

# (Acts) to the Jew First

by Brian Brodersen

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*Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of presenting the gospel as good news and the historicity of the Christian faith, using the resurrection of Jesus as the cornerstone of the faith.*

**Duration:** 59:37

**Scripture:** Acts 13:33-36, Acts 13:38, Acts 13:46, Acts 13:48

**Topics:** "Jewish Evangelism", "Resurrection Message"

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## Description

In this sermon, Paul addresses a Jewish audience and appeals to their history and scriptures. He emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus as the good news and declares it as the message they bring. Paul summarizes the message by highlighting God's fulfillment of raising Jesus and the witness of many. The sermon is similar to Peter's message on the day of Pentecost, leading some to question if Paul copied Peter, but it is likely a summary of Paul's own preaching.

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## Transcript

The book of Acts chapter 13 and we'll pick up in verse 13. We left off with Paul and Barnabas having ministered on the island of Cyprus and there they were called upon by one of the chief rulers of the island, the governor actually, Sergius Paulus. He was an intelligent man and he was interested in hearing the gospel and so they met with him and they were sharing the gospel with him and you remember the story how this man who was a sorcerer stood up and opposed them and sought to turn Sergius Paulus away from hearing the word and at that moment the Spirit of God came upon the Apostle Paul and he took authority and he pronounced a judgment upon this sorcerer and he became blind and he went groping about looking for someone to lead him and Sergius Paulus, the governor, was greatly impressed by the gospel message and the demonstration of the power of God that he saw there himself and so Sergius Paulus embraced the Lord and they finished up their ministry there and now we pick up as they continue their journey.

They've been sent out, remember, from Antioch and this is the first real missionary endeavor by the church sending out the apostles and they're going into new territory. They're breaking new ground. They're going into places where the gospel's never been preached.

And so now leaving the island of Cyprus, they sail to the mainland and they come to a place called Perga. Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. Now remember, John is also Mark, John Mark, who was their assistant.

He is a cousin to Barnabas. He's the author of the gospel, according to Mark. But at this stage in his life, he wasn't quite fit to go on the journey, probably physically fit to go on the journey.

And it probably seemed like an overwhelming thing for him. And so he departed from them at this point. But when they departed, so he departed from them in Perga and they remained in Perga for an unknown period of time.

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia or Pisidian Antioch is a better way to describe where they came to. Now they sailed from Cyprus and they they would have been on the southwestern side of Cyprus. And so they sailed around to Perga, which is located in sort of central southern Turkey.

And from Perga, they they left there. And of course, they would travel by foot probably for the most part. And they traveled over 100 miles to Pisidian Antioch.

And not only did they travel over 100 miles, but they traveled up in elevation. They had to cross the Taurus mountain range and they traveled up to about thirty six hundred feet above sea level. And so it was quite a journey, as you can imagine.

And not only was the terrain difficult, but the road was notorious for bandits. And so it was quite a risky thing that they undertook. And in Paul's writings, as he would write back to the churches at various points, he he will mention certain aspects of his ministry and of his journeys.

And he will talk about being in danger of bandits, being in danger of being accosted and robbed and beaten and those kinds of things. And and this would have been one of those places where that would have been very much a reality. You know, sometimes we don't get the whole picture.

We read through our New Testaments and, you know, we don't realize because everything is, you know, very brief. We don't get a lot of the details, but we we miss out on the fact that, you know, this was this was difficult stuff. Missionary life is difficult.

It always has been. And right from the very beginning. But to think of the courage of these men and the determination of these men not to be deterred by any obstacle, they're going to take this gospel of Jesus Christ and they're going to get it to people that haven't heard it.

And that's one of the things that gives me such admiration for the missionaries. That's that's the heart that they have. They're going to they're going to get the gospel to people regardless of the obstacles.

And Paul was the great pioneer in doing that initially. And so they come to Antioch and Pisidia. Now, remember, they left from Antioch, but it was a different location.

It was Antioch in Syria. And many of these cities were named after rulers at the time. And remember, they're in the Seleucid Empire.

There were the various rulers named Antioch or Antiochus. And so the cities would have been named after them. And so they come to this place.

And as they're there for a period of time, they then go into the synagogue. And that's where Paul and Barnabas would begin their ministry efforts in every community. They would, first of all, go and meet with the Jews, because, of course, Jesus was the Jewish messiah and the promises were initially to Israel and

the Jews that were in the dispersion outside of the land of Israel.

