

The Promise for All Men

Acts 13:13-52

*Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus; vast, unmeasured, boundless, free.
Rolling as a mighty ocean, in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me is the current of Your love
Leading onward, leading homeward, to Your glorious rest above.¹*

Have you ever considered the near sightedness of man as compared to the vast reach of God's great love? It would be as though we are focusing and amazed by a small puddle of water left by a short Spring rain shower, while God is drawing us to examine the greatness of all the oceans of the world.

But even if you were to gather together all the oceans of the world, they would never be able to be compared to the *vast, unmeasured, boundless, and free* love of God.

- After all, the oceans have boundaries, but the love of God has none.
- Although the depths of the ocean are deeper than the highest of the world's mountain peaks, the depth of our Father's love goes even deeper still.

God's desire is to reveal His truth to all men, everywhere. Yet man not only limits their own commitment to that love, but they try to limit the outreaching arms of God.

We continue today with the First Missionary Journey of the Apostle Paul, as he and Barnabus had been sent out by the Holy Spirit from the Church at Antioch of Syria. Having first landed on the island of Cyprus they now set sail from the harbor at Paphos north to the city of Perga on the southern coast of what we now call Turkey.

Acts 13

¹³ *Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.*

Lets just deal with this right here and then we'll move on. There's a lot of speculation in reference to John Mark leaving the Missionary Journey.

¹ "Oh the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus", Samuel Trevor Francis, ca. 1890 Public Domain

- Some have felt perhaps with the change of leadership moving from Barnabus to Paul brought about a change of loyalty – Barnabus was a relative (many believe to be a cousin), and perhaps he didn't like the fact that this Saul/Paul guy was now taking the lead in what had originally been designated as the responsibility of his relative.
- Perhaps the “romance of Missions work” had already worn off. There had already been some conflicts or distractions in the work through the attack of Bar-Jesus or Elymas.
- Still others look at the possibility that he was simply homesick. Missing his mother, the comforts of home, and the familiarity of his culture.

A.T. Robertson said that “*Mark ‘flickered in the crisis,’ but the light did not completely go out. This is an encouragement to all of us.*”²

Whatever the reason, Paul didn't seem to agree with his leaving them and so the coming conflict was now set in place... but more of that when we get to Acts 15. For right now, John Mark leaves Perga and sets sail back to Antioch of Syria, while Paul and company move further inland to Antioch of Pisidia.

Understand, there were many cities with the name Antioch in the First Century. But only two Antiochs are spoken of in the book of Acts: Antioch of Syria, where the center of Christianity grew after the fall of Jerusalem; and Antioch of Pisidia (in the region of ancient Galatia or modern day Turkey, where the missionary team is now headed).

¹⁴ But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

Antioch was a fairly major Roman city for the area and was located on what was known as the Roman Road and populated with Roman government officials, soldiers and the general citizenry made up of Gentiles from around the region and not a small number of Jews.³ And once again, as Paul's custom was he headed for the synagogue on the Sabbath Day.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 457.

³ W. M. Calder, https://bibleatlas.org/pisidian_antioch.htm

¹⁵ And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." ¹⁶ Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

According to rabbinic sources, it was the normal custom or liturgy of the Jewish synagogues to have a reading from the Law and then from the Prophets. It would then be the option of the synagogue elder to invite particular individuals to deliver the message or sermon for that day. The ruling elder then invited this traveler to share *any word of exhortation* with them.

Paul took it as an open opportunity to share the truth of the Gospel. He addressed those who were Jewish by birth, and those who were both Gentile proselytes to Judaism and non-proselyte Gentiles who were seeking the One, True God.

We don't know what the reading from the Law or the Prophets were that day, but Paul takes them back to the formation of the descendants of Abraham as a people, as a nation formed by and for God, Himself; he speaks of their release from Egyptian captivity and on through the time of King David.

*¹⁷ "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. ¹⁸ Now for a time of **about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.** ¹⁹ And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. ²⁰ After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.*

I love how he says, (God) **put up with their ways in the wilderness**... without calling them stiff-necked and rebellious. Throughout this first portion Paul remains as positive as he could concerning Israel and their reaction to the word of the Lord.

