

Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 13



Paul's First Missionary Journey Begins

Notes on Acts Chapter 13

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Introduction - Paul's First Missionary Journey (Itinerary)



The table below lists the years of Paul's journeys and imprisonments. (Matthew McGee, "Chronology of Apostle Paul's Journeys and Epistles") In Acts 13-14 we read about the first missionary journey.

Paul at Damascus	37-40 AD
First Journey	45-47 AD
Second Journey	51-53 AD
Third Journey	54-58 AD
Imprisonment in Judea	58-60 AD
Voyage to Rome	60-61 AD
Imprisonment in Rome	61-63 AD
Post-Imprisonment Journeys	63-67 AD

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The first journey began when Paul, Barnabas, and Mark (John Mark) set out from Antioch (Acts 13:4). This journey started after 44 AD and ended a “long time” (Acts 14:28) before 50 AD.

They left Antioch for Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus, large island 100 miles off Syrian coast. There they went to Salamis and Paphos where Paul met Bar-Jesus the sorcerer. (Acts 13:4-6).

Then they sail to Perga in Pamphylia, which is now southern Turkey. From here, Mark returns to Jerusalem.

At Antioch in Pisidia, a city in the Turkish Lakes Region, in the Taurus Mountains in Southwestern Turkey, (not to be confused with the one in Syria), Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

Then it was on to Iconium, where they abode a “long time” (Acts 14:3), Lystra, where Paul stoned, but lives (Acts 14:19), and Derbe. Then they retraced their steps back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia) (Acts 14:21).

Paul and Barnabas went throughout Pisidia, Pamphylia, then to Perga, Attalia, and sailed back to Antioch in Syria (Acts 14:24-26)

The First Journey Ended

The first journey ends in Antioch, Syria, where Paul and Barnabas stay there a long time (Acts 14:28).

The dates for the events from 50-60 AD are found by counting backwards from the succession of Felix’s reign as Procurator in Judea by Porcius Festus in 60 AD. Should one want to check these dates for accuracy, one should start at 60 AD and work backwards.

In about 50 AD, Paul and Barnabas go to the council in Jerusalem 14 years after Paul’s conversion (Galatians 2:1-9 and Acts 15:2).

Judas and Silas return to Antioch (Syria) with Barnabas and Paul where they continued some days (Acts 15:35-36), possibly in the winter of 50-51 AD.

[Note: Foregoing information courtesy of Matthew McGee’s “Wielding the Sword of the Spirit” web site at <http://www.matthewmcgee.org/>.]

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Chapter 13 - Paul's First Missionary Journey Begins

Acts 13:1-5 - Barnabas and Saul Sent as Missionaries

Acts 13:1-5: *1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John [John Mark] to assist them. (ESV)*

Luke mentions the Holy Spirit fifteen times in his gospel and fifty five times in Acts. Mark mentions the Holy Spirit six times and Matthew twelve times.

Acts 13:1-5 gives us insight into the Church's mission in the context of the working of the Holy Spirit. We see the Holy Spirit sending messengers of the Gospels out to various places. We learn that servants of the Word do not have to be great by human standards. We are reminded that God, not humans, retains the power over missionary activities and their accomplishments.

Acts 2:4: *And they [at Pentecost] were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (ESV)*

Acts 4:31: *[The believers prayed for boldness.] And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (ESV)*

Acts 10:44-46: *[After Peter's sermon ...] While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. ... (ESV)*

Acts 19:6: *[Paul baptized persons who had had only the baptism of John.] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. (ESV)*

1 Corinthians 3:7: *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. (ESV)*

1 Corinthians 3:6: *I [Paul] planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. (ESV)*

Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the church at Antioch to go abroad and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. This was a commission given after fasting and prayer and not something they felt to do on their own accord. Paul later explained the mission to the Gentiles in Romans 15:1-13.