They had, for the most part, never heard about the things that had transpired in Jerusalem. They had never heard the gospel story. They'd never heard about this Galilean carpenter, this Jesus of Nazareth, necessarily, and the miracles that he performed and and how, you know, the government turned against him and his execution and his resurrection.

Many of them had never heard the story. And so their first target was the Jewish community. They wanted to bring the gospel to their brethren.

And Paul made that a pattern in his ministry. He would go to the Jew first. He even in writing to the Romans, he talked about the gospel being to the Jew first and then to the Gentile.

And so we see that they they do this here. And, you know, this was in some ways you look at. How in the overall picture of God's providence, you see how he prearranged for the gospel to go from place to place by allowing Jewish communities all over the world.

If the Jews hadn't been spread all over the world, there's a good chance that everybody would have just congregated right in Jerusalem and never gone anywhere else. But the Lord and his providence, he allowed them to be scattered all over the place. And it was through that scattering that the gospel would initially be spread.

And so they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and they sat down and after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying, men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on now in the synagogue, the practice was to begin the service with prayer and then to have a reading from the scriptures. They would read, first of all, from the law, which would be technically the first five books of our Bibles, the books of Moses. They would read they would read a segment from the books of Moses and then they would have someone read a segment from the prophets.

And then if there was a learned man among them, they would ask that person to sort of give an exhortation based on the text that had been read. And so they look out in the congregation and they see here's a couple of men. One of them is a rabbi.

Paul probably had some sort of garment that indicated that he was a rabbi and the other one, Barnabas, was a Levite. So these were two important men in the Jewish community. And so they look out, they see them there and they ask the question, do you have any word of exhortation for us? Would you like to stand up and comment on the text that were read? And so Paul stood and motioning with his hand, he said, Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen, the God of this people, Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelled as strangers in the land of Egypt and with an uplifted arm, he brought them out of it.

Now, for a time of about 40 years, he put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he distributed their land to them by allotment. After that, he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years until Samuel, the prophet.

And afterward, they asked for a king. So God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years. And when he had removed him, he raised up for them David as king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart who will do

all my will.

From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a savior, Jesus. So Paul begins by identifying with them right where they would be at. He goes right to their own history and he brings it to a climax with Jesus, God having sent Jesus.

Now, you know, I said a moment ago they wouldn't have heard the gospel message and the majority probably wouldn't have. But there were definitely some that would have heard of the name of Jesus, because, of course, these people would visit Jerusalem on a fairly regular basis and they would hear things when they were there. But nobody had actually brought the message to them.

And that's what Paul's about to do. But he makes reference to Jesus, indicating that they had some sort of knowledge of at least the person, Jesus. So he goes on and he says now, after John had first preached before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

And as John was finishing his course, he said, Who do you think I am? I am not he. But behold, there comes one after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God to you, the word of this salvation has been sent for those who dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not know him, nor even the voice of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning him.

And though they found no cause for death in him, they asked Pilate that he should be put to death. Now, when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning him. They took him down from the tree and laid him in the tomb.

But God raised him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. And we declare to you glad tidings, that promise which was made to the fathers.

God has fulfilled this for us, their children, in that he has raised up Jesus. Now, this is undoubtedly a summary of Paul's message. Luke did was not even in attendance with Paul at the time.

And yet there was probably somebody there that was sort of, you know, like you might do during somebody's message. You might be writing down your notes and you have your heading. And of course, you don't include every single word that the person is saying, but you summarize what was said.

And so this is a summary of the message that Paul preached. Interestingly, it's very similar to the message that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Some people have had a problem with that.

Some people have said, oh, well, you know, it sounds like Paul was just copying Peter's message and even, you know, in implying that maybe, you know, maybe this was just made up. Maybe it wasn't a true account of what happened. But of course, the message would be similar.

The audience is similar. It's a Jewish audience. And so just like Peter, Paul is going to appeal to them based on their history, based upon their scriptures, based upon the things that would be relevant to them as Jews.

And so in this summary, he he concludes the whole thing with the resurrection. But God raised him from the dead. And then with the fact that many had witnessed that and then he says, this is what we declare to

you, these glad tidings.

The word gospel, you probably know this. Some of you might not, though the word gospel means good news. And that's the message that we bring.

It's the good news. It's the glad tidings of what God has done for people. And.

