

Acts 076

Gracious Forgiveness

Acts 13:34-43

May 14, 2025

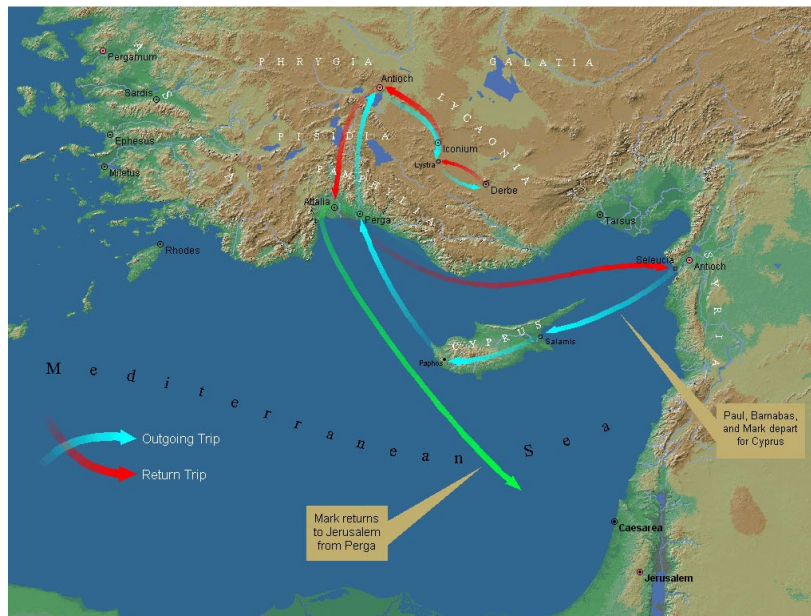
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Let us open our Bibles this evening to Acts 13:34.

Jesus, in His statement recorded here for us, giving us the outline for Acts when He said,

"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remote parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The ministry of the church in Jerusalem is in Acts 1-7; the ministry of the church in Judea and Samaria is in Acts 8-12; and now we are in the section of the Book of Acts, where it is the ministry to the "remotest part of the earth" in Acts 13-28. We have started the first subsection of that final section, the first missionary journey.



Here are the divisions of the first missionary journey, which we are going to try to finish this week and next week: Paul's ministry in Pisidian Antioch. He has left Cyprus—that is that island in the Mediterranean Sea. He went to Perga, modern-day Turkey, where Mark said, "I have had enough." He bailed out. Then Paul and Barnabas keep moving around 100 miles through mountainous terrain to get to Antioch.

It gets a little confusing because we have Antioch in Pisidia—Pisidian Antioch. Then there is another Antioch that you already know about—Syrian Antioch at the northern tip of Israel—which is where the three missionary journeys are launched from. This is the first of the three journeys recorded in Acts 13-14.

The journey from Cyprus to Pisidian Antioch is recorded in Acts 13:13-15. Then here comes Paul's message in the synagogue in Pisidian, Antioch (Acts 13:16-41). It is very normal as you study these missionary activities of Paul, that the first place he always goes in Gentile areas is the synagogue where Jews gathered, because he felt like he had common ground with the Jews through Hebrew Bible. He uses that as a springboard to talk about Jesus. He does give us this maxim: "to the Jews first, then the Gentiles." Paul practices what he preaches in Romans 1:16.

Acts 13:16 is the introduction. He goes to the synagogue along with Barnabas, and they open the door for him, and they say, "Get up and say something." I guess they looked learned and studious. Paul cannot resist that opportunity because they just finished reading the Prophets. He is trying to show that the Prophets point to Jesus.

- I. Pisidian Antioch Ministry (Acts 13:13-52)
 - A. Journey to Pisidian Antioch (13-15)
 - B. Paul's message (16-41)
 - 1. Introduction (16)
 - 2. Historical background (17-22)
 - 3. Messiah (23-25)
 - 4. Gospel (26-29)
 - 5. Resurrection (30-37)
 - a) Fact of Resurrection (30-31)
 - b) Good news of Gospel (32-33)
 - c) Resurrection (34-35)
 - d) Application to Jesus Christ (36-37)
 - 6. Application to Paul's audience (38-39)
 - 7. Warning (40-41)
 - a) A.D. 70 (40)
 - b) Application of Habakkuk 1:5 (41)
 - C. Results of Paul's message (42-52)

He gives the historical background of the Nation of Israel leading to Christ (Acts 13:17-22); he gets into how the Old Testament pointed to the Messiah (Acts 13:23-25); and he lays down the essentials of the gospel (Acts 13:26-39). The last time we were together, he was talking about how this Jesus was not only crucified, but he rose from the dead (Acts 13:30-37).

