

Seize the Opportunity . . . To Spread the Word – Acts 13:13-52

So good to be back; Much to cover this morning – Open Bibles to Acts 13:13-52

Take time to read through the passage in its entirety; Comment; Go back & apply it

13 – *companions* – John-Mark (writer of Mark and close associate of Peter)

Barnabas (cousin of Mark); probably Luke (who wrote Acts)

13-14 – geography – **Map of NT world; Map of Paul's 1st missionary journey**

Antioch of Pisidia – Davenport in Iowa; Modern-day Turkey

15 – a free address by a competent Jew in attendance was common in the 1st cent

24 – *baptism of repentance* – a salvation based on repentance for the forgiveness sin, and shown by public immersion in the waters of baptism

26 – *the message of this salvation* – the good news embodied by Jesus

27 – those who crucified Jesus didn't get it; they didn't recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ; they didn't understand the Scriptures; so they condemned him to die, fulfilling the Scriptures

33-35 – cites Scriptural examples to say that Jesus fulfills all that was written of the Mess.

33 – case in point – he's the Son of God (Ps 2:7); meaning he's God in the flesh

34 – he's of David's line (23), whose throne/authority God promised he would establish forever (2 Sam 7:6-16)

34b – Applies Is 55:3, saying that Jesus has been given the blessings/privilege of David Which is the leadership of God's people, forever

35 – Jesus is the one whose body would never see decay/*corruption* (Ps 16:10)

38-39 – *the law of Moses* was a law of works – do certain things, offer certain sacrifices at certain times in a certain place, and you can be forgiven of your sins

But you couldn't be freed once for all time from the grip/consequences of sin

You had to go back year in and year out to offer sacrifices all over again

Paul is saying that belief in Jesus changes all that – not only can you be *forgiven* of your sins, but also released and freed from their penalty once and for all time

40 – now that you know the truth, be careful that you don't continue in disbelief; if you do, you'll perish (Hab 1:5)

43 – *in the grace of God* – continue to seek after and dwell on the truth of Jesus

44 – *almost whole city* – don't know pop; but preaching of God's word often draws crowd

45 – *reviling him* – insulting him, verbally abusing him

46 – if you're not going to accept our message, we'll talk to people who will

47 – I've given you this message of hope, to be a light in the midst of darkness for all

48 – they rejoiced because they were second class to that point

48b – *as many were appointed to eternal life believed* – in one phrase we see the sovereignty of God and the free will of man

Those who God chose to save, believed – Sovereignty of God – Free will of man

How those things work together for salvation, we aren't told – Bible just says they do

51 – *they shook off the dust* – a gesture of scorn and disassociation; *Iconium* – 80 mi East

52 – *filled with the HS* – they were led by the HS from within; with all the peace, love, and understanding that comes with his presence in your life

Our theme for this ministry year is Spread the Word – Acts 12:24

As the early believers told others about the word – the truth of Jesus and the salvation he offers – it increased and multiplied; told to more people, and embraced by more

This account in the life of Paul and Barnabas is a perfect example of seizing an opp to spread the word, that was seized

While their opp came in synagogue as they were traveling around Med in 1st cent . . .

Our opp is right here, right now, in our own church – 2 golden opp's in front of us

1st is Easter – time when many are *looking* for a place to go; 2nd is our building

Building is a golden opp to say – “look what God is doing”

Easter is a golden opp to say – “come and see”

Like Paul and Barnabas, we need to seize these opp's to Spread the Word

Begins with God's work in the past

Spread the Word – of God's work in the past (v16-37)

That's where Paul started (16-25)

He told them the amazing things God had already done among his people

Things he knew would grip their heart and get their attention – we should do the same

• Spread the Word of God's work in our church

Tell anyone who will listen, the things too amazing and too numerous to dismiss as coincidence/chance

Tell them how God has . . .

