

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

A Man without Corruption

Acts 13:13–52

Let's take our Bibles together and turn to Acts 13. In today's message, I want to introduce you to a "Man without fault." I want to introduce you to "A Man without Corruption."

There's a great scene in the 1995 BBC miniseries "Pride and Prejudice," where the protagonist of the story, Elizabeth Bennett, questions whether Darcy, a potential suitor of hers, could possibly be a man without fault. He was called that by another person. She questioned it. And Darcy responds by saying, "[A man without fault.] That's not possible for anyone." True enough.

But two-thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul preached a message in Pisidian Antioch that argued for a man without fault. A man greater than Moses. A man greater than David. A man who wasn't just without fault, he was also without corruption. Look at verses 36 and 37.

³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,

His body decayed. It decomposed. Ashes to ashes; dust to dust.

³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

This "man," according to Paul, like David, died. But this man, unlike David, didn't stay dead. His body was raised and never experienced corruption. And if that's true, wouldn't you want to know about it?

Look, today's message is a simple message. It's very simply about the good news of Jesus Christ. And the very simple question that I want to ask you this morning is this—do you know this man without corruption? If I could ask it simpler, I would ask it this way—are you saved? Have you experienced the forgiveness that this "man without corruption" has offered you?

Forgive me for being direct, but life is short. We're not promised another day. And I don't want to mince words or beat around the bush. I just want to ask a simple pointed question—are you saved? When you die in this world, are you going to leave this earth and enter into an eternity with the Lord, an eternity of bliss and celebration and sinlessness and perfection and indescribable joy? Is that your destiny? Or are you going to be eternally separated from God in perpetual, interminable, everlasting torment?

In our text today we're going to hear a two-thousand year old sermon preached. And even though this sermon was preached two-thousand years ago, its impact on the world has been incalculable. Others have preached this same message again and again for twenty centuries. And countless people have come to faith in Jesus Christ and received the free gift of salvation. Are you one of them? Have you believed this message?

Today we are going to hear from one of the greatest preachers ever in the history of our world, a man named Paul. And as Paul preaches, I want you to consider how this message has a bearing on your life. Paul preaches the gospel message in a way that is clear and compelling and passionate. And there's an urgency in his message. If I can come anywhere close to Paul with my own sermon in clarity and passion and urgency, I'll be happy.

And as we hear Paul's sermon, I want to address the following two questions from the text: (1) What are the central components of the gospel preached? In other words, what are the essential pieces to the gospel message that Paul delivers? I'll give four answers to that question. And secondly, here's what

we'll explore after Paul's sermon is preached: (2) What are the typical responses to the gospel preached? I'll give three answers to that second question.

Now look with me at **Acts 13:13**, and let's set the context for this great gospel sermon that Paul's about to preach.

¹³ Now Paul and his companions [John Mark and Barnabas] set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia.¹ And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,¹⁴ but they went on from Perga² and came to Antioch in Pisidia.³ And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue⁴ and sat down.⁵

Now, just by way of review. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark were sent out by the church in Antioch at the beginning of **Acts 13**. They were unleashed by the Holy Spirit to travel about the ancient world and preach the gospel (see the map below).



They started this missionary venture on the island of Cyprus where people got saved, churches were planted, and a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus got a Holy Spirit smack-down from the Apostle Paul. And after the proconsul of the island (the most powerful government figure in Cyprus) got saved, Paul and Barnabas moved on in their missionary journey. And **verse 13** tells us that they came to Perga in Pamphylia. Let me show you this progression on the map below.

¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 296: "At this point Perga seems to have been only a stopping place on their journey. On their return trip they would preach there (14:25)."

² MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 16: "Paul and Barnabas apparently did not preach in Perga at this time, although they did on their return journey (Acts 14:25). Some have speculated that Paul was ill (cf. Gal. 4:13), possibly with malaria, and needed to leave the coastal lowlands for the cooler mountain regions (Pisidian Antioch was 3,600 feet above sea level). In any case, they did not remain there, but going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch."

³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 573: "The fact that Paul and Barnabas evidently traveled on the Roman road called *Via Sebaste* through the province of Pamphylia/Lycia and the region of Pisidia—bypassing cities such as Attalia, Termessos, Ariassos, and Komama—without preaching the gospel—raises the question of their missionary strategy (or, rather, tactics) at this point. One explanation is the possibility that Paul had contracted malaria and wanted to reach the higher elevations of central Anatolia to find relief. Another suggestion points to the connections of Sergius Paulus, the governor of Cyprus, with the family of the Sergii Paullii, who owned estates in southern Galatia."

⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 297: "The Diaspora synagogue was more than a house of worship. It was the hub of the Jewish community—house of worship, center of education, judicial center, social gathering place, general "civic center" for the Jewish community. If one wished to make contact with the Jewish community in a town, the synagogue was the natural place to begin. It was also the natural place to begin if one wished to share the Christian message. Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah, and it was natural to share him with 'the Jews first.'"

⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 573: "Paul and Barnabas "sat down" (ἐκάθισαν), probably on one of the stone benches built against two or three sides of the wall, perhaps on wooden benches in the middle of the room. Paul, a Jewish-Christian teacher, would naturally begin missionary work in the local synagogue, where he would encounter Jews and Gentiles: proselytes, God-fearers and sympathizers, who were attracted by the ethical monotheism of the Jewish faith."



They left the island and set sail for Perga in Pamphylia, which was north and a little west of Cyprus. This is modern-day Turkey, and it's in the same region where Jesus addressed his seven letters to seven churches in seven cities in the book of **Revelation**.⁶

And from Pamphylia they travelled north by foot to Pisidian Antioch (not Syrian Antioch where they started). **There's a Paris in France, but there's also a Paris, Texas. Don't get those two confused. There's a Decatur in Illinois, and there's also a Decatur in Texas. Those aren't the same places. So just to summarize—Paul and Barnabas went from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia, and then to Pisidian Antioch.**

And by the way, just a few things about this trip: **(1)** they sailed about two hundred miles by boat.⁷ That's no easy task in the Mediterranean. Shipwrecks were common.

