

Paul Preaches Jesus
Acts 13:14-52
Pastor John Miller

In Acts 13:14, Luke says, “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 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. 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.”

At the end of verse 16, Paul stood up in the synagogue, beckons with his hands, and asks the people to give audience and to listen. It's at this point that Paul launches into his sermon. A couple of things about this sermon, it's the first recorded sermon of Paul in the Bible. There will be others in the book of Acts, but this is the first one. That doesn't mean this is the first time Paul ever preached, no doubt, Paul preached frequently; but this is the first one recorded by Luke. It's the longest recorded sermon that is given to us in the book of Acts or, for that matter, in the New Testament of Paul's preaching.

I believe the greatest need in the church today (and it only stands logically as the result also in the world today) is for biblical preaching, is for expository preaching. What is sad and frustrating to me as I see it as the greatest need in the church today, and some of you might say, “Well, that's because you're a preacher. That's what you do, and you think that's the greatest need.” Yet, I do believe that it is the greatest need in the church, and the church is the most important thing for the world. What the world needs is Jesus. Amen? What the world needs is to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the way that's going to happen is by the Word of God being preached or proclaimed. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul, writing his last words, some call it his swan song before he was to die, says to Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,” and he says, why? Because “...the time will come,” and I believe that time has come, “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts,” or desires, “shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

I do believe that's the top priority of the pastor, minister, and of us as the people of God, to share the gospel, to get the good news out, and tell others about Jesus Christ. When I think about the church, I think the church rises or falls on its preaching—as goes the preaching, so goes the church. At every point in church history, all the great revivals were actually preceded by biblical preaching, whether that be through the evangelist or through the pastor/teacher. Paul also told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, to make full proof of his ministry. I believe that's the priority of the church, that's the priority of the pastor, and the biblical preaching that I'm talking about is preaching that proclaims and communicates what the text actually means and says, or, you might say, what it says and what it means.

A lot of preaching today is life situational or kind of preaching that just helps people to do well in

life, to be built up, and encouraged in life. Very little preaching is expositional or has doctrinal content or seeks in its preaching to explain the meaning of the text in its historical, grammatical, and theological context. Now, that may sound boring to you, but I believe that's what it means to preach the Word. Every verse of Scripture has one meaning, and that one meaning should be derived based on the grammar, context, theology, and the intention of the original author—what he actually meant when he wrote it. A lot of preaching imposes on the text secondary application or devotional application or a meaning that wasn't really intended by the text. I think that as a result of that, the church is anemic, weak, biblically illiterate, and lacking spiritually resulting in not evangelizing as we should in the world around us today. Even in the book of Acts, the first great move of the church was Pentecost, when Peter preached his first sermon and three thousand souls were added to the church. Then the church began to move out a little from the area of Jerusalem as the result of the preaching of Stephen. Now, you've had these sermons, Peter's sermon (Acts 2), then Stephen's sermon (Acts 7), and these were kind of transitional points in the book of Acts. Now you have Paul's sermon on this first missionary journey in Acts 13. They were out in the area of Galatia, many Gentiles came to the Lord, and there was much fruit. I do believe that what we need is preaching, biblical preaching. We need preaching that takes the text and conveys what the text actually says and means, thus how it applies to our life. That's what it means to really preach the Word.

In verse 14, "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia," this is not Antioch of Syria where they came originally out of to start their missionary journey. This is in the area that we know where the churches of Galatia were. Paul makes a comment in Galatians 4:13 that when I came to you and preached, it was in weakness and in sickness, in fear, and much trembling. Paul was preaching there in the cities around the Antioch in Pisidia, but he did it with much weakness and sickness and needed to depend upon the Lord; but when he came, they went first of all to a synagogue.

