

Acts 13

Psa 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Psa 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

Psa 51:3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Psa 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Psa 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psa 51:6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Psa 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psa 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

Psa 51:9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Psa 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Psa 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Psa 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psa 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Psa 51:14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

Psa 51:15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Psa 51:16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psa 51:18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;

Psa 51:19 then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Lets Pray -----

Last week we covered Acts 12 -- We saw a transition in the church history... James, the brother of John, the Apostle was martyred by Herod Agrippa.. Peter was next in line to be martyred, but God sent an Angel to rescue him. And we saw Herod Agrippa struck down after he failed to rebuke the people's worship.. We noted last week that the focus of the book of Acts is shifting, The first 11 Chapters center around Peter's ministry, and the ministry to the Jews, and Israeli gentiles... Now we will shift to the ministry of Paul, spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles of Asia and Europe...

So lets get started. Acts 13 - verse one..

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.

So the story begins in Antioch, Syria. The Christians in Jereselem where scattered with the Martyrdom of Stephen. And they went preaching the word everywhere they are scattered. As we look at the roster of this church, Simon and Lucius where most likely from Africa. We gather this from the word Niger, which means black, and the fact that Cyrene was from the area of Modern Libya The text tells us that Manaen was a member of Herod's court. There are a ton of Herods living in this time period, but this was the same Herod who had John the baptist killed, and held one of the trials of Jesus. He may very well have been a source that many of the Gospel writers relied on to explain what happened within that court. Scholars suspect that this took place around 46 AD, and Herod had been deposed by this point and was in exile in Gaul, or Modern France.

The Herods where an interesting clan. Herod the Great had 10 wives and several offspring who he allowed to live (And several that he executed) When he died, His kingdom was split into four parts, and several of his relatives ruled over his territories. Most of them wanted the whole kingdom, and they jockeyed with one another to gain power. This Herod, Antipas the Tetrarch Ruled over Galilee, married his niece, who was also his sister-in-Law. His Brother in Law who was also his Nephew, Herrod Agrippa was boyhood friends with the madman emperor Caligula.. After Caligula came to power, Agrippa was given power over Judea.. Herodius convinced her husband to spread some rumors about her Brother Agrippa. Caligula defended his friend, and sent Antipas packing for France. Agrippa succeeded in taking over the entire kingdom of Isreal, but then died suddenly, as we learned last week.

The point, is that after a very short time.. 16 or 17 years, we have quite a Diverse church. People from different continents. Tentmakers and Aristocrats... God had a plan in allowing the church to be scattered.

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."

Notice how this happened.. It happened in worship and fasting.. I really feel like fasting is something that we don't do enough of as Christians today.. It just isn't taught enough. Worship should be a constant state of the heart, but fasting makes it intentional.

Matthew 4 tells us that Jesus fasted, for 40 days, and 40 nights in the desert, before he was tempted by the devil...

Jesus also taught about how to fast. Matt 6:16

"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

Notice, he said When you fast, Not If you fast.

And finally, in this passage, we see that the early church fasted.

As we live our lives, I think that there is a tendency to take for granted all that we have. A glaring example would be our attitude towards air travel. 100 years ago, air travel was impossible.. If you wanted to cross the country, you did it over the course of months, by horseback.. or in a covered wagon, if you had much baggage. Now, we complain about our flight being delayed for an hour, and it taking 7 hours to cross the country instead of 6. Lets see, 7 hours? or 2 months? Even in a car it takes days..

I believe fasting is a way to reorient yourself away from taking everything for granted. At the very base level, you need food. Everything we are blessed with above that is gravy.. When we fast, we don't allow ourselves to take food for granted. We can be thankful again for the little things. We can remember who gives it all to us.

Of course fasting is a big study, I encourage you to investigate it further --

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 to assist them.

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

Sweet and syrupy preaching is popular these days.. But the truth about the world just isn't that sweet. If we preach that everything is peachy, we lie, and if we are lying, we are working for the wrong side..

Movies have really spoiled our interpretation of some words. Movies are almost always about the extra-ordinary. When was the last time that you saw a movie about a cop that drove around and arrested drunk drivers? The movies are always about the ones fighting terrorists and saving cities from mass destruction. I think that our culture has done the same thing with the demonic.. I think we think of Sorcery as caldrons and spells, but I think that in truth it is something much more subtle. We certainly have extraordinary magicians today, but we also have psychics, new age medicine. Check out how Isaiah 47 describes it as he describes the state of Babylon:

8 Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children":

9 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.