You know, we really need to keep that in mind and we need to ourselves understand it as that and see it as that. So when we do have opportunity to present it to people, we present it in such a way as it really does seem to be good news. You know, somebody was asking me just recently about a situation that had arisen, I think it was in their family and and they were wondering about how to address these things with their family.

And I and I think the family had a Catholic background, if I remember right. And everybody was upset about, you know, some things that had been implied. And so they were asking me the question, you know, how do I deal with this? How do I answer these questions or how do I show them that they're wrong and Catholicism is not the way to go and all of that? And, you know, I said, well, in actuality, you probably shouldn't take that approach with them.

You probably ought to concentrate on just getting the good news to them if they'll listen, of course. But I think so often what happens is we come we become combative with people and we we start arguing and we're bickering and we're contending and we don't get anywhere, you know, because once the tempers start to flare and once people are offended because you've said something about their ancestral faith and all, you know, the last thing they want to do is listen to anything you have to say. And I've discovered, of course, the hard way in many cases over the years that that's really not the best way to approach people, but really to seek to present just the gospel to them.

And sometimes, you know, you have to deflect all of this other stuff and just to keep it on that that main point of the good news of Jesus. And, OK, yeah, this is your religion and your belief and all that. And but listen to this.

This is the message. This is good news. God has for you that he's done something by which you can be saved and all you need to do is embrace it.

All you need to do is receive it. And if you receive it, the salvation is yours. So Paul presents this to them as these glad tidings of fulfillment of the promise that God made to the fathers.

And then he goes on to support his claim. That Jesus was risen from the dead by quoting from the scriptures. And so he quotes, first of all, from the second psalm, You are my son, as it is written in the second psalm, You are my son today.

I have begotten you and that he raised him from the dead no more to see corruption. He has spoken thus. I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Therefore, he also says in another psalm, You will not allow your holy one to see corruption for David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers and saw corruption. But he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins.

So Paul does a brilliant thing here, and he sets an example for us, all those that would follow after him in evangelism. He shows us how to argue that we argue from the scriptures. And so he claims that Jesus rose from the dead and then he goes to the scriptures to support his claims.

He said, see, the scriptures said that this would happen. Now, the resurrection of the dead is really the the cornerstone of the Christian faith. The Christian faith stands or falls on whether or not the resurrection actually occurred.

Now, you see, if the resurrection didn't happen, then we are wasting our time right now. If the resurrection isn't a reality, then people who are Christians are foolish people. Now, that was the reasoning of Paul, the apostle himself, some people today, even people that are known as theologians, deny the reality of the resurrection, but still try to hold on to Christianity.

They say, oh, well, Jesus didn't actually rise from the dead, and it doesn't really matter whether he did or not. All that matters is that we believe that he did for ourselves. And if we believe that he did, even if he didn't, it still helps us to get through life.

And therefore, you know, it's right and good. But that's stupid. That's not right and good to believe something that isn't a reality just because it makes you feel better.

That's a placebo. It's just like when you go to the doctor and they give you a sugar pill. And you go home and you take these sugar pills, you go back, say, Doc, I don't know what that medication was, but boy, it makes me feel so much better.

Well, what does it prove? You weren't sick in the first place because it isn't medication. And that's what that sort of thinking would be like. You see, Paul didn't think that way at all in writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, if Christ is not risen, then our faith is futile.

If Christ is not risen, then why bother being a Christian? You see, that's reality. If Christ isn't risen from the dead, then the Christian faith is not true. But if Christ is risen from the dead, then that means that everything that Jesus said is absolutely true.

Everything the apostles said is absolutely true. And we need to give total and complete adherence to it. And that, of course, is what is the fact.

And that's why we have ourselves submitted to it. And that's why we seek to persuade others to submit to it as well, because it is true. And it's provably true.

And Paul here, he doesn't just simply make a claim and then say, look, I'm telling you this happened now, you just believe me, don't ask any questions. But Paul supports the claim with mentioning the scriptures that prophesied that there would be a resurrection and also by pointing to the fact that there were witnesses to the resurrection. And so today, when we talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have those same things that we can use to convince people of the reality of our claim.

We can go back to the scriptures, we can show how hundreds and even thousands of years before Jesus came into the world, his whole life was prophesied. You know, it's amazing you can go back to the Old Testament and you can reconstruct the life of Jesus from the Old Testament without even opening the New Testament. You can find out about his family line, you can find out about the location of his birth, you can find out about the activity that he would be involved in during his public ministry.