(2) They hiked uphill about a hundred miles from Perga to Pisidia.⁸ Pisidian Antioch was something like 3,600 feet above sea level.⁹ This was a treacherous journey through steep passes and flood-prone rivers. I've switched that second map to "terrain mode" so that you can see that this was a perilous, mountainous journey.

(3) Also, the Taurus Mountains which they travelled through were full of thieves.¹⁰ Again, this is no easy task. Paul says later in his letter to the Corinthians, "[I have been] on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the

⁶ All seven churches are west of Pamphylia and Pisidian Antioch. The closes city/church would have been Laodicea which was approximately a hundred and twenty miles southwest of Pisidian Antioch.



⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Expanded Digital Edition, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 572–3: "The journey by ship (ἀναχθέντες) from Paphos to Perge was about 150 nautical miles (280 km.). In the first century, Perge (see on 14:25) could be reached directly by ship traveling up the River Cestrus (mod. Aksu), which was navigable in antiquity, with the city lying about 3 miles (5 km.) west of the river. At Perge the missionaries could access the Roman road called Via Sebaste, the most direct route into the interior."

⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 297: "Antioch itself was in the highlands, some 3,600 feet above sea level. It was one of the sixteen cities named Antioch that had been established around 300 B.C. by Seleucus Nikator in honor of his father Antiochus."

⁹ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 386; "Antioch of Pisidia was an important civil and military center of the Romans (v. 14), which lay about 3,600 feet above sea level. The city actually belonged to Galatia, but it was near Pisidia and thus got its name (as there was another Antioch in the same district)."

¹⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 297: "Antioch lay some 100 miles to the north across the Taurus mountain range. The route was barren, often flooded by swollen mountain streams, and notorious for its bandits, which even the Romans had difficulty bringing under control."

wilderness, danger at sea” (2 Cor. 11:26). Probably one or more of those dangers took place on this trek to Pisidian Antioch.¹¹

4) One of the three travelers deserted them, John Mark. And he returned all the way to Jerusalem. He quite literally went running home to his mama in Jerusalem. We don’t know precisely why he abandoned Paul and Barnabas. But we do know that Paul wasn’t happy about it. John Mark probably just got fed up dealing with magicians and opposers and dangers at sea and dangers by land. So he quits and goes back home to Jerusalem; Paul and Barnabas soldier on.

I think it’s important for you to know that this is a hard journey. **This wasn’t a posh vacation with hotel rooms and amenities. This wasn’t a glamorized, romanticized missionary endeavor.** This was hard, labor-intensive, dangerous missionary work for Jesus. And Paul and Barnabas were compelled; they were driven to press on so that they might continue preaching the gospel to those who haven’t heard.

And so finally, after an exhausting trek through the mountains, they reach Pisidia (look at **verse 14**) and go into a synagogue and sit down. Watch what happens next in **verse 15**!

¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets,¹² the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.”

What? Seriously? They give Paul and Barnabas carte blanche to preach whatever they want to preach. What do you think Paul’s going to preach about?¹³

What do you think Paul’s going to do with this opportunity? **“Well, thanks but no thanks. I’m just here to observe. Carry on.”** Do you think Paul’s going to say that? **“I’m sorry I left my notes back at the hotel, I’m not prepared.”** Do you think Paul says that? I don’t think so. What does he do?

Look at **verse 16**.

¹⁶ So Paul stood up

Sometimes in some Jewish settings you would sit to preach. Not Paul. Not here. Paul’s got something to say and he stands up to deliver it.¹⁴

“Do I have a word of encouragement? You bet I do. I’ve got a message that’s going to change your life forever. I’ve got a message that is the most important message you will ever hear in your entire life.” By the way let me just say this. Just step out of the story with me for a moment. When you get a chance to share Christ with someone, you take that opportunity. Take it. Those are precious. Don’t back out. Don’t wimp out. Don’t say “evangelism’s not really my gift.” Don’t say, “Well you know I’d rather live out the gospel than share it with someone.” Don’t miss an opportunity to share the most important message in the world. You do like Paul, here.

¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand¹⁵

What do you think that looked like? Paul motioning with his hand? I don’t know, but I bet it was emphatic. And then Paul delivers his message.

Now here’s what I want to do. I want to read to you Paul’s sermon in **verses 16–41**.¹⁶ And I want you to imagine yourselves as this audience in Pisidian Antioch. Okay? Let’s just kind of transport ourselves back in

¹¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 297: “The Seleucid rulers had moved many Jews to the city [of Pisidian Antioch], and there was a large Jewish population there.”

¹² Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 291–2: “Every Sabbath, there was a reading of the Law (*Torah*) as well as of the Prophets (*Hafarah*), after which came the sermon. The duty of the rulers of the synagogue was to select both the readers and the speakers, and if there were distinguished guests present, they could be asked to speak. From the way Paul and Barnabas looked, they were obviously distinguished guests.”

¹³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 574: “As Paul and Barnabas would have introduced themselves to the leaders of the Jewish community, perhaps earlier in the week, the synagogue officials would have known that Paul was a trained rabbi who had studied under the famous Gamaliel.”

¹⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 392: “In his message Paul showed how, through the vicissitudes of human history, God was working out his plan for his creation and that this plan reached its zenith in ‘the Christ-event.’”

¹⁵ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 16: “As Paul begins his sermon, he stands up and motions with his hand (v 16). Peter, in just the previous chapter, also motioned with his hand before he spoke. Luke includes these details in order to parallel Peter and Paul as the two foundational apostolic preachers of the first-century church.”

time two-thousand years ago to this synagogue. You be the audience. I'll be Paul. I'll motion with my hands. And let's live in the reality of this text.¹⁷ Can we do that?

