

The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 13:32–52 — Week 21

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Introduction — Completing Paul's Apostolic Gospel

Acts 13:32–52 completes Paul's first recorded apostolic sermon, preached in Pisidian Antioch around AD 45. Paul moves from Israel's history and Messianic expectation to the heart of the gospel: **Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, He was crucified, God raised Him from the dead, and forgiveness and justification are offered through Him to everyone who believes.**

The passage then shows what happens when the apostolic gospel is proclaimed: some receive it with joy, others oppose it, the message spreads throughout the region, persecution increases, and the new disciples remain **filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.**

Three themes continue to shape Paul's message:

- **God is good, gracious, and Fatherly.**
- **God works through people and their destinies to accomplish His purposes.**
- **The apostolic gospel centers on the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and humanity's reconciliation to God.**

Acts 13:32–37 — God Keeps His Promises

Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

Paul declares the gospel as the fulfillment of **“what God promised.”**

Israel had been waiting for Messiah, and Paul announces that God has fulfilled His promise through Jesus Christ.

- God is faithful to His promises.
- Joshua 21:45 declares that not one of God's good promises to Israel failed.
- Second Corinthians 1:20 teaches that God's promises find their ultimate **“Yes” in Christ.**
- Jesus is therefore not disconnected from Israel's story; He is the fulfillment toward which that story was moving.

Talking Point: God is a promise-keeping Father. What He promises, He is faithful to fulfill.

The Scriptures Point to the Resurrection

Paul supports his message by quoting:

- **Psalm 2:7**
- **Isaiah 55:3**
- **Psalm 16:10**

Paul interprets these passages as prophetic witnesses to Jesus and His resurrection.

David Was Not the Messiah

David died and experienced physical decay. Jesus, however, was raised from the dead.

Paul's argument is straightforward: **David pointed toward Messiah, but Jesus fulfilled the promise.**

Talking Point: The resurrection distinguishes Jesus as the fulfillment of the Messianic promise. Christianity rests not merely upon Jesus' teachings but upon the reality that God raised Him from the dead.

Acts 13:38–39 — Forgiveness and Justification Through Jesus

Paul now brings his sermon to its central invitation:

Forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through Jesus Christ.

APHESIS — Forgiveness

The Greek word **aphesis** communicates release, pardon, remission, and liberation from bondage.

Forgiveness is not a minor theme of the New Covenant. It stands at the heart of God's reconciliation of humanity to Himself.

Through Christ, sin is forgiven and its penalty is remitted.

Talking Point: The gospel does not simply tell people how sinful they are; it announces what God has done in Jesus to release people from sin and restore them to Himself.

Everyone Who Believes Is Justified

Paul contrasts what Jesus accomplishes with what the Law of Moses could not accomplish completely.

- The Law revealed and addressed transgression.

- The Law pointed forward toward something greater.
- The Law could not finally perfect humanity.
- Jesus accomplishes reconciliation.

Paul's message is radically inclusive: **everyone who believes is justified.**

The Cross

The notes emphasize two dimensions of Christ's work:

Penal substitution — Jesus bears the penalty of sin.

Restorative justice — through Jesus, God acts to restore and reconcile humanity to Himself.

Talking Point: The cross addresses both the guilt of sin and the broken relationship between humanity and God.

Acts 13:40–41 — Do Not Reject the Good News

Paul quotes **Habakkuk 1:5** and warns his listeners not to dismiss what God has done through Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas stand as witnesses testifying to the truth of Messiah.

The message carries eternal significance. Therefore, Christians have a responsibility to communicate the truth about Jesus to others.

Talking Point: The gospel requires a response. Hearing the good news of Jesus presents every person with an opportunity to believe.

Acts 13:42–43 — Continue in the Grace of God

The response is initially enthusiastic. Paul and Barnabas are invited to return and speak further.

Many people continue following them, creating additional opportunities for ministry and explanation.

CHARIS — Grace

Luke describes their message in terms of the **grace of God**.

The Greek word **charis** carries ideas of favor, kindness, graciousness, benefit, joy, and God's merciful influence upon people's lives.

Paul and Barnabas encourage those responding to **continue in God's grace**.

Talking Point: Christianity begins with grace, grows through grace, and calls us to continue living in grace. God's transforming work in us flows from His goodness rather than our ability to earn His acceptance.

Acts 13:44–45 — Revival Produces a Reaction

By the following Sabbath, almost the entire city gathers to hear the Word of the Lord.

The gospel is moving beyond the walls of the synagogue and influencing the larger community.

Revival Draws People

The notes connect Paul's ministry here with his later statement:

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The expectation is that apostolic proclamation is accompanied by the activity and power of the Holy Spirit.