He has dealt with the fact of the resurrection (Acts 13:30-31); the good news of the gospel (Acts 13:32-33); and now he really starts to zero in on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Notice what he says in Acts 13:34:

"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'"

When he talks there, you will notice it is in a lot of our translations, either in quotes or italics, or it is capitalized. He is quoting the Old Testament and he is most likely quoting Isaiah 55:3, which was written 700 years beforehand. It says,

*'Incline your ear, and come to Me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David' (ESV).*

He is probably referencing or alluding to Isaiah 55:3. In the process he is showing that Jesus is a Davidic descendant, which is a big deal. God to Abraham promised land, seed, and blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15). The land is amplified in the Land Covenant; the blessings are amplified in the New Covenant; but the seed is amplified in the Davidic Covenant.

That is where God made a promise to David. David wanted to build a house for God, a temple. God said, "No, because you are a man of war, that privilege will go to your son Solomon, who was not a man of war and did not have blood on his hands." In the process of that conversation, God says to David, "Even though you are not going to build a house"—the Hebrew word there is "bayit"—"a temple for Me, I am going to build a house for you." There he took the word "house" and used it as a wordplay, not speaking of a temple, per se, but speaking of a dynasty, a household coming from David.

In the process of that, he says, "I am going to raise up one of your descendants." He says, "The throne of his kingdom will be forever." He says this to David in 2 Samuel 7:16:

'Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.'

All of these things were spoken by God to David through the prophet Nathan.

The obvious fulfillment of that prophecy is Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ can bring in a forever throne or dynasty, because only Jesus is forever or eternal. That is why Matthew painstakingly connects Jesus back to David and then ultimately Abraham and his genealogy in Matthew 1. He is trying to show that Jesus is a Davidic descendant. Jesus is the one that the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, and all of them pointed towards. That is why Paul the Apostle is making such a big deal, quoting Isaiah 55, indicating that Jesus descended from David's lineage, David's loins.

As you keep reading this sermon that Paul gave in the synagogue in Acts 13:35, he quotes Psalm 16:10. This was just an impromptu invitation that he got. There are no notes that I know of; there is no PowerPoint, obviously; it is just what is coming out of Paul's mind. He is weaving all of these Scriptures together, showing them that Hebrew Bible and the whole Nation of Israel, and God's dealings with Israel were designed to bring this Davidic descendent, Jesus, into the world.

He has quoted Isaiah 55:3, or at least referenced it. Now he seems to be quoting Psalm 16:10, written a thousand years in advance. Acts 13:35 says,

'Therefore He also says in another Psalm, "You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

You might remember that when Peter, back in Acts 2, gave his opening sermon on the day of Pentecost, he also quoted Psalm 16 (Acts 2:25-29).

Then you go to Acts 13:36-37, and Paul takes all this information about the resurrection and now applies it directly to the audience that he is speaking of. Notice what he says in Acts 13:36:

'For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep...'

I love that verse. You might recall, I mentioned that this Sunday when we were talking about Joseph's death at the end of the Book of Genesis. It is such a wonderful thing that a life that is consecrated to God fulfills a purpose. Then after that purpose is complete, we pass on. That is what I want for my life; that is what I want for your life; and that is what I see role modeled in all of these biblical characters.

It is what I see role modeled in Paul the Apostle who said, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith..."* (2 Timothy 4:7). It is what I see role modeled in John the Baptist a little earlier on. In Acts 13:25 it talks about how John the Baptist had completed his course. It is such a neat thing to see people complete their course, complete what God called them to do, and then they pass away after that purpose is complete.

I have given you this quote many times from Mark Twain, who talks about how the average person that dies cannot look back and say, "I have finished my race" because they have spent their life yearning after the things of the flesh. It is comparing this to what Paul says, "I finished my race." Those two quotes are like night and day.

Of course, we want to be on the side of what God has for us. "I finished what I am supposed to do, so I am not being taken from this earth prematurely." I understand that there are some exceptions to it. People die suddenly of health issues or car accidents, but in general, the godly leave this world having fulfilled the purpose for which God put them into the world. We want to find out what that purpose is and press into it.

