

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 13 — Sent Out to the Nations

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 13 marks another major turning point in the book of Acts.

Until this chapter, much of the missionary activity has developed through circumstances such as:

Persecution.

Scattering.

Individual divine direction.

Unexpected gospel opportunities.

Now something new happens.

A local church deliberately sends missionaries.

The church at Antioch has become a spiritually mature, diverse, teaching-centered, prayerful church.

While its leaders are:

Worshiping.

Fasting.

Seeking the Lord.

The Holy Spirit says:

“Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

The church responds with:

Prayer.

Fasting.

The laying on of hands.

And sending.

Acts 13 therefore becomes the beginning of the great missionary journeys associated with Paul.

The chapter also marks a transition in terminology.

Saul begins increasingly to be called:

Paul.

The mission begins in Cyprus.

There Paul and Barnabas confront a sorcerer named Elymas who tries to prevent the Roman governor Sergius Paulus from hearing the gospel.

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronts Elymas directly.

The sorcerer is temporarily blinded.

The governor sees what happens and believes.

Paul and his companions then travel to Antioch in Pisidia.

There Paul delivers one of his great recorded sermons.

He traces God's redemptive work through Israel's history:

Egypt.

The wilderness.

Canaan.

The judges.

Saul.

David.

Then Paul reaches the center:

Jesus Christ.

He declares that Jesus is the promised Savior from David's line.

Jesus was rejected.

Jesus was crucified.

Jesus was buried.

But:

God raised Him from the dead.

Then Paul proclaims one of the clearest gospel statements in Acts:

"Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."

And:

“Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you could not obtain under the law of Moses.”

The gospel creates two very different reactions.

Some hearers want more.

Many follow Paul and Barnabas.

Almost the whole city gathers.

But others become jealous and oppose the message.

Paul and Barnabas then declare that they will turn openly toward the Gentiles, fulfilling God’s promise that His salvation would reach:

“The ends of the earth.”

The Gentiles rejoice.

The Word spreads.

Persecution rises.

Paul and Barnabas are expelled.

Yet the chapter does not end in defeat.

It ends with:

“The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 13 teaches us:

Mission begins with God.

The Holy Spirit calls and sends.

The gospel must remain centered upon Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness and justification come through faith in Christ rather than through works of the law.

Opposition cannot stop God’s Word.

And:

When some reject the gospel, God continues opening doors elsewhere.

The central truth of Acts 13 is:

The Holy Spirit sends God’s servants into the world to proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, through whom everyone who believes receives forgiveness and justification, and no opposition can stop God’s mission from advancing among the nations.

I. A DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IN ANTIOCH

Acts 13:1

“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been raised with Herod the ruler, and Saul.”

Antioch had become an important center of Christian ministry.

Its leadership was remarkably diverse.

Barnabas

The encourager.

Simeon Called Niger

A leader whose name or nickname may indicate a darker complexion or African association.

Lucius of Cyrene

Connected with North Africa.

Manaen

A man raised in close association with Herod’s household.

Saul

The former persecutor who had been transformed by Jesus Christ.

Cross References

Acts 11:19

Believers scattered by persecution traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, carrying the gospel with them.

Romans 12:6

God gives different gifts according to His grace, and believers should faithfully use the gifts He has given them.

1 Corinthians 12:28

God appointed different ministries in the church, including apostles, prophets, teachers, and other forms of service.

Spiritual Principle

A healthy church can unite people from very different backgrounds around one Lord and one gospel.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel does not erase human differences; it brings different people into one spiritual family under Jesus Christ.

II. WORSHIP, FASTING, AND THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 13:2

“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.’”

Mission begins in worship.

Before missionaries are sent:

The church worships.

The church fasts.

The church listens.

Then:

The Spirit speaks.

Cross References

Acts 9:15

The Lord said concerning Saul, “He is My chosen instrument to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the people of Israel.”

Galatians 1:15

Paul said that God had set him apart from birth and called him by grace for His purpose.

Romans 1:1

Paul described himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.

Important Truth

The Holy Spirit says:

“Set apart for Me.”

Mission belongs to God before it belongs to the missionary.

Spiritual Principle

True missionary calling begins with God’s initiative rather than human ambition.

III. THE CHURCH SENDS BARNABAS AND SAUL

Acts 13:3

“So after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them out.”

The church responds seriously.

They do not rush.

They:

Fast.

Pray.

Lay hands upon Barnabas and Saul.

Send them.

Cross References

Acts 6:6

The church presented the seven servants to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands upon them.

1 Timothy 4:14

Timothy was reminded not to neglect the gift associated with the laying on of hands by the elders.

Acts 9:17

Ananias placed his hands on Saul and prayed for him to regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

The missionary is called by God and recognized and supported by the church.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A sending church does not merely say, “Go.” It surrounds mission with prayer.

IV. SENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 13:4

“Sent by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus.”

Verse 3 says the church sent them.

Verse 4 says:

The Holy Spirit sent them.

There is no contradiction.

God works through His church.

Cross References

Acts 4:36

Barnabas was from Cyprus, the island where this missionary journey now begins.

Acts 15:39

Barnabas later returned to Cyprus during another missionary journey.

Acts 8:29

The Holy Spirit had previously directed Philip toward the Ethiopian official.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical mission combines divine calling with human obedience.

V. THE WORD IS PREACHED IN CYPRUS

Acts 13:5

“When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed God’s word in the Jewish synagogues, with John Mark as their helper.”

The central activity is clear:

They proclaimed God’s Word.

John Mark accompanies them.

Cross References

Acts 12:25

Barnabas and Saul had brought John Mark with them after completing their ministry in Jerusalem.

Colossians 4:10

Mark later became known as a coworker associated with Barnabas.

Acts 13:13

John Mark would soon leave the missionary team and return to Jerusalem.