You can find out about the fact that he would be betrayed by a personal friend. You can find out that he was going to be sold for 30 pieces of silver. You can find out that he was going to enter Jerusalem and be hailed as king on a donkey.

You can find out ultimately that he was going to be executed by crucifixion, something that didn't even exist at the time that it was written. And you can find out that the one who was going to die on that cross was going to rise again from the dead and you can find out that it was all going to happen before the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. You can find that all out in your Old Testament, you don't even have to go to the New Testament to find out any of that.

It's all there. So you see, we have the scriptures to support our claim, but we have also the historical testimony, the eyewitnesses. And this is what I love about the Christian faith.

And this is what one of the things that just gives me just such absolute security is the historicity of it. It's it's a historical faith. Jesus lived in time and he performed these acts in real history.

Now, you might say, well, of course, what what else could it be? But, you know, that isn't true in other religions necessarily. If you study Hinduism and, you know, you start getting into Krishna and these kinds of things, you find that you can't really find historical evidence for these people ever existing. It's really more of a mythology that sort of has come to be embraced by many that it did happen somewhere sometime in history.

Nobody knows dates or times or anything like that. But in reality, it's just a mythology. You read through the Koran and of course, Mohammed lived in history, I wouldn't deny that for a moment.

But yet when you read through the Koran and you read, you know, the sayings and some of the things you this, you know, it just doesn't. There's there's that element of that, that historical element is not their specifics and and it's just it's just non-existent there. And that's the case in most of the world's religions.

But in Christianity, we have something that occurred in history. We have Jesus who came into the world under the reign of Caesar Augustus, who carried out his public ministry under the reign of Tiberius Caesar, who was actually tried by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. And we have all of these references and so forth to history, and, you know, this isn't some fairy tale, some legend sort of a thing.

And all you got to do is read it and find out that that's true. Anybody reading the Bible for the first time would be surprised at that deep historical element to it. I think a lot of people are shocked at that sometimes because they've been led to believe that it's just a book of myths and legends and fairy tales and those sorts of things.

And you start to read through it. I'll never forget reading the testimony of a Jewish rabbi years ago who was one of the leading rabbis in the in the Budapest area, he was the chief rabbi, trained all of the rabbinical students. And he was very much opposed to Christianity because he felt that Christianity was Judaism's great enemy.

And he had all of these presuppositions about what Christianity was. And a lot of it was just, you know, like I'm saying, a lot of myth and legend and so forth. And he picked up a New Testament and he began to read the Gospel of Matthew.

And he read the first verse. This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David, and he was floored. This is a historical record, this is a Jewish book, and before he finished the New Testament, he was converted, he was a believer.

So anyway, going back to the resurrection, we have the historical. Proof of the resurrection, there were eyewitnesses that saw Jesus raised from the dead. Now, we don't question eyewitnesses about anything else.

If you get a couple of eyewitnesses to any event, then that becomes established in our judicial process as that's a fact that eyewitnesses, they saw it. It's only when it comes to the gospel that we start to not we, but they, you know, others. The critics, the skeptics, they start, oh, well, you know, we can't apply those things here.

They don't question ancient history for the most part. In any other area. It's interesting when you look at, you know, the the historical record concerning the ancient world, did you know that there is more? Manuscript evidence, far more manuscript evidence for the things that occurred in the New Testament and for the New Testament itself than any other, not only than any other piece of ancient literature, but then all other pieces of ancient literature combined together.

There's a vastly greater amount of manuscript evidence, in other words, what we teach in universities there, what they teach in universities today is historical fact is based upon very little actual information compared to what we have for our New Testament. And you don't hear people questioning. The validity of the account of, you know, Caesar's battles or, you know, whatever else you might want to look back at Alexander's conquest or, you know, things that were going on in the ancient world, I mean, you go into a classroom and they teach you that this is fact.

And yet you find that those facts are based on very little written information when it comes to the New Testament, there are thousands upon thousands of manuscripts, and yet people say, oh, well, you can't trust the Bible. If you can't trust the Bible, you can't trust anything in regard to history because there's more information for these things than any of those things. But how do we know anything happened in history? We know because people who lived at the time wrote it down, passed the information on and does eventually come down to us.

That's how we know about history. How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? Well, the scriptures say he would rise from the dead. And when he rose, people saw him.

And they testified to it, they wrote it down, and here we have it right here in our New Testament, it's the eyewitness accounts. And it wasn't just one or two, but it was dozens of people and even hundreds of people, according to Paul in First Corinthians 15, that Jesus was seen by over 500 people at one time after his resurrection. And then to top it all off, you have these men that have testified that they had seen Jesus.