Acts 13:6-12 - Conversion of Proconsul Sergius Paulus

Acts 13:6-12: *6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 12 Then*

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the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. (ESV)

“*But Saul, who was also called Paul*” - This is the first time in the New Testament that Saul’s name Paul is used. There is a Biblical history of people’s names being changed to suit a new role or mission. Examples of names changed by God are Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, and Simon to Cephas. Examples of names changed by persons are Naomi to Mara (name did not stick), Hadassah to Esther, Daniel to Belteshazzar, Hananiah to Shadrach, Mishael to Meshach, and Azariah to Abednego.

We are not told who changed Paul’s name. There has been speculation over the reason for the name change from the times of the Church Fathers until now. Here are some candidate reasons.

Some commentators indicate that Paul, as both a Jew and a Roman citizen, had two names; that he simply used his Roman name instead of his Jewish one. (*The Abingdon Bible Commentary*)

Augustine of Hippo connects Paul’s Latin name with the Latin word for small or humble, “*parvulus*”. (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*) The name reminds us of the suffering servant of Isaiah and Jesus’ earthly life and death.

Some commentators have believed that Paul may have changed his name in honor of his first convert, Sergius Paulus. (*The Abingdon Bible Commentary* and Jerome cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*)

Saul and David - According to some commentary, Paul’s name changed because he was not “asked for” but was called by Jesus. The name David was probably derived from the Hebrew word meaning “beloved”. The name Saul was derived from the Hebrew meaning “asked for” or “prayed for”. In other words, Saul was the king that God did not want to grant to the Israelites but He gave them what they asked for. Perhaps Paul, being a Benjaminite, did not want to bear the name of Israel’s first and discredited king.

By this statement, “*the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time*”, Paul was telling Elymas (See Notes.) that he had obstructed the Lord’s work, that God Himself was striking him blind, and that the blindness would be temporary. Early commentary saw this as a merciful act of God to allow Elymas time for spiritual healing - to realize what had happened, repent, and follow the Word of God. (See Notes.)

[Note: Elymas was the Arabic for the Greek word “*magos*” often translated as “magician” or in the plural as “*magi*” (i.e., as in Matthew 2:1-12). The repentance of Elymas is discussed by John Chrysostom as cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*]

Acts 13:13-15 - Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia

Acts 13:13-15: **13** Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, **14** but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. **15** After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “*Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.*” (ESV)

Paul clearly patterned his mission after that of Jesus. Jesus went first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. (See the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-29, and the story of His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:1-42.) The synagogue was a place for reading and expounding on Scripture and for worshipping. The sages saw the synagogue as a place of “*divine council*” in the context of Psalms 82:1. There was no permanent appointment of persons to lead the prayers or recite the Scriptures. Different persons were asked to do this - visitors and regular attendees. (See Note.)

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Hence, Paul's being invited to speak was a Jewish custom that we also saw in Luke 4:16-30. Also, Paul's and Barnabas' experience has similarities to the pattern of Jesus' experience recorded in Luke 4:16-30. Paul was invited to speak in the synagogue, some congregants wanted to know more, some opposed his preaching and caused him and Barnabas to be removed from the area.

[Note: *The Jewish People in the First Century, Volume Two*, "The Synagogue"]

Psalm 82:1: *God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment* (ESV)

[Note: The divine council in the Hebrew Bible is a symbolic ruling body consisting of God as the supreme monarch and various supernatural attendants. It is one of the Bible's ways of describing how God maintains order in the Creation. In His position as head of the council, God is absolute ruler over all. He makes judicial decisions about the activities of its occupants. And He initiates punitive actions against those forces which cause chaos and disorder, in order to restore righteousness and peace. The existence of the divine council is witnessed to by various literary genres of the Hebrew Bible. The concept and imagery of the divine council is woven throughout the pages of the Hebrew Bible. ("The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible")]

Luke 4:16-30: *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [Isaiah 61:1-2] And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. [1 Kings 17] And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." [2 Kings 5] When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.* (ESV)

[Note: Jesus used the example of the prophets ministering to Gentiles as a model of His mission.]

