

**filling our
hearts with
food
and gladness**

Acts 13:1 – 52

~ The heart of Paul's ministry was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Period. That's what his sermons centered on; and that's what his message to the churches was. Christ rose from the dead for our justification. That's the Gospel. We either begin there with God – or we do not begin with Him. If it weren't for the apostle's commitment to take the Gospel to Galatia – which is modern day Turkey – and then on the entire known world, you and I may have never received the message of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wasn't emphasizing healing or tongues or prosperity or blessings; only Christ crucified - and risen. Because we benefit from the work of the apostles, we have a responsibility to likewise further the Gospel in the sound doctrine of the apostles to those who have never heard it. Please pray for this worldwide ministry, dear readers. Also pray the Spirit of God will open your eyes in spiritual discernment and wisdom, revealing the wonders of His Word today.

The key to the book of Acts is when the Lord Jesus said, in chapter one, "ye shall be witnesses unto Me...." That does NOT mean the church as a corporate body – it means YOU and me as individual believers. We have an obligation of love to our Savior, and He has given us the ability to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world right here on this forum.

In previous reports, we considered how the early church was comprised of one hundred percent Jews. Then, it began to move out into Samaria and Judaea. In this leg of our safari, we see the church begin to go to the ends of the earth, where it passed by our ancestors in the process. You and I are beneficiaries of someone who went down the road of this world preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ. You and I should be in the business of passing it on beyond where we are; to someone who has not heard about Christ properly, correctly and completely. This is also where we lose track of Peter, and Paul becomes the dominant Christian leader.

This chapter and the next cover Paul's first missionary journey. We begin in Seleucia with Barnabas and then move to his home in Cyprus. From there, they continue to another island called Paphos and then on to Perga in Pamphylia. After that, they enter Asia minor – modern day Turkey – and go into what was known, at that time, as Galatian country. If you have a good Bible with a map, it will outline this journey. I believe you'll find it extremely helpful to understand the geographical route Paul and Barnabas took the first time....

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

~ So, certain men were set aside as missionary's Personally by the Spirit of God. Notably, the church that sent them forward into the world was not the church in Jerusalem. Quite frankly, the church in Jerusalem wasn't even a missionary church. The church in Antioch was. The reason they were fasting and praying was an earnest desire for the will of God in their lives. When they laid their hands on Paul, they didn't impart anything to him – they simply identified themselves as partners in the enterprise of getting the Gospel message out to the entire world. The church in Antioch is simply affirming they would support Paul and Barnabas – and John Mark – as they went forth; being sent by the Holy Spirit Himself....

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

~ Paul always began in the synagogue and used it as a springboard into the community. It seems almost no one follows that method anymore. Most people would deeply criticize a preacher who attempted to teach the Gospel in a modern synagogue. Well, that's the place to start, I assure you. There is no record of what happened at Salamis; so, I would have to assume they didn't have any success there. Then, they cross over to the other end of the island where they encounter satanic opposition.

As we read on, we are introduced to another sorcerer. This one had a tremendous influence on the Roman authorities on the island. Some of our modern-day religious organizations wield tremendous political power. They all use the Word of God for some hazily perceived credibility, but their overall message is directly contradicted by the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Most of them stress gifts, tongues, blessings and healing everyone under the sun - but they aren't interested in taking up their cross to follow Jesus. Try to speak to them concerning losing their life because they love it, you'll discover you may as well be speaking Mandarin Chinese. It's possible you'll be charged with a crime. Jesus never knew those people. Their cause isn't Christ – it's religious sorcery. It's Satanic....

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him,

~ This is where "Saul" changed his name to "Paul" – and Paul means "small." Some Believe he took the name to tone down the pride associated

with a huge name like Saul. My personal opinion is that, because Sergius Paulus was the first convert we have a record of, Saul changed his name accordingly. Paul was a very mild-mannered man in many ways. However, when he encountered satanic opposition and blasphemous teaching, he denounced it with authority. We ought to do the same thing today. As we read on, we see a man in spiritual darkness also placed in physical darkness....