Unmistakably. Seen him, they were with him, they didn't just see him at a distance and say, oh, I think that's Jesus. He I think he rose and I don't know that.

No, but they saw him. They spoke with him. They ate with him.

They conversed with him. They had, you know, relationship with him after his resurrection until he ascended. And the same people.

Then went out and began to proclaim this message, and that at a certain point in time, the the existing governmental authorities, the Romans at the time, stood up and said, you cannot proclaim this message. You must cease to proclaim this message. You can't proclaim a message that this Jesus of Nazareth, this Lord, because Caesar is Lord.

And unless you recant, we will put you to death. And they all chose to go to death. Now, is it likely that they chose to go to death for something that wasn't true? And if it wasn't true, they would have known it wasn't true.

And that wouldn't make any sense that people would get killed for something, a lie they made up when they could simply save themselves by saying, you know what, we just made this up. It really didn't happen. I'm sure that had that been the case when it came down to kneeling down with a sword, you know, hanging over your head, somebody in that crowd was going to say, wait a second.

This isn't really true, but none of them ever did that. They all willingly gave their lives. They sealed their testimony that Christ was risen in their own blood.

And so Paul says there were people who saw him. We have the eyewitnesses, we have the scriptures, and then we have two thousand years of history and transform lives. Paul was just getting started, but he himself was a radical testimony to the risen Christ because he had a major transformation in his life.

As we know, we've studied that here in the book of Acts. He was the greatest antagonist of the Christians, but now he's the greatest promoter of the Christian faith. How do you explain that one without a resurrected Christ? But we've got thousands of Paul's now as history's gone on, thousands and thousands of people just like Paul.

Who were antagonistic, who were hostile, who were disinterested, who couldn't care less about Jesus or the gospel or salvation or heaven or hell or any of that. But then they met the risen savior. And they're Christians, they became Christians, they're Christians today, some of you are in that exact situation.

And so the resurrection, that's it. And all through the New Testament, this is what's put forth as the as the final and total proof of the validity of the ministry of Jesus and of his claim to be the son of God and the savior of the world. He even said it himself.

They asked him on one occasion. Remember, he cleansed the temple. They came and they said, what authority do you have to do this? Who gave you this authority? He said.

Destroy this temple. And I will raise it again in three days, that'll be my proof that I have the authority to do this. And that's what he did.

He raised it again. And so all through the Gospels, then we have going back to this point, like Paul did in Romans, he said that he was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, but he was declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. That's the proof that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the savior of the world, that he did something that no one else in history has done.

He rose from the dead. I was teaching the Christianity one on one class last night, we were talking about a lot of this stuff, but, you know, I think that sometimes we hear this so often, I said this last night. So if you were there, bear with me as I repeat it.

But I think sometimes we, you know, having heard this so often, we just sort of take it for granted. We Jesus rose from the dead. Oh, yes, Jesus, Jesus rose from the dead and Jesus rose from the dead.

But the the reality of it, the magnitude of it. It sort of we miss it. But we can't miss it.

And I know for me, one thing that's driven at home, just the the the reality of it and how profound it really is, is encountering death and having, you know, as a pastor, having many occasions where I'm involved in funeral services and, you know, burying people and so forth. And you see, you look and you know, here's a person who people love that person. And that person was once the life of the party and they were energetic and vibrant and all those things.

And, you know, maybe even young and promising future and and they're dead and there they are in that coffin. And there's nothing that anybody on the planet can do to get them up and get them out of that situation. They're dead and gone and it's irreversible and it's always been that way.

And, you know, sometimes I like to just sort of go back over history and think about all the great people that have lived and how they were, you know, Alexander the Great. What what an example is, you know, by the age of 30, he's conquered pretty much the world. And there he is.

He has it all in his grasp and he suddenly dies and he's gone and they can't bring him back. There's nothing they can do to get this great man, this brilliant general, this guy who, you know, in his 20s conquered the world as great as he was in his life. Once he was dead, he was dead and it was over.

And that's true with everybody else. I think sometimes we seem to forget it, but there's one person in history that it isn't true with, and that's Jesus Christ. He died, but he rose again.

Now, there are other resurrections, of course, but where do you find them? You find them in the Bible. You can't find another religion in the world that has any. Not even a claim to a resurrection, really, let alone, you know, an actual event that occurred in history, you just don't find it anywhere else.