Acts 13:16-25 - Paul Recounts the History of Israel

Acts 13:16-25: **16** So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, 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 up with them in the wilderness. **19** And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. **20** All this took about 450 years. 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 up 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.' (See Note.) **23** Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. **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

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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. [Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16]” (ESV)

[Note: This Old Testament reference to the son of Jesse is apparently a paraphrase referring to 2 Samuel 7:13-16; Psalm 132:11, 32-33; and Psalm 89:19-37. It could be a quotation from an Aramaic translation (i.e., Targum) or a Greek variant of the Septuagint that was in use at the time.]

Paul is now the dominant personality in the story. John Chrysostom noted that this was reminiscent of how the Apostle John gave way to Peter although John was greatly respected. (See Note.)

[Note: John Chrysostom cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*]

This is the first time that Luke records a discourse of Paul, and it is the first documented sermon of Paul. Paul illustrates the continuity between the history of Israel and Jesus the Messiah emphasizing that the Scriptures foretold Jesus. Paul garnered credibility by relating the good news of redemption found in Old Testament prophecy and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus. He emphasized the positive aspect of God’s kindness - His grace - toward His people. Paul did not speak of the times when Israel disobeyed God and was punished, nor did he call for repentance on the part of his audience. He called for belief in Jesus as the Redeemer of both Jew and Gentile.

Acts 13:26-33 - The Prophets Fulfilled in Jesus

Acts 13:26-33: **26** “*Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God [Gentile proselytes], 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, fulfilled them by condemning him. 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. 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, today I have begotten you. [Psalm 2:7]”* (ESV)

We see in Acts 13:16-33 that Paul addressed all of his audience, Jews and gentile proselytes alike, as “*sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God*”. He did not address the proselytes separately. He spoke to his audience as all-inclusive - as all “*who fear God*”. (See Note.)

[Note: (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 11, Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans, Homilies XXVIII-XXX*)]

Paul did not hurl any accusations at his Jewish audience in Pisidia. He addressed them as potential believers. He told of John the Baptist’s call to the Jews in Palestine to repent. He assigned fault for the rejection of Jesus to Jews “*who live in Jerusalem and their rulers*”, but he attributes that fault to ignorance, to failure to understand the Scripture and Jesus. He continues to emphasize the positive call to accept Jesus as Messiah. He addressed his audience in love, passing over all of Israel’s faults and emphasizing only God’s kindness. This is a different emphasis than was seen in Peter’s sermons in Jerusalem that called for repentance (e.g., in Acts 2:14-41 and Acts 3:11-26). Paul referred to Psalm 2:7, and may also have had other Scripture in mind such as the Father’s pronouncements over Jesus at His baptism and Transfiguration. See the following quotes.

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Psalm 2:7: *I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."* (ESV)

God's words at Jesus' baptism are recorded in Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; and Luke 3:21-22. Matthew 3:16-17 is quoted here.

Matthew 3:16-17: *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* (ESV)

God's words at Jesus' Transfiguration are recorded in Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; and Luke 9:35. Matthew 17:5 is quoted here.

Matthew 17:5: [God spoke to the three Apostles at the Transfiguration.] *He [Peter] was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."* (ESV)

Prophecies seen to foretell Jesus are too numerous to quote or even cite here.

Acts 13:34-41 - Paul Proclaims the Resurrection

Acts 13:34-41: **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. [Isaiah 55:3]'* **35** *Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption. [Psalm 16:10]'* **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: 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.'* [Habakkuk 1:5]" (ESV)

Acts 13:38-39 are exceptionally important verses. They constitute a statement of justification only by faith in Jesus. Paul expounded on this Christian doctrine in Romans 3, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:10-11, and Galatians 5:4-6. The verses from Galatians are quoted here.