The best way to figure out what your purpose or purposes are is to ask your Creator. It is a great question to ask God, "Why am I here?" I ask Him that a lot. "I have reached a certain age, and You have given me so many blessings. What do You want me to do with all this stuff?" I think if we are on our knees like that, God answers prayer. I think that is a prayer request within His will.

That is who David was, as Paul is explaining David:

'For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay.' (Acts 13:36)

If David underwent decay, he could not have been the fulfillment of Psalm 16:10, which David wrote. It was just quoted a little earlier (Acts 13:5): *""You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.""* David wrote that and people say, "He was talking about himself," but he could not have been talking about himself because he died after he fulfilled his purpose, and his body decayed. Obviously Psalm 16:10 must be talking about somebody else. Who could that be? It is David's greater son, Jesus, who died, but His body did not undergo decay because on Sunday morning Jesus rose from the dead.

I have actually been to David's tomb. You cannot visit it anymore today in Israel for this reason or that reason; but when my wife and I were married we went on a honeymoon and we decided to go to Israel. They took us all to all these places you cannot get to today. One of the places they took us to was David's tomb. They were pretty confident that that was his tomb. He died a thousand years earlier, and his body was in that tomb, or his bones or whatever. Psalm 16:10 cannot be talking about David, even though David wrote the psalm a thousand years in advance.

Paul, when he quotes this to this Jewish audience, is getting the point across that this is a Messianic prophecy—just like all the other ones that have been quoted here—pointing to Jesus, the unique Davidic descendant. Paul goes on in this unplanned sermon in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, and he says in Act 13:37:

'but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.'

David underwent decay; Jesus did not undergo decay. Psalm 16:10 says, "My body will not undergo decay." That cannot be talking about David, even though David wrote the psalm, because his body underwent decay. It must be talking about someone *""whom God raised""* from the dead who did not undergo decay (Acts 13:37).

Now, it is interesting that when the Apostle Peter gives his sermon back in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, as I mentioned before, he is quoting Psalm 16:10, just like Paul is. What Peter does, Paul does; what Paul does, Peter does. Luke is drawing a deliberate parallel between the two apostles. He is trying to show that Paul is just as legitimate as Peter. That is very important for a guy like Theophilus, the recipient of the Book of Acts,

to learn. Theophilus, as we have said, was probably second guessing whether Christianity was for him.

Theophilus, as we have tried to explain, most likely was reached through Paul. He probably thought to himself, "Paul is not Peter. Peter was one of the original Twelve; Paul was not. So, maybe the fact that I have been evangelized by Paul or one of Paul's disciples means that my Christianity is illegitimate. After all, I am just a Gentile and this whole book looks very Jewish."

To remedy that nagging doubt in Theophilus's mind, Luke is drawing these parallels between Peter and Paul, showing that Paul is just as legitimate as Peter because Paul does pretty much what Peter does, but in a different way. If Peter is legitimate, and he has to be because Jesus made all of these wonderful predictions and prophecies about him in Matthew 16, then Paul must be just as legitimate.

That dispels the idea that you cannot believe Paul because he was not one of the original Twelve. He was the apostle born out of due season (Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 15:8). He was the only apostle that we have that was not on the ground floor in the earthly ministry of Christ. Peter was, but Paul was not. Theophilus might say, "I guess my Christianity is not as real as a Jewish person's." "No, your Christianity is just as real. Let me write a long historical treatise showing you that Peter and Paul are both equal in terms of apostleship."

From Peter to Paul				
Reference	Center	Person	Place	Outreach
Acts 1–12	Jerusalem	Peter	Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria	Jewish
Acts 13–28	Antioch	Paul	Uttermost parts	Gentiles

The first part of the book (Acts 1-12), is in Jerusalem; in the second part of the book (Acts 13-28) the focus is Antioch because that is the city that sends forth Paul on his missionary journeys. The main guy in the first part of the book is Peter; the main guy in the second part of the book is Paul. The first part of the book focuses on Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem; the second part of the book, which we are now into, focuses on the uttermost parts of the earth. The first part of the book is Jewish; the last part of the book is primarily for Gentiles.