In the synagogue, they would read the Scriptures. They would start with the Shime'i, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD," then they would read from the Law, and then from the Prophets, verse 15. It was customary that what they would do would be that someone could, impromptu, stand up and give an oratory, a lecture, a teaching, or an exposition on Scripture. When they saw Paul and Barnabas, they evidently understood that they were distinguished rabbis or teachers. Paul might have been wearing a robe that actually distinguished him as being a rabbi. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and it could be that they recognized that. They would customarily just call on someone impromptu. It would be like me coming out here tonight saying, "You know, I'm not going to teach. You're just going to listen to me. Does anyone want to say anything? Does anyone want to speak? Would anyone like to come up and talk for 20 minutes and share the Word of God?" We would just kind of pop up and do that impromptu, and that's what they would do in the synagogue. So, when they get in the synagogue, their custom was to go to the synagogues because they knew the Bible, they were reading the Bible, and Paul would use that as kind of a send-off point to begin to reach them with the good news of Jesus Christ as we're going to see in his sermon. It was a natural kind of a segue into preaching the gospel and an opportunity. Paul also had a love and a burden for the Jewish people. He wished beyond anything that they would come to know Jesus Christ. He had a

great love for them and a burden for them.

They cruise into this synagogue and read from the Law and the Prophets, and the point in time came in the synagogue service when they said to Paul and Barnabas, “Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” Can you imagine Paul or Barnabas saying, “No, that’s okay. We’ve journeyed a long ways. We’re kind of tired and we’re new here. We don’t really know anybody, so we’ll just sit and listen to you. You just go ahead.” No. God opened a door and Paul jumps through it. Amen? When God opens the door, jump through that door. Take advantage of that door. When God opens an opportunity for you to speak, guess what you should do? You should speak.

I remember being a young Christian and a little nervous about talking to my friends that I became a Christian or that I was converted. One day, I was working in the garage. I used to actually build surfboards for a living. I would build and sell them, and I did them in the garage. I built them on my own. So, I’m making a surfboard and my friends come over and are hanging out. I just got born again—my sins are forgiven, I got new life in Jesus. All they ever knew was that we would do drugs or party or hang out or go surf—that’s the John Miller they knew. I remember I hadn’t seen them for a few weeks after my conversion. They come over and say, “So, what’s been going on with you?” I’m like, “Uhhh.” I’ll never forget this, I panicked and just, “Uhhhh, nothing. I’ve just been hanging out. I haven’t been doing anything,” and I didn’t say anything. They visited for a while and then left. I felt so bad! I felt horrible. I’ll never forget, even as a young Christian saying, “Lord, please forgive me, and give me another opportunity. Lord, if I get another opportunity like that, Lord, give me strength, give me boldness, and help me to just jump through that door.” About an hour later, they all came back. I’m like, “Lord! I didn’t want You to answer that quick!” Again, I’m relating this story (it happened a long time ago) and I remember just, “Okay.” I just felt the Lord’s power and presence, and I started to preach and share. It was just amazing how they just sat there and listened. They were receptive and heard the gospel, and God emboldened and enabled me to do that. I said, “Lord, with Your help, I’ll never, ever, ever, ever, ever miss another opportunity. When You open the door, always give me that boldness and that ability to step through that.”

Sometimes we see that—God will open the door—and we panic or freak out. We go, “Oh, I’ve...” you’ve been to Bible study, you’ve been getting into the Word, you’re getting blessed, God’s filling your heart. You go to work and, “So, what have you been doing lately?” “Oh, nothing.” It’s like, “Nothing?” All the cool things that God is doing in your life and you just say, “Nothing?” God opens a door, we need to step through that door. By the way, this is the way the Holy Spirit works. I love that, “Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” I can almost imagine Paul looking at Barnabas thinking, Hey, is it you or is it me? They did a rock, paper, scissors, you know. Who gets to preach and stand up. Evidently, Paul won and got up, but the Holy Spirit is the One that opens the doors, opens hearts, leads, and guides us. They didn’t have any promotional guys going in. They didn’t have any flyers or any brochures. They didn’t have any advertisement. They just went in praying and walking in the Spirit. God opened the door, and they took a step and walked through that door.

In verse 16, "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." Now, the "Men of Israel" would be the Jews that were present in that synagogue, and "ye that fear God" is a reference to Gentiles who had proselyted and become Jews. They were called "proselytes of the gate." They were Gentiles that had actually become Jewish in their religion. They proselyted into Judaism. There were Jews there and Gentiles who had begun to follow Judaism. This was their audience.

