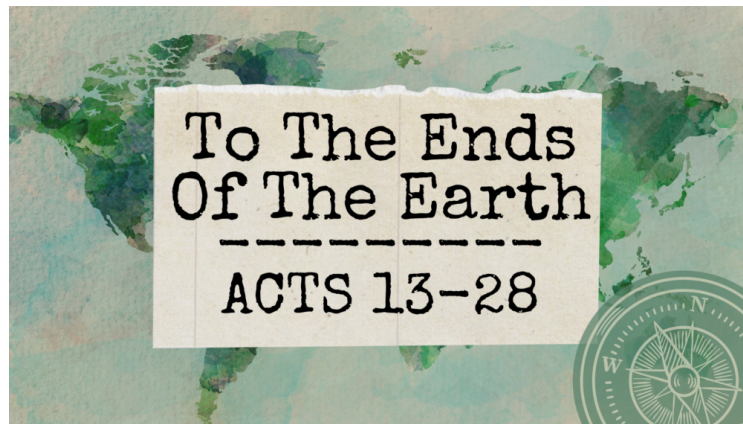


# The Gospel Message Comes With a Warning!



## Acts 13:40-52

I don't know about you, but when Kory is preaching I have my Bible open and my sermon notepad and pen out, and I feverishly take as many notes as I can so that I can digest what he has said throughout the rest of the week. I want to share the last thing I wrote last Sunday. I didn't write it while Kory was preaching, but I wrote it while he was praying because I found it odd that Kory stopped at Act 13:39. So, because I knew I would be preaching this week, I made this note: **Acts 13:40—start to sermon at HBC—beware.** I know you realize that Kory spent the majority of the sermon last week talking about the sermon of Paul on the first missionary trip and told us how much he loved mission trips, yet, he didn't finish. He lacked two verses finishing the sermon. He stopped, and now I have to begin my sermon by finishing the sermon Kory didn't finish last week, and the first word begins with the word, "beware." That is a word of warning.

Now, you and I are familiar with some products around the house or farm that the manufacturer, because of government regulations, believes could be hazardous if we come in contact with them so it comes with a warning label. The product is designed so that you have to read the warnings first. They want you to read it first, they want you to know before you use the product that it could be dangerous and there could be a consequence if you react wrongly to the product you come in contact with. Paul didn't warn the Jewish people in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia about how hazardous this message could be to their spiritual health until after he preached his message. He doesn't begin with a warning and say, *now listen up!* He waited until the end, and that is how we have to start the message today, looking at the warning that Paul ended his message with. This passage is skillfully woven together by Luke under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. I think there are some key things in here that we have to pay attention to. We are going to read the entire passage this morning, and I want you to pay close attention as we close out the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts.

## **Scripture**

***"Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:***

***"Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you."*** [Habakkuk 1:5]

***As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.***

***The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to***

***you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,***

***"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*** [Isaiah 49:6]

***And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."***

### **Paul's Message Ends in Warning**

If you were reared in a church tradition like mine, you know that many times at the end of a sermon, the worship leader comes back up, counselors or a pastor will stand before the church, an invitation will be given, and people will be invited to believe the message that was preached. Do you find it odd that on this first missionary journey by the church outside the area of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (to the ends of the earth, so to speak), that instead of the Apostle Paul inviting people to believe, he warns them that they are in danger of fulfilling what the prophets spoke about...how God is doing a work among them? Yet, they do not believe even though someone is telling them what God is doing. He ends with a warning.

- **The Prophets Spoke of Disbelief in the Work of God**

If you go back and read Habakkuk 1:5, you will notice it reads a little differently than what Paul quotes. The reason for this is because as Alexander the Great conquered the world, Greek culture spread worldwide and he wanted to have a copy of every book in his famous library at

Alexandria. So he commissions seventy scholars to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, so Paul doesn't quote from the Hebrew Old Testament, he quotes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Paul's quote is worded just a little bit differently, but the main message is the same. Habakkuk opens up with a complaint about God, and here is his complaint: *How in the world can you look at what's going on and not do anything about what's happening?* Have you ever said that to God, if maybe a little nicer? You questioned why God was allowing what happened to happen if He is a holy and just God. God answer Habakkuk back, *I'm not allowing what's happening to happen; I'm actually causing everything that's happening to happen.* What was Habakkuk referring to? He was referring to an army that had just invaded the land and was wracking havoc on the countryside. Habakkuk couldn't understand how God would let a foreign army come into the country. So God tells Habakkuk that He is doing a work with this army in their midst, and they would not believe it even if He tells them He is doing it. It absolutely blew their minds that a holy God would bring a pagan army into the holy land of Israel and use that army with all of their pagan practices to judge God's people.