Grown a group of 20 compelled, committed, contagious people into a church of 700 compelled, committed, and contagious people

Paved the way, against all odds, for us to meet here in the HS

Saved so many people, and changed so many lives

Compelled almost 60 people to publicly proclaim their faith in waters of baptism

Given us the opp to buy an unbelievable building at an unbelievable location

Spread the Word of God's work in the past – in our church

• Spread the word of God's work in Christ (26-37)

It's not just about what God has done in our church; It's about what he's done in Christ

Spread the word that Jesus . . .

Fulfills all that the OT Scriptures say about the promised one of God

Is the Son of God – God in the flesh

He died in your place, rose again for your life

Seize the opp to Spread the Word of God's work in the past – in history, church, Christ

Spread the Word – of Christ's work in you (v38-41)

• Tell them of the *forgiveness* of sins he offered you (38)

Help them understand their need for forgiveness, because their sin separates them from

God (Is 59:2); and leads to eternal separation from him, in hell (Rom 6:23)

Then tell them of the forgiveness of sins you've experienced in Christ

No longer responsible to suffer the penalty for your sin, because Jesus already suffered it, in your place

Spread the Word of Christ's work in you through the forgiveness of sins he offers

• Tell them of the *belief* he requires in you (40-41)

Warning them against persistent unbelief; Of perishing if they don't believe

If you don't believe that Jesus died in your place for your sins

If you don't believe that his offer of forgiveness is real and *necessary*

If you don't believe when you're told – you'll perish; Not just die physically, but . . .

Mt 25:46 – *You will go away into eternal punishment*

After you die, you'll awake *to shame and everlasting contempt* (Dan 12:2)

Don't be caught in disbelief

Tell others of the forgiveness God offers, the belief he requires and . . .

- Tell them of the *freedom* he gives you (38-39)

38 – *by him, everyone who believes is freed*

Freed from the punishment and eternal consequences of sin

Things you can't be freed of through good works, *under the Law of Moses*

Sad part is, so many churches/religions teach that by doing good works you can be forgiven and freed; saved

This passage is clear in saying “no, that’s not so” – it’s belief in *Christ’s* work on your behalf that results in forgiveness, freedom, and salvation

If you haven’t believed and embraced his work for yourself – Seize the opp, right now

Get right with God by *believing* in Jesus – that he is God in the flesh, died in your place

Ask him to *forgive* you of your sins – God, forgive me, I’m a sinner

Live *free* from guilt and eternal punishment – free to do your will and live your way

Then, spread the word of Christ’s work in you

Spread the Word – at every opportunity (v13-16, 42-44)

With everyone you can; Sometimes opp’s just come our way

- But most often they come because you go to the people and get *involved* in their lives

That’s what Paul and Barnabas did (14b)

They went *to* the people; put themselves in the right place; waited for the right time

And the opp came in the form of an invitation (15)

16 – So P&B consulted together, weighing the risks and considering cost, and told them they’d pray about it/get back to them – Stop it!

16 – Paul seized the opp – stood up, and spent the next 31 verses spreading the word

Get involved in people’s lives and spread the word at every opp, with everyone you can

- And make sure you’re prepared for them (42-44)

You may have the opp to share the love of Christ with . . .

Hungry, desperate people (42) – the people *begged* them to hear the truth

Unlikely, religious people (43) – *many Jews and devout converts to Judaism*

Don’t assume that just because someone is devout in their *religion about* Christ, that they’re uninterested in a *relationship with* Christ

Surprising numbers of people (44) – *almost the whole city gathered* . . .

When you’re faithful to spread the Word to a few, get ready for the crowds

Because if there’s anything God blesses, it’s the faithful proclamation of his Word

I sent the newspaper article of our building to a friend – he wrote back . . .

“I’m not surprised; Get ready, get ready, get ready, get ready” – Eddie

I don’t know what God’s going to do with our church in this building, but we’re preparing

to Spread the Word with desperate people, unlikely people, surprising #’s of people

It doesn’t matter whether those numbers come slowly or quickly

Point is – we going to prepare to Spread the Word at every opp, with everyone we can

Spread the Word – despite opposition (v45-47)

- These verses give us insight into the reaction and response we can *expect* when we spread the word – Understand that . . .

