “shake off the dust of their feet” is a Jewish idiom for saying “you are so bad, I don’t even want the dust of your town on my feet”.
  - c) Iconium is the mainland. When Paul and Barnabas left, they sailed west to the island of Cyprus. Now they set sail north back to the mainland.
    - i) Most Bibles have maps in the appendix that show Paul’s 3 missionary journeys and his travels. This is a good study aid.
  - d) Notice Paul & Barnabas’ attitude of the rejection. They were being persecuted for their teaching. Their reaction? Verse 52: “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”
    - i) That’s something to keep in mind when people are treating you badly for your witness as a Christian.
    - ii) “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12-13 NIV)
30. Let’s pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons you have taught. We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May he continue to guide us for your glory. Make it known to us what is your will for our lives, and how we may glorify you through our thoughts and actions. Lord, we also know that the enemy is always present. Keep us on our guard, and remember that prayer is our greatest weapon in this battle. For we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.