10 You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me."

11 But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.

12 Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; perhaps you may inspire terror.

13 You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you.

Sorcery, as it is described here is our method of denying the truth. It is putting our belief in the idea that if we just do this combination of things, everything will be okay. Just try harder, Just believe more, Just keep a positive mindset. Perception becomes reality. We can enchant ourselves into thinking that anything is good, and right.. Demonic Magic is used in just a big enough dose to make us comfortable enough with our fallen state not to seek God.

Once again we have a magician interfering with God's word. I talked about magic a bit with Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8. Magic in it's most dangerous forms is used to make us comfortable with our sin and our fallen state. God certainly is a "comforter" but he comforts us in the trials and persecution we endure when we follow him. Satan is also a comforter, but He comforts us in our sin. Do not get the two confused! When we sin, the Holy Spirit's words will usually come out something like "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?" Hopefully most of us are not in the state where we need to be rebuked with that level of language, but we should still expect rebuke and discomfort when we sin.

I really think that our sexual culture right now is a breeding ground for the demonic comforters...

<http://www.miriamgrossmanmd.com/pdf/SenseAndSexuality.pdf>

A princeton study shows that the college hook up life is not all that it is cracked up to be...

"91% of girls admit to having feelings of regret, at least occasionally. Guilt and "feeling used" are commonly cited, and overall, 80% of girls wish the hook-up hadn't happened."

Why is sexual promiscuity so prevalent if girls feel this way? Because our culture has bought comforting effect of demon's lies. Many times those who are sexually impure where abused themselves - Then they listened to the devil's comforting words... We then incorporate this dirty state into our identity.. Rather than seeking cleansing, we accept our condition as normal, and okay.

John 1 tells us:

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The Magician is making a sales pitch for darkness. It is interesting that God uses Darkness to punish him.

Quite a sales pitch for the good side too.. Our God, is an awesome God.. He is a good God, but a God worthy of fear and trembling.

Another quick thing to note. Saul begins going by Paul at this point. Unlike many other saints, there is no record of God changing his name. I think he was both a Jewish and Roman citizen, and as such, he had two names. From this point forward he is known by and large by the name Paul. There are a couple instances where history is recalled, and he is identified as Saul. His focus was on spreading the gospel to the Gentiles, and they are going to relate to Paul a bit better than Saul.

13 Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,

A quick preview of coming attractions. John here, is John Mark. He is a cousin to Barnabus. He returns to Jerusalem and spends a lot of time with Peter.. He records the oral history that he learns from Peter in the book of Mark. Here in Acts 13, his departure from Barnabus and Paul is just briefly mentioned. But later in Acts 15 we learn that Paul is irked about it.. Irked enough that it breaks up the team and Paul and Barnabus go their separate ways. Later in his ministry Paul writes praises about Mark.. In Timothy 4:11 he asks to see Mark and says he is "very useful to me for ministry" Paul was Human - God perseveres in spite of our feeling and our judgments of others.

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.

Antiochus was the father of the first king of the Seculid Empire -- As a result, the king named at least 16 different cities after his father. This was a different Antioch than the one that Paul and Barnabas departed from. The left Antioch, in Syria, sailed to Cyprus, then sailed north to this Antioch, which was on the southern coast of modern Turkey.

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."

1 Peter 3:15 Tells us "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Paul demonstrates that he was ready. He had a sermon in his back pocket, I am going to go ahead and read the whole thing.

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.'

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 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.'

26 "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, 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.'

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.'

35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, "'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

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.'"

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.

Preaching to a predominantly Jewish audience, he has a predominately Jewish lesson. The folks who frequent the synagogue certainly would know David, and the promises that where to come through him and his line... Paul connects the dots.. David was not the messiah. He rotted in the grave, the promise must come through another son of his.. One who did not rot in the grave. Jesus...

The crux of Paul's sermon - The big selling point was verse 38 and 39

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.

Let me build an analogy here---

Rich Dad lets you live in his house...

- Normal Wear and tear - Carpets - lights -paint etc.
- accidental abuse Food spills, kids, Dogs etc.
- Accidental bad judgment.

In appreciation and as a good steward it only makes sense that you would repay some of these costs.. This was what the atonement under the law of Moses was for.. It set up a system that allowed people to give back to God to repay him for some of the Havoc that they caused just in the normal course of being human..

There are some other things that you can do that certainly would get you evicted. Intentional damage.