Here's what he says,

"Men of Israel¹⁸ and you who fear God,¹⁹ 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 uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸ And for about forty years he put up²⁰ with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan [Deut 7:1 – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites], he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. ²¹ And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ 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 when he had removed him, he raised up²² David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'²³ ²³ Of this man's offspring²⁴ God has brought to Israel a Savior,²⁵ Jesus, as he promised.²⁶

²⁴ Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'²⁶ ²⁶ "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath,²⁷ fulfilled²⁸ them by condemning him.²⁹ ²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy

¹⁶ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 390: "In my fresh study of Acts for writing this commentary, one of the features that kept coming up is how important the content of the gospel is to evangelism. This is why Luke emphasizes it so often in Acts, as he does here at considerable length (vv. 16–41). Christianity is essentially a religion of revelation, and Christians are the people of a book. Thus the content of the gospel and arguing for its validity are important to Christianity."

¹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 448: "Paul's speech here parallels another synagogue speech that Jesus gave in Luke 4:16–30, declaring fulfillment, after which he confronted the force of evil in the same chapter (Luke 4:16–44, but in reverse order, since Paul confronts in Acts 13:1–12 and then preaches here whereas Jesus preached in Luke 4:16–30 and then confronted in 4:31–44). The ministry of Jesus continues through Paul."

¹⁸ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 16: "Paul has established his message on the common ground he shares with the Jews. Common ground only serves as a launching pad, not a place of rest."

¹⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 451: "The reference to God-fearers (οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, *hoi phoboumenoi ton theon*) probably refers to Greeks in the audience who respect the God of Israel, as distinguished from children of Israel."

²⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 300n28: "There are variants in the LXX as well as Acts between the verbs προποφωρέω ('put up with') and προποφωρέω ('treat gently like a nurse'). The Hebrew of Deut 1:31 (סָפַר) has the same ambiguity." Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 467: "A difficult textual problem arises here; there is only a one-letter difference in the variants, and both readings are also attested in LXX MSS in the verse that is alluded to (Deut. 1:31). We read that God bore with Israel (ἐτροποφόρησεν, *etropophorēsen*; x, B, C², D, Byz). The variant (ἐτροποφόρησεν, *etrophophorēsen*) is more positive, meaning "care for" someone, as a nurse for a child (ℳ⁷⁴, A, C*, E, Ψ, 33). This second reading has clearer support in Deut. 1:31 LXX. If this were the reading, the meaning would be that God fed them for forty years in the desert (Deut. 1:31; Exod. 16:35; Num. 14:34). But it is slightly more difficult to explain the reading that does not match the LXX than the one that does, so 'bore with them' is the slightly more likely reading (Metzger 1971: 405–6; Fitzmyer 1998: 510–11). Barrett (1994: 632) with R. Gordon (1974) and Witherington (1998: 409–10) prefers the more positive reading on the premise that God's positive activity is underscored (Deut. 2:7; 32:10; Hos. 13:5; Zech. 9:11), but God's patience is also a positive feature of God's work for Israel, so that the reading 'bore with them' also carries a positive sense."

²¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 300n29: "The reference to 450 years seems to cover the period of the Egyptian sojourn to the time of the judges, allowing 400 years in Egypt, forty in the wilderness, and ten for the conquest. The Western text reads, "There were judges for 450 years," but this conflicts with the OT."

²² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 576: "The verb 'gave' (ἔθηκεν) is the same as the term used for Jesus' resurrection (vv. 30, 37), a fact that underlines David's role as the model (or type) of a ruler who has been sent by God and who is faithful to his divine calling as he carried out the will of God."

²³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 301n31: "The quote in v. 22 is a mixed quote based on three passages: 'I have found David' (Ps 89:20), 'a man after my own heart' (1 Sam 13:14), 'who will do everything I want him to do' (Isa 44:28). For 'son of Jesse,' cf. 1 Sam 16:1."

²⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 448: "The address rehearses the history of Israel from its origin to David and then leaps over a thousand years to John the Baptist and Jesus."

²⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 453: "The title 'Savior' (σωτήρ, *sōtēr*) appears in only two texts in Acts (5:31; 13:23). It also appears at the announcement of Jesus's birth in Luke 2:11."

²⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 301: "This promise was embodied in Nathan's prophecy to David (2 Sam 7:12–16)."

²⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 454: "The Jewish leadership had two failures: (1) it did not recognize Jesus and his work, and (2) it failed to understand the prophets read in the synagogue each Sabbath."

²⁸ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 23–4: "Paul then answered a second question that would have arisen: If Messiah was rejected, does that nullify God's plan? Far from it, replied Paul. Isaiah 53:3 foresaw that Messiah would be 'despised and forsaken of men.' They

of death,³⁰ they asked Pilate to have him executed.²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

³⁰ But God raised him from the dead,³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “ ‘You are my Son,³¹ today I have begotten you.’³² ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way [Isa 55:3], “ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm [Ps 16:10], “ ‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’³³ ³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about [Hab 1:4]:⁴¹ “ ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’ ”

Go ahead and take your notes and write this down. Here are the four central components of the gospel that Paul preached.³⁴

1) Jesus Christ **promised** in the Old Testament (13:13–23)³⁵

Jesus Christ is the promised deliverer of the OT. Jesus Christ is the culmination of human history. He’s the one, the Messiah that the Jews had been anticipating for centuries.³⁶

I don’t have time to go through all the details of Paul’s sermon, but let me just summarize what Paul says here: **(1)** God chose the Israelite forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **(2)** God made the nation great in

hated Jesus without cause, so that even though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. They thus unwittingly fulfilled Psalm 69:4, ‘Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head’ (cf. John 15:25).”

²⁹ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 23: “If Jesus is the Messiah, why did the Jewish leaders fail to recognize Him as such? Paul gave the same answer Stephen did: because of their hardened, sin-darkened hearts. He explained that 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.”

³⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 294: “According to verse 28, they became guilty of killing the Messiah, *though they found no cause of death in him*. The Sanhedrin accused Yeshua of blasphemy, but could not produce the two witnesses who were needed to prove the charge. Nevertheless, they still asked of Pilate that he should be slain or be executed in accordance with civil law. As a result, Yeshua was crucified.”

³¹ CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: “Since he was Son by nature and by truth and had shone forth from the very essence of God the Father, he was made flesh, that is, man, according to John. He desired to be called the brother of those who are in the world and to be born according to flesh like us. However, he was before time and sat with his parent even though he was made flesh.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 167.

³² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 456: “This is not Jesus becoming Son or being adopted as Son, as some argue, but being made evident as Son.”

³³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 457: “‘Holy things’ (τὰ ὁσία) and ‘Holy One’ (τὸν ὅσιον, *ton hosion*) are the link words between Isa. 55:3 and Ps. 16:10 as Paul employs *gezera shewa*, one of Hillel’s rabbinic rules of interpretation, where two texts can be explicated together if they share a term or a related form of a word.”

³⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 570 sees the sermon divided into three parts based on ancient categories: “The threefold address of the audience (13:16d–e, 26a–c, 38b) divides the speech into three main parts, which can be linked with the traditional rhetorical parts of (1) the brief *exordium* (introduction, v. 16d–f), followed by the *narratio* (statement of the facts) that reviews salvation history (vv. 17–25), (2) the *argumentatio* (proofs), the proclamation of the significance of Jesus as Messiah (vv. 26–37), and (3) the *peroratio* (conclusion), which calls the listeners to repent (vv. 38–41).”

³⁵ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 21–2: “Not only does Old Testament history point to Jesus Christ, but so also does Old Testament prophecy (Rev. 19:10). He was the Seed of the woman who bruised the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). He was the virgin-born Son whose name was “God with us” (Isa. 7:14). He was the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God of Isaiah 9:6. Micah 5:2 foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and Jesus was (Matt. 2:1). Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:2–3), Jacob (Num. V 2, p 22 24:17), and Jesse (Isa. 11:1), and Jesus was (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16; Luke 3:32). He was to be a descendant of David (Jer. 23:5; 2 Sam. 7), and Jesus was (Matt. 1:1). Psalm 110:4 predicted Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and Jesus was (Heb. 6:20). Centuries before Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, Zechariah 9:9 predicted Messiah would do just that. Psalm 41:9 predicted Judas’s betrayal, and Zechariah 11:12 the exact amount of money he would receive for doing it. The fulfillment of those prophecies and dozens more provide overwhelming proof that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Israel’s prophesied and long-awaited Messiah.”

³⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 299: “Stephen used Old Testament history to depict the rebelliousness of the Jews toward their divinely appointed leaders. Paul used it to show God’s faithfulness to his promises for Israel, promises that were ultimately fulfilled in Christ.”

Egypt while they were in captivity. (3) God freed them from slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. (4) God put up with them in the wilderness. (5) After entering into the Promised Land, God appointed judges for them until the time of Samuel the prophet.

By the way who's doing all these things? Who's the actor in this great recounting of Israelite history? It's God. The spotlight is on him from start to finish. I think that's theologically significant.

(6) God gave the Israelites a king, Saul, who stunk it up as a leader for forty years. (7) After Saul, God appoints a man after his own heart, David, to be king.

By the way, what does it mean to be a “man after God's own heart” or “a woman after God's own heart”? Does it mean that we are perfect? Was David perfect? Hear me on this: David was guilty of cowardice (1 Sam 21:10-22:1). David was guilty of adultery (2 Sam 11:1-4). David was even guilty of murder (2 Sam. 12:9).³⁷ A man after God's heart is not a perfect man; it's a man who sees his sin and repents of it. “David may justly be termed a man after God's heart because (unlike Saul) his greatest desire came to be the doing of God's will.”³⁸

Finally Paul says in verse 23, after recounting all this Israelite history,

²³ *Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.*

That is a “boom goes the dynamite” statement right there. The Savior has come.³⁹ The true and better David from the line of David has appeared, just as God promised.⁴⁰

By the way, Mary was of the line of David. We see that in **Luke 3**. Joseph, Jesus's adoptive father, was of the line of David. We see that in **Matthew 1**. Jesus is the true and better David. He is the promised son of David, who would save his people from their sin.

Jesus is the Messiah that the Israelites waited centuries for. How important do you think this statement would have been to a synagogue full of Jews in Pisidian Antioch who had been waiting, along with their forefathers, for centuries for Messiah to come? **“He's here”** says Paul. **“He's here. The Messiah is here.”**

Write this down #2. What are the central components of the gospel preached? Jesus Christ promised in the OT. But also...

2. Jesus Christ **executed** by sinful men (13:24-29)

After Paul's “boom goes the dynamite” statement in verse 23, he says in verse 24,

²⁴ *Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming,⁴¹ the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’*

This crowd in Antioch might have been familiar with John the Baptist already. John the Baptist was famous, and word traveled far in the Jewish community.⁴² But Paul wants to make crystal clear that John the Baptist was the forerunner to the Messiah, not the Messiah. “I am not he,” says John.

³⁷ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 0-1: “Some may question the designation of David as a man after God's heart. After all, he was guilty of cowardice (1 Sam. 21:10-22:1), adultery (2 Sam. 11:1-4), and murder (2 Sam. 12:9). A man after God's heart, however, is not a perfect man. He is a man who sees his sin for what it is and repents of it. That David did (Pss. 32, 38, 51); divine V 2, p 21 chastening had a perfecting work.”

³⁸ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 21.

³⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 576: “It is probably relevant that in Jdg 3:9, 15 the judges are described as saviors (σωτήρ). This prepares Paul's emphasis on Jesus as Israel's ultimate Savior (v. 23), in whom the promises of the prophets were fulfilled (vv. 23, 32-33), among them Samuel who prophesied the events of Jesus' death and resurrection (3:24).”

⁴⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 577: “In the Old Testament it is God himself who is repeatedly described as ‘savior’ (σωτήρ). When Paul describes Jesus as Savior, he emphasizes that Jesus does what God does, that Jesus carries out the will of God as the Servant of the Lord, and that Jesus is the climax of salvation history fulfilling God's promises to his people. The connection between David and Jesus in vv. 22-23 involves two elements of Davidic messianism: Jesus came as the Davidic Messiah who was a descendant of David, and he was typologically prefigured in David, God's chosen and righteous king who carried out God's will.”