Crowds often lead to *jealousy* (45)

“I want that; I deserve that; You’re taking away from *my* thing”

Boldness gives birth to lies or contradictions (45)

“You don’t really care about people; All you want is a big church”

Publicity produces insults (45) – *reviling him* (verbal abuse)

Smallest men usually cast the biggest stones of criticism – Spread the Word anyway
Understand that faithfully spreading the word breeds opposition

- When arrived here the fall of 2004, sent 95 letters to pastors of churches in QC’s
Who we were; Our intent was to *join* them in reaching the lost, building up believers
That we were in no way coming to replace/displace them
I offered to get together with them; Heard back from a handful; Had lunch with a few

Unfortunately, there was one who was very strong in his opposition

Though he didn’t contact me, I heard through the grapevine that he was very bitter, angry, and spewing lies about us . . . I called him to meet

He agreed, and I went to his office – he used that hour to throw more jabs and lies at me through innuendo, than I had ever experienced before in my life

But I took it as opposition to spreading the word

I drove out of there feeling very sorry for him

And committed to the Lord to stay the course, asking him to guard me from such calloused cynicism

That’s the example of Paul and Barnabas (46-47)

Despite the opposition, they spread the word anyway – they stayed the course

They spoke – Boldly (46); Truthfully (46); Obediently (47)

- If I stopped preaching every time someone said something unkind or untrue of me, I wouldn’t be worth much as your pastor; and God wouldn’t be honored
If you *stop* spreading the word when someone reacts adversely to you, you won’t honor the Lord either
Don’t allow opposition in the form of jealousy, insults, or lies deter you from Spreading the Word – Seize the opp to spread the word despite opposition

Spread the Word – with great expectation (v48-49, 52)

Sometimes we’re hesitant to speak up and spread the word because afraid of the response

We obsess on the discomfort of being rejected, and psyche ourselves out

But rejection isn’t always the case

- Just like you can expect opposition, you can also expect . . .
Great joy (48, 52) – that was the reaction of people hearing and receiving the Word
Great awe (48) – when people are impacted by the word, they glorify it
Speak of its power; Amazed at its affect; Gripped by it’s impact
I can hardly believe the impact of God’s word in the life of our church
I’m in awe of how he’s using it to change our lives
Salvation (48) – people were saved
Took me 6 months to stop being surprised that people were being saved here; and to start expecting that they would be saved, as we faithfully spread the word
Multiplication (49) – those led by the HS (52) spread the word to more and more people
The common refrain throughout Acts (49; 6:7; 12:24)

When the truth of who Christ is and what he’s done is proclaimed, heard, and received – it results in joy, awe, salvation, and multiplication

Spread the word with that expectation

Spread the Word – as long as you can (v50-51)

Close

- You have no idea how long your opp will remain to influence someone's life
You never know how long they will listen before either accepting your message, or rejecting it – it could be 5 minutes or 5 years
You never know when you'll be forced to move on (51), leaving them to their own devices and desires
You never know when they will incite their friends against you (50) – provoking and stirring them up to join them in their hatred and opposition
Happens to students all the time – keep on!
You never know how long you have to spread the word
- And you can be assured that there will always be people who wish we'd just go away as a church – they hate Jesus; And hate you and I for proclaiming him as Lord
Fortunately, because of the country we live in and the laws that govern it, they can't drive us out of the city like Paul and Barnabas
But they *can* drive us out of their lives and exclude us from their circles

When that happens, remember the words of Jesus . . .

Mt 5:10-12 – *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Summary

With Easter coming up, and our building in view –

Seize the opp to spread the word . . .

Of God's work in the past; Of Christ's work in you

At every opportunity with everyone you can; Despite opposition

With great expectation; For as long as you can