

## A Familiar Salvation

When considering the book of Acts, one of the most well-known events discussed is the sermon in chapter two brought by the Apostle Peter. This sermon is more than noteworthy due to it being the first gospel sermon in the New Testament, and from that one sermon 3,000 people were saved! However, there is another sermon that is not discussed quite as often, but yet still convinced many to believe. That sermon is preached by Paul in Acts 13:16-41. At this point in scripture Paul and Barnabas, who just returned to Antioch of Syria from Jerusalem, were called by the Holy Spirit to go out and preach. Together, these two and John Mark departed to the island of Cyprus, preaching in the synagogues. As they traveled on the island from Salamis to Paphos, Paul, John Mark, and Barnabas encountered many people. Moving on from Paphos, when they reached a town called Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark, for some unknown reason, decided to depart and returned to Jerusalem. Still determined, Paul and Barnabas continued onward until they reached Antioch of Pisidia; it was at this place Paul stood in front of the city's synagogue and preached the royal proclamation from Jesus of forgiveness and salvation. The exact same proclamation brought by Peter in Acts 2:36-47. In this sermon, especially in verses 38-39, Paul gives many characteristics of this salvation, which is important, not only to those in Antioch years ago, but to all of us today.

First, Paul establishes how this salvation has been made available. In verse 38, he mentions, "Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man ..." The man spoken of here is Christ. Forgiveness and salvation has been purchased and made accessible to us by the blood and authority of Christ. Another example can be taken from passages such as Colossians 1:14, 18 that say, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ... And He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." The book of Colossians is a book of fulfillment, as such the writer goes through explaining and making a case that Jesus is the embodiment of fulfillment, as He had fulfilled the Law, but also fulfilled the plan of God in granting salvation to us.

Next, Paul continues in verse 38 of Acts 13, "... through this Man is preached ..." By looking at the grammar used, Paul is not telling of a salvation that was once offered but now gone. He is not speaking of something that is no longer obtainable. Through inspiration, Paul is delivering to the people, and by his writings to us, a salvation that is present; in other words, through Christ is a salvation that has not ceased to be offered, even now 2,000 years later! James uses the same present tense terminology in his writings in James 1:12, 21: "Blessed IS the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he WILL receive the crown of life which the Lord HAS promised to those who love Him ... Therefore LAY aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and RECEIVE with meekness the implanted word, which IS able to save your souls."

Continuing on in Acts 13:38, Paul says, "... Through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." Paul makes it clear by using the pronoun "you" that salvation is personal to each person. It is the responsibility of every person to work out their own

faith and salvation. My words, lessons, or writings have no sway in your walk with God. It is what you say and do that determines your eternal home, just as it is what I say and do that determines my eternal home. Therefore we should consider what Paul writes in Romans 14:12: “So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.”

Picking up in verse 39 of Acts 13, Paul says, “And by Him everyone who believes ...” indicating the salvation Christ offers is plenteous. It is not like a sporting event, or concert where there is only a limited number of seats. What Christ offers is plenteous, that is to say that if everyone had believed from the beginning to the end of time, there would be room for everyone. John says in John 1:12, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” We see again that present tense terminology that after all this time since John’s writing, there is still plenty of room for us. The writer of Hebrews also makes it clear in Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Continuing in Acts 13, Paul explains verse 39 “... by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things ...” by saying that what Christ has to offer us is something perfect. Through the salvation of Christ, we have been set apart from the people we once were, and have fellowship with God. Paul writes in Romans 5:1-4, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Paul also writes in Romans 5:9, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

Finally, Paul declares that it is only through the words of Christ that we have justification at the end of verse 39 when he tells the Jews and God-fearers, “... from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Being at a synagogue, everyone there would believe that it was the Law of Moses that saved, so when Paul tells of Christ, he has to make it known that while the law did come from God, Christ taught something that is more perfect and could do what the Law of Moses could not. That one thing is true righteousness. Paul has to teach this lesson to those in Galatia, writing in Galatians 2:16, 21, “... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified ... I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

In conclusion, I hope we all have a new appreciation for Paul’s sermon, especially in verses 38-39, when Paul says, “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” It doesn’t seem like much, but from that sentence, we learn that Jesus has made a royal proclamation of a perfect, peerless salvation that will be available until the end of time,

purchased by Him, and personally given to each one us. And no matter where you are or when you make the choice, there is always room in the Kingdom of God for you.

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