Spiritual Principle

Missionary ministry must remain centered upon the proclamation of God’s Word.

VI. A FALSE PROPHET IN PAPHOS

Acts 13:6

“They traveled across the island until they came to Paphos, where they met a sorcerer and false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus.”

The missionaries encounter spiritual opposition.

Cross References

Acts 8:9

Simon had previously practiced sorcery in Samaria and amazed the people.

Deuteronomy 18:10

God forbade His people from practicing divination, sorcery, witchcraft, or occult practices.

Exodus 7:11

Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers attempted to imitate God's signs through secret arts.

Spiritual Principle

Not every person claiming spiritual power speaks for God.

Key Truth

Biblical discernment must test spiritual claims by truth.

VII. SERGIUS PAULUS WANTS TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

Acts 13:7

"He was with the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man who wanted to hear God's word from Barnabas and Saul."

Sergius Paulus demonstrates spiritual curiosity.

He wants to hear:

God's Word.

Cross References

Acts 10:2

Cornelius was another Gentile official who feared God and sincerely sought Him.

Acts 17:11

The Bereans later received the Word eagerly and examined Scripture carefully.

Acts 10:22

Cornelius was described as a God-fearing man who was ready to hear a message from God.

Spiritual Principle

God can create spiritual hunger in people holding positions of great responsibility.

VIII. ELYMAS OPPOSES THE GOSPEL

Acts 13:8

“But Elymas the sorcerer opposed them and tried to turn the governor from the faith.”

This reveals the real issue.

Elymas does not merely disagree.

He attempts to stop someone else from believing.

Cross References

2 Timothy 3:8

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, certain people oppose the truth through corrupted thinking.

Galatians 5:7

Paul asked the Galatians, “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

Acts 8:18

Simon the sorcerer previously displayed a corrupted understanding of spiritual power.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The person who rejects truth for himself is in danger; the person who actively tries to keep others from truth carries even greater responsibility.

IX. SAUL IS ALSO CALLED PAUL

Acts 13:9

“Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at him.”

From this point forward Luke primarily uses:

Paul.

Paul does not confront Elymas in mere human anger.

Luke emphasizes:

“Filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Cross References

Acts 9:17

Saul had been filled with the Holy Spirit after his conversion.

Acts 4:8

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly spoke before the religious leaders.

Ephesians 5:18

Believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit rather than controlled by other influences.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical boldness should arise from the Holy Spirit, not uncontrolled temper.

X. PAUL EXPOSES ELYMAS

Acts 13:10

“You are full of deceit and evil. You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right. Will you not stop twisting the ways of the Lord?”

Paul speaks directly.

Elymas was:

Deceptive.

Opposed to righteousness.

Twisting God’s truth.

Cross References

John 8:44

Jesus said the devil is a liar and the father of lies, and those who reject truth reflect his character.

Matthew 13:38

Jesus described those under the influence of evil as belonging to the evil one.

Hosea 14:9

The ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous walk in them while rebels stumble over them.

Spiritual Principle

Love does not require pretending destructive spiritual deception is harmless.

XI. ELYMAS BECOMES BLIND

Acts 13:11

“Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You will be blind for a time, unable to see the sun. Immediately, mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about for someone to lead him.”

There is striking irony here.

Elymas tried to spiritually blind Sergius Paulus.

Now Elymas becomes physically blind.

Cross References

Acts 9:8

Saul himself had once risen from the Damascus road unable to see and had to be led by the hand.

Exodus 9:3

God’s hand came in judgment upon Egypt when Pharaoh continually resisted Him.

Deuteronomy 28:28

Moses warned that rebellion could bring confusion and blindness as judgment.

Important Truth

The blindness is described as:

“For a time.”

Even the judgment contains limitation.

Spiritual Principle

God has authority to stop those who aggressively obstruct His truth.

XII. THE GOVERNOR BELIEVES

Acts 13:12

“When the governor saw what had happened, he believed, amazed at the teaching about the Lord.”

Notice what ultimately amazes him.

Not merely the miracle.

He is amazed at:

“The teaching about the Lord.”

Cross References

Matthew 7:28

The crowds were amazed at Jesus’ teaching because of its authority.

Mark 1:22

People were astonished because Jesus taught with authority rather than like ordinary teachers.

Acts 8:13

Simon had been amazed by signs and miracles, though his later conduct exposed problems in his heart.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Miracles may gain attention, but truth about the Lord must remain the center.

XIII. JOHN MARK LEAVES THE TEAM

Acts 13:13

“From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.”

Luke gives no detailed reason here for Mark’s departure.

But later Paul considered it serious enough to oppose taking Mark on another journey.

Cross References

Acts 15:38

Paul later did not think it wise to take Mark because Mark had left them during the earlier work.

Acts 13:5

Mark had originally accompanied Barnabas and Saul as their helper.

2 Timothy 4:11

Years later Paul said, “Bring Mark with you, because he is useful to me for ministry.”

Spiritual Principle

Failure in one season does not have to become permanent failure.

Mark’s story continues.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A setback may become part of a restoration story rather than the final chapter of someone’s usefulness.

XIV. PAUL ENTERS THE SYNAGOGUE IN PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

Acts 13:14

“From Perga they traveled to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.”

Paul consistently begins where people already possess Scripture.

Cross References

Acts 17:2

Paul later entered the synagogue according to his custom and reasoned from Scripture.

Luke 4:16

Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath according to His regular practice.

Acts 9:20

Soon after his conversion, Saul had begun preaching Jesus in the synagogues.

Spiritual Principle

Wise evangelism begins where people are and moves them toward Jesus.

XV. PAUL IS INVITED TO SPEAK

Acts 13:15

“After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders said, ‘Brothers, if you have a word of encouragement for the people, please speak.’”

God opens the door.

Cross References

Luke 4:17

Jesus was handed the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue and read from it.