Peter heals a man lame from birth (Acts 3); Paul does the same thing (Acts 14). Peter heals by a shadow (Acts 5); Paul does the same thing, but by a handkerchief (Acts 19). Peter's success is a cause of jealousy (Acts 5); and the same thing happened to Paul as we will see (Acts 13). Peter confronts the sorcerer (Acts 8); and that is what Paul did on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13). Paul raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9); Paul is

going to do the same thing—he is going to raise from the dead someone that fell asleep during one of his lengthy sermons (Acts 20).

From Peter to Paul	
Peter	Paul
Heals a man lame from birth (3:1-11)	Heals a man lame from birth (14:8-18)
Heals by shadow (5:15-16)	Heals by handkerchief (19:11-12)
Success is a cause of jealousy (5:17)	Success is a cause of jealousy (13:45)
Confronts a sorcerer (8:9-24)	Confronts a sorcerer (13:6-11)
Raises Dorcas (9:36-41)	Raises Eutychus (20:9-12)
Jailed and miraculously freed (12:3-19)	Jailed and miraculously freed (16:25-34)

Did you know that Paul got a little long-winded one night there in Troas, and poor Eutychus fell asleep on the second floor on the windowsill, and fell out of the building and died? Paul did not go down there and say, "Now do you see what happens when people fall asleep in church?" No. He laid hands on him and raised him from the dead. That is a weird story. Why is that even in there? Well, it is showing that what Paul did, Peter had already done. Do you see the parallels?

Peter is tossed in prison and miraculously freed (Acts 12); the same thing is going to happen to Paul in Philippi (Acts 16). "So, Theophilus, do not panic that you were reached through Paul instead of Peter, because your conversion is just as legitimate as anybody Peter ever reached." That is why it has this sermon by Paul.

This is the first record we have of Paul's teaching. We are going to get a ton of stuff from Paul in the New Testament—13 letters—but this is the very first public teaching he ever did. When he does public teaching, he sounds a lot like Peter. Peter quotes Psalm 16 to prove Messianic prophecy about Jesus, and Paul does the exact same thing.

Then Paul makes an application to his audience. It is application time. That is interesting, is it not? You have doctrine in Acts 13:16-37. He does not get to application until Acts 13:38-41. That is only four verses of application and the whole rest of this content is doctrine.

Do you see any weaknesses in modern-day preaching, where the preacher moves immediately to application? The reason the preacher moves immediately to application is because that is what people want to hear. "How does the verse relate to me?" Because after all, it is all about me, right?

This is not exegesis, it is narcigesis. I have to see myself in everything. You do not have today in modern-day Christianity, people standing in the pulpit and developing meaning because your average parishioner does not have the patience for that. They say a few words about meaning, but they move right into application. I think we are a little mixed up because your application is only as good as the meaning it is found in.

Our church is abnormal. We spend a lot of time on developing meaning before we apply it to the individual person that comes to church. Paul would have flunked modern-day preaching because they want you to move to application really quickly. After all, how are some of our most famous preachers—Swindoll, Tony Evans, these kinds of guys—marketed? They are masters at application, which I think they are. That is why your average Christian is so confused about everything. They do not really get a lot of meaning in sermons, but they are getting a ton of application.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter, it is even worse. Paul gives 57 verses of knowledge or meaning; and he gives one verse in application. Finally, 1 Corinthians 15:58 says,

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

One verse of application, and 57 verses of knowledge or meaning. That is a sermon right there. If you get me going on that I may never finish the chapter, let alone the book. I believe that modern-day homiletics, the way it is taught in your typical seminary, has almost destroyed Christianity, because the whole emphasis is on meeting the felt needs of the people. It is not on putting up a map showing where Paul went and how many miles it is from the shore to Antioch. Nobody wants that, right? Your average Christian knows very little about the Scripture.

I am not really sure who to blame: modern-day homiletics, the preachers who want the big audiences, or the people themselves. It is like when you get to the end of Jeremiah 5, and it says that the priests are liars; the prophets prophesy lies; and it goes through all of the bad things the leadership is doing. Then you get to the very end of Jeremiah 5 and it says, "and My people love it this way."

There is a problem. Supply is determined by demand. If people really do not have an appetite or understand that the purpose of coming to church is primarily to receive meaning and then application; and if people do not want that or do not think that is what a church should be, then the church just takes that off the menu. See how that works? If no one is buying the jelly-filled donuts, then you just take those off the menu. That explains modern-day Christianity, particularly here in the West.