But you find in the Bible that people are raised from the dead in the Old Testament, the prophets raised people from the dead. But Jesus, of course. He was the one who really, you know, in an extraordinary way, raised people from the dead, raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead when everybody was lamenting at the death of this 12 year old girl walking through the village of Nain and seeing a funeral procession and a woman with her only son being carried out to be buried.

Jesus stops the procession and says, the young man get up, restores him to his mother. And then, of course, the story of Lazarus, how Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, the brother of Martha and Mary, he dies. And for four days he's in the tomb, Jesus finally comes.

And there he says to Mary, he says, move away the stone. And she says, Lord, we can't do that. The body's begun to decompose and Jesus commands that it be done and they do it and he calls Lazarus out of the grave.

But then here's the final thing. Who raised Jesus from the dead, he raised himself. See, he was the one that raised these others, but then he raised himself, he said, I have power to lay my life down and I have power to take it again.

And that's been granted to be by my father. So the scripture implies that God, the father, raised him from the dead. But it also states that Jesus raised himself from the dead.

And so this is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, and this is the person in all of history that God, he sets his seal on and he says, this is the savior of the world. This is my son. And this is how everybody can know, because he will have done something that nobody else has done or ever could do.

He will rise from the dead. That's our Lord, he rose from the dead. And so Paul drives that message home to them here.

And then he says in verse thirty seven that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins and listen, and by him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Now, here's where the great news comes in. Paul says that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins.

And then he says, and everything that you couldn't be justified. By of by the law of Moses, you can now be justified through him, you see, there were certain things that under the Mosaic law were unjustifiable, you couldn't be justified, you couldn't be forgiven in this in that sense. There were certain violations of Moses's law that required the death penalty.

And so if you had committed adultery, if you had committed murder, if you had been involved in any of those things that God had declared were punishable by death, then there wasn't any there wasn't anything that you could offer to God for that. There were sacrifices were offered for, you know, a variety of sins, but there were certain sins that you couldn't offer a sacrifice for idolatry, there was no sacrifice that could atone for idolatry. And so you see, under the law.

There was the impossibility of redemption. But under the gospel and through the grace of God, even those things that could not be atoned for under the Mosaic system are now atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ. And that's the amazing thing, it doesn't matter what a person's done, it doesn't matter where they've been or how wicked and horrible they've been.

And Jesus Christ is able to cleanse them from their sin, forgive them and give them a place in heaven. You know, there are some people in the world, historically, some presently that you just, you know, you look at them and you think there's no way this person could be forgiven. The more you learn about Saddam Hussein, the more you think, you know, your tendency would be to think there's no way.

And I've been in groups with Christians praying for Saddam Hussein, and I got to tell you, it's tough, but. I have to forget my emotion and say, you know. It's true.

It's true, this guy could be forgiven because all of those brutal, wicked, vicious, horrible things that he has perpetrated on people were laid upon Jesus Christ on the cross, and when he died, he died because of those things. And if that man would turn. And say, Jesus, forgive me, Jesus would forgive him, that's hard in one sense, but it's glorious in another sense, isn't it, because that's how radical the grace of God is.

Now, of course, God would forgive him. And turn him into a different person, he would have to pay for his crimes against society, perhaps with his life physically, but he could even still go to heaven. Amazing.

But that's why John Newton wrote the hymn Amazing Grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. You remember his background, he was a slave trader.

He was hauling Africans from their homes in chains on his ship back to England, and he was brutalizing them just like everybody else was. And in the midst of a storm, the spirit of God gripped his heart and convicted him of sin. And he fell on his knees and he asked Christ to forgive him.

And he became a great minister of the gospel and a great advocate of the liberation of the slaves and the abolition of the slavery movement. But you see, it doesn't matter what a person's done. Some of these serial killers that we have had in our society in the past 20, 30 years or so, they're apprehended and we find out all the horrible things that they've done.

And then we hear that in prison they have a conversion experience. And, you know, some people are just so angered to to even have somebody suggest such a thing. But it's true, if they've repented, they can be forgiven again, because.

All things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses are now able to be atoned for through Christ, because Jesus took every sin ever committed, every sin that ever will be committed, and he bore it upon himself on the cross and was punished for those things. Amazing. It's amazing what Jesus suffered.