Do you see what Paul is doing? Kory told us last week that the work of God is done by the Word of God. And in Paul's sermon, he told us that Paul talked about the greatness of God, and then he reviewed what God had done in Israel. Then, he talked about the good news of God, how Jesus fulfilled the role as the Messiah, that Jesus came to die, not on a cross but a tree so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could be brought into a right relationship with God; and we could not only be forgiven of sin, we could be freed from the power of sin, which is something that the Law of Moses could never do. So in this synagogue, as Paul finishes his sermon and just talked about the greatness of God, the good news of God (the gospel), he warns them that God is doing a work among them. How is God doing a work among them? He is doing a work with the word that Paul has just preached. He warns them that they may not believe what God is doing, even though he is telling them what He is doing. This should scare us to death. It is possible this morning that God's work is being done in our

assembly, and many of us will not believe it even though we're being told what God is doing. He doesn't invite them to believe, he doesn't give an invitation; he just warns them.

Please hear this. The good news of God comes with a warning. The warning is that you have the free choice to not believe the work that God is doing. You've been warned. You may not believe. You may not ever come to that place where you trust in, commit to, and rely upon nothing else but Jesus Christ to bring you into a right relationship with God, and to free you from the power of sin. Can you imagine a sermon ending right now with that?

### **The Invitation to Return Next Sabbath**

The response by the people in the synagogue to Paul's warning was to beg Paul and Barnabas to come back the next Saturday and say all these things over again. Nobody went out saying *great sermon, Paul! You stepped on my toes today, Paul!* They are begging to hear more. They want to make sure that they're going to come back next Saturday and when the synagogue leader asks if anyone has a word, that Paul will take the floor and speak the Word of God! Then, when the service ended and Paul and Barnabas started leaving, a group follows them and continues to ask questions of them. Paul and Barnabas know a week will pass, but they know this group has been given the Word, so they encourage them to continue in the grace of God. Paul viewed that just them coming under the preached Word was a special enabling, a special gift, a special grace, from God. He is basically telling them to continue to think about what they are hearing.

I think Luke means to do this intentionally in my opinion, but did you notice when this missionary trip started that it was Barnabas and Saul who were sent and now Saul is no longer being called Saul? He is being called by his Gentile name, Paul. The Bible doesn't talk about Barnabas and Paul now; it talks about Paul and Barnabas. There is a switch in order. We are transitioning now. Kory reminded us last week that Peter has been the primary person in speaking God's Word. We've been analyzing his sermons, and now the emphasis shifts to Paul, but I want to make sure

you don't overlook this. Imagine going on your first missionary trip and you took Saul with you. You are the one who literally saved his life when the church wanted to kill him. Barnabas came alongside and vouched for him and took him in. The name Barnabas means 'son of encouragement.' He is an encouraging Saul, and now his understudy, so to speak, the one whom he's been encouraging is no longer number two; he's number one. Is that your spirit? Wouldn't it be awesome if God let us come into somebody's life and we would be such an encouragement to them that, literally, the day came when we took the second chair while they have the first chair? It's kind of how John the Baptist was when Jesus came along. He said "I must decrease" and "He must increase."

- **Most of the City Gathered**

You see this, right? A week passes and the Bible says, "The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord." I don't know about you, but if I'm correct, if almost the whole city showed up to the synagogue service the next week, that means they couldn't get them all in the building. How in the world in just a week's time have we gone to a normal synagogue service to almost the whole city wanting to know what's said so we have to move the service from inside to outside? I think Luke is giving us the key. Everybody inside that synagogue heard the Word of the Lord and they were so hungry that they begged for Paul and Barnabas to come back on this Saturday. People even followed them back to where they were staying to hear more! I believe the synagogue people who broke huddle that last service talked about what would happen the next Saturday when Paul and Barnabas would speak again. So word had spread and now almost everybody in the city is there.

I just have to tell you, the pastor in me is tickled to death! Can you imagine what it would be like to preach to a group of people who begged you to come back the next week? Some of them can't even wait until the next week, they have to text you, or call you, or send an email because they were so hungry for God's Word! Pastors love that! Missionaries love that! Can you imagine me standing in this pulpit and almost the whole community being here, and we couldn't just have three services, we had to move out on the parking lot? Are you seeing this? This is blowing my mind,

and I hope it's blowing yours! I'm ready; revival is ready to break out, glory hallelujah! The band is getting ready to start and we are getting ready to enter worship!