Paul defies all of the contemporary thinking of today. He takes time to develop meaning. He gets to Acts 13:38, and here comes the application. *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him"*—who is the "him"? The Davidic heir, Jesus; the one

that the whole Nation of Israel points to; the reason God brought Israel into existence is to deliver this present—"*forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.*"

Notice he calls them "brethren." I think he is using brethren in the Romans 9:3 since, where he says,

"For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,"

He is dealing with this as in "I am a Jew, and you are a Jew. We are brothers in that sense." He is not dealing with it as in the body of Christ, we are brothers and sisters, because these people that are listening to this are not even saved yet.

His application is this: "As I am proclaiming this to you, here is what it is going to create in your life. It is going to create the forgiveness of sins. Every single sin you have ever committed, are committing, and ever will commit before a holy God is forgiven in Jesus Christ." That is his application. That is his point that he is giving to his brethren.

Then in Acts 13:39 he lays down the condition of salvation. "*And through Him everyone who believes*"—and raises a hand and closes their eyes and cries and walks an aisle. Oh, I am sorry, it does not say that.

'And through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things...'

Passages Conditioning Salvation on Faith Alone (<i>Sola Fide</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genesis 15:6• John 3:16; 5:24; 6:28-29, 47; 16:8-9; 20:30-31• Acts 16:30-31• Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9• Hebrews 11:6

This is another example where God has laid down a single condition for justification: you either trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins or you do not. All these verses that I have here teach that: Genesis 15:6; John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31. In fact, the Bible is so clear about this that it teaches this 160 times. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes,

"...because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only."¹

He says 150 upwards, but the number is probably more like 160. This is so clear. How do we ever mess this up? How do we ever get a bunch of gospel tracts in circulation

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

that tell people they are saved by grace through faith, not by works, but at the end the gospel tract gives them five works to do? The Bible does not give you any works to do. You take it as a free gift, and the only way you can take it, as a free gift, is to trust or believe. It is the only thing we can do before God that is non-meritorious. That is the application after this long history lesson, *"through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things."*

Now notice the rest of Acts 13:39:

'...from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.'

Obedience to the Law of Moses, circumcision, and all of that stuff does not free you from sin. The only thing it could really do is kick the can down the road and postpone the day of indebtedness for a year. That was what Yom Kippur was about, Day of Covering (Leviticus 16). You had two animals; one runs out into the wilderness demonstrating that you are free from sin debt for a year; and the other one is killed.

Blood is applied to the mercy seat by the priest, and he could only go in there one time a year after an animal sacrifice was made for his sins. That is why Jewish tradition tells us that there was a rope tied around his leg. He had a big robe with bells on it, and if any of those provisions and instructions in Leviticus 16 were violated in the most minute way, the priest was killed behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies.

They were out there listening to the priest doing his thing, if they heard the bells ringing, they knew everything was fine. If all of a sudden, the bells stop and maybe they heard a thud or something, then somebody would run in there and get the body out. "Oh, do not do that. You will be killed, too." That is why the rope is tied around his leg to pull him out. He is the only one that could go into that Holy of Holies—the inner sanctuary—on that one day.

If everything was done right, the only thing it did was postpone the nation's indebtedness for sins for one year. You got one year, and the debt is not even canceled. It is still hanging over your head. You just do not have to pay for another year. They almost had no guarantee that God was going to allow it, so it was a day of trepidation.

It is as if you owe a bunch of money to somebody and they say, "You can pay me next year." Next year comes and you are really nervous. "Am I going to have to pay?" They say, "You can pay next year." So it never fixed the problem. It just kicked the can down the road. That is what the Nation of Israel lived under.

Here comes Paul into this city. He speaks up, impromptu, when given the opportunity, and weaves a bunch of Old Testament verses together from memory, telling them that they can be completely and totally forgiven of every single sin past, present, and future, by doing something as simple as believing in what Jesus did for them. It is amazing.

Jesus does not say, "You do not have to pay this year." He takes the loan and cancels it. Then he takes \$2 million and puts it into your bank account, because Ephesians 1:3 says that I have been blessed *"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"*. Jesus is going to give you something that the Law could never do for you. That is Paul's point.

Galatians 2:16 says,

"Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

We are telling people today that to be a Christian, you have to repent of your sins. When the Bible tells us that no man is justified before God through keeping the works of the Law (Galatians 3:11). You do not have to repent of your sins to be a Christian; you have to believe in Jesus.