Beginning in verse 17, I'll try not to get bogged down because I want you to get the whole sermon. The sermon goes to verse 41. I want to outline it for you as we go through it. It's a marvelous, marvelous sermon. Beginning in verse 17 to verse 25, Paul starts with preparation. Jesus is the Promised Messiah. He starts with the Old Testament, which they knew, and shows how it was God who sent the Messiah and that Messiah is Jesus. It wasn't Paul presenting Jesus. He was using the Scriptures to present Jesus and showing them that God was the One who sent this Messiah, this Christ, this Jesus, to be the Savior of the world.

Beginning in verse 17, "The God of this people," you might do this as we go through the section here, note all the references to God. "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 an high arm brought he them out of it," the "he them" bringing them out is a reference to God again, "And about the time of forty years suffered he," that is, God, "their manners in the wilderness." Paul is recounting their history and telling them all that God has done. "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that he," that is, God, "gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 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. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave," that is, God, "testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."

Notice verse 23, "Of this man's seed," that is, of David's seed or lineage, "hath God," emphasis on God, "according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour," and guess Who that Saviour is? Jesus, right? He finally comes right out and tells them that this Promised One is Jesus. Again, I want you to note as he recounts their history, he first mentions their exodus. They came out of Egypt (verse 17) with a high arm, that is, God's mighty power. He delivered them in the exodus. That exodus would be a 400-year period. They were in bondage to Egypt around 400 years.

Sometimes, when the Bible uses numbers, it actually rounds them off like we would do in ordinary speech. Sometimes we'll throw out numbers, and when we're talking to people, we're not trying to be exaggerating or trying to lie or anything, we just kind of, "About 300 people," or "About 30 people," or "About \$500." We might round it off, but it was 400 years that they were in bondage in Egypt. Then, they wandered in the wilderness for another 40 years, verse 18, "And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness." We all know about the desert march, right? How for 40 years they walked in circles until that whole generation

died out until the next generation was allowed to enter into the promised land. I'm giving you these numbers because it's going to add up to the 450 years mentioned in this text. I want to explain it to you.

After the wilderness, they had the conquest. It says, "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot." That was a period of about 10 years. So, you have 400 years, you have 40 years, and you have 10 years. The 10 years, again, was kind of rounded out. That's why it confuses people when you come to verse 20. It says, "And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years." People assume that the period of the judges was 450 years, but rather it goes back to the references of the exodus, the wilderness, and the conquest. They add up to 450 years of their history.

It then moves into the time of the kings, verse 21, "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." They said, "We want a king like the other nations." God warned them what a king would do to them and the problems that would happen, but they said, "No. That's okay. We want a king," so God granted them their request, and it turned out to be not a good a thing—rather than God ruling over them, they had King Saul ruling over them; and he turned his heart away from the Lord. Then, God raised up David. It says, "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David," verse 22. David, of course, was a man after God's own heart. He was the shepherd king of Israel, and "he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."

God made a promise to David. This is a very important point in the Bible where God promised David, after telling him, "You can't build Me a temple, but I will build you a house through your lineage, through your seed, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world will come." It's known as the Davidic covenant—God promised that through David's line Messiah would come. That's why Jesus was known as the Son of David. It was a Messianic title, God's promise to David, and God "raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus," or Yeshua, Jehovah Saves.

In verses 24-25, he then transitions into the New Testament with John the Baptist. "When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." Jesus comes on the scene, and the forerunner to Messiah was John the Baptist. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He came and preached, "repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 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," or sandals, "of his feet I am not worthy to loose." John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the first of the New Testament preachers. He actually bridged the gap between the old and the new. Jesus said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." When Jesus makes a comment like that, that's pretty good. So, John, filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb (and he was actually the cousin of Jesus) was the forerunner. He was prophesied by Isaiah that he would be, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." John pointed people to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world.” Again, that’s an element of importance in preaching—always point people to Jesus Christ.