Nehemiah 8:8

God’s Word was read clearly and explained so the people could understand.

Romans 15:4

Everything written in earlier Scripture was written to teach us and give endurance and hope.

Spiritual Principle

A prepared servant should be ready when God unexpectedly opens an opportunity to speak.

XVI. “LISTEN”

Acts 13:16

“Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and said: ‘Men of Israel, and all who fear God, listen.’”

Paul addresses both:

Jews.

And God-fearing Gentiles.

Cross References

Acts 2:14

Peter stood at Pentecost and called the people to listen carefully to his words.

Acts 10:34

Peter began speaking to Cornelius' household after realizing that God does not show favoritism.

Acts 17:22

Paul later stood in Athens and addressed another religious audience.

Spiritual Principle

Gospel preaching calls people to serious attention because eternal truth is being proclaimed.

XVII. GOD CHOSE AND DELIVERED ISRAEL

Acts 13:17

“The God of Israel chose our ancestors. He made the people prosper while they were in Egypt, and with mighty power He brought them out.”

Paul begins with God.

God chose.

God multiplied.

God delivered.

Cross References

Exodus 1:7

The Israelites became fruitful, increased greatly, and multiplied in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 26:5

Israel was commanded to remember that its ancestors became a great nation while living in Egypt.

Genesis 15:13

God had foretold that Abraham's descendants would live as strangers in another land before He delivered them.

Spiritual Principle

Redemptive history is fundamentally the story of what God has done.

XVIII. GOD ENDURES ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

Acts 13:18

“For about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.”

Israel repeatedly complained and rebelled.

Yet God remained faithful to His purpose.

Cross References

Numbers 14:33

Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years because of unbelief and rebellion.

Deuteronomy 8:2

Moses told Israel to remember how God led them through the wilderness to test and humble them.

Psalms 95:10

God said He was grieved with that generation for forty years because their hearts wandered.

Spiritual Principle

God’s patience should lead us toward repentance rather than presumption.

XIX. GOD GIVES ISRAEL THE LAND

Acts 13:19

“He destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to His people.”

Cross References

Deuteronomy 7:1

Moses identified seven nations in Canaan that Israel would confront as God brought them into the land.

Joshua 14:1

Israel received inheritance in Canaan according to God's direction.

Joshua 21:43

The Lord gave Israel the land He had sworn to give their ancestors.

Spiritual Principle

God fulfills His covenant purposes according to His Word.

XX. GOD GIVES JUDGES

Acts 13:20

"He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until the prophet Samuel."

Paul summarizes a long period of Israel's history.

Cross References

Judges 2:16

The Lord raised up judges who delivered Israel from those who oppressed them.

1 Samuel 3:20

All Israel recognized that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.

Judges 3:9

When Israel cried to the Lord, He raised up a deliverer for them.

Spiritual Principle

Again and again God raised servants to help His people despite their repeated failures.

XXI. ISRAEL ASKS FOR A KING

Acts 13:21

“Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled for forty years.”

Cross References

1 Samuel 8:5

Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king over them like the surrounding nations.

1 Samuel 9:2

Saul son of Kish was described as physically impressive among the people.

1 Samuel 10:1

Samuel anointed Saul and declared that God had appointed him ruler over Israel.

Spiritual Principle

God sometimes allows people to experience the consequences of what they insist upon.

XXII. GOD RAISES UP DAVID

Acts 13:22

“After removing him, He raised up David as king, about whom He said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”

David was not sinless.

But his life was fundamentally oriented toward God’s purposes.

Cross References

1 Samuel 13:14

Samuel told Saul that God had sought a man after His own heart to lead His people.

1 Samuel 16:13

Samuel anointed David, and the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him.

Psalms 89:20

God said, “I have found David My servant and anointed him with My holy oil.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is looking for hearts willing to obey His purposes, not merely outward impressiveness.

XXIII. JESUS COMES FROM DAVID'S LINE

Acts 13:23

“From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as He promised.”

Paul reaches the central point.

All the history has been moving toward:

Jesus.

Cross References

2 Samuel 7:12

God promised David that one of his descendants would be raised up after him and that God would establish his kingdom.

Matthew 1:1

Jesus Christ is identified as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham.

Isaiah 11:1

Isaiah foretold that a shoot would come from Jesse’s family line and bear righteous fruit.

Key Truth

Jesus is not an interruption in biblical history; He is the promised fulfillment toward which biblical history moves.

XXIV. JOHN PREPARES THE WAY

Acts 13:24

“Before His coming, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel.”

John’s ministry prepared people for Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 1:4

John appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism connected with repentance and forgiveness.

Luke 3:3

John traveled throughout the Jordan region calling people to repentance.

Malachi 3:1

God promised to send a messenger who would prepare the way before the coming Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Preparation for Christ includes recognizing sin and the need for repentance.

XXV. JOHN POINTS AWAY FROM HIMSELF

Acts 13:25

“As John was finishing his work, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the one. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’”

John understood his role.

Cross References

John 1:20

John openly confessed that he was not the Christ.

Matthew 3:11

John said the One coming after him was far greater than he was.

John 3:28

John reminded his followers that he had said, “I am not the Christ; I was sent ahead of Him.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faithful ministry does not make the messenger the center; it points beyond the messenger to Jesus.

XXVI. THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION

Acts 13:26

“Fellow Israelites, and you who fear God, this message of salvation has been sent to us.”

Paul identifies the gospel as:

“The message of salvation.”

Cross References

Acts 13:16

Paul had addressed both Israelites and God-fearing Gentiles.

Acts 28:28

Paul later declared that God’s salvation had been sent to the Gentiles and that they would listen.

Psalms 67:2

The psalm prays that God’s saving way would become known throughout the earth and among all nations.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel is not merely advice for improving life; it is God’s message of salvation.

