

Monday Night RAW

Acts 13

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Begin with song

Pray

Welcome back! I am grateful to you all for joining me for a deep look into a Book of the Bible that has been called, “The Gospel of the Holy Spirit”. This book is a favorite of many clergy especially, because it documents the beginnings the first Christian churches and reminds us how desperately we need the Holy Spirit in our lives. The church, we’re discovering is messy. It’s full of people far less than perfect. And it is often a supreme challenge to grow and maintain. And in case you don’t know, guess what? The Church has not changed that much in the last 2000 years. We’re messy, we’re far from perfect, we can be a handful and challenging, right? Everyone shake your head....

Well, finishing last week with chapters 11 & 12, we learned that Peter encountered some resistance from within his own following! They did not think it was OK for Peter to preach/teach to the uncircumcised gentiles. And Peter told them what happened and that the Holy Spirit was given to the gentiles addressing a theological crossroad where no longer was the Gospel message only for the Jew – now the Gospel is for everyone and laying claim to an important doctrine of the faith: Salvation belongs to God. In Antioch – the Spirit of God was moving mightily and the first model of what the church should look like was birthed. It was in Antioch, don’t forget, where the disciples were first called, “Christians.” Barnabus and Saul come to Antioch and spent a year. Shortly after, Herod starts the persecution, killing James and imprisoning Peter. But we read about a miraculous and very telling rescue of Peter. We learned about a very important term regarding God: God is sovereign. We learned faith doesn’t mean we always get the outcome we pray for and that is OK because God is good and He is sovereign. It does NOT however, eliminate human responsibility.

And this brings us to today’s lesson on Chapter 13.

[READ verses 1-3]

The first thing we learn are the names of some of the teachers and prophets in the church at Antioch. You find Barnabus, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and of course Saul.

It must be noted here, that the very initial mission established comes from a worshipping congregation - this is the first account of the missionary movement in the Book of Acts. What are these new “missionaries” doing?

- They are **worshipping** together everyday
- They are practicing the spiritual devotion of **fasting** (abstaining intentionally from food)
- They are **listening**. (Talk about prayer as an act of intentionally listening....)
- They are praying
- They are Responding to the Holy Spirit

Everybody hold up your hand. Hopefully you have five fingers and here Luke is identifying the “five fingers of faithfully being the Church”

Worship, fasting and other spiritual practices (lectio divina, Bible study, spiritual guidance and accountability...) Listening, prayer, and responding to the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word here is leitourgeo – to minister, serve, perform sacred service or conduct worship. This is where we get the term, “Liturgy”. We know that liturgy is equated to the way we conduct worship. The term Liturgy, though has a bigger meaning, it means “The work of the people”. Notice its not “The work of the Clergy” but the work of the people!!

Here we can surmise the first theological point: **Mission is birthed and grown out of worship.**

BECAUSE the Church worships, they become missionary people. And make no mistake it means being set apart, appointed, designated in the Greek. Now, this is a work of God – He does the setting apart – the church simply acknowledges what God is already doing. (Explain my calling)

Let’s read Acts 13:4-12

Once again, as we will see commonly as the church grows in number, the disciples encounter resistance. They encounter a man named, “Bar-Jesus”, who is a known magician. He opposes the Gospel message and instead, encounters Saul (now and hereafter called Paul). And Paul is not just defending the faith, but rather it says something about Paul we must heed: it says he will “Filled with the Holy Spirit”. And Paul responds, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness...”. Wow. Strong language. Why do you think he responded so strongly? Its not that he was simply disagreeing with Paul. **It was because he was attempting to prevent someone from hearing the Gospel.**

Theological point #2: Opposition comes in a variety of ways whenever we try to advance the Kingdom message.

- Spiritual
- Cultural
- Political
- Intellectual
- Personal

The Church at it's mission isn't ultimately dependent on HUMAN power.

READ 13:13-25

So Paul and Barnabus travel to Pisidian Antioch and are invited to speak in their Temple. What Paul says is an important reminder of Israel's complete history and though we may already know it, it is something we should always renew in our minds:

- God chooses Israel as His chosen
- God empowers Moses to lead them away from Egypt (The Exodus)
- God has to "tolerate" them in the wilderness
- God appoints judges to assist the large population
- God anoints Saul (not Paul) as king
- God anoints David to be king

Paul then move straight toward Jesus. And he doesn't present Jesus as some disconnected figure from their history. Paul is declaring: **Jesus is the fulfillment of God's redemptive history.**

What Paul is doing is "connecting the dots" of all of Israel's history – a history well known by Rabbi's and Jews.

The Exodus, King David, the prophets, the promises – ALL POINT TOWARD CHRIST!