When you share the gospel, always point people to Jesus. Always tell them about Jesus, who He is and what He can do. In proclaiming the gospel, it’s basically just stating the facts about His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection—that Jesus rose and He’s alive. That’s one of the central themes of this sermon, that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. There’s no substitute for preaching Christ. That’s where the power comes—in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Now he moves, beginning in verse 26, to declaration. First, there was preparation, the Old Testament foreshadowed and prophesied of the coming Messiah. Then, beginning in verses 26-37, we have the declaration of Jesus—that He is the Saviour, the One the prophets foretold. He says in verse 26, “Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God,” again, addressing the Jews and the proselytes, the Gentiles, the God fearers, “to you is the word of this salvation sent.” In the first section of preparation, it was all about what God had done—God had delivered them. God had provided for them. God had made a promise. God had sent a Saviour. You know, you can’t argue with what God had done. Now the whole focus is Jesus—who He is, what He came, and what He did. He says in verse 27, “For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not,” they didn’t know Jesus, “nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him,” two things, they don’t know Him and they don’t know the prophets, what they were prophesying. It goes together. They didn’t know the living Word, Jesus, and they didn’t know the written Word; the two go together because their eyes were blinded and their prejudice kept them from coming to faith in Jesus Christ. They were ignorant of the Living Word, who Jesus is, and the written Word, even though they read the prophets and the Scriptures.

Do you know it’s possible to know the Bible but not know Jesus? It’s possible to read the Bible but not have a knowledge of Jesus Christ or be saved. It says, “And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.” If you’re marking in your Bible or taking notes, this is the Cross. He’s saying they didn’t find any cause of death in Him, yet they desired him that he should be slain. This is a reference to His crucifixion. Jesus died. “And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him,” in other words, the Old Testament prophesied of Christ’s death, and the Jews actually fulfilled those prophecies in having Him crucified, “yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre,” that’s His burial. So He died, the cross, He’s buried, and in verse 30, “But God raised him from the dead.” Don’t you love those “But God’s” in the Bible?

Jesus died and Jesus was buried, but God, right? You bring God into the picture and there’s always hope. We were dead in our sins, but God who is rich in His mercy and His love forgave us, cleansed us, and made us His children. I love it, verse 30, “But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.” You have the Cross, the burial, the

resurrection—God raised Him from the dead—and then you have His post resurrection appearances, “He was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again,” there’s His resurrection again, “as it is also written in the second psalm.” What he’s begun to do now is he’s preaching Christ to them. He’s going to quote other Scriptures from the Old Testament that were messianic or had application to the message of the gospel of Jesus. Here in verse 33 he’s quoting from Psalm 2:7. “...he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm,” here’s the quote, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”

In Psalm 2:7, it’s interesting because you have God the Father actually talking directly to God the Son, which, by the way, supports the doctrine of the trinity. If God is speaking about His Son and says, “...this day have I begotten thee,” you have two persons there, God the Father speaking to and about God the Son. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” At this reference, Paul is actually focusing on the fact that at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God the Father was declaring God the Son to be just that—His only begotten Son. Now, a great cross-reference for that is Romans 1:4 where the Bible says that Jesus Christ is actually “declared,” or horizon or set off, “to be the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead.”

I’m convinced that what we need to do more often is actually preach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We always want to talk to people’s felt need, you know, are you lonely? Are you sad? Do you need a better marriage? Do you need this or that? Do you want to be more successful? We even hear sermons like that and people flock to come hear them, but what we need is Jesus. That’s what’s going to change our lives, especially in evangelism, and this is what Paul is all about in this sermon, by the way. He’s preaching to win people to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. If you’re going to share with people and see them come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, you’re going to have to talk about Jesus’ death, why He died (because of sin); you’re going to have to talk about His resurrection (what it was and that it took place for our justification), and that we’d have to put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ and believing in Him. In the Old Testament God made a promise that God would raise up His Messiah and that day He would be begotten. It’s from Psalm 2:7. The sermon is filled with Scripture, as any good sermon should be.

In verse 34 it says, “And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead,” Paul’s still speaking of His resurrection, “now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.” That’s a second quotation from the book of Isaiah 55:3, “I will give you the sure mercies of David,” as He promised through David the Messiah would come. In verse 35, “Wherefore he saith also in another psalm,” this is the third reference from the Bible, Psalm 16:10, “Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” In the Psalm, it seems like he’s speaking about David, but now as Paul preaches, we know that is a Messianic reference not to David but to Jesus Christ. He explains it, verse 36, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep,” or died,” and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption,” so this wasn’t a reference to David, it’s a reference to Jesus.