## **The Jews Jealousy**

Then the Bible says, "But when the Jews saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy..." They're distracted now. See, Luke has told us that it was many Jews and proselytes, Gentiles who had converted to Judaism, who were following. Now, when the next Saturday arrives and the Jewish people look around and their synagogue can't hold everybody so they are outside, they are filled with jealousy. The word here literally means 'envy.' Have you ever been jealous? Have you ever been envious? Have you ever been on the other end of jealousy and envy? It starts out with somebody wanting what you've got, knowing they don't have it, knowing they probably can't get it, and because they can't get it, they don't want you to have it. Then war breaks out. That jealousy, that envy, starts oozing out of their mouths. That is what look is describing. I don't think we have to use our imagination much to understand that what is happening here. The Jews are suddenly realizing they have been there their whole lives and hadn't had very many people come, just converted a few Gentiles, and now the whole town shows up just because these two guys show up. They're not desiring to hear the Word of the Lord; they're wanting to protect what's theirs, so they begin to contradict what Paul is speaking.

This word, contradict, in the Greek is *antilego*, meaning 'to speak against. They are not just listening now, not just asking questions, they are not actively contradicting, opposing, what Paul has been teaching about how Jesus is the Messiah. How if you believe in Jesus you can have all of your sins forgiven, be brought into a right relationship with God, and everything the Law of Moses couldn't free you from you are free from all of it. The power of sin is broken in your life. You can become a new creation of God. The old passes away and it all becomes new. This is what is being contradicted. What always happens when someone is jealous of someone is they don't just speak against what they believe in or what they are saying; you eventually have to attack them. That is what happens here. They revile him. That means they speak evil of; they blaspheme him. I

didn't see this coming, did you? For every person who comes under the hearing of the gospel and chooses not to believe, this is what could happen. You find yourself not only not believing, you find yourself standing in opposition to the work of God. Since the work of God is done by the Word of God, what you find yourself in opposition to is the very word of God. You are surely wise enough to open up your eyes and see that what's happening in our country today is an attack on God's Word. It's ultimately because people do not want to believe in the work of God, and if it's the Word of God that's doing the work of God, you attack the Word of God.

- **Paul and Barnabas Address the Issue**

Paul and Barnabas now speak boldly. They say, "It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken first to you." Paul believed this. Every town Paul went into, he believed he must first take the gospel to the Jews. Why did he believe this? He wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile]."

It's obvious when you read the life of Christ that Jesus was a Jew, and He came to bring salvation to the Jewish people. He came to die on a cross for their sins so that they could be brought into a right relationship with Him, and He knew that every animal sacrifice made in the Old Testament could never do away with sin. That was just a type, a shadow, of His death when He would die on a cross as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin, once and for all, of the Jewish people. Jesus also knew He wasn't coming just to die for the Jewish people; He was coming to die for Gentiles as well. He knew God's plan was ultimately to take Jews and Gentiles, together, to break down that middle wall of partition to create a new race of people, and that new race of people is the Church.

So everywhere Paul went, he went into the synagogue. Even after what he says at Antioch in Pisidia, when he goes to the next town he will go into the synagogue and he will tell the Jews about Jesus, and then he will tell the Gentiles about Jesus, even though he's been called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. I want you to hear this...the gospel is not just for Gentiles; it's for Jews. Don't dare believe God is not saving Jews today. Don't dare buy



into that teaching that somehow God has stopped the clock and Israelites will not be saved now; that Gentiles will be saved now, and sometime in the future He will take the Church off the earth and go back for seven years and save Jewish people then. No, God is saving Jewish people right now. The gospel is for Jewish people, but not just for Jewish people, it is for Gentile people too. That is what Paul is saying here, *it was necessary that I speak the Word of God to you first!*

Then look what Paul says next, "Since you thrust it aside..." what are they thrusting aside? They are thrusting aside the Word of God that does the work of God. He said they threw it away, cast it away, "and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life..." Did you hear that? When a sinner rejects the Word of God, they are judging themselves unworthy of having a relationship with God. Eternal life was not used by the New Testament writers to just speak about what happens when you die and live with God forever; it was a life that started the moment you believed. It brought you the very life of God. It wasn't just about quantity; it was about quality of life, becoming a child of God and entering a personal relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. He is telling these Jewish people that they judge themselves unworthy of having a relationship with God. If we could just get this picture that when people reject the Word, when people do not want to believe, we aren't passing judgment on them, they're judging themselves unworthy of having a relationship with God.

This had to break Paul's heart! How do I know? I have read the book of Romans! Chapter 9 opens up with Paul pleading...*I would be cursed from Christ for the sake of my kinfolk according to the flesh, the Jewish people!* It so broke his heart that he was willing to be separated from Christ, eternally, if they would just come to know Christ! Do any of you have that kind of passion for people, that you would swap places with them? That is what Paul writes to the church at Rome.