These Jews would have known that their forefathers were a stiff-necked and rebellious people, but Paul stuck to the positive by reminding both Jews and Gentiles alike that it was God who fought the battles for them and defeated seven different nations of the pagans of Canaan. Then through His mercy, God appointed and provided Judges for

450 years to direct the people and give them leadership in the new land, until He raised up Samuel as a Prophet.

²¹ "And afterward they asked for a king; so 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 for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

Serving as a Prophet for about 80 years, Samuel had warned them not to ask for a king, but the people did anyway. These Jews, who were educated in both the Torah and in the history of Israel would have full understanding that although Saul began as a humble man, pretty soon his pride and ego got in his way, bringing turmoil, spiritual decline, and destruction to the nation. I believe that's why Paul said, "**(God) removed him,**" it was truly God who removed Saul, not the Philistines. God used the Philistines, but God was the one who brought about his final destruction.

*"(God) removed him, then He raised up for them David as king. God set David up as the King of Israel. These Jews also knew that **David wasn't perfect in any way, shape, or form,** but He was a man who loved God. As a matter of fact, God, Himself says of David, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'*

David was and still is the favored son of Israel. They also knew that the Promised Messiah would come from the root of Jesse, from the lineage and house of David, so Paul draws that connection to the synagogue audience.

*²³ "From this man's seed (from David's line), **according to the promise,** God raised up for Israel **a Savior--Jesus**—²⁴ after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'*

“according to the promise...,” there are multitudes of Prophetic words concerning the Messiah coming from the seed, the family or the throne of David. Just a couple that this crowd would have been familiar with are found in Isaiah 11:1-2 and Jeremiah 23:5-6

Isaiah 11

¹ *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.* ² *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

Jeremiah 23

⁵ *"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.* ⁶ *In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Even John the Baptist's testimony and ministry would have been well known **as the first Prophet since the times of Malachi**. John had been well received and loved by the Jewish people at the time. Yet, John made it very clear that he wasn't the Messiah or Hope of Israel... there was One yet to come, *the sandals of whose feet (he was) not worthy to loose. According to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus.*

Paul brings the message home now... **this is what it is all about –**

²⁶ *Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.*

²⁷ *For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.* ²⁸ *And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.*

²⁹ *"Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.* ³⁰ *But God raised Him from the dead.* ³¹ *He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.*

Paul declares the guilt of the people of Jerusalem and in particular the rulers of the people who had **missed the Messiah totally**. They had missed and denied the

Promised One of Israel, because they had missed the *voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath* – a message they were familiar with, but still missed. **The Word of God was in their head, but not in their hearts.**

They had a head knowledge of the Scripture, but missed the fulfillment of it when it happened before their very eyes. They had Him crucified, *but God raised Him from the dead*, and His resurrection was verified through numerous witnesses who could attest to the reality of His resurrection.

God had promised all of this through the message of the Fathers and the Prophets and Paul wants them to understand the faithfulness of God in fulfilling those promises.

³² *"And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers.* ³³ *God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm (actually Psalm 2:7): 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'* ³⁴ *And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David (actually Isaiah 55:3).'*

³⁵ *"Therefore He also says in another Psalm (actually Psalm 16:10): 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'* ³⁶ *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;* ³⁷ *but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.*

Jesus Christ was and is the complete **fulfillment of the Prophetic Word**, spoken hundreds of years before He came to earth as a helpless babe. It was because of His great love and in fulfillment of His promises that God sent His Son to bring and make available the forgiveness of sin to *everyone who believes*. Paul declares—

³⁸ *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you, the forgiveness of sins;* ³⁹ *and by Him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.*

Greater than the Law, in that He, Himself fulfilled the requirements of the Law. Therefore the Law has no hold on those who come by faith to receive the completed work of Christ for the forgiveness of their sin.

The Law could never bring forgiveness, it simply showed how sinful we are. We look in the mirror of the Law and it shows that we are dirty, but it has no power to cleanse us. As a matter of fact, the more we look at the mirror of the Law, the more we recognize the greatness of our filth.