Verse 37, "But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption," that's a reference to Jesus Christ. Think about that. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist is actually not referring to David but yet a future coming of David's Son, that He would be raised from the dead; and it was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Now we've come to the third section of Paul's sermon, verses 38-41, where the sermon concludes and it's application. Another element of a good sermon is it has application. There's the explanation, exposition—you read it, you explain it—and then you apply it. The application should always be consistent with the interpretation. He says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren," he's getting ready to apply his sermon, "that through this man is preached," that is, through Jesus, "unto you the forgiveness of sins," I love that, "And by him," that is, Jesus, "all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." It's almost like you're reading the book of Galatians. By the way, remind yourself, would you, that Paul is preaching this sermon to the churches there in the area of Galatia. He's preaching in the area where the churches of Galatia would exist, so when he wrote to them in his Galatians epistle, he had so much to say about justification by faith apart from the law. So, he says, "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets," now he's going to quote another passage from the Old Testament, Habakkuk 1:5. "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." It's interesting, that passage in Habakkuk is about God using Gentiles to judge Israel, which was something that they couldn't fathom God would do, how God would use a Gentile nation to judge the nation of Israel; yet Paul here makes an application where God is going to save Gentiles, and the nation of Israel is rejected because they reject their Messiah. He's warning them. Paul ends his sermon with an invitation to believe, be forgiven, be justified, and then he warns them.

A couple of good elements in either preaching or witnessing, do you know what that is? Give an invitation. "Would you like to accept Christ? Jesus died for your sins. Jesus rose again from the dead. You can be forgiven by trusting Jesus Christ." Take Paul's sermon as a pattern for how you share the gospel and give them an invitation. "Would you like to pray right now?" They say, "Yes, I would." You go, "What?!" You freak out and don't know what to do. "Uhhhhhhh. Come to church this Sunday and the pastor will give an invitation," or "Let me call the pastor right..." No, no. Right then and there, wherever you're at, in the middle of the mall, just stop and say, "Okay, we can pray right now. You can invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart." Lead them in the prayer. Ask them to pray it out loud after you but make it their prayer from their heart. Pray that God would come into their heart, forgive their sins, and lead them in a prayer.

Paul actually gives them an invitation, and there's a lot of important truths packed in verses 38 and 39. The preaching of the gospel brings forgiveness, verse 38, "...that through this man is preached," by the way, notice the reference to "through this man is preached," so we need to keep preaching Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, that our sins can be forgiven. Also, verse 39, "And by him all that believe are justified," this is what's called the doctrine of justification by faith. Remember John 3:16? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth,” what’s another word for believe? Trust or faith. They’re all kind of different aspects of the same concept—you believe in Jesus, you trust in Jesus, you put your faith in Jesus. I like the idea of “trust” or “faith.” We even have a hard time understanding what “faith” is, but we understand “trust.” We understand what it means to trust somebody or to trust something, so you need to trust Jesus Christ to save you. You’re not trusting in your good works or your own righteousness. That’s what it means to be justified by faith. To be justified means that God declares you righteous, and it is true, it’s just as if I’ve never sinned. Now, we have sinned, but it’s as though we have not sinned. God actually declares us righteous. He doesn’t make us righteous in a practical sense, but He does declare us righteous in the judicial sense or a standing or position sense that we are declared righteous before God by our faith not by our good deeds.

In verse 39, Paul makes it clear that the law could not do that. It could not happen by the law of Moses. Through the law of Moses, no one can be justified, no one can be saved. This is probably one of the reasons why the Jews had such a difficult time receiving the gospel because they so loved the law and they loved Moses, and they loved the law of Moses. They were so devoted to the law and keeping the law. Remember in the synagogue, they read from the Law and the Prophets, and now Paul is coming along and saying, “You can’t be saved by keeping the law.” Their whole thing was trying to be good enough, keeping the law, in order to be saved, and now Paul says no one can be justified by the deeds of the law. This is really, almost a one-statement summary of the book of Galatians and the book of Romans.

In verse 40, the warning, “Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets,” he closes with a warning. I think it’s fitting that, as the Spirit leads you, when you’re witnessing and telling people about Jesus that you tell them, “Look, if you reject Christ, there’s no salvation. If you reject Christ and you die in your sins, you’ll go to hell.” “Oh, well, that’s not very nice. That’s not very loving.” No, but it’s true, and I think that we need to proclaim the truth and let people know that if you reject Jesus Christ, you can die in your sin and be lost for all eternity. He was preaching the full gospel.