"Well, Pastor, you are going to encourage lawless living." No I am not, because the Holy Spirit is going to come inside of you after you are saved, and He is going to start to deal with you with different areas of sin in your life; but that has to do with your growth. That is not how you got born. You got born by faith alone in Christ alone. All the "repent of your sins" stuff is a growth issue, not a birth issue. Paul is not dealing with growth issues here, at least not at this juncture. He is dealing with birth issues.

Part of the application is that he gives them a warning. You see it in Acts 13:40.

'Therefore, take heed, so that the things spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you.'

He is dealing with a warning from the Prophets. I think he is probably talking about two things here. First of all, A.D. 70, and secondly, he gives a quote from Habakkuk 1:5 and he draws from that Old Testament prophet one point of application.

What is he saying here about A.D. 70? God brought Israel to Sinai, and gave them the Law of Moses. The Book of Deuteronomy is a restatement of the Law of Moses to a new generation. The first generation had died, not having seen Canaan because of their unbelief. The Book of Deuteronomy is laid out like a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. Anybody that studies this can see it.

The Suzerain is the superior; the vassal is the inferior. It is when two people come together in a contractually binding way. There is a preamble; there is a prologue; there are the covenant obligations that the vassal is supposed to perform for the Suzerain (Suzerain is the superior; vassal is the inferior); there are storage and reading instructions; and then there are witnesses to the covenant. That is how Deuteronomy is laid out just like that, like everything we know from that time period about Suzerain-

Vassal treaties. With the witnesses, who can be a witness to God? God calls heaven and earth as His witness.

Six Parts of a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty in Deuteronomy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preamble (1:1-5)• Prologue (1:6–4:40)• Covenant obligations (5–26)• Storage and reading instructions (27:2-3; 31:9, 24, 26)• Witnesses (32:1)• Blessings and curses (28)

This is not the Abrahamic Covenant which is unconditional. This is the Mosaic Covenant, which is conditional. The vassal in this case, Israel, has to obey what God wants them to do, or else God will bring on them blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience. The curses for disobedience would roll up like a snowball until they could not be stopped. The height of the curses, which are national to Israel, is in Deuteronomy 28:49-50, where God says,

'The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young.'

Israel's Judgments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Division of the kingdom in 931 B.C. (1 Kgs. 12)• Assyrian judgment in 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17)• Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25)• Rome Diaspora in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:41-44)

These covenant curses were meted out regularly against national Israel for disobedience in their history. In 931 BC, their kingdom was divided; in 722 BC, the Assyrians came for the north and scattered them; in 586 BC, the Babylonians came and took Judah into captivity; and then Israel was recycled into her land in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Jesus came through Israel when Rome was in control. The National of Israel said to Yeshua, the one that all of these Old Testament Scriptures are pointing to, "Thanks but no thanks. We do not need Your regal authority. No man shall reign over us."

To quote that great theologian, Yogi Berra, "It is deja vu all over again" because here come the Romans to scatter them, which would happen about 40 years after the time of Christ. I have a mind that that is what Paul is talking about here when he says in Acts 13:40, *"Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets, may not come upon you."* I think what he is saying is, "Do not imitate in this synagogue here in

Pisidian Antioch the rebels in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel, because they are going to be decimated in A.D. 70."

It is very similar to what Peter says in Acts 2:40: "*Be saved from this perverse generation.*" "If you go into unbelief, you are no different than the Nation of Israel that rejected Jesus, and you too are going to be punished severely at the hands of the Romans. it is coming. It is just a matter of whether you are going to be saved from this or not."

I am seeing in this, not just an invitation to salvation—that clearly is there—but it is an invitation to believe everything Jesus says and to get out of Dodge before AD 70 hits. "*Therefore, take heed, so that these things spoken of in the Prophets*"—that is the curses in the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty structure—"may not come upon you."

Then in Acts 13:41 he applies Habakkuk 1:5.

*"Behold, you scoffers, and marvel and perish;
For I am accomplishing a work in your days,
A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to
you."*

That is where God said through the prophet Habakkuk on the eve of the Babylonian captivity, "I am going to do something in your day that is so big that if I were to tell you what it was, you would not believe it is true." In context, it is talking about how the nation would be uprooted from their land around the sixth century, taken into Babylon for 70 years, and come back out again. I think that is what Habakkuk is prophesying about. Of course, as Habakkuk is making his prophecy, all the people just laugh the whole thing off. How could that even happen? That is ridiculous. Yet it happened.