⁴¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 301: “The references to Jesus' being the ‘coming’ one in vv. 24-25 may reflect the prophecy of Mal 3:1, which looks to the sending of God's messenger as a herald to the coming of the Lord.”

⁴² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 301-2: “Quite possibly Paul's listeners in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch had heard about John the Baptist. A few years later Paul encountered a group of the Baptist's disciples even further to the west in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). Paul wanted his hearers to see John's role in its proper perspective.”

And here's where Paul makes an appeal as a Jewish man speaking to a Jewish audience.

²⁶ "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.

"It came to us first," says Paul. "We are privileged with this as God's people."

²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning [Jesus].

I was translating this verse from Greek to English this week, and it took me like ten minutes. This is a complex sentence grammatically. But it's not a complex idea. The people who should have received Jesus rejected him. The readers of Scripture rejected the Messiah of Scripture.

And look at **verses 28–29**.

²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

They killed him. They killed an innocent man. They collaborated with the Gentile leaders to execute the Messiah on trumped up charges. Pilate wanted to wash his hands of the whole matter. Nevertheless they murdered him. And they used the most despicable, monstrous, form of execution known to man at that time. They crucified him.⁴³

If you had a family member who was crucified in this era, you wouldn't even mention that person's name. Crucifixion was universally viewed with horror in the ancient world. And among Jews the horror of the cross was even greater because of Deuteronomy 21:23: "Anyone who is hanged on a tree is under God's curse." It's interesting that Paul uses the word "tree" here instead of the cross. I think he knows his Jewish audience would pick up on that. The Bible says this in **Galatians 3:13**, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'" Christ did that for us. **God the Son did that for you! Can you believe that? Do you believe that?**

Now I don't know how Paul preached this sermon. But I bet Paul's eyes welled up with tears as he told this room full of Jews about what Christ had done for him. Paul, this hateful, vengeful, murderous, sinner... Christ died for him. **And here's the thing—there is no sin that Christ can't atone for. And there is no sinner too far gone that Christ cannot save. Do you know that? If Paul, this murderous, hell-bent, church-destroying sinner can be saved by the blood of Jesus, then you can be too.**

So what's next? What's next in this gospel presentation? Do you know? Is Jesus's body rotting in some tomb somewhere in Jerusalem right now? Could we go collect his bones and put them in a mausoleum if we wanted to? Can we enshrine Jesus's body as a holy relic? No! Why not? He's alive.

Look at verse 30. This is a great, glorious statement after the description of Jesus's execution.

³⁰ But God raised him from the dead

Write this down as #3. What's the third component of the gospel preached?

3. Jesus Christ **raised** from the dead (13:30–37)

If Jesus Christ wasn't raised from the dead, your faith is meaningless! Do you get that? If Jesus Christ wasn't raised from the dead, we're wasting our time here. I'm wasting my time. I'm wasting my life preaching this.

"Why do you say that, Pastor Tony? You got a verse for that, Pastor Tony?" I do. 1 Corinthians 15:17 - "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

But I'm not wasting my time. Because I believe what Paul preached so many years ago.

³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

⁴³ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 24: "The very fact that the Old Testament predicted that Messiah would be *crucified* is amazing. Crucifixion was not a Jewish form of execution, if indeed it was even known to them in Old Testament times. Yet Psalm 22 and Numbers 21 picture such a death (cf. John 3:14)."

Think Peter and John and Matthew and Thomas, his apostles. Think Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Think James the brother of Jesus who is now leading the church in Jerusalem. They are his witnesses. They saw the risen Christ. So did Paul on the road to Damascus.⁴⁴

Look at verse 32.

³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “ ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ ” ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, “ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ ” ⁴⁶

That’s **Isaiah 55:3**.⁴⁷ The book of **Psalms** is quoted more times in the NT than any other OT book, except for the book of **Isaiah**.⁴⁸ Paul references both here in his preaching.

Look at verse 35. Here’s another psalm in Paul’s sermon.

³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm, “ ‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’ ”

That’s **Psalm 16:10**. That psalm can’t be about David!⁴⁹

³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Now let’s be clear about this, David’s soul survives. David’s soul is in the presence of the Lord just like all the other OT and NT believers who died. Theologically this is what Christians call the intermediate state. Paul knew this as well as anyone because he wrote about it. He said, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (**2 Cor 5:8**). So David’s soul is in the presence of the Lord. But it is also absent from the body, awaiting a future resurrection with a new resurrection body. So David’s body, just like your great grandmother’s, is in the grave experiencing corruption. It is decaying and decomposing back into the earth.

And that’s true of all dead saints. That’s true of all men and women, believers and unbelievers alike. Their bodies are decaying. The exception to that is the “Man” without corruption. Jesus’s body didn’t experience corruption. There wasn’t enough time for decomposition. Because God the Father raised him up on the third day.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 455: “There is no effort to downgrade Jesus’s appearance to Paul here, only to note that the core of the gospel goes back to witnesses who were there and who had walked with Jesus.”

⁴⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 303–4: “God said to the Messiah: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’ (Acts 13:33). To what does ‘today’ refer? In the context Paul seems to have been implying the day of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus was indeed the Son of God from all eternity and recognized as such throughout his earthly life (Luke 1:35; 3:22; 9:35). But it was through the resurrection that he was exalted to God’s right hand, enthroned as Son of God, and recognized as such by believing humans. It was through the resurrection that he was declared Son of God *with power* (Rom 1:4).”

⁴⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 457: “Isaiah 55:3 taught that the promises once given to David are going to be made available to God’s people (ὑμῖν, *hymīn*, to you) in the deliverance... There is a difference here between the MT and the LXX, which is the form Paul cites, except that he simplifies the LXX verb ‘I shall covenant’ (διαθήσομαι, *diathēsomai*) to ‘I shall give’ (δώσω, *dōsō*). The LXX reads, ‘I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.’ The Greek translation differs from the Hebrew in reading ‘holy things’ (τὰ ὅσια, *ta hosia*) instead of a Hebrew term meaning ‘faithful love’ or ‘mercy’ (חַסְדִּים, *hāsādīm*). The Greek OT has a paraphrastic rendering, for it makes concrete (the holy [and sure] things of the promises of David) what God’s love and mercy expressed (Johnson 1992: 235). Fitzmyer (1998: 517) calls the LXX translation a fairly accurate rendering of Isa. 55:3, which is also reflected in 1QIsa^a 45.22–23. It is often said that Luke’s version lacks a reference to the covenant, but this overstates the difference. Any Jew would be aware that the ‘holy things of David’ alludes to the covenant. The change only makes the idea of covenant less explicit.”