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

~ Once again, I call your attention to the fact that Paul had the sign gifts of an apostle. Paul didn't have a New Testament to turn to and point out Scripture. The epistle to the Romans hadn't even been written at this time. Likewise, John hadn't written an epistle yet, either. The only authority Paul had was sign gifts. Today, John says, "... if any man comes to you not having the doctrine of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are to receive him not." It's about doctrine, friends. The sign gifts are not doctrine – and this is not about you – it's about Christ Jesus as the Son of God. I don't know why make-believers refuse to get that straight – but they do. Satanic miracles likely abounded at this time; but Paul dominates with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ – that is, His death, burial and resurrection. Sergius Paulus has been in spiritual darkness, and he is NOT astonished by sign gifts. No, friends, he is astonished at the doctrine of the resurrected Christ Paul is bringing him....

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

~ Luke is mild and modest and doesn't issue a tirade against John Mark. John Mark's mother was a prominent member of the church in Jerusalem, and John returns home. See, when John Mark saw the paganism and dangers in Asia Minor, it was too much for him. He decided he hadn't been called as a missionary after all and makes a beeline in the other direction. This led to a violent disagreement that would cause them to part ways with animosity. Interestingly, God didn't throw John Mark overboard for this; no, it turns out Paul was wrong to get so upset. Thank God He doesn't throw us overboard because of failure, friends. Paul himself will be big enough to admit he was wrong in second Timothy; when he tells Timothy to "bring John Mark – he was profitable" to him for the ministry. God always gives us a second chance....

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

~ Many of the Jews were displaced from Jerusalem and scattered throughout the Roman empire at this time; and the custom of the day was to have visitors from Jerusalem preach to them whenever possible. That afforded a marvelous opportunity for Paul, and he took advantage of it. This sermon by Paul on the Sabbath is one that most expositors recklessly ignore and pass over; and that's a shame, because it's a great sermon....

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

~ You may recall this method of preaching. Steven cited Israel's history in his defense before the Sanhedrin. Paul is presenting our Savior and Lord, crucified and risen. These Jews knew all about John Baptist – but not Jesus. This gets down to the nitty gritty, my beloved. Paul tells them this is fulfillment of prophecy, and at the same time, they were reading it. Unfortunately, they had no idea what they were reading – but they thought they did. See, friends, every sermon preached in the New Testament was an Easter message with the resurrection as the heart and center. That is so important to learn and remember. The death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel message in its entirety. Furthering that message is the cause of Christ. It's just that simple; and just that complicated!

Moving on, verse thirty-three does not refer to the virgin birth. It refers to resurrection from the dead. In verse thirty-five, we see the same message Simon Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost. Verse thirty-eight forces them to make a decision to believe in the resurrection of Christ or reject it. Well, the Gentiles heard Paul's message - and they wanted to hear it again, as we see in verse forty-two. I doubt they fully understood it the first time. In fact, I know they didn't. But they did want to hear it again. Because His sheep hear His voice.

The result of this was a time of chaos ensuing. Many of the leading religious rulers in the synagogue are going to strongly oppose Paul and Barnabus from here forward. That's because these two were standing up and declaring the Word of God. This is also when they are run out of town. They simply shook the dust off and left. When someone doesn't want to hear the Gospel – don't insist they hear you. Shake the dust off and leave. That's God closing the door. Thank Him for that!

People react negatively to my teaching of the Gospel all the time. They emphasize every healing and sign and wonder under the sun - but never Christ resurrected. Just. Never. But don't worry. I don't get discouraged, friends – not for a moment. When the Gospel is taught properly, correctly and completely, there WILL be resistance. But God always blesses His Word. It never returns void unto Him. Join me on this safari as we allow the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and lives, won't you? ~