Paul is not quoting this to predict the Babylonian captivity again, that is ancient history. He is quoting it to say, "I am saying something awesome here, that some are going to believe, but most are going to scoff at. That is no different than anything that has happened in our history. They did the same thing to Habakkuk." Habakkuk said, "I am going to tell you something that is so big that if I told you all the fine details, you would laugh at it.

Paul is giving the biggest news you could ever get: You are justified by faith alone without adherence to the Mosaic Law. That is huge news! Just like in Habakkuk's day, people were mocking it—some were believing, but many of them were mocking. Paul is saying, "Do not be on the wrong side of this, because if you are on the wrong side of this, you are going to be swept away in AD 70, just like the rest of the unbelieving nation." It is a strong warning; it is a warning to the mocker; it is a warning to the rejector.

The most dangerous place you could be in is in a place that honors the truth; and you hear it week after week after week; but there is something inside of you that never

receives it or frankly, just laughs the whole thing off. Of all the people on planet Earth that I would not want to be in the position of, it would be that kind of a person, because "everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

God is not asking for a lot here. He is just asking for these people to receive a gift by faith. Their whole history has been laid out for them by this brilliant man named the Apostle Paul. He ends this whole thing by saying, "Do not be a mocker. Believe it, because if you do not there are some consequences that are coming."

Go down to Acts 13:42-52. Now the sermon is over—and it is a lengthy sermon. That is the Book of Acts. I warned you about this at the beginning. There are a lot of lengthy sermons in here. Acts 2 took a while to get through, by Peter; Acts 7 took a while to get through, by Stephen; and now Paul's first formal teaching takes a little while to get through (Acts 13:16-41).

C. Results of Paul's Message (Acts 13:42-53)

1. Immediate results (42-43)
 - i. Synagogue's invitation (42)
 - ii. Many followers (43)
2. Subsequent results (44-49)
3. Results for the Apostles (50-52)

As with all of these lengthy teachings, there is some kind of reaction that happens. The reaction is found in Acts 13:42-52. There are the immediate results (Acts 13:42-43); there are the subsequent results (Acts 13:44-49); and then after the apostles see the reaction, there is an impact on them and their ministry philosophy (Acts 13:50-52).

What does the synagogue say? It says,

"As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath." (Acts 13:42)

"Hey, you guys have a great Saturday evening, but could you come back next Saturday? We have never heard anything like this." The Greek text says "they kept begging," meaning, not just "please" but "pretty pretty please with sugar on top"—that kind of thing. "Please come back. Please come back. Tell us more." They want to know more because they have never heard anything like this.

They have never heard anything about grace. It is all Law, your failure to keep the Law, the consequences for not keeping the Law. Now they have these guys that proved from their own Hebrew Bible that all that stuff in the Old Testament was a shadow of the grace of God that they have just heard. They wanted them to come back; they kept begging them to come back.

Paul and Barnabas had many followers. The first part of Acts 13:43 says,

"Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas..."

A lot of them said, "We are not going to wait till next week. We are just going to follow you around because we want to keep hearing this stuff." This idea of continuing showed them that they had immediate followers. Their followers were Jews and their followers were the God-fearing proselytes. We know who Jews are—physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but in the Old Testament there were proselytes that were Gentiles that converted to Judaism to grow in the knowledge of Yahweh.

Ruth in the Book of Ruth is probably the most famous proselyte I know of. Ruth was from Moab, which was adjacent to Israel, and she said at one point to her mother-in-law Naomi, "'Your people shall be my people, and your God, My people'" (Ruth 1:16). She was submitting to the religion of Israel, and she wanted to grow in the knowledge of Yahweh, or God.

That is who these proselytes are. They are not necessarily Jewish, but they are people who had a great respect for the Jews to the point where they wanted to convert to Judaism. That is why they are hanging around in a synagogue on a Saturday when they could have been on the tennis court, if they played tennis.

By the way, they played a lot of sports in the Greco-Roman world. That is where the Olympics and things like that come from. That is why Paul uses so many athletic images to get across his spiritual points. He talks about running the race; we receive a crown, which does not perish; the other athletes receive a crown that perishes.

