

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 13:39-52 | Session 35 | To The Gentiles

Saul (Hebrew name) is now referred to throughout the rest of Acts as Paul (Greek name). In Antioch Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas have a chance to preach the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. Paul's message mirrors Peter's sermon in Acts 2, but in verse 38-39, Paul adds something new to the message that has up to this point been preached, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. This most likely came as a shock to the Jews in the synagogue.

Verse 40—

Beware, lest they tune him out at this point, as people often do when they don't hear what they think they should hear, Paul give a plea to *continue listening* because if you don't **that will come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets.**

Verse 41—

Paul quotes from the prophet Habakkuk (1:5). A rule of interpretation states *when quoting Hebrew Scripture in the N.T., the original meaning of the passage cannot be twisted or removed from the quotation.* The context of that passage is Babylonian (Chaldean) judgment on wicked Judah, judgment so terrible that God's doomed people (Israel) would not believe it. The righteous, by contrast, would survive the judgment because of faith (Hab. 2:4). There is still time for the Jewish nation to believe in Jesus as Messiah, and Paul's point is the nation of Israel is rejecting her Messiah and his Kingdom and therefore is facing destruction and punishment that is beyond belief. We can be confident this destruction of the nation and punishment came in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the scattering of the Jewish people for nearly 2,000 years. Jesus prophesied this event in Luke 19:42-44.

Verse 42—

And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought (Greek: parakaleo; para = alongside, kaleo = to call). They called on Paul to come alongside them next sabbath and preach **these words to them.**

Verse 43—

Congregation (Greek: sunagoge = synagogue), not a church congregation like we think of today. This was still a Jewish assembly with some **religious proselytes**, that is, converts to Judaism. Nonetheless, **Jews and Gentiles are persuaded by Paul and Barnabas to continue in the grace of God.** They no longer needed to believe they were *justified by the Law of Moses. Now, they were justified by grace alone, through faith.*

Verse 44, 45—

This new message from Paul and Barnabas was anticipated the **next sabbath day** when **almost the whole city together** came to hear the word of God. In other words they *packed out the joint!* Standing room only. And this caused envy among the Jewish religious leaders **when they saw the multitudes;** bitterness, spite, resentment, there are many synonyms for the word **envy.** Their **envy** caused them to go on the attack and they **spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul.** This hostility was because this new message required only faith in Messiah, not the Law to be justified (declared righteous). And seeing the joy of the Gentiles set the Jews into more a rage.

Contradicting (Greek: *anti*=against, *lego*=speak) **and blaspheming** (Greek: *blasphemeo*), abusive and hateful speech, in an attempt to turn the crowd against them or to make them shrink back!

Verse 46—

But the strategy of the Jews to undermine the apostles did the opposite, **Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold.** To *wax* is to increase, like *the moon is waxing*, i.e., it is getting bigger. Their boldness was increased by the *contradicting and blaspheming.* Often it is under times of persecution our faith is strengthened. **It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you,** we saw this in Acts 3:26 where Peter addresses the Jews by saying *God raised up Jesus, and sent him to bless you.* The Jewish people were given the first opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah/Christ. When they rejected him, Jesus forgave them "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." They were given another chance, which is the opportunity that is before now in the book of Acts. Paul tells them **but seeing ye put it away from you** (the Greek word: *apothomai*, we get our word apathy; in this case they *shoved it away!* **And judge yourselves** (Condemned themselves) **of everlasting life.**

The people of Israel were deep in the process of the *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit* which Jesus spoke of in Matthew 12:31 which only relates to Israel. Therefore, because they are rejecting the **word of God**, their national salvation was a stake. And God sent Paul to **turn to the Gentiles** with a pure message of salvation by grace alone. This was not anticipated and was totally unexpected by the prophets. This turning to the Gentiles is the *new dispensation of grace* Paul writes about in Ephesians 3:2.

A refresher on what is a dispensation: It is simply a recognition, at several times through history, God did something that fundamentally changed all the rules (a new economy), e.g., We don't live in a paradise garden in which everything is provided for us (Genesis 2-3); We speak different languages (Genesis 11); The Focus of the Bible after Genesis 12 is Abraham and his extended family; In Exodus 20, there were 613 Laws given by God for the people to obey in order to be right with God; The Apostle Paul declares these laws are no longer binding for those who believe in Jesus—circumcision, unclean foods, Sabbath observance, etc., are now all things of the past.

Verse 47—

Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, a passage that is also quoted in Luke 2:32 as a reference to Jesus himself. Through Jesus God promised the Messianic word would someday go to **the ends of the earth.** Paul is, by obeying Christ's command for him to go to the Gentiles, saying that day has come before its expected time and in a different manner from what the Jews thought.

Verse 48,49—

This brought *gladness* to the Gentiles. This verse has caused a misinterpretation of Scripture throughout the ages. The word **ordained** is taken by many to say, "See, everlasting life is ordained for some." But the word **ordained** here does not at all require that interpretation. The Greek word is *tasso* which just means *to set in order.* Young's literal translations helps clear it up "And the nations were glad, and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and did believe—as many as were set in order to life age-during." The order of salvation is to *believe, and then everlasting life.* This good news then was **published throughout the region.**

Verse 50-52—

But the Jews stirred up...and expelled them out of their coasts (borders). Paul and Barnabas **shook off the dust of their feet against them and came to Iconium. Were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.**