

The Good News of the Promise

Acts 13.26-39

December 3

Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians, inhabitants of the Roman province of Galatia. Pisidian Antioch was the beachhead of the gospel entering the region of Galatia, the central region of modern Turkey. The population of Pisidian Antioch was a heterogeneous mixture of Roman army veterans, culturally accommodated Jews, Gentile God-fearers, and pagans. In his last letter, Paul described the negative response the gospel encountered, “along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra” (2 Tim. 3.11).

The title of this lesson derives from Acts 13.32, “And we ourselves proclaim to you the good news of the promise” (Acts 13.32). What is the good news that Paul preached? Why did some respond to the message of good news by afflicting Paul with “persecutions and sufferings?”

First, the good news declares a message of a Crucified Messiah (Acts 13.26-29). Paul labeled this message a “word of salvation” (v. 26) that centered in the promised Savior Jesus (v. 23). The natural tendency of humans is to solve problems ourselves. Yet, the problem of our sin and consequent separation from God is not one humans can solve. In his sermon, Paul described God’s plan to set matters right through a plan God chose to work through one family – Abraham – to bring broken humanity back into a relationship with Him (Gen. 12.1-3). “All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12.3). God’s plan narrowed to the family of David, and then one descendent of David, namely the Savior Jesus (Acts 13.23). Jewish leaders fulfilled “the sayings of the prophets” (Acts 13.27) of the death of the Savior Jesus upon a tree (v. 29). The Bible states that “anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse (Deut. 21.23). Jesus experienced the curse of God as “He himself bore our sins on the tree” (Gal. 3.13; 1 Pet. 2.29) as He died as our substitute.

Second, the good news declares a message of a Resurrected Messiah (Acts 13.30-37). Paul highlighted the witnesses to God’s act of raising up Jesus. First, Paul emphasized the eyewitness testimony of individuals that followed Jesus from the beginning of His ministry in Jerusalem in Galilee to the place of His death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Second, Paul set forth the witness of three Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by means of Jesus’ resurrection. of the resurrection of Jesus as a fulfillment of two OT prophecies. Jesus’ resurrection fulfilled Ps. 2.7, “You are My Son” – a psalm pointing to the enthronement of Jesus as King because of the resurrection. Further, Paul quoted Isaiah 55.3 (Isaiah 55.1-3 is nicknamed the “Great Invitation”) of the resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of a covenant to David. Moreover, Paul cited the Davidic Psalm Ps. 16.10 about His servant not experiencing decay. Because

Third, the good news proclaims a message of salvation that demands a response (Acts 13.38-39).

“Therefore” indicates that Paul reached the conclusion of his sermon. Paul detailed two aspects of salvation available for people through the crucifixion and death of Jesus: forgiveness and justification.” The Greek term translated “forgiveness” literally meant, “to send away.” Because of the death of Jesus, the substitute that bore our sins on the cross, our sins are “released, pardoned, and our guilt sent away.” “Justification” describes God’s act of judicially vindicating people by acquitting individuals of a guilty verdict for sin on the basis of Jesus’ death as our substitute. We are “justified freely through His grace” (Rom. 3.24). Yet, the manner in which people receive God’s gifts of forgiveness of sin and justification is through faith – “everyone who believes” - rather than works.

In Acts 13.40, Paul concluded his sermon with a warning about the danger of rejection of the good news, “So beware....”