God was a Dad, Giving his people Israel a place to stay... But he was not just housing his kid, he was building a great nation.. Nations are built of people, not buildings. As such, The damage that they do to one another was also doing damage to God.. As Jesus said, "**What you have done to the least of these, you have done to me.**" Or as David said in the Psalm we opened with. "**Against you, you only, have I sinned**"

So the law, lays out how God Expected Israel to steward his blessing.. The rules for atonement where layed out for those who tried, but missed the mark.

Numbers 15:27-31 provides an explanation for the atonement sacrifices:

27 "If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering.

28 And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

29 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.

30 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

31 Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him."

The ESV translates "High Hand" from the literal Hebrew. The word 'yawd' used for hand refers to an open hand, not a closed hand. I kind of see it like we raise our hand to shade ourselves from the light. Many other bibles translate this "defiantly" or "presumptuously".

I think if we all think about it, at least some of our sin is intentional. God's word clearly tells us not to do something, and we choose to ignore his word, and do it anyway. - Under the new testament covenant, this kind of behavior is still a big concern, and if you find yourself doing these things, it is a good indicator that your heart is not quite in the right place, but there is hope for you... If you confess and repent, He will cleanse you. Such forgiveness is not laid out in the law of Moses. If the judges are faithful to the law, the most optimistic sentence you can expect is to be cut off from the people. Often the penalty is much more severe.

The word "Iniquity" is often translated as "Lawlessness" We do not treat God's people and God's things as if they belonged to God. We do what seems best to us, forgetting our responsibility to steward the rest of God's creation. Often, we steward God's sons and daughters in exactly the opposite way that God lays out in his law.

Jesus highlights this point in John 8:7 **"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."** No one is righteous, not one.

While the Law of Moses seems to make no provision for our iniquity, The prophets however, do talk of it quite frequently. In order to be saved, the Jews would have to have faith in some act of God's love beyond the law.

Micah 7

**18 Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?
You do not stay angry forever
but delight to show mercy.**

**19 You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.**

Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

These prophets hope was in the messiah, Jesus.

Romans 5 explains it. I wish I could read the whole thing.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

God is a generous and good God, He built us. He built this world. He composed the atmosphere so that we could breath. He put us in orbit around the sun so that we would keep just the right temperature, and plants and animals could prosper, and we could eat. He gave us the right organs to have offspring to love and cherish. Eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell with. Like I mentioned in the section on fasting, there are miracles all around us, and we take them all for granted. We despise God, and blind ourselves to his goodness. Often we even become prideful, and take credit for what God built.

"Look at how great I am!" We tell ourselves "I am so smart" "I am so strong" "I am so Beautiful" "I am so rich" The bragging might be different for each of us, but we take credit for what God has built. Once it is all about us, we tend to lie, steal and cheat others who God has created.

God is just, and we need to pay for what we have destroyed. We are not the creator. We cannot rebuild what we have destroyed. Only God can do that. And he did. He sent Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins. He sent the Holy Spirit to give us new regenerate heart, and He makes us a new creation.

1 Peter 3:15 continues: always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect,

16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Now lets see if Paul and Barnabus experience this reaction:

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.'"

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.

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.

I am so lucky to get verse 48 to teach tonight... "**as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**" One of our favorite discussion topics is always election. As we have read through John and Acts, As we have gone through Ephesians on Sunday mornings, this topic keeps coming up.

Paul preached to everyone. Some reviled him for it and they put themselves to shame with their jealousy. Others rejoiced and began Glorifying God. The message of God is for everyone. Some people are saved by it, and others are condemned, not by it, but by their refusal to be saved from their pre-existent condemnation. Paul did not argue with those who rejected the truth. He did not repackage the truth several different ways, hoping that he could find a tool to pry open their heart enough to get God in. There are many people out there waiting to be saved. Sew the seed of the Gospel everywhere you can. Some hearts have been prepared for it, and the Gospel will flourish. Some hearts are hard, and it will not. God knows how to harden and soften hearts. There is a point where you shake the dust off your feet and find somebody else to witness to.

John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*

Since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, it befits us so to feel as to wish that all be saved. So it will come about that, whoever we come across, we shall study to make him a sharer of peace . . . even severe rebuke will be administered like medicine, lest they should perish or cause others to perish. But it will be for God to make it effective in those whom He foreknew and predestined.

So even if we take it from the pen of the teacher most associated with God's sovereignty in the election, We should preach and teach to all as if they are elect. Our job is to be faithful to our calling. We should not feel like a failure when people do not respond to our witness. We should not feel like a success when people do respond to our witness. It is God who makes his word effective in the hearts of those he foreknew.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

--Pray ---