XXVII. JESUS WAS NOT RECOGNIZED

Acts 13:27

“The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. In condemning Him, they fulfilled the words of the prophets read every Sabbath.”

There is tragic irony.

They heard the prophets.

But failed to recognize the One the prophets foretold.

Cross References

John 1:11

Jesus came to His own people, but His own did not receive Him.

Luke 23:34

Jesus prayed for His persecutors, recognizing their ignorance concerning the full significance of their actions.

Acts 3:17

Peter said that the people and their rulers acted in ignorance when they rejected Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A person can hear Scripture regularly and still miss its central message if the heart is resistant to Christ.

XXVIII. JESUS IS CONDEMNED WITHOUT JUST CAUSE

Acts 13:28

“Though they found no basis for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have Him executed.”

Jesus was innocent.

Yet He was condemned.

Cross References

Luke 23:22

Pilate repeatedly stated that he found no crime in Jesus deserving death.

John 19:6

Pilate said, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, because I find no basis for a charge against Him.”

Matthew 27:22

The crowd demanded that Jesus be crucified.

Spiritual Principle

The cross reveals both the injustice of human sin and the redemptive purpose of God.

XXIX. JESUS IS BURIED

Acts 13:29

“When they had carried out all that was written about Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.”

The burial confirms the reality of Jesus’ death.

Cross References

Luke 23:53

Joseph took Jesus’ body down, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in a tomb.

John 19:40

Jesus’ body was wrapped according to Jewish burial customs.

Isaiah 53:9

Isaiah foretold that the suffering Servant would be associated with a rich man in His death.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel is rooted in real historical events: Jesus truly died and was truly buried.

XXX. “BUT GOD RAISED HIM”

Acts 13:30

“But God raised Him from the dead.”

These words overturn everything.

People condemned Him.

People killed Him.

People buried Him.

But God raised Him.

Cross References

Acts 2:24

God raised Jesus from the dead, freeing Him from death because death could not hold Him.

Romans 1:4

Jesus was powerfully declared to be the Son of God through resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:4

Christ was buried and raised on the third day according to Scripture.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Humanity's verdict was death; God's verdict was resurrection.

XXXI. THE RISEN CHRIST APPEARS TO WITNESSES

Acts 13:31

“For many days He was seen by those who traveled with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now His witnesses.”

The resurrection was witnessed.

Cross References

Acts 1:3

Jesus presented Himself alive through many convincing proofs over forty days.

1 Corinthians 15:5

The risen Christ appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.

Acts 10:41

Peter said Jesus appeared to witnesses chosen by God who ate and drank with Him after His resurrection.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection message rests upon apostolic testimony to the risen Christ.

XXXII. GOD FULFILLED HIS PROMISE

Acts 13:32

“We bring you the Good News: what God promised to our fathers.”

Christianity is fulfillment.

Cross References

Romans 1:2

God promised the gospel beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Galatians 3:16

God’s promises ultimately find their fulfillment in the promised offspring, Christ.

Genesis 12:3

God promised Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through him.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel is the fulfillment of God’s long-established redemptive promise.

XXXIII. JESUS IS GOD’S SON

Acts 13:33

Paul quotes Psalm 2.

“You are My Son; today I have become Your Father.”

Cross References

Psalm 2:7

God declares concerning His anointed King, “You are My Son.”

Hebrews 1:5

Hebrews applies this royal Sonship language uniquely to Christ.

Hebrews 5:5

Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest; the Father appointed Him and declared Him His Son.

Important Truth

Paul is not teaching that Jesus first became the Son of God at the resurrection.

The New Testament presents Jesus as the eternal Son.

The resurrection publicly vindicated and enthroned the Son in fulfillment of royal messianic promise.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection confirms Jesus as God's victorious Messiah and Son.

XXXIV. THE SURE PROMISES TO DAVID

Acts 13:34

“God raised Him never to decay, as He said: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’”

Cross References

Isaiah 55:3

God promised the faithful covenant blessings associated with David.

2 Samuel 7:16

God promised David that his house, kingdom, and throne would ultimately be established.

Ezekiel 37:25

God promised an enduring Davidic ruler connected with the future restoration of His people.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' resurrection guarantees the permanence of God's messianic promises.

XXXV. THE HOLY ONE WOULD NOT SEE DECAY

Acts 13:35

“In another Psalm it says: ‘You will not let Your Holy One see decay.’”

Cross References

Psalm 16:10

God's Holy One would not be abandoned to the grave or allowed to experience corruption.

Acts 2:27

Peter had already applied this promise to Jesus' resurrection.

Acts 2:31

Peter explained that David prophetically foresaw the resurrection of the Messiah.

Key Truth

Psalm 16 reaches beyond David to Christ.

XXXVI. DAVID DIED AFTER SERVING HIS GENERATION

Acts 13:36

“David served God's purpose in his own generation and then died and was buried, and his body decayed.”

This is one of the great summaries of a faithful life.

David:

Served God's purpose.

In his generation.

Cross References

1 Kings 2:10

David died and was buried in the city of David.

Acts 2:29

Peter said David both died and was buried, and his tomb remained known.

2 Samuel 7:12

God had promised that after David's death He would raise up one of David's descendants.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A successful life is one that serves God's purpose in the generation God gives it.

XXXVII. JESUS DID NOT SEE DECAY

Acts 13:37

“But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.”

David died.

Jesus rose.

Cross References

Acts 2:31

The Messiah was not abandoned to the grave, and His body did not experience decay.

Romans 6:9

Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer rules over Him.

Acts 13:35

Scripture had promised that God's Holy One would not see decay.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is greater than David because death could not hold Him.

XXXVIII. FORGIVENESS IS PROCLAIMED THROUGH JESUS

Acts 13:38

“Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.”

Paul reaches the invitation.