Paul wants them to understand that ***it is not the Law or the commands of man that make a man clean before the Lord God.*** But all too often, man himself still wants you to be under the bondage and judgment of man. So Paul speaks against those who would come against the message of Grace—

⁴⁰ "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: ⁴¹ "Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.""

Paul is declaring the offering of the Grace of God through the completed work, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some will receive it, while other will not.

Some will stick to religious ceremony, while others will find forgiveness through faith.

The synagogue time had now come to a close and the people were dismissed, and the response was varied.

*⁴² So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, **the Gentiles begged** that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ Now when the congregation had broken up, **many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas**, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.*

Many believed and many wanted to hear more, so Paul and Barnabus and those with them stayed in Antioch another week, until the next Sabbath day.

*⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath **almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.** ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with*

envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Jealousy and fear go hand in hand. There's no need to wonder, Luke lays it out pretty clear for us. If there had only been a few who were moved by the message of the Gospel, the Jews probably wouldn't have gotten so upset, but because God was moving powerfully, the Jews were **afraid of losing their power and sway over this multitude**. They were jealous for power and authority in people's lives and so they feared when it looked like they were losing it – even when it was the Holy Spirit of God who was doing the supernatural work among them.

But because these men couldn't battle in the supernatural, they struck out in the natural – *filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.*

*⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but **since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.**" ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles; that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"*

This is where we see that **continuing major shift from ministering to the Jews, to ministering to the Gentiles**. Paul doesn't abandon the Jews completely, as we will see in the following chapter. But we will also see in the following chapter (14) that the attack of the Jews against the Gospel and its messenger continues to intensify.

Since the Jews were determined to *reject* (the message of the Gospel, and by that rejection) *judge* (themselves) **unworthy of everlasting life**, (Paul and the team will now begin to focus more on) **the Gentiles**.

*⁴⁸ Now **when the Gentiles heard this**, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.*

I believe that it's **almost impossible for us to understand** what these words would have meant to the Gentiles. For those who were being drawn to God, it seemed as

though there was this **insurmountable barrier between them and a full relationship with God.**

They weren't born as Jews, therefore (in their minds), their relationship with God would always be as second class, incomplete, and not quiet on the level as those who had been born as Jews.

Yet now Paul comes in and says the message and the hope of the Gospel is for the Gentiles too. What a powerful revelation – God's love for them was equal to His love for the Jews, a perfect and complete love, "*vast, unmeasured, boundless, free*"; *now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.*

And Luke tells us: "*as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*"

Beloved, that is the blessing and richness of election. Paul speaks about it in many of his writings—

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴ ...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..., ⁵ having predestined us..., according to the good pleasure of His will,

Romans 8:29-30

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined..., ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

¹³ ...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel...,

And a multitude of others. But I see God's election not as limiting, but as opening the door. God elected to make His Gospel known to the Gentiles. He elected to do it through the Jews, but they messed up in their calling and even crucified the One who was the Hope of the Gospel, yet God elected to continue to bring His message to the Gentiles through the work of men like the Apostle Paul, not shutting them off because of their ignorance of the Law and the Scripture, but to make His way known to them through grace.

Luke makes it clear for us here in verse 48 that God's elective grace included the Gentiles.

But the Jews would have none of it.

For them, THEY were the ONLY elect of God, and not the Gentiles. They felt they were the ones who had the corner on the truth and Gentiles must come to them. But throughout Paul's ministry he continues to reveal that neither the Law nor Judaism can save. It is only by the work of Grace, through Faith.

He tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:3-5

1 Timothy 2:3-5

³ For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

It is this message that the Jews despised. In their pride and jealousy, they continually fight against the message of the Gospel and the hope of grace.

⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

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

They *were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit* because they had seen the Lord God work powerfully in people's lives, as men and women, even Gentile men and women were coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus! Love of ev'ry love the best:
'tis an ocean vast of blessing, 'tis a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus! 'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;
And it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to Thee.*

They knew persecution would come, but even persecution couldn't take away their joy or separate them from the love, the work, and the power of the *deep, deep love of Jesus!*

Do you know that love today in your life?