When you think of, you know, sometimes we you know, if we're relatively normal people in one sense, you know, you kind of sometimes it's even hard to really see ourselves as sinful as we really are. You know, we have moments, though, where it all sort of, you know, comes out at times. But for the most part, you know, our sin that that real depraved nature is is kept in check, subdued and so forth.

But, you know, there are those that that's not the case. And so sometimes we tend to think, well, you know, I can understand, you know, that Jesus died for sins and we kind of think about ourself and, you know, the little things we do here and there and and, you know, we don't realize how bad we are or how horrific that is. But when you think of someone like.

Saddam Hussein, when you think of someone like Adolf Hitler, when you think of someone like Joseph Stalin or you think of, you know, some other tyrant, you know, ruthless dictator kind of a person, and then you think that's what Jesus was dying for, too. Oh, my. Then you understand a little bit better the magnitude of the wrath of God that was being poured out upon him.

But it was being poured out upon him because God loved all the world, all those people, all of us people, because in reality, we're all in the same boat. The heart is deceitful, above all things, desperately wicked. Not just their heart, the heart, our heart, my heart.

The heart is deceitful, desperately wicked, who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. You see what the Lord is telling us there is that we are so wicked that we'd never believe it. If we were told it.

And it's true for the most part, isn't it? Oh, I'm not like that guy. No way. Oh, he's bad.

He's wicked. I'm not that bad. No, the heart is deceitful, above all things, desperately wicked.

Who can know it? No one can know the depth of their own depravity. We need to take God at his word. He says, I know your heart.

And deep down inside, believe it or not. Hate to say it, hate to break the news that every one of us have the capacity to go to the extent of manifesting wickedness like some of these other people. It's there because that's the condition of the human heart.

But that's what Jesus died for. And so Paul breaks forth the good news to them that all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses, you can now be justified through what Jesus Christ has done. And now he says, beware, therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you.

Behold, you despisers marvel and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you. So I think Paul at this point was sensing. Some opposition from the crowd, I think he was starting to sense that he was he was.

Losing them a bit, that he was probably angering them, because, of course, what he's telling them is that you guys are sinners and you just didn't tell a Jew he was a sinner. He just didn't want to hear that message because, you see, to the Jew, he was a, you know, a child of God. He was a child of the covenant.

The Gentiles were the sinners. They're the ones that God was anxious to pour his wrath on, but not the Jews. But Paul is saying to them, you're guilty.

And I believe by, you know, where he goes with it, that he probably sensed their hostility rising. And so he says, beware, therefore, he gives them a warning less what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you. And of course, he refers to the judgment that would come upon the Israelites.

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, now listen to this. When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Interesting.

Paul has a great love and passion for the Jewish people, top priority to him to get the gospel to the Jews. But sadly, tragically, when he would come with this message, he would find that they weren't that receptive. They weren't begging to hear more about this message.

Instead, they were challenging. They were arguing. They were debating.

You see, their hearts had become hardened, but the Gentiles, the ones who now remember they're in a synagogue. So these are Gentiles who have been being drawn toward what they've understood of Judaism, but still by the Jewish community, they would have been looked down upon. They would have been considered second class citizens because the last thing a Jew would ever believe is that a Gentile could be on the same level as they were in a relation to God.

And so as Paul and notice, as we've gone over this message, it's very Jewish in its content. Paul is he's speaking to Jews and he's speaking to them from a Jewish context. But the Gentiles are the ones who are begging to hear more.

You know, it's so difficult living among people with hardened hearts, isn't it? When you just sense that people don't want to hear what you have to say. I had an opportunity yesterday to share a little bit with a man, and I'll tell you, the moment I started sharing with him, he was doing his best to get in his car and get his ignition turned on and get out of my driveway. He said, hey, thank you very much.

You know, he wanted to talk all day until this subject came up. Then all of a sudden, oh, I got to go. And, you know, you just think, wouldn't it be nice to come across someone that just was saying, tell me more.

Oh, please. Please. I shared this on Monday night, but I'll share it with you guys as well.

When I was in Hungary last year, last summer, we were ministering with the church in Debrecen and we were also going out to the refugee camp and the refugees are people that have primarily come from the Middle East. And we had invited some to come to some of the outreach we were doing in that night out in the city. There were two men that came from the refugee camp.

They'd heard about it and I was there speaking with them. They were Iraqis. They were Muslims.

And as we talked for about 45 minutes and as I shared the gospel with them at a certain point, one of them spoke up and he said, please keep speaking. These are beautiful words. When's the last time you heard an American say that, you know, this hard heart, just like the Jews in Paul's day, they had heard it so often and they knew it all and you can't tell me anything.