Cross References

Luke 24:47

Jesus said repentance and forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

Ephesians 1:7

In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to God's grace.

Colossians 1:14

In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel does not merely expose sin; it announces forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

XXXIX. JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH

Acts 13:39

“Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you could not obtain under the law of Moses.”

This is one of Paul's great statements on justification.

Everyone Who Believes

The invitation is broad.

Through Him

Jesus is the basis.

Justified

Declared righteous before God.

Not Through the Law

The law reveals sin but cannot provide the final righteousness sinners need.

Cross References

Romans 3:28

A person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Galatians 2:16

A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:3

What the law could not accomplish because of human sinful weakness, God accomplished through His Son.

Key Truth

What law-keeping cannot accomplish, Christ provides to the believer.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We are not justified because we performed well enough; we are justified because Christ is sufficient and we trust Him.

XL. A WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF

Acts 13:40

“Take care that what the prophets said does not happen to you.”

The gospel includes invitation.

It also includes warning.

Cross References

Hebrews 2:1

We must pay very careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.

Habakkuk 1:5

God warned that He would accomplish a work people would struggle to believe even when told about it.

2 Peter 3:3

Scripture warns that scoffers will arise who reject God’s truth.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel must not be treated casually.

XLI. “LOOK, YOU SCOFFERS”

Acts 13:41

“Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.”

Paul applies Habakkuk’s warning to his hearers.

Cross References

Habakkuk 1:5

God warned people to look and be astonished because He was doing something they would hardly believe.

2 Peter 3:4

Scoffers later questioned God’s promises because they judged truth by their own expectations.

Isaiah 29:14

God said He would again perform an astonishing work that would overturn merely human wisdom.

Spiritual Principle

Refusing to believe simply because God’s work exceeds our expectations is spiritually dangerous.

XLII. THE PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR MORE

Acts 13:42

“As Paul and Barnabas were leaving, the people invited them to speak more about these things on the next Sabbath.”

The sermon creates hunger.

Cross References

Acts 13:44

On the next Sabbath almost the entire city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord.

Acts 17:32

In Athens some hearers later said they wanted to hear Paul again concerning resurrection.

Acts 13:16

Paul had originally called the congregation to listen carefully.

Spiritual Principle

A healthy response to biblical truth is a desire to hear more.

XLIII. CONTINUE IN GOD'S GRACE

Acts 13:43

“When the congregation was dismissed, many Jews and devout converts followed Paul and Barnabas, who urged them to continue in God’s grace.”

Beginning well is not enough.

They must continue.

Cross References

Acts 11:23

Barnabas had encouraged the Antioch believers to remain faithful to the Lord with all their hearts.

Acts 14:22

Paul and Barnabas later strengthened disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith.

John 8:31

Jesus said that true disciples continue in His Word.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Grace is not merely how the Christian life begins; believers must continue living in dependence upon grace.

XLIV. ALMOST THE WHOLE CITY GATHERS

Acts 13:44

“On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.”

The gospel has captured public attention.

Cross References

Acts 13:42

The people had specifically asked to hear more on the following Sabbath.

Mark 6:33

Large crowds once gathered rapidly to hear and see Jesus.

Acts 17:5

Large public response to the gospel later provoked jealousy and opposition elsewhere.

Spiritual Principle

When people hunger for God’s Word, the church should be prepared to proclaim it clearly.

XLV. JEALOUSY PRODUCES OPPOSITION

Acts 13:45

“But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting Paul and insulting him.”

Their opposition is connected explicitly with:

Jealousy.

Cross References

Acts 5:17

The high priest and his associates had previously been filled with jealousy toward the apostles.

Acts 17:5

Certain opponents later became jealous when crowds responded to Paul’s preaching.

Romans 10:19

Scripture had foretold that Gentile inclusion would provoke Israel to jealousy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jealousy can cause religious people to oppose something they should be celebrating.

XLVI. PAUL AND BARNABAS TURN TOWARD THE GENTILES

Acts 13:46

“Paul and Barnabas answered boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. But since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”

Paul does not say the gospel was wrong.

He says the hearers rejected it.

Cross References

Romans 1:16

The gospel is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

Acts 18:6

When certain hearers rejected the message, Paul declared that he would turn toward the Gentiles.

Acts 28:28

Paul later announced that God’s salvation had been sent to the Gentiles and that they would hear it.

Important Truth

Their rejection was morally significant.

Paul says they:

“Judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.”

Spiritual Principle

Rejecting the gospel is not a neutral decision.

XLVII. A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES

Acts 13:47

“For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Paul applies Isaiah’s mission language to the gospel mission flowing from Christ through His servants.

Cross References

Isaiah 49:6

God declares that His Servant will be a light to the nations so His salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Luke 2:32

Simeon described Jesus as a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory for Israel.

Isaiah 42:6

God promised that His Servant would become a covenant for the people and a light for the nations.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A church that belongs to the Light must carry the light beyond its own walls.

XLVIII. THE GENTILES REJOICE

Acts 13:48

“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord, and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

Their response contrasts sharply with rejection.

They:

Were glad.

Honored the Word.

Believed.

Cross References

Acts 11:18

The Jerusalem church praised God for granting repentance leading to life to the Gentiles.

Ephesians 1:4

God chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy before Him.

John 6:37

Jesus said that everyone the Father gives Him will come to Him, and He will never reject the one who comes.

Important Doctrinal Note

Acts 13:48 has long been discussed in relation to divine election and human faith.

The verse clearly emphasizes God's sovereign work in salvation.

The same chapter also emphasizes genuine human responsibility:

Some reject the Word.

Others believe.

The safest biblical conclusion is to affirm both truths Scripture presents:

God sovereignly works in salvation.

And:

People are genuinely commanded and responsible to believe the gospel.

Spiritual Principle

Salvation is never a reason for human boasting; it is ultimately a work of God's grace received through faith.

