

Acts

Part 32 – “By Him Everyone Who Believes Is Freed”

Introduction

1. Acts—written by Luke to show the power and presence of Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the apostles through the spread of the gospel. This book has been known as “The Acts of the Apostles” but is better understood as “The Acts of the Risen and Reigning Jesus” (Pruitt).
2. Acts 13—Paul and Barnabas embarked on their first missionary journey with a few others and came to Pisidian Antioch (modern day Turkey). They went to the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath, and Paul was invited to preach.
3. Paul’s penetrating point—what will you do with the gospel, the good news that Jesus lived, died, and was raised for sinners? What will you do with this Jesus?

Paul’s Message (Acts 13:16-41)

1. Paul spoke of a promised Savior (v. 17-25).
 - a. Note who the subject is in v. 17-23. “God chose...made...led...He put up with them...He destroyed seven nations...He gave them their land...” God was the one working on behalf of His people.
 - b. God’s greatest promise was that of a Savior. “Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He promised” (v. 23). All of God’s work in choosing Israel, in delivering them out of Egypt, in bringing them to the Promised Land, in raising up leaders for them, etc. was to point His people to the Savior.
 - c. Even closer to home was the ministry of John the Baptist. His role was to point God’s people to Jesus. “I am not He” (v. 24). Jesus was the “He”!
2. Paul spoke of a risen Savior (v. 26-37).
 - a. There were many who missed this Savior. “Those who lived in Jerusalem and their rulers....Pilate,” they read of Him every Sabbath and yet they missed Him and put Him to death. In so doing, they “fulfilled” (v. 27) the Scriptures. This was all by God’s design.
 - b. “But God raised Him from the dead, 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” (v. 30, 31). This Jesus was not just an exemplary model of a moral man or an extraordinarily gifted teacher; He is the risen and reigning Savior.
 - c. Again, to be sure we do not miss Him, God had promised He would raise this Savior (Psalm 2:7; Isaiah. 55:3; Psalm. 16:10). The resurrection should not have taken anyone by surprise.

3. Paul spoke of a saving Savior (v. 36-38).

- a. "...through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you..." (v. 38). Through Jesus you can have forgiveness of sin. This is GOOD news!!
- b. "...by Him everyone who believes is freed..." (v. 39). Through Jesus you are set free from both the power and the penalty of your sin. The word "freed" is the same as that translated "justified". Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, you are made right with God, declared righteous in His sight. We could never get this through the law (v. 39b).
- c. "...beware..." (v. 40). Paul warned his hearers of rejecting this gospel. He used a verse from Habakkuk (1:5) where God warns His people of coming judgment through the Babylonians. Paul's point was, "failure to embrace what God is doing leads to judgment." (Bock)
- d. Application: what will you do with this risen Savior? Jesus stands as a fork in the road. He confronts us with a clear choice: either we strive for our righteousness through the works of the law (our doing) or we believe in His death and resurrection on our behalf for our righteousness. Will you embrace what God has done through Jesus the risen Savior?

The People's Response (Acts 13:42-52)

1. Many wanted to hear more about this Jesus (v. 42-44). They "begged" Paul and Barnabas to come back, and many followed them. On the following Sabbath, "almost the whole city" came to hear the Word of the Lord.
2. Not all received these apostles or their message (v. 45, 50). The Jews, filled with jealousy, opposed and persecuted Paul and Barnabas.
3. Many of the Gentiles believed (v. 48-49). "They began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord....And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region" (v. 48-49).

Conclusion

1. Note God's sovereignty in salvation: "...as many as were appointed to eternal life believed" (v. 48). God, in His sovereign mercy, appointed all who would believe. May this truth humble us, fill us with "rejoicing and glorifying," and move us to proclaim Him with great confidence.
2. Note the main instrument for this work of God was the Word of God (v. 44, 46, 48, and 49). It was not the charisma or cleverness of Paul and Barnabas that changed hearts. It was the Word of the Lord. Will you trust the power of the Word of God in your life and ministry?
3. Note that the Word of the Lord "continued to spread" (v. 49) despite the opposition (and probably because of it!). And, the disciples were "filled with joy and the holy Spirit" even in the face of this persecution. God's purposes cannot and will not be thwarted. Do you believe this? Will you be a "spreader" whatever the opposition?