And what do you mean, Paul? We're sinners. And and, you know, it's just God have mercy on our nation. God, soften people's hearts.

And we need to pray that that would happen, that we would find those receptive persons. I know there are still people out there that are receptive, but just generally speaking, you know, it just seems that there's that same kind of thing. But then in other places in the world, there are people that would beg to hear these words again, like those two fellows from Iraq and all over the Middle East, people that have been dominated by Islamic.

Religion and culture and society all over the place, people remember the girls that were arrested by the Taliban and they were there in Afghanistan, they were liberated when the troops came in and all, you know, they wrote a book about their experience in Afghanistan. They love the people. They want to go back because they said the people are open, they're receptive, they want to hear.

And there's a whole world out there full of people that want to hear. And God help us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into his harvest because they're there. But sadly, in our situation, we find almost the same response that Paul found here in the synagogue.

But the Gentiles beg that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now, when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. So there were those that embraced and those followed Paul and Barnabas and they spoke to them and they persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

So there were those that day that did receive the message. And so Barnabas and Paul encouraged them to continue in the grace of God on the next Sabbath. Almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first. But since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles for so the Lord has commanded us.

Now he quotes from Isaiah. I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth. Now, when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and they glorified the word of the Lord.

So the Jews were angered, they were jealous. And, you know, their main contention, even more than the message of Jesus himself. They were contentious about that because the implication was, again, that they were sinners.

But what they were really irritated about was that Paul was seeming to imply that Gentiles could now have the same kind of relationship with God that Jews had. That there was not going to be any preferential treatment from this point on and that you didn't have to become a Jew and a second class citizen as a proselyte to know God, you could come to know God just as a Gentile. That's what made them angry.

That's what annoyed them more than anything else. And later on in this history, we'll find when Paul is arrested in Jerusalem and he's telling his own testimony, he's got this attentive crowd. They're all listening to him.

And then he makes the fatal mistake of saying that God told him to go to the Gentiles. And when he said that, says they ripped their clothes, they threw dust in the air. They said, get this man off the planet.

He's not fit to live. Because he mentioned the Gentiles. You see the prejudice that had developed there within the people at that time and and just the distorted view of God.

But the Gentiles, they were glad when they heard this, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life, believed in the word of the Lord was being spread throughout the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women of the and the chief men of the city, raised up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and came to Iconium.

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Let's pray. Lord, as we have read over these things tonight.

Lord, we thank you for the fact that the gospel came to us. We thank you, Lord, that. You have patiently endured.

And Lord, even tonight, you're patiently enduring the heart and hearts of people. And you're giving people chances to respond. Lord, we pray.

We pray for our nation. We pray, Lord, for a softening of the hearts of the people in this nation. We pray, Lord, that people in our own community would begin to.

Cry out for truth, people would begin to beg that they could hear the words of God, Lord, touch hearts, we pray. And Lord, we think of the world beyond us, we think of that world over in the Middle East where the millions and millions have been kept captive to false religion and these things, and Lord, how many of them would love to hear the truth. Father, we pray that the events going on in the world tonight would lead to a greater opportunity for the gospel to get out.

Lord, we know that you are the lord of history, your sovereign over the nations. We know you allow kingdoms to come into existence and you then remove them at times. And we know that you're working all things according to the counsel of your will to bring about your glory in the salvation of many.

And so, father, tonight we pray that you'd send forth laborers into your harvest and that the gospel could go to the hungry, to the thirsty souls. Lord. Lord, send us even or help us, Lord, to send others.

Lord, you are indeed the Lord, you rose from the dead. We know it, the prophets foretold it, history reveals it, and we have experienced it. Lord, may we.

Like these men, like Paul and Barnabas, be your witnesses and proclaim you the resurrected Christ to the people. Lord, fill us with your spirit, we pray. Lord, we pray for the services tomorrow.

We pray you bless and Lord, now that this conflict has started and there's turmoil in the nation and all Lord, we pray that people would wake up tomorrow and realize that it's a more serious day than it was last Sunday, that people would be prompted and moved to come to a place of worship, a place where they could hear the Bible taught. We pray your blessing upon Pastor Chuck as he teaches your word tomorrow. And upon John, as he teaches from the Psalms tomorrow night.

And so, Lord, we just commit ourselves to you. Lord, work in our lives. Your purpose in these days, we pray in Jesus name, amen.

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