XLIX. THE WORD SPREADS THROUGH THE REGION

Acts 13:49

"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region."

Opposition has not stopped the mission.

Cross References

Acts 19:20

The Word of the Lord later continued growing and prevailing powerfully.

Colossians 1:6

The gospel was bearing fruit and growing throughout the world.

Acts 6:7

The Word of God spread, and the number of disciples greatly increased.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Word spreads because no human opposition can cancel God's truth.

L. PERSECUTION IS STIRRED UP

Acts 13:50

“But the Jewish leaders stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, driving them out of their region.”

Successful ministry produces opposition.

Cross References

Acts 14:2

Opponents later stirred up Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the believers.

Acts 14:19

Paul would later be attacked severely by hostile opponents.

2 Timothy 3:11

Paul later reminded Timothy of the persecutions he endured in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

Spiritual Principle

Opposition does not automatically mean ministry has failed.

Sometimes opposition rises precisely because the message is having an effect.

LI. THEY SHAKE THE DUST FROM THEIR FEET

Acts 13:51

“So they shook the dust off their feet in protest and went to Iconium.”

They do not remain endlessly where the gospel is deliberately rejected.

They move.

Cross References

Matthew 10:14

Jesus told His disciples that when a town refused the message, they could shake the dust from their feet and move on.

Luke 9:5

Jesus gave the same instruction concerning places that rejected His messengers.

Mark 6:11

Shaking the dust from the feet served as a testimony concerning rejection of the message.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faithfulness sometimes means staying and preaching; at other times it means moving to the next open door.

LII. FILLED WITH JOY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 13:52

“The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Notice when the joy appears.

After opposition.

After persecution.

After Paul and Barnabas are expelled.

Yet:

The disciples are joyful.

Cross References

Acts 2:4

The believers at Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22

The fruit produced by the Spirit includes joy.

John 16:22

Jesus promised His disciples a joy that no one could ultimately take away from them.

Spiritual Principle

Christian joy does not depend upon an opposition-free environment.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The world may remove the preacher from the city without removing the Holy Spirit from the disciples.

LIII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 13

1. Mission Begins with God

The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul.

Principle:

The church does not invent the mission; it joins God's mission.

2. Prayer and Worship Should Surround Mission

The Antioch church worshiped, fasted, and prayed.

Principle:

Mission without prayer quickly becomes human activity instead of spiritual ministry.

3. The Gospel Is Centered on Jesus

Paul's sermon moves through Israel's history until it reaches Christ.

Principle:

Biblical preaching must ultimately point people toward Jesus Christ.

4. Jesus Died and Rose Again

The cross and resurrection stand at the heart of Paul's message.

Principle:

A gospel without the resurrection is not the apostolic gospel.

5. Forgiveness and Justification Come Through Christ

Paul declares that believers receive what the law could never provide.

Principle:

Salvation rests upon Christ's sufficiency rather than human performance.

6. Opposition Cannot Stop the Word

Elymas resisted.

Others contradicted.

Persecution arose.

Still:

The Word spread.

Principle:

God's mission is larger than its opponents.

7. Spirit-Filled Believers Can Have Joy During Opposition

The chapter ends with joy.

Principle:

Christian joy comes from the Holy Spirit, not merely favorable circumstances.

LIV. WHAT ACTS 13 TEACHES ABOUT THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

The Antioch church becomes a model.

It Had Biblical Leadership

Prophets and teachers.

It Worshiped

Mission arose within devotion to God.

It Fasted

The believers sought God seriously.

It Listened

They recognized the Spirit's direction.

It Released Its Best Leaders

Barnabas and Saul were important people in Antioch.

The church did not keep them for itself.

It Prayed

The mission was covered in prayer.

It Sent

The church became outward-looking.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A mature church does not merely gather people; it sends people.

LV. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSION

The Holy Spirit is central throughout Acts 13.

He Calls

“Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul.”

He Sends

They are:

“Sent by the Holy Spirit.”

He Fills

Paul confronts Elymas:

“Filled with the Holy Spirit.”

He Sustains

The disciples end the chapter:

“Filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Spiritual Principle

The mission of the church is impossible to accomplish properly without dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

LVI. SAUL BECOMES PAUL

Acts 13:9 introduces:

“Saul, who was also called Paul.”

This is not necessarily describing a dramatic name change at conversion.

It was common in the Roman world for people to use more than one name in different linguistic or social settings.

As Paul’s ministry increasingly moves among Gentiles, Luke primarily uses his Roman name:

Paul.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel messenger may adapt culturally without changing the gospel itself.

LVII. PAUL’S SERMON — THE GREAT STORY OF GOD

Paul’s sermon demonstrates how to understand biblical history.

He does not treat the Old Testament as disconnected stories.

He sees one redemptive movement.

God chose Israel.

God delivered Israel.

God gave the land.

God raised judges.

God raised David.

God promised a Savior.

John prepared the way.

Jesus came.

Jesus was rejected.

Jesus died.

Jesus was buried.

Jesus rose.

Forgiveness is now proclaimed.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Bible tells one unfolding redemptive story centered in Jesus Christ.

LVIII. “BUT GOD RAISED HIM”

Acts 13:30 is one of the great turning points in Paul’s sermon.

Human beings did their worst.

They rejected Jesus.

Condemned Jesus.

Crucified Jesus.

Buried Jesus.

Then:

“But God raised Him from the dead.”

Principle

Never evaluate God’s final purpose while you are still standing at the tomb.

The grave looked final.

It was not.

LIX. DAVID SERVED HIS GENERATION

Acts 13:36 deserves special attention.

“David served God’s purpose in his own generation.”

We cannot serve every generation.

But we can serve ours.

We cannot control the world after we die.

But we can faithfully obey God now.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Serve God’s Purpose in Your Generation”

Ask:

What has God called me to do?