Notice verse 41, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder,” he’s quoting from the book of Habakkuk. The closing is the results, verses 42-52. What happened as the result of Paul’s sermon? Well, there are three results. In verses 42-44, there was a greater hunger stirred in the people’s hearts. They wanted to know more. They wanted more of God’s Word. It says, “And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.” I know in some translations, rightfully so based on the Greek, that it would actually read, “when they were gone out of the synagogue, they besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.” In the Greek, it doesn’t say Jews or Gentiles, it just says “they.” It’s assuming in the King James translation, that it’s a reference to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

Notice verse 43, “Now when the congregation was broken up,” this was after church, after the service at the synagogue, “many of the Jews and religious proselytes,” or the Gentiles, “followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace

of God.” So, they followed them to their hotel, or wherever they were camping out, and said, “continue in the grace of God,” but notice verse 44, “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” Isn’t that awesome! Wouldn’t it be amazing if everyone in Menifee showed up to hear the Bible? If everyone in the whole city showed up to hear the Word of God? So, there’s a hunger. When the Word is preached, it creates a thirst and a hunger for more. Gentiles, who were not proselytes, were also present. There was a greater hunger.

Here’s the second result, verses 45-47, opposition. You can always bet, too, that when you share the gospel, there’s going to be opposition. “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.” We could go into a lot of different reasons why they were so upset, but in the text it’s obvious. When they saw all these Gentiles coming to hear God’s Word and these Gentiles were hearing that they could be saved by faith in Jesus apart from the law of Moses, these Jews were not happy. They were not happy. They felt threatened. They were upset. You go to Israel today and preach like this, they’re not going to be happy either. I mean, they’ll spit at you, throw rocks at you, yell at you. They get all uptight. Whenever you preach the gospel there is opposition.

Verse 46, “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.” Paul waxes very bold and says, “You counted yourself unworthy, you reject the gospel, so we’re going to turn to the Gentiles. We’ve gone to the Jew first, but now we’re going to go to the Gentiles.” Also, that indicates that the gospel is for the whole world. Verse 47, “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.” Salvation is for everyone, take note of that. For God loved the world—the gospel goes to everyone.

The third response, in closing, verses 48-52, is that there were Gentiles saved or converted. They came to faith in Jesus Christ, so it’s kind of mission accomplished. “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord,” which means that they believed the message that Paul spoke, “and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” You want to take note of that statement. I’m going to come back to that, “and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region,” all that area of Galatia, “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city,” it’s believed that these “chief men of the city” were the husbands of these honorable women. They were probably Gentile women who had husbands who were civic authorities in the cities, and they moved them to raise “persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled,” the word “expelled” means violently cast “them out of their coasts.”

What Paul and Barnabas did is interesting, verse 51, “But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.” They came 80 miles southeast to Iconium, and verse 52, “And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.” Isn’t that a great

conclusion? That's kind of like, The End. Guess what? We covered all those verses tonight, right? And, you're still alive! But, I'm not done yet, so don't clap too much.

I want you to get your markers out. I want to show you something, verse 44, "...hear the word of God." The whole city came to hear the Word of God. Jump down to verse 46, "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you," a second reference to the Word of God. Then, notice verse 48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord," I love that! Then, notice verse 49, "And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." Here you have this repetition, "the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord." What is it that we're to be doing as the church? It's preaching the Word of the Lord, right? Not, a social gospel, not philosophy, not psychology, not a feel-good, let's all be happy and have a good time message—preach the Word—nothing more, nothing less. Don't add to it, and don't take away from it. Don't substitute it, don't replace it; just preach the Word. He uses the word *kerusso*. It means to herald or proclaim God's Word. They did that. They were preaching the Word, and that's our responsibility, that's man's side.

