

Text: Acts 13:13-43

Topic: the gospel.

Theme: The effect of the gospel

My purpose for this message: Through faith in Jesus Christ, you can be justified before God, free from all guilt and condemnation.

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## [Book Thesis: The Power of God Spreads the Gospel]

### The Good News

#### PRAY.

Have you seen the Geico commercials talking about getting good news? In each story, there's one person anticipating good news, and another person supposedly bringing good news. An attorney meets his client who's in jail and he's very upbeat. The inmate assumes he's getting out soon but the attorney says, "No, but I do have some good news; I saved a bunch of money on my car insurance with Geico."

Most of our good news is temporary: the new car we couldn't wait to get is now rusty; the boy you had a crush moved on to another girl and is now a 35-year old unemployed lifeguard. The company where you got the promotion is now bust, and although you survived the tumor, you eventually die of a heart attack.

Here's *genuine* good news: God solved your biggest problem. How can a sinner like you, be acceptable to God? The word on today's streets is that if there is a God, he's not a judging God, he's a loving God, as if it would be impossible for both to be true. READ Heb.12:23: *You have come to God, the judge of all men...*

God solved your biggest problem with the gospel. The very word means "good news." The world has a catalogue full of substitute good news. In India, tens of millions of Hindus observe caste (class) regulations, do religious rites, and make sacrifices, hoping to make gods happy. Muslims fulfill 5 pillars of faith including praying 5 times a day, almsgiving, fasting, and a pilgrimage to Mecca hoping to catch Allah's eye.

Buddhists kneel in the streets before the monks, giving them rice and presents hoping to appease the gods. Even professing Christians work, work, work, hoping to find in their work, God's acceptance: church attendance, tithes, and good deeds. But God shakes his head. "Acceptance by me comes when you embrace what I've *already* done, not in what you are doing." READ Acts 13:13-43

This was Paul's first recorded evangelistic sermon. He, Barnabas, and Barnabas' cousin John Mark, sailed from Cyprus across the Mediterranean to what is now Turkey. At Perga, John Mark decided to leave the trio to go home to Jerusalem. The desertion so infuriated Paul that on the next mission trip (Acts 15:36-39), he refused Barnabas' request to try him again.

"No way; he's unreliable." Perhaps mission work was turning out to be too hard for Mark, maybe he didn't like that Paul had assumed his cousin's role of leader, or maybe he objected to Paul preaching a gospel that didn't include adhering to Moses' Law.

So the two left pressed on to Antioch, crossing 100 miles of rugged terrain in the Taurus Mountains. There were 16 cities dotting the Med. Region an Asia Minor, and this one—although actually in Phrygia (frig'ia), was near Pisidia and thus distinguished from the others that way.

Jews among the population meant there was a synagogue so that's where the missionaries showed up first. In most Christian churches this morning, there is sermon scheduled. But in a first century synagogue, a sermon was only a *possibility*; one would

be preached only if there was a capable speaker—sometimes that meant a visitor. Perhaps Paul still dressed like a Pharisee and made him a likely candidate. They invited him to speak.

Inviting *Paul* to speak was like waving a red flag in front of a bull! (1 Cor.9:16: I am compelled to preach!), and so he launched into his gospel presentation. He covered a thousand years beginning with Abraham—God selecting Israel as His chosen people—to King David. Then stopping the history with a giant they were familiar with—King David, Paul jumped ahead a thousand years to one they *weren't* familiar with: Jesus.

You have to understand that though Jesus was likely unknown to all of them, both Jews and Gentile *converts* to Judaism, knew that in the OT Scriptures, God promised a Deliverer, a Savior, the Anointed One, the Messiah—there were many terms for him, and he would be a “son of David,” and sit on David’s throne forever ( 2 Sam.7:15-16). But they didn’t know he had come.

That the “...*the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...*” of Is.9:6-7 had come. That the One prophesied in Is.42:1, 6-7: *Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. ...will be “ a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind.”* The one whom Isaiah predicted would be “...*he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...*” (Is.53:5) had already landed.

Paul explained to his surprised crowd how Jerusalem’s Jewish leaders were responsible for Jesus’ death despite David’s son having committed no crime

[By the way, this is the issue in Mel Gibson’s new film that comes out next week: are the Jews responsible for Jesus’ death. Well, yes, *some* were. And you can’t change that without editing history. Paul was a Jew, a semite. It was not anti-semitic for him to blame some Jerusalem Jews for Jesus’ death.]

But Paul was not *preaching* blame, he was preaching, hope; deliverance. V.30, “But God raised him from the dead!” People saw him. (In fact, 1 Cor.15:6 says over 500 people did.)

And then Paul gave the good news; how this Jesus could matter in the lives of those listening that day. READ vv.38-39. You can be forgiven of all your sins by faith in Jesus Christ. Every personal fault, every character defect, every individual sin, susceptibility to sin, and sin habit, Jesus died for. It’s not what we can do for God, it’s what God already did for us. It’s not what we can buy for God, it’s what God already bought for us; it’s not what we give up that matters, it’s what God already gave up.

Some were thrilled; as we’ll see next week, some were not. At the benediction, Paul recalled the words of Hab.1:5 to warned opponents (41). “Be careful if you are a scoffer; for I’m going to do something you would never believe.” Originally, God warned the nations to turn to him or be consumed by the Assyrians. *This* time, the warning was not just that there would be an earthly judgment for refusing the gospel, but an eternal one.

### **Concl:**

This good news is for you today too. Will you repent of your sins and put your faith in Christ to save you? By yourself, God regards you as His enemy and the future is the same for you as all his enemies. But praise God, in his mercy, He offers to forgive your sins if you will turn to Christ in faith. Through him, everyone who believes is justified; freed from guilt and God’s condemnation.

Christ is the key. If Jesus is not the main issue, we're just practicing Jews. And lost. Quote 1 Cor.15:3-4.

Because we live in America in AD 2004 and not in Prygia in AD 40 or so, we must make a word of explanation. Americans "believe" something is true, but do not act on it. We often call it intellectual assent: I believe that a particular political party holds the best promise for our nation. But I don't vote. I believe it's best—no, it's right—to wait until marriage to be intimate. But my girlfriend and I are sexually active.

No Jew—or even Gentile listening to Paul would have given much thought to such a thing. To them, "belief" meant not only agreeing that it's true, but acting upon it. So, elsewhere in Scripture, Paul, Jesus, and others writing—or being quoted in the NT—emphasize that faith includes repentance: a turning in my mind and life, from my love affair with sin.

Are you ready to make that choice? To embrace the good news as yours and put faith in Jesus Christ? READ Rom.10:9-10.