Who has God placed around me?

What truth must I proclaim?

What ministry has He put in front of me?

What opportunities do I have now?

Principle

Faithfulness is serving God where He placed you during the time He gave you.

LX. FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION

Acts 13:38–39 gives a beautiful description of salvation.

Forgiveness

Our sins are pardoned.

Justification

The believer is declared righteous before God through Christ.

Through Jesus

Christ is the basis.

Through Believing

Faith receives the gift.

Not Through the Law

The law cannot justify the sinner.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Religion says, “Do enough and perhaps you can become acceptable.” The gospel says, “Christ has done what you could never do; believe in Him.”

LXI. WHAT THE LAW CAN AND CANNOT DO

Paul does not insult the law.

The law was God’s revelation.

But the law could not justify sinners because human beings failed to keep it perfectly.

The Law Reveals God's Standard

The Law Exposes Sin

The Law Points Toward the Need for Christ

But Christ Provides Justification

Spiritual Principle

The problem is not weakness in God's law but weakness in sinful humanity.

LXII. JEALOUSY IN RELIGIOUS MINISTRY

Acts 13:45 is sobering.

The opponents saw crowds.

Then:

They were filled with jealousy.

They were more disturbed that people listened to Paul than delighted that people were hearing God's Word.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When another person's fruitfulness makes us angry rather than thankful, jealousy has begun corrupting ministry.

LXIII. WHEN SOME REJECT, OTHERS RECEIVE

The same gospel produces different responses.

Some Want More

Some Follow

Some Believe

Some Rejoice

Some Become Jealous

Some Contradict

Some Persecute

The message does not change.

Spiritual Principle

Our responsibility is faithful proclamation; God alone knows every heart's final response.

LXIV. WHAT ACTS 13:48 TEACHES ABOUT SALVATION

Acts 13:48 says:

“All who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

This should humble believers.

Salvation is never something we can boast about as though we made ourselves spiritually superior.

Yet this same chapter says unbelievers:

“Reject” the Word.

The Bible therefore places two truths side by side.

God Is Sovereign in Salvation

And:

Human Beings Are Responsible to Respond to the Gospel

We should not use one truth to erase the other.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Biblical theology must be willing to affirm every truth Scripture affirms even when our minds cannot fully explain how those truths fit together.

LXV. THE GOSPEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Paul quotes Isaiah:

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

This echoes Acts 1:8.

Jerusalem.

Judea.

Samaria.

The ends of the earth.

Spiritual Principle

The missionary heart of God reaches beyond every local boundary.

LXVI. WHAT ACTS 13 TEACHES ABOUT OPPOSITION

Opposition takes several forms.

Spiritual Deception

Elymas.

Intellectual Contradiction

Opponents challenge Paul.

Personal Insult

Paul is verbally attacked.

Organized Persecution

Influential leaders stir up opposition.

Expulsion

Paul and Barnabas are driven away.

Yet:

The Word spreads.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Opposition may alter the route of mission, but it cannot cancel the mission.

LXVII. JOHN MARK — FAILURE IS NOT FINAL

John Mark leaves.

Later Paul refuses to take him.

But years afterward Paul writes:

“Bring Mark with you, because he is useful to me for ministry.”

That is restoration.

Spiritual Principle

One failure does not have to define the remainder of your service to Christ.

Do not romanticize failure.

But do not make failure permanent when grace allows restoration.

LXVIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was the church at Antioch doing when the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul?

They were worshiping the Lord and fasting.

Their missionary calling arose in an atmosphere of worship, prayer, and spiritual devotion.

Question 2

Who called Barnabas and Saul to missionary work?

The Holy Spirit.

The church recognized that calling, prayed, laid hands upon them, and sent them.

Question 3

Why is the Antioch church important?

It became a major missionary-sending church.

It demonstrated worship, teaching, diversity, prayer, Spirit-led leadership, and willingness to send gifted servants outward.

Question 4

Who was Elymas?

Elymas, also known as Bar-Jesus, was a sorcerer and false prophet who tried to prevent Sergius Paulus from believing the gospel.

Question 5

Why was Elymas judged with blindness?

Paul said Elymas was deliberately twisting God's ways and trying to turn the governor from faith.

The temporary blindness became a visible judgment corresponding to Elymas' spiritual opposition.

Question 6

What happened to John Mark?

John Mark left Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia and returned to Jerusalem.

Later this created disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.

Yet Mark was eventually restored and became useful to Paul in ministry.

Question 7

What was the main point of Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch?

God's promises and Israel's history find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who was crucified, buried, raised from the dead, and through whom forgiveness and justification are offered to believers.

Question 8

What did Paul teach about forgiveness?

He declared that forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through Jesus.

Christ is the One through whom sinners can receive pardon.

Question 9

What did Paul teach about justification?

Everyone who believes in Christ is justified from what the law of Moses could not justify them from.

Justification is received through faith in Christ rather than earned through works of law.

Question 10

Why did Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles?

After certain Jewish hearers persistently rejected the Word, Paul and Barnabas declared that they would carry the message openly to Gentiles, fulfilling God's purpose that salvation reach the nations.

Question 11

How did the Gentiles respond?

They rejoiced.

They honored the Word of the Lord.

Those appointed for eternal life believed.

The Word then spread throughout the region.

Question 12

What is the main lesson of Acts 13?

The Holy Spirit sends believers to proclaim Jesus Christ to the nations, forgiveness and justification come through faith in Him, and opposition cannot stop God's Word from spreading.

LXIX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 13 asks several important questions.

Am I Worshiping Before I Ask God for Direction?

The Antioch church was.

Am I Available for God to Send Me?

Barnabas and Saul were.

Am I Willing to Release Others for God's Work?

The church released important leaders.

Do I Know the Gospel Well Enough to Explain It?

Paul did.