Galatians 2:16: *yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified [Psalm 143:2].* (ESV)

Galatians 3:10-11: *For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them [Deuteronomy 27:26]."* Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for *"The righteous shall live by faith [Habakkuk 2:4]."* (ESV)

Galatians 5:4-6: *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* (ESV)

[Note: This is the only place in the book of Acts (Acts 13:38-39) where justification by faith is mentioned this directly. (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*) This justification is alluded to elsewhere in Acts: Acts 2:38 and Acts 15:9. Paul later developed the concept of justification by faith alone in his epistles. Also, Paul, in his epistles, used the term "uncircumcised" in the same sense as in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 10:16, Deuteronomy 30:6, and Jeremiah 4:4.]

Jesus Himself told us that He is the Resurrection.

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John 11:25-26: *Jesus said to her [Martha], "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (ESV)

We find Old Testament references, both direct and indirect, to the Resurrection. They may be found at Genesis 22:10-12; 1 Samuel 2:6; 1 Samuel 28:11-15, 20; 2 Samuel 12:22-23; Job 14:10-17; Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; Psalm 17:15; Psalm 21:1-13; Psalm 23:6; Psalm 30:3; Psalm 40:1-3; Psalm 49:15; Psalm 73:23-27; Psalm 116:3-9; Isaiah 1:18-20; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 26:19; Isaiah 53:8-12; and Ezekiel 37:1-14. A couple are quoted here.

2 Samuel 12:22-23: [David comforted himself with the knowledge that he would see his dead child once again.] *He [David] answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."* (ESV)

Job 19:25-27: [Job said] *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!"* (ESV)

[Note: The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews 11:17-19, saw the saving of Isaac [Genesis 22:10-12] as a figure of the Resurrection. Hebrews 11:17-19: By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. (ESV)]

Some people may say that we Christians invented the idea of a resurrection. They say that we are clutching at straws when we see resurrection in the Old Testament with our post-Resurrection and post-Pentecost mindsets. However, according to an Orthodox Jewish source:

"Belief in the eventual resurrection of the dead is a fundamental belief of traditional Judaism. It was a belief that distinguished the Pharisees (intellectual ancestors of Rabbinical Judaism) from the Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the concept, because it is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. The Pharisees found the concept implied in certain verses." (*Judaism 101*, "Resurrection")

Paul proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus and relates it to our faith as a means of freedom. In Acts 38-39 we read that Jesus forgave our sins and by faith in Jesus we are set free from all sins that the Law of Moses could not pardon us. The truth that Jesus offers brings freedom. Freedom is a most precious possession. Every creature desires and enjoys its freedom. Tether an animal and keep it in one place and it will howl to be set free. We humans are no different. We do not want our liberties to be tampered with. If we walk in faith, if we walk in truth and worship in truth, we have nothing to fear. We shall be free people in the Lord. Only the truth of God can make us free. The truth leads to our sanctification - setting ourselves apart for God and His service. Jesus prayed: *"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."* (John 17:17) Jesus Himself is the personification of truth.

Lloyd Ogilvie summarized a formula, found in Acts 13:38-39, like this.

"There's a clear formula for this freedom. It declares what God has done, what we can receive, and what happens as a result. Catch the dynamic progression: the *faithfulness* of God, the *forgiveness* offered in Jesus Christ, the *faith* that grasps the gift, and the *freedom* that follows." (Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Acts of the Holy Spirit - God's Power for Living*)

Martin Luther wrote that there are two kinds of freedom. The first kind of freedom is the false one of false disciples who want freedom to gratify their personal desires. The second type of freedom is the true one of genuine disciples who remain faithful and obedient to God's Word, endure hardships that come their way, and grow stronger in faith as time passes. (See Note.)

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[Note: Martin Luther, *Faith Alone: A Daily Devotional*, “True Freedom and False Freedom”]

Acts 13:42-48 - Paul Is Contradicted and Turns to Gentiles

Acts 13:42-48: **42** *As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. 43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. 44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 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. [Isaiah 49:6]’” 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.* (ESV)

[Luke also used the statements from Isaiah 49:6 about light and revelation to the Gentiles in Luke 2:32, Acts 13:47, and Acts 26:18.]