It's interesting in verse 49 that the word of the Lord was preached, and then it says, verse 48, "...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," that's God's part. We do our part, we preach the Word of the Lord, and God does His part and saves as many as are ordained to eternal life. Isn't it interesting that thrown in this narrative passage of Paul's preaching, Luke records that those who are ordained by God to eternal life believed. Do you know what this is called? This is called the doctrine of election. It's taught in the Bible, and I believe it. I believe that God in sovereign grace saves those who will be saved, but I believe that we have a responsibility to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ—that's the means to that end. God is going to save whom He's going to save, but God wants us to be participants in those who will be saved. We can't just sit idly by and say, "Well, you know, if they're preordained, or if they're chosen by God or if they're elected by God, they'll get saved and I don't have to preach." That's crazy. The God who ordained the end, the salvation of sinners, ordained the means to the end. You say, "Well, I don't really understand that." Neither do I, so don't ask me any questions after church tonight. I don't understand it either, but it's taught in the Bible. We can be participants. We can share the gospel.

When I'm preaching and I give an invitation, "Would you like to accept Christ?" I know that only God can open a heart. Only God can convince them of sin and their need for Jesus Christ. We can't manipulate or trick them into heaven. Only God can do that work, but we can preach, and the Holy Spirit can take God's Word and bring conviction and salvation to them. So, God had actually ordained that certain...that should actually embolden us that God has people out there that He wants to save, and He's just waiting for us, in a mysterious sense, to be an instrument to go to them and tell them about Jesus so that they can come under conviction and then repentance and then faith in Jesus Christ. God chose us before the foundations of the world; and God ordained as many as would believe, they have eternal life. It's a mystery we can't understand, God's side and man's side. We preach the gospel, and God does the work of saving those who believe. It's all about preaching the Word of God.

I love verse 49, “And the word of the Lord was published,” that’s what we should be doing—getting out the Word of God—sharing, preaching, radio, tracts, booklets, and doing everything we can do to tell others about Jesus Christ. Notice verse 51, “But they shook off the dust of their feet,” when the Jews rejected the gospel. Jesus actually told them to do that in Luke 9:5 and Luke 10:11. He said, “And whosoever will not receive,” the gospel, “...shake off the very dust from your feet,” and move on. Don’t get bogged down. Don’t argue with them. Don’t get upset or give up. Just say, “Okay,” and move on. Sometimes we either give up and we don’t continue to preach, or we get mad and try to argue with people. It kind of gets us bogged down rather than just saying, “Okay, we’re going to move on.”

That’s what Jews did, by the way, whenever they would walk through Gentile territory. When they were leaving Gentile territory and entering into Jewish territory, they would literally take off their sandals and CLAP CLAP! knock the dust off. Then, they would step over the line into the Jewish territory, put their sandals back on, and would continue their journey. Why? Because they didn’t want any Gentile cootie dust in their turf. It was a symbolic gesture of CLAP CLAP! “Knock this Gentile, cootie stuff off,” you know, and put your sandals on and walk along. Jesus turns it around. He actually tells them if they reject the gospel, just shake the dust off your feet and move on. Now, you actually have Paul and Barnabas shaking off the dust toward these Jews and turning to the Gentiles. It’s just amazing how God works! And, as I said last Wednesday night, the whole world was changed by this missionary endeavor and outreach through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is why I believe that the church has failed in abandoning the preaching of the Word for a social gospel. From time to time, I’ve received letters from people, “You know, Pastor Miller, wouldn’t it be better if you didn’t preach and you just got together and had everyone bring canned food to church and took it out and fed the poor and gave people clothes, food, and all that stuff?” That stuff is fine. That stuff’s great, but that’s secondary to the preaching of the gospel. You can give someone a can of food and you can give someone clothing, you can give someone shelter or give education, but if they die in their sin and go to hell for all eternity, what does it accomplish? If someone comes to know Jesus Christ, their life is going to be changed from the inside out. It’s the gospel that’s the power of God unto salvation, and that’s what changes people from the inside out. The church has become weak and impotent because we’ve abandoned the preaching of the Cross and the preaching of the gospel for a social gospel or a feel-good gospel rather than just being heralds of the truth of Jesus Christ. We’ve abandoned that for methods and tactics and trying to build the church and do the work of God rather than relying on the Holy Spirit.

One thing you’ll notice as we go through the book of Acts, we see it in this sermon, that the Spirit said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul,” and they went out in the Spirit. They went out and preached the Word. They went out and God’s Spirit opened the doors. When they stepped through the door, they preached the gospel; and God’s Spirit worked in hearts, people were converted, and the world has never been the same. The world still needs Jesus Christ. That’s the greatest need today in the world. Amen?