Is Jesus the Center of My Bible Teaching?

Paul moved all biblical history toward Christ.

Am I Depending on Law-Keeping or Christ for Justification?

Paul says justification comes through Jesus.

How Do I Respond When Others Are More Successful Than I Am?

With jealousy?

Or gratitude?

Can I Continue in Joy when Opposition Comes?

The disciples did.

Am I Serving God's Purpose in My Generation?

David did.

LXX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Mission Begins in Worship Before It Moves Into the World”

Acts 13 does not begin with a strategy meeting.

It begins with believers worshiping God.

Then the Spirit speaks.

Then the church prays.

Then the missionaries go.

Principle

We should not be so eager to work for God that we stop spending time with God.

Mission should flow from worship.

LXXI. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Never Let Opposition Make You Forget the Open Door”

Elymas opposed.

Paul continued.

Some Jews opposed.

Paul continued.

Persecution drove them out.

They moved to Iconium.

Principle

When one door closes through rejection, remain alert for the next door God opens.

The mission does not belong to one city.

LXXII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Gospel Gives What the Law Could Never Produce in Us”

Paul’s great announcement is:

Forgiveness.

Justification.

Through:

Jesus Christ.

The law can say:

You have sinned.

The gospel says:

Christ can forgive.

The law can expose guilt.

Christ provides righteousness.

Principle

Our hope before God is not that we finally became good enough, but that Jesus Christ is enough.

LXXIII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Serve God’s Purpose Before Your Generation Is Gone”

David served God’s purpose:

“In his own generation.”

Every generation passes.

Every life is temporary.

Every opportunity eventually closes.

Principle

Do not spend your entire life preparing to serve God someday while ignoring the people and opportunities God has given you today.

LXXIV. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 13 begins inside a worshiping church.

It ends with a joyful, Spirit-filled group of disciples in another region.

Between those two scenes:

Missionaries are called.

Missionaries are sent.

The gospel crosses the sea.

A sorcerer opposes.

A governor believes.

A helper leaves.

A synagogue opens.

Paul preaches.

Jesus is proclaimed.

The resurrection is announced.

Forgiveness is offered.

Justification is explained.

Some believe.

Some reject.

The Gentiles rejoice.

Persecution rises.

The Word spreads.

That is the story of mission.

Mission does not mean:

No opposition.

No disappointment.

No conflict.

No rejection.

No hardship.

Mission means:

God sends.

Servants obey.

Christ is proclaimed.

People respond.

The Word keeps moving.

Acts 13 also reminds us that the heart of missionary preaching must remain Jesus Christ.

Paul does not merely preach:

Morality.

Tradition.

Politics.

Self-improvement.

Religious culture.

He preaches:

Jesus.

Jesus is the promised Savior.

Jesus was crucified.

Jesus was buried.

Jesus was raised.

Jesus fulfills Scripture.

Jesus forgives sins.

Jesus justifies believers.

That is the gospel.

And when some reject it:

Paul does not change the gospel to make rejection disappear.

He takes the same gospel to people ready to hear.

Acts 13 therefore challenges the church:

Worship deeply.

Pray seriously.

Listen carefully.

Send willingly.

Preach clearly.

Point to Jesus.

Trust the Holy Spirit.

Do not become jealous of gospel fruit.

Do not allow rejection to create despair.

Do not allow persecution to silence witness.

And remember:

The Word of the Lord can spread even when the servants carrying it are driven out.

The chapter begins with the Holy Spirit saying:

“Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul.”

It ends with disciples:

“Filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

The same Spirit who sends the missionary is the Spirit who sustains the believer.

And the same gospel that faced opposition in Acts 13 still carries God’s saving message:

Through Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.

And:

Everyone who believes is justified through Him.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the missionary testimony of Acts Chapter 13.

Thank You for the church at Antioch.

Teach our churches to worship You deeply.

Teach us to pray.

Teach us to fast when we need focused spiritual dependence.

Teach us to listen to Your direction.

Give us courage to release people for ministry rather than keeping every gifted servant for ourselves.

Thank You for Barnabas.

Thank You for Paul.

Thank You for every believer willing to carry the gospel beyond familiar places.

Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

Give us discernment when false teaching appears.

Give us courage to speak truth without fear.

Protect us from jealousy when You use others powerfully.

Help us rejoice whenever Jesus Christ is faithfully proclaimed.

Thank You that Your promises find their fulfillment in Jesus.

Thank You that He is the promised Savior.

Thank You that He died.

Thank You that He was buried.

Thank You that You raised Him from the dead.

Thank You that He lives forever.

Thank You that forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through His name.

Thank You that justification is available through faith in Him.

Keep us from trusting our own works.

Keep us from trying to earn what Christ alone can provide.

Help us trust completely in Jesus.

Give us hearts like David that desire to serve Your purpose in our generation.

Show us what You have called us to do now.

Give us courage to do it while we have opportunity.

When people reject the gospel, keep us faithful.

When persecution comes, give us strength.

When doors close, show us the next open door.

When ministry becomes difficult, remind us that Your Word cannot be chained.

Let Your Word spread.

Let Jesus be preached.

Let sinners believe.

Let believers grow.

Let churches send.

Let the nations hear.

And fill Your people with:

Joy and the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you could not obtain under the law of Moses.” — Acts 13:38–39

Central Truth

The Holy Spirit calls and sends God's servants to proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus Christ to the nations, and through Him everyone who believes receives forgiveness and justification that human works and law-keeping can never provide.

Acts 13 in One Sentence

The Holy Spirit sends Barnabas and Paul from Antioch into missionary service, Paul confronts spiritual opposition and proclaims Israel's history as fulfilled in the crucified and risen Jesus, forgiveness and justification are offered through faith in Christ, and despite jealousy and persecution the Word of the Lord spreads among the Gentiles while believers remain filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.