There were a lot of things that these people could have been doing, and they were not. They were in a synagogue on a Saturday because they were proselytes. The audience that heard this consisted of Jews and God-fearing proselytes. Some said, "Come back," and some said, "We want to keep following you around to learn more." consisted of Jews and God fearing proselytes.

Then you hit the second part of Acts 13:43, which might be one of the most important verses in the whole Bible.

"Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God."

You cannot continue in the grace of God unless you are first in the grace of God. That implies that as Paul was speaking, there were people getting saved. When Paul got to this point (Acts 13:39) about believing, I think a lot of people that were listening to him just started to believe. Some of them—it does not tell us how many—were already believers. They were already in the grace of God.

What do Paul and Barnabas tell someone that has already received the grace of God? They say, "Continue in the grace of God." Your average Christian hears the gospel and they get saved, and then they put themselves right back under the Law. "I better be obedient to keep being saved. I better not smoke or chew or go with girls who do, because I might lose my salvation."

You do not smoke or chew or go with girls who do, because it is bad. We should not do it; but we do not stay away from it because we are in legalistic bondage. We stay away from it because we are stunned at the grace of God. If God can give me this, why would I go back to that? It is irrational.

Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 to offer our bodies as believers as "a living sacrifice," which is reasonable; it is logical. If you have received the grace of God and go right back into sin, I am doing something irrational. It does not make any sense. We continue on with the grace that we have already received—that is the Christian life.

Do you know what book Paul is referring to there in Acts 13:42, which has not been written yet? Which one of Paul's 13 letters is he referring to, which has not been written yet, that he is going to spend a whole six chapters on this subject? Galatians. That is the whole point of the book. The Book of Galatians is written to saved people, telling them that they were saved by faith alone, through grace alone, under the power of the Holy Spirit alone.

That is how you live as a Christian, by grace alone, by faith alone, under the power of the Holy Spirit alone. What is the key verse that unpacks every verse in the Book of Galatians? It is Galatians 3:3. He is dealing with people that are saved, but they went back under the Mosaic Law. The false teachers got to them too fast.

"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3)

How did you get your foot in the door? You got your foot in the door through the Spirit, by faith, through grace. How are you going to live the Christian life? How are you going to live tonight? How are you going to live this evening? When you are tempted to sin and you are driving home and someone cuts you off and you want to lay on the horn like there is no tomorrow? Ask me about it. I had that issue coming here. It is fresh in my mind. Why would I turn that down? Is it willpower? No. It is the same way I got saved: by grace alone, by faith alone, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

When I am tempted to retaliate, I say, "Lord, help me with this. I know You can help me with it, because You got me in the door and You did not go anywhere." I am not holding myself up as the best example. There are times when I have retaliated, and I am not proud of it; but there are times I have not. During the times I have not, you know how I overcame my fleshly tendency to retaliate? I did it the same way I got in the door.

Galatians is a book on the Christian life. It is how to live the Christian life. You do not live the Christian life on your own strength. You live the Christian life on the exact same power that got you justified. Paul says, "You, Galatians, are so foolish that you got saved and you are going to go back to human power." That is why I find Acts 13:42 such a big deal, as many of these people got saved and they are begging Paul and Barnabas to come back next week, and some are following them around. What did Paul and Barnabas say? They say, "Continue in the grace of God. Live with the same power that got you justified." That is a glorious thing, is it not?

Do not go back to Acts 13:39b, the Law, which you have been freed from. You have been freed from the Law of Moses. You have forgiveness of sins past, present, and future, not because of your performance relative to the Law of Moses, but you have it completely by grace. If that is true, why in the world would you go back to the Law of Moses as some kind of vehicle for the Christian life? All that the Law of Moses can do is tell you how bad you are, but it did not have built within it empowerment.

The Law of Christ is totally different. It can point out flaws, but it will give you the power to live above those flaws. The Law of Moses could not do that. You say, "I do not deserve the Law of Christ and the Holy Spirit." You are right. You do not deserve it. I do not deserve it either, any more than we deserve justification. The whole package is grace, unmerited favor, getting justified, and living for Jesus.

That is a great statement there about the Christian life. I think it is an entry point into the Book of Galatians that Paul is going to pen. What is Paul's first letter? Galatians. This is the first subject he is going to get into when given the opportunity at the end of this missionary journey, when he gets back to Antioch of Syria.