⁴⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 303–4: “Paul’s second Old Testament text, Isa 55:3, also relates to the Nathan prophecy of 2 Sam 7:4–17: ‘I will give to you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ It is somewhat more difficult to determine the exact purpose of this quotation in the total argument, but Paul gave a key in introducing the verse by saying that it established that God raised Jesus from the dead, never to decay. The ‘holy and sure’ blessings to David are God’s promise that he would establish in his descendant an eternal throne, a kingdom that would last forever (cf. 2 Sam 7:13, 16). But God’s promise was not fulfilled in David, who did not himself enjoy an eternal reign.”

⁴⁸ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 25: “A second promise, from Isaiah 55:3, came true when God raised Jesus 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.’ A dead Messiah could not have been the channel for the holy and sure blessings God promised to David and his posterity.”

⁴⁹ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 17: “That psalm could not have been about David. David’s bones are dust. It had to be about the one David saw. It had to be about the One from David’s line: the true, lasting and eternal fulfillment of all God’s promises.”

⁵⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 297: “In His resurrection body, He is no longer subject to mortality and corruption, but has put on immortality and incorruption.”

And that's really important to us, because according to Paul's writing elsewhere, Jesus's resurrection is the firstfruits of our own resurrection (1 Cor 15:20–23). We get resurrection bodies just like Jesus's at his return!

Which leaves us with a fourth answer to that question: “What are the central components of the gospel preached?” Here it is.

4. Jesus Christ **provided** the only means of forgiveness (13:38–41)

Paul has preached the objective truth of Christ's death and resurrection. But now he brings this home with a gospel challenge. Now he calls his audience to do something.⁵¹ Look at **verse 38**.

³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers,⁵² that through this man forgiveness of sins⁵³ is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Wow, that sounds like the book of **Romans**.⁵⁴ It's almost like the same guy here wrote the book of **Romans**.⁵⁵ And what is he saying here. He's saying, **“Legalism won't save you. Good works won't save you. Religiosity won't save you. False religions won't save you. Doing nothing and just waiting for eternity won't save you. The only way that you are going to find freedom and forgiveness of your sins is through faith in Jesus Christ. That's the gospel.”**⁵⁶

Now in just a moment, we're going to see the radically different ways in which Paul's listeners respond to this gospel presentation. As you might expect, some receive it; some reject it. But I would be remiss if I didn't say like Paul says in **verse 40**, “Beware.”

⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:

This is a quote from the prophet Habakkuk, by the way. Habakkuk 1:5.

⁴¹ “ ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’ ”

Beware. Don't scoff at these truths. Don't miss an opportunity today. Maybe God brought you here today to hear this message and this is your chance to finally believe and receive Christ as your Lord

⁵¹ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 17: “Christians must learn from Paul's style of presentation. On the one hand, he exuded empathy as he grounded his message in something that his audience would have understood. On the other hand, Paul advanced his message to the uniqueness of Christ, which would have required courage and conviction. Christians need both empathy and courage in order to present the gospel effectively, persuasively, and passionately.”

⁵² Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 297–8: “Paul again addressed them as ‘brethren,’ who in this context were his fellow Jews. He wanted them to know that through this Man, the very One who was killed and raised from the dead, the promise of remission of sins was now proclaimed to them. If they believed, they would not only receive forgiveness, but also justification (v. 39), which means they would be declared righteous. By faith in Yeshua the Messiah, one can be justified from every charge of guilt under the Mosaic Law.”

⁵³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 305n39: “Throughout Luke-Acts, the work of Christ is described in terms of the forgiveness of sins: Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 26:18. It is often argued that this concept is not found in Paul. It is, however, very much involved in his whole idea of justification. Cf. also such explicit references as Rom 4:7; Col 1:14; Eph 1:7.”

⁵⁴ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 18: “Romans 3:20 says, ‘For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.’ The law could not save because of the power of sin. The law does not provide salvation but points to the need for salvation.”

⁵⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 570–1: “Paul's speech, while formulated by Luke as a summary, contains important conceptual parallels in Paul's letters.

(1) The combination of a reference to the leaders (in Jerusalem) who did not acknowledge Jesus and who thus killed him (vv. 27–28) is (only) found in 1 Cor 2:8.

(2) The combination of attestation in Scripture for Jesus' lying Jesus in a tomb and being raised p 571 from the dead by God, Jesus' appearances before numerous disciples, and a reference to eyewitnesses (vv. 29–31, 34–35) are (only) found in 1 Cor 15:3–7.

(3) A reference to the fathers to whom God gave a promise and the fulfillment of that promise among the fathers' descendants who believe in Jesus (vv. 32–33) is found in Rom 4:13–16; Gal 3:14–16.

(4) Jesus' recognition as Son of God as the fulfillment of Scripture (v. 33) is found in Rom 1:2, 4.

(5) The combination of justification, the law, and faith (vv. 38–39) is found in Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9.

(6) The combination of closed eyes, blind eyes, deaf ears, rejection of the gospel by Jews, and the gospel addressed to the Gentiles (v. 46) is found in Rom 11:8–11.”

⁵⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 459: “Paul's concern is not the intermediate way of picturing forgiveness in the law or sacrifices but the extension of full forgiveness in Christ. This is total forgiveness that the law of Moses could not give.”

and Savior. Don't miss that opportunity. Don't live another day in this world unsure about your eternity. It doesn't have to be that way.