Theological point #3: **ALL OF CHRISTIANITY IS ROOTED IN GOD'S COVENENTAL FAITHFULNESS.**
(Explain covenant)

Acts 13:26 – 37 is simply a recap of what Jesus did, and what the people did to him (crucifixion) and God raised Him

Jesus was: Rejected, condemned, crucified, buried and raised by God. If you want to hear the theological heartbeat of Acts, its, **"But God raised him from the dead."**

The resurrection of Jesus is the culmination of God's complete redemptive story.

III : Ask the question what if someone found Jesus' bones?

READ Acts 13:38-39

“Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, tht through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you”. And then, “By this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”

Freed: in the Greek, Aphesis – which means, “Release, forgiveness, liberation, and cancellation of a debt. This is at the very heart of the Gospel, that through Christ, sinners can experience **release from the guilt and bondage of sin.**

Which leads us to the Wesleyan understanding of Justification by Faith. Verse 39 says this using the Greek word, dikaioo which means, “to justify, declare righteous, vindicate”

Ex. “Just If I’d never sinned before...”

Theological point #4: **It is through the law that sinners are revealed. But it is only through Jesus Christ that salvation from sin is given.**

Please note that when we often describe “The Law”, because of the Gospel it sometimes gets a raw deal. The law is not evil. The law is holy! It just cannot accomplish what Jesus Christ can accomplish.

Wesley understood this greatly and it formed his understanding of Justifying Grace.

Wesley, of course did not just stop there with Justifying Grace. His soteriology of grace move forward from there toward Sanctifying grace.

Justifying grace changes our standing before God. But Sanctifying grace changes our CHARACTER before God.

III. Imagine two rooms. You enter the first, it’s a courtroom. The judge on the bench declares you forgiven because of Jesus Christ. That’s Justification. You enter the next room. It’s a hospital. You are in the process of healing. God begins transforming you heart, your habits, desires, and life. That is Sanctification.

God doesn’t only pardon us; He transforms us.

Now verse 40-41 has a stark warning (READ)

I think we need to understand that the gospel isn’t just information to gather in our heads and hearts, rather it DEMANDS a response. And what Paul does here is to identify the danger in hearing God’s grace and refusing it.

Theological point #5 – Grace is a gift that must be received. It is literally a free gift of God. And we have the ability, of our own choosing, NOT to take it. Wesley was very clear about

this emphasizing that God's grace IS RESISTABLE. When God calls, it is not forced, bullied upon us, or thrown at us. God's call is genuine. And when we receive it, God shows us the way to a far more fulfilling life:

- Repentance
- Believing / having faith
- Receiving
- Following Him

This is our genuine response.

READ Acts 13:42-52

Well something amazing happens after the gentiles have listened to Paul's message. It says, "When the gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord..." But the second half of this phrase often is controversial: "as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers."

Of course this points to the concept of predestination – a Calvinistic theological position that states, God, in His sovereignty and foreknowledge, has determined or ordained beforehand the ultimate destiny of human beings, particularly in relation to salvation. (Thank you AI!!)

Of course, as Wesleyans, we disagree with this. John Wesley's theology stated:

- God takes the initiative in salvation through Grace (Prevenient Grace)
- This grace is offered to ALL – not just a predetermined few.
- We as humans always have free will and thereby have a genuine ability to respond to or resist God's grace.

III. Think of a parent who knows their child well. The parent may know what the child is likely to choose because of their history with the child, but knowing the choice does not cause the choice. Likewise, **Wesleyan theology distinguishes between God's foreknowledge and God's causation.**

In the original language here, the word destined is *Tatzo* which means, to appoint, arrange, designate, or order. This is a perfect passive participle which simply indicates something that has been acted upon.

But in any way you want to adopt this, Luke's clear theological point emphasizes that God is sovereignly directing the mission of the Gospel.

Here is theological point #6: Divine sovereignty and human response are both indicated as present in the Acts Church.

It is really a very simple formula that Acts is teaching us:

- God alone initiates
- God calls
- God empowers (Holy Spirit)
- People respond

READ Acts 13:49-52

“Thus, the word of the Lord spread throughout the region.”

The Word of the Lord spread –not Paul’s popularity, not Barnabus’s character or reputation, not the apostle’s church organizational strategy. The Word of the Lord spread.

Luke uses the Greek term, diaphoreeo, which simply emphasizes the ongoing – continuance or the carrying forth or the message.

The truth is, the gospel is never stagnant and it is never confined to one location.

And so, as we close this chapter, let me give you one final theological point:

The destination for the gospel is not the church; the church is the vehicle for the gospel.

- The church receives the gospel.
- The church lives out the gospel
- The church proclaims the gospel
- The church sends the gospel.

Culmination point: **The gospel is something we receive IN ORDER TO PASS ON TO OTHERS!!!**

PRAYER / DISMISSAL