Paul gave his audience enough information so as not to inundate them with the wealth of information accompanying the Gospel. He preached the risen Jesus as hope of Israel and the light for the Gentiles who brings salvation to everyone. He sowed the seeds of truth to whet his audience’s appetite for more information.

John Chrysostom saw Paul’s statement that “*we are turning to the Gentiles*” not as one of rebuke but one of gentleness. (See Note.) Paul could do nothing else to further the Gospel after being rejected by the Jewish leaders. He made it clear that God had not abandoned His people, Israel, but that God wills that the hope of Israel be shared with the Gentiles. There is also New Testament prophecy about Jesus as the salvation of Israel and the light for the Gentiles.

Luke 1:76-79: 76 [Zechariah prophesied at the birth of John the Baptist.] “*And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*” (ESV)

Luke 2:32: [Simeon prophesied at Jesus’ circumcision] “*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.*” (ESV)

[Note: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 11, Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans, Homilies XXVIII-XXX*]

We mentioned in the discussion of Acts 13:13-15 that Paul patterned his mission after that of Jesus by going first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Jesus spoke of Israel rejecting Him as their Messiah and His going to the Gentiles in two parables.

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-20), was spoken to those who stood in opposition to Jesus and were plotting His death. In this parable, Jesus showed His wicked opponents that He is well aware of their plots and schemes. In this parable Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22-23 as it applied to Israel’s rejection of Him.

Psalm 118:22-23: *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.* (ESV)

[Note: Jesus also said specifically “*Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.*” (Matthew 21:43)]

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In the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) Jesus again shows Israel how they are wickedly rejecting the kindness and graciousness of God who has invited them to the wedding feast of His Son, Jesus Christ.

[Note: This parable may be interpreted in terms of personal holiness as opposed to those who personally do not accept the Lord. It may also be interpreted in terms of the Lord's inviting Gentiles after His own people rejected the invitation.]

Some of the Jews *“began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him”*. Regardless of who rejects the Gospel, the Lord will gather His believers to Himself. Paul later, in Romans 11:1-24, addressed the false notion that God had rejected Israel. He also addressed avoiding arrogance of faith. Part of Romans 11:1-24 is quoted here.

Romans 11:1-7: *I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life [1 Kings 19:10 and 14].” But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal [1 Kings 19:14].” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,* (ESV)

Romans 11:18-20: *do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.* (ESV)

We find in 2 Timothy 4:16-18 and 1 Peter 2:11-12 guidance to early Christians when preaching to the Gentiles. Christians are to teach and preach with humility relying on the Lord's power to convey the Gospel message correctly. We are never to be arrogant. Like Paul we are to see those to whom we witness, beyond our shared sinful nature, as potential believers.

2 Timothy 4:16-18: *At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* (ESV)

1 Peter 2:11-12: *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* (ESV)

In Acts 13:48 we read *“and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed”*. Paul probably was alluding to Scripture that addresses the “Book of Life” such as in Exodus 32:33, Malachi 3:16-18, Daniel 12:1, Psalm 40:7, Psalm 69:28, and Psalm 139:16. (The Book of Life is first mentioned in the New Testament later in Revelation 13:8 and Revelation 20:11-15.) Paul was not preaching “predestination” as interpreted by some Calvinists. The phrase *“appointed to eternal life”* refers to God's eternal omniscience. We have to remember that God is mysteriously both separate and apart from His creation and all-present in it. Being apart from His creation, He is not bound by time and space (e.g., as Moses described in Psalm 90). For God, existence is an all-encompassing “now”. Being omniscient, He sees all of our past, present, and future “now”. According to *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, “The Divine Attributes”:

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We live in space. God does not. We have space in creation. The Creator is apart from His creation and yet ever present with us. He exists in a dimension (a human way of describing it) in which there is no space. That is a mystery.