Let me just turn down the preaching knob and turn up the pastoral knob for a moment. I have a tendency to throttle up the boldness so high that I miss opportunities to speak tenderly from my heart. I care about every person in this room. And I don't want any person here to be unprepared for eternity. And I believe Jesus Christ is the only means of forgiveness in this world. And if you haven't accepted that free gift... if you haven't embraced Christ as your Savior, do that today. Do that right now. Admit your sinfulness before a holy God. Believe in his death and resurrection. And confess him as your Lord.

For those of you in this room, who know Christ as Lord and Savior, I want to encourage you to throttle up the boldness a little bit. Don't miss opportunities to speak about your faith when someone's listening. Don't waste chances to share the gospel. Speak about him at work, at home, at the gym, at your kid's t-ball game, etc.

Okay, finally. What happens when you share? What happens when the gospel is communicated? What's the aftermath of Paul's sermon here in Acts 13? Write these down:

Typical Responses to the Gospel Preached

- 1) Truth **polarizes** (13:42-49)
- 2) Persecution **mobilizes** (13:50-51)
- 3) Joy **maximizes** (13:52)

Look at verse 42.

⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.

When was the last time you left church and begged the pastor to preach again next week? Paul got through to them, didn't he? They had just had their world turned upside down by Paul's message.

⁴³ And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas

That word "followed" intimates the start of the discipleship process. So these guys, Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, got saved. And now they can't wait to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. "Let's do this! Let's get it on! I've been waiting my whole life for this!"

And what were Paul and Barnabas doing at this time?

⁴³ Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue⁵⁷ in the grace of God.

What were they doing? They were discipling the people. They were making disciples. They were "urging them" to continue to persevere in the grace of God.

And look at verse 44.

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

"Almost the whole city!" Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel. People get saved. News spreads and almost the whole city gathers. This is fantastic, right? This is the greatest job in the world. We just preach and people get saved. And nothing bad ever happens if you preach the gospel. Isn't that right? **It's as if Satan just goes on vacation. He doesn't even care if people get saved. Is that right?**

Do you remember this paradigm from last week? God calls. God sends. We serve him. Opposition comes. Believers boldly and courageously persevere. And then there's fruit. Last week I said that faithful, fruitful Christian ministry requires fortitude in the face of opposition. Well, here comes the opposition.

Look at verse 45.

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

So at first, they started to argue with Paul. They tried to contradict him. But when that didn't work, they just started reviling him. "O yeah, well, you're an idiot." It's as if they couldn't defeat his argument, and so they just degenerated into *ad-hominem* attacks. "O yeah, well, you're a jerk, Paul. You're a liar." They revile him.

Isn't it amazing how the same truths that energize people and bring joy to new believers, makes others into angry dissenters and naysayers? I marvel at that. Here's the thing—truth polarizes. It polarizes. Just get

⁵⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 298: "The very word 'continue' implies that they had become believers."

used to that. If you think there's a way that you can frame the gospel and soften its blunt edges or ease a belligerent person into faith in Jesus Christ, you've got to give that up.⁵⁸

The truth is that Jesus Christ polarizes. Just get used to it. 2 Corinthians 2:15 says, “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.” If you're not willing to be the fragrance of death to some, you won't be a fragrance of life to others. You've got to be willing to do that. You've got to be willing to polarize your audience.

So what do Paul and Barnabas do when they face a little opposition? We've seen this before. Look at verse 46. They press on with boldness.

⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out⁵⁹ boldly,⁶⁰ saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you.⁶¹ Since you thrust it aside⁶² and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,⁶³ behold, we are turning⁶⁴ to the Gentiles.⁶⁵ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “ ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”⁶⁶

“Go be my witnesses” Jesus said. “Go be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). That started with the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul's *modus operandi* was to start with Jews and

⁵⁸ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 30: “Conflict will often occur when the true gospel is preached today. The gospel does not gather everyone together, nor is it a generally tolerable opinion that nonbelievers can take or leave. Instead it splits people, dividing the penitent from the hardhearted, the saved from the unsaved, the righteous from the reprobate, those who love its truth from those who reject it.”

⁵⁹ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 36: “Far from being intimidated, Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly in reply. As the crowd's fury intensified, so did the missionaries' courage.”

⁶⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 463: “Paul boldly (παρρησιασάμενοι, *parrēsasamenoi*) declares that ‘to [all of] you’ (ὡμῖν, *hymin*) the word has come first. Of its nine NT occurrences, παρρησιάζομαι appears seven times in Acts (9:27–29 [2x]; 13:46; 14:3; 18:25–26; 19:8; 26:26; Eph. 6:20; 1 Thess. 2:2). All the occurrences concern Paul.”

⁶¹ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 36: “God's plan was that salvation should be first offered to the Jewish people. In Matthew 15:24 Jesus ‘answered [a Canaanite woman] and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ ” When He sent the twelve out on a preaching tour, Jesus commanded them, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5–6). The resurrected Christ said that “repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem, ‘For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways’ (Acts 3:26). Paul would later write that the gospel ‘is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek’ (Rom. 1:16). Although known as the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), Paul nonetheless placed a high priority on Jewish evangelism. He normally began his evangelism in Gentile cities by preaching to the Jews, thus gathering some believers to assist in the witness to the Gentiles.”

⁶² MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 31: “That the very hope of Israel, so long awaited, did not arouse their faith and love, but their anger, is the greatest tragedy of redemptive history.”

⁶³ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 39: “Scripture affirms that those who go to hell do so because they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life (v. 46). Conversely, the elect are saved because God appointed them for eternal life (v. 48). Those truths form a narrow causeway between two deep chasms. To emphasize either truth at the expense of the other is to plunge oneself into the abyss of doctrinal error.”

⁶⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 463: “Paul turns to the Gentiles. This is the first of several places in Acts where Paul goes to the Gentiles after being rejected by most Jews (18:6; 28:28). This turning away is not absolute, however, as in each place Paul goes, he again starts by preaching to Jews (14:1; 18:4–6, 19; 19:8–9; 28:28; explained in Rom. 9–11). Paul repeatedly faced violent resistance in many synagogues (2 Cor. 11:24) but continued to preach to Jews. In this he turned the other cheek, as Jesus had commanded in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:39).”

