



Message #30
“PROCLAMATION and RESPONSE”
(Acts 13:13-52)

Evangelism:

The word *evangelize* means “to proclaim good tidings”. More than any other individual, Paul was responsible for proclaiming the good news and spreading Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Paul’s method of Jewish evangelism throughout Acts was to prove from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah. The “evangelist” was a gift of God to the early church (Eph.4:11). These persons were not attached to any specific local church. They travelled over a wide geographical area, preaching to those to whom the Holy Spirit led them. The early disciples were also called evangelists (Acts 8:4) because they proclaimed the gospel.

God does not call every believer to be an evangelist, but He calls every believer to be a witness.

All Christians today may continue the witness of the early evangelists. As they spoke and wrote of Jesus, so may Christians bring His message to others today.

Acts 13:13....John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Perga to return to Jerusalem.

Luke does not give us any details, we can only assume that something must have happened to cause this abrupt separation. We can see in **Acts 15:38** that whatever the cause of this separation, it had a lingering impact....enough to cause a rift between Paul and Barnabas over the prospect of John Mark joining them once again. Paul considered that John Mark had deserted them and, therefore, could not be trusted again. However, we also see that there must have been a reconciliation between Paul and John Mark at some stage because **Colossians 4:10** and **2 Timothy 4:11** both refer to Mark as being a valued partner with Paul in the ministry of the gospel.

Have you ever had a falling out with another Christian? What happened? Was there a reconciliation?

From Perga, Paul and Barnabas continued north to Pisidian Antioch. There they followed the pattern of going to the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath where they were invited to share a word of exhortation. Paul took the opportunity to deliver his first recorded sermon in Acts (and his longest).

The content of the sermon has similarities with Stephen’s sermon to the Sanhedrin (7:2-53).

In the first part of this message (13:16-25), Paul describes the powerful hand of God at work in some major strands of Jewish thinking – the provision of the land, deliverance and the human dynasty (of David) through which God chose to reveal His Messiah. Paul is showing how God has always been faithful to His promises. And the emphasis here is on the Messiah as the crucial part of the revelation.

Paul then moves from the Old Testament references into the second phase of his sermon (13:26-41). In this part, there are strong similarities with Peter’s earlier messages. For example, Paul reiterated that the Jewish leaders were responsible for the death of Jesus (4:10) and that the apostles were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (2:32).

In particular, Paul argues that David (the great Jewish hero) was only a forerunner of the Messiah. He quotes from Psalm 16:10 to show that the prophecy could not have been about David but “someone else”. That someone else is Jesus, who is not dead but is alive (Peter’s argument in Acts 2:27-31 is identical).

Jews were sometimes so focussed on a good thing (the land) that they missed the best thing (the Messiah). In what ways can we be preoccupied with “good things” and neglect the “best thing”?

Paul closes out his message with a gentle appeal (13:38-39).

This seems like a very EXCLUSIVE thing: that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

But then Paul indicates the wonderful INCLUSIVITY of the gospel message: that *everyone* who believes is saved. This was a remarkable proclamation in a Jewish synagogue....this was a declaration that God's grace and favour extended BEYOND the Jewish people.

(Other verses to consider: Romans 3:28; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 2:16, 3:11; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 2:13-14)

Read Acts 13:42-52. What are some of the consequences of Paul's sermon?

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What do you learn from Paul and Barnabas about interacting with those who are hostile to the gospel?

Paul and Barnabas never seemed surprised and they certainly never retreated when they encountered opposition. What was the secret to their boldness and perseverance?

Martin Luther wrote in his *Preface to the Acts of the Apostles*....

"It should be noted that by this book St Luke teaches the whole of Christendom.....that the true and chief article of Christian doctrine is this: We must be justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without any contribution from the law or help from our works. This doctrine is the chief of the book and the author's principle reason for writing."

(Muhlenberg Press, 1960, 363)

Why do you think this doctrine of justification by faith alone, not by works etc, is so difficult a thing for people (not just Jews) to accept? What does justification by faith mean to you, personally?

Paul and Barnabas, in this First Missionary Journey, were experiencing the highs and the lows of ministry. They had wonderful opportunities of sharing the gospel, as well as encountering severe opposition and expulsion from towns. It is still the same today....not everyone responds the same. Many will receive the Good News with joy (see 13:52) whilst others will be incensed and even become violently opposed (13:50).

In what ways do you see people today getting angry because of the gospel? Why?

What can you learn from Paul and Barnabas about how to respond to the opposition?

How confident are you in being able to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone else?