We live in time. God does not. God has no beginning or end. This staggers the mind.

[Note: Edward W. A. Koehler, DD, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, “The Divine Attributes”]

Also, the appointment to eternal life has to do with God, through His Holy Spirit, choosing us. We do not choose God. Jesus tells us that He chooses us. He chose His disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:18-20, Matthew 22:14, Mark 1:17-18, Luke 5:1-11, Luke 6:13, John 1:43-48, John 6:67-70, John 13:18, and John 15:16 and 19.

Matthew 22:14: [Jesus told the parable of the wedding feast and the improperly dressed guest.] “*For many are called, but few are chosen.*” (ESV)

John 15:16: *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* (ESV)

It is remarkable that the Holy Spirit moved the Gentiles in Paul’s audience to be joyful over the Good News in the midst of Paul and Barnabas being persecuted for their teaching (Acts 13:45-51). Lloyd Ogilvie commented on this joy as follows (bold type mine).

“There is another reason for the joy of Paul and his band. Joy is not only an outer expression of the inner work of grace in our hearts; it’s an expression of delight over being part of the transformation of the world. The evangelists had been a part of the miraculous transformation of hundreds of people who had given their lives to Christ. There is no greater joy. **If we are not involved in personal caring to help others know Christ, our own personal concerns will sink us. To miss the joy of caring for others is to miss everything.**” (Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Acts of the Holy Spirit - God’s Power for Living*)

Acts 13:49-51 - Paul and Barnabas Driven out of the District

Acts 13:49-51: **49** *And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. 50* *But the Jews incited the devout women 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 feet against them and went to Iconium. 52* *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.* (ESV)

Several ancient Christian commentators saw in the women’s role in inciting the public against Paul and Barnabas a reflection of Satan first tempting Eve that she could be his proxy to tempt Adam. Women held a position of service in the male-dominated culture of the time. Although they were not the source of evil, they - and the unbelieving men - became its instruments. That they were devout did not mean that they were faithful to God’s Word. (See Note.) Perhaps the less we have to do in the world, the more we should do for our own souls, and the souls of others. But, it is sad, when, under the guise of devotion to God, we try to show hatred to Christ. The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face difficulties in the profession of godliness.

[Note: From *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V, Acts*]

Upon being rejected, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet (See Note.). They may have done this to emulate the instruction given by Jesus when He sent His disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. That is recorded in Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; and Luke 9:5.

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[Note: In Jesus' time, travellers would often arrive with their feet caked in dust and hence foot washing was quite traditional. The Jews made this a theological and sacred issue. Jewish customs and traditional teaching believed that any land outside of Israel was defiling, or at least its dirt was. Pious Jews shook the dust from their feet when leaving Gentile cities to show their separation from Gentile practices. If the disciples shook the dust of a Jewish town from their feet, it would show their separation from Jews who rejected their Messiah. The gesture was to show the people that they were making a wrong choice. This tradition may have stemmed from references as diverse in specific meaning as Deuteronomy 25:7, 9 and Isaiah 52:2.]

Luke 9:5: *“And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”* (ESV)

Perhaps Paul and Barnabas were moved by Jesus' words about adversity and division recorded in Matthew 10:16-23 and Luke 12:49-56.

Matthew 10:16-23: *“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”* (ESV)

Luke 12:49-56: *“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”* (ESV)

Acts 13 closes with repeating the theme of joy - this time the joy of the disciples at the Lord having achieved something good in their mission. The source of their joy must have been the grace of the Holy Spirit in them. Only the grace of the Holy Spirit can make us so glad that we are lifted above the cares of the world. The lesson here is that if our faith is well grounded in God and thoroughly rooted in His Word and, if it is strengthened by the Holy Spirit, then it nourishes spiritual peace and joy in us even if the world around us is in an uproar.

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To Be Continued