⁶⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 308: “Again and again he experienced the rejection of the Jews and turned to the Gentiles of that town. But he never gave up on his fellow Jews. It was very much the problem he wrestled with in Rom 9–11. In spite of the overwhelming rejection of the gospel by his own people, Paul could not bring himself to believe that the rejection was final and that God had deserted them. His great successes in witness were indeed among the Gentiles, but he never abandoned his witness to Jews.”

⁶⁶ JOHN CALVIN: “But at that time the adoption of God remained their possession, and only theirs, with the Gentiles passed over, on condition that with the coming of Christ they still ought to have the preference over the Gentiles. For although Christ reconciled the world to the Father, still those who were already near to God and belonged to his family were first in order. It was therefore the proper order for the apostles to gather the church first from the Jews and then from the Gentiles, as we have seen.... Thus the association of the Gentiles did not remove the right of the firstborn from the Jews, but they would always be preeminent in the church of God. Following this reasoning Paul says that the righteousness of God is manifested in the gospel first to the Jews and then to the Greeks.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 185–6.

then move to Gentiles whenever he entered into mixed company. That's what he does here. And he again quotes the book of **Isaiah**.⁶⁷ Isaiah prophesied that the Jews would be a light to the Gentiles and would bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And sure enough, that's happening.

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word⁶⁸ of the Lord,⁶⁹ and as many as were appointed⁷⁰ to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

There it is again. Some people reject; some people rejoice. Truth polarizes. Some people oppose; some people rejoice. And the word of God keeps getting preached.⁷¹

So back to my second question—what happens when the gospel is preached? What happens? 1)

Truth polarizes. And secondly...

2) Persecution **mobilizes** (13:50-51)⁷²

Look at verse 50,

⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women⁷³ of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet⁷⁴ against them and went to Iconium.

“Here's your dust back, Antioch.” Paul and Barnabas are disappointed in the reaction of these disbelievers, but they are not surprised. **1 Peter 4:12–14** says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” **Are persecution and joy mutually exclusive? Not according to Peter. Not according to Luke and the book of Acts.**

Because finally,

3) Joy **maximizes** (13:52)

Look at verse 52.

⁶⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 308: “Paul backed his decision to turn to the Gentiles by quoting Isa 49:6, an Old Testament text that was ‘programmatic’ for the Christian mission in Acts (Acts 1:8; 26:23; cf. Luke 24:47). The text of Isaiah, a ‘servant’ passage, originally envisaged Israel’s destiny as being that of a witness to God to all the nations of the world. As Servant-Messiah, Jesus fulfilled this divine destiny. He was to be ‘a light to the nations.’”

⁶⁸ MARTIN LUTHER: “So, the glory of this good news about Christ, which Saint Paul here calls a ‘Word of salvation,’ is infinitely greater and higher than all kingdoms, riches and glory of the world, even heaven and earth... Do not follow yourself or your feelings but cling tightly to the divine, eternal, ineffable truth that he has spoken and promulgated.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 180.

⁶⁹ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 388: “The unusual expression ‘honored (*edoxazon*) the word of the Lord,’ (v. 48b) probably means ‘that they gave glory to the Lord for the word that they had heard.’”

⁷⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 464–5: “The word *τάσσω* (*tassō*, ordain) appears four times in Acts (13:48; 15:2; 22:10; 28:23)... Here it refers to God’s sovereign work over salvation, where God has assigned those who come to eternal life... The passive voice indicates that God does the assigning.”

⁷¹ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 388: “The receptivity of the Gentiles was remarkable, considering the fact that the imperial cult (public worship of the emperor) was strong in Antioch. There was a temple of Augustus in the center as the city’s most prominent building, and this cult dominated the city’s daily life and annual calendar.”

⁷² Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 19: “As happens so often in the history of the church, great spiritual advancement meets with an equally great spiritual hostility (v 50).”

⁷³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 465: “In the case of the women, these upper classes would be Gentiles who also frequent the synagogue. Josephus tells of many Gentile women being attracted to Judaism in Damascus (*J.W.* 2.20.2 §§559–61). Epigraphic evidence tells us that women often were the most responsive, composing 50 percent of the proselytes but 80 percent of the God-fearers (Le Cornu and Shulam 2003: 756). The contacts these Antiochene women have with other prominent Greeks help to heighten the pressure against Paul and Barnabas.”

⁷⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 309: “Paul and Barnabas followed the directions given by Jesus for dealing with an unreceptive town: they shook the dust of the city off their feet as they departed. The gesture had a certain irony about it. The rabbis attested to the Jewish practice of shaking the dust off their feet when they returned from a sojourn in Gentile territory, symbolizing their leaving their defilement behind as they stepped on the ‘holy land’ once again. Paul and Barnabas’s dust-shaking symbolized their ridding themselves of all responsibility for the unreceptive Jews.” Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 466: “Paul and Barnabas leave the city, shaking the dust from their feet, a symbolic act against those who oppose them (Mark 6:11 = Luke 9:5; Luke 10:10–11 = Matt. 10:14). This custom is a way of signaling that responsibility for an action is with the people or town... It portrays leaving defilement behind and moving on. In other words, no trace of their presence is left, even on their feet. This response was also commanded by Jesus in Luke 9:5.”

I'll close with this. Why would Paul and Barnabas go through this? What made this persecution worthwhile? It was the gospel. It was the truth about Jesus Christ. Paul said in the book of Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the [Gentile]" (Rom 1:16). Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed. And neither are we.

⁷⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 301: "The joy was the result of their salvation. Hence, the persecution had the opposite effect to the intention of the Jewish community."

⁷⁶ JOHN CALVIN: "They were filled with joy, because the grace of the Holy Spirit was ruling within them, and this alone makes us so genuinely and thoroughly joyous that we are exalted high above the whole world. For we must pay attention to what Luke had in mind, that far from being agitated or upset by those serious hindrances, by the ignominy of their teachers, by the disturbance of the city, by alarms and threats, even by the fear of imminent dangers, the faithful, out of the depth of their faith, strongly despised the showiness of their spurious sanctity as well as of their power." Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 190.