Jealousy Produces Opposition

Some Jewish opponents become jealous when they see the crowds.

Importantly, **not all Jewish people rejected Jesus**. Acts itself records many Jewish believers, including priests who became obedient to the faith.

The conflict centered on competing understandings of Messiah, covenant, Temple, and sacrifice.

Talking Point: Genuine moves of God can produce both hunger and resistance. Opposition does not necessarily mean God is absent; sometimes resistance increases precisely because the gospel is advancing.

Acts 13:46–47 — A Light to the Nations

Paul and Barnabas respond boldly and quote **Isaiah 49:6**.

The prophetic promise concerns God's salvation reaching beyond Israel to the nations.

Jesus is the Light through whom God's salvation extends to the ends of the earth.

This represents a major development in Acts. What Jesus commanded in Acts 1:8 is becoming increasingly visible:

Jerusalem → Judea → Samaria → the ends of the earth.

God's heart is reconciliation, and His grace is being extended to all peoples.

Talking Point: God's mission has always been larger than one people, culture, or nation. Through Jesus Christ, His saving grace is offered to the world.

Acts 13:48 — The Gentiles Rejoice

The Gentiles respond with tremendous joy.

Those who had previously remained at a distance now hear that through Jesus they can personally know God and participate fully in His covenant community.

TASSŌ — Appointed

The notes highlight the Greek word **tassō**, meaning to arrange, assign, place, or appoint.

Within the theological framework of these notes, the verse is not interpreted as God arbitrarily choosing some people for salvation and others for destruction. Instead, human beings genuinely encounter the opportunity to receive or reject Jesus, while God knows the human heart.

Talking Point: The gospel brings people near. Through Jesus, people who were once outsiders are welcomed into personal relationship with God.

Acts 13:49–50 — The Gospel Spreads Throughout the Region

The Word of the Lord does not remain confined to Pisidian Antioch.

It spreads throughout the entire region.

This gives us an important expectation concerning revival: the gospel can transform more than individuals; it can penetrate communities and regions.

Revival and Resistance Increase Together

As the Word spreads, opposition also intensifies.

Influential people are stirred against Paul and Barnabas, and the apostles are eventually expelled from the region.

Yet persecution cannot undo what God has already accomplished.

Talking Point: We should believe for more than isolated conversions. The gospel has the capacity to penetrate cities, communities, and entire regions.

Acts 13:51 — Shake Off the Dust

Paul and Barnabas respond exactly as Jesus had taught His disciples.

They **shake the dust from their feet** and move forward.

They refuse to allow rejection in one location to prevent obedience in the next.

Their actions also demonstrate that Jesus' teachings were already shaping the ministry practices of the Early Church.

Talking Point: Mature ministry knows when to persevere and when to move forward. Rejection should not become an anchor preventing us from entering the next assignment God has prepared.

Acts 13:52 — Filled With Joy and the Holy Spirit

Acts 13 ends on a remarkable note.

Paul and Barnabas have been expelled, persecution has intensified, and yet the disciples are:

“filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

The word translated **filled** communicates being filled abundantly or to fullness.

Their joy was not dependent upon favorable circumstances. It flowed from the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This becomes the final picture of the chapter: **opposition outside the Church but joy and the presence of God inside the Church.**

Talking Point: Spirit-filled Christianity should produce communities marked by God's presence, joy, safety, hope, and life. Our churches should become some of the most joyful and presence-filled places in our cities.

Major Themes of Acts 13:32–52

- **God keeps His promises.** Jesus is the fulfillment of God's Messianic promise.
- **The resurrection validates Jesus as Messiah.**
- **Forgiveness is central to the apostolic gospel.**
- **Everyone who believes can be justified through Jesus Christ.**
- **The cross brings forgiveness and reconciliation.**
- **The gospel is the message of God's grace.**
- **Revival produces both hunger and opposition.**
- **God's salvation extends to all nations.**
- **The gospel can transform entire regions.**

- **Rejection cannot stop God's mission.**
- **Spirit-filled believers can live in supernatural joy even during opposition.**

Discussion Questions

1. God's Promises: Paul presents Jesus as the fulfillment of what God had promised. Where are you currently learning to trust God's faithfulness even though you have not yet seen the complete fulfillment of His promises?

2. Grace and the Gospel: Paul centers his message on forgiveness, justification, grace, the cross, and resurrection. How can we communicate these truths in a way that helps people understand the gospel primarily as God's invitation into forgiveness and reconciliation?

3. Revival and Opposition: Acts 13 ends with both increasing persecution and disciples filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. How can we cultivate a Spirit-filled life and church culture whose joy and confidence are not controlled by opposition or circumstances?