### **Paul and Barnabas Turn to the Gentiles**

But look what he says next to these Jews in Acts, "...behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." He is saying because of your choice, even though you've heard about the work of God, heard about what God can do in your lives,

because you're not going to believe, and because you judge yourselves, we are going to turn to the Gentiles.

Then Paul quotes the Old Testament, Isaiah 49:6. If we read our Old Testament in context, before we get to the New Testament we come to understand that the reason God chose Israel was so they would be a light to the nations around them. God didn't save Israel just to save Israel. God saved Israel to save others. By the way, God didn't just save you to save you. He saved you to save others. That is why we are witnesses.

Get this picture. Paul takes a verse that is talking about the nation of Israel, but he knows the nation of Israel is rejecting Jesus; they aren't being that light, so he now says this is talking about me. This is talking about me and Barnabas. This is talking about us, the Church. God has commanded us to be light to Gentiles. Why? It is because God wants to save all the earth, not just the Jewish nation; God wants salvation to be in Gentile nations. So Paul says, "...we are turning..." we are turning from you now because you choose not to believe, and now we are turning to the Gentiles.

- **The Gentiles Rejoice**

Look at this next verse, "And when the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." Those Gentiles who had ever heard a Jew teach before knew that they taught if you wanted to be right with God you had to be like them. You had to become a Jew. They had all these external things a Gentile had to do to become a Jew. Now, those Gentiles hear Paul tell the Jews that they were turning from them because God ordained them to be a light to the Gentiles! Many of these Gentiles had heard what Paul had preached the week before. That by faith in Jesus dying on a tree, being buried, rising again, being seated at the Father's right hand throne, they could be brought into a right relationship with Him, through faith only; and that their life would be radically changed so that they are set free from all those sinful tendencies, enslavements, and they could become a brand new person. When they heard this, (that the gospel

was for them too), they began to rejoice, "...and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed."

Then verse 49 says the Word of God spread throughout the whole region. In that sermon the Saturday before, word spread to the whole town and almost the whole town came. Now, after this Saturday's sermon, the word spreads to the whole region! Why? It is because there was a group there who weren't filled with jealousy; they were filled with rejoicing. They glorified. They didn't contradict; they glorified the Word of the Lord. They praised it, they celebrated it; they honored it, and the Greek New Testament says they "believed." Those first two actions describe a state in which they are continually, at the present time, rejoicing and glorifying, but the third thing Luke tells us is they believed. They didn't continue believing; they believed. They come to that place where they made a definite commitment to rest everything on the work of God, that Jesus Christ died in their place on a tree, which was a Roman cross, so that their penalty could be paid and they could be brought into a right relationship with God. They believed! We've just seen a group of Jews who don't believe and they thrust the good news away. They bring judgment on themselves. Now, we see another group and the crowd didn't bother them; they were the crowd. When they heard, they began to rejoice and they were glorifying.

### **Appointed to Eternal Life**

Do you know where it ended? It ended in belief, but Luke added this phrase in, "as many as were appointed to eternal life." Let me read that together from the Bible, "...and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." For my benefit and your benefit, I looked this up in the Greek New Testament and the word order is different in our Bible. Sometimes when the Bible is translated from Greek to English, they change the word order for English speaking people. As I'm trying to learn Portuguese, I see that it has a different word order than I have in English. I have to change my English to their word order when I speak Portuguese. Here is what Luke said in the Greek. They rejoiced, they glorified, and believed. They did three things. Then, Luke says as many as were appointed (ordained) to eternal life. What is he doing? Don't miss this...this ought to be glorious to

your ears. Luke is telling us that there is a reason why the Gentiles believed. It wasn't based on something within them; it was based on something that was already true. What was that? They had an appointment to eternal life. Luke is trying to say that belief doesn't cause you to be appointed to eternal life; the appointment to eternal life is what causes you to believe.

Why does Luke tell us this? First of all, it is because it is true, it is biblical. But primarily, it is because Luke does not want the Church looking at people who do not believe the gospel and somehow think there is something in ourselves that caused us to be different from them so that we take credit for believing in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He wants us to know that there was a prior appointment that had already been made for you and for me. That appointment was to eternal life, to a relationship with God, and that appointment caused us to do what we did in believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Therefore, we don't take credit for it; we give credit to the free will of God in our salvation. Scripture is going to teach that if you don't believe it is because of your free choice. You don't have to believe, but if you do believe, the reason you believe is because before you chose Him, He had already chosen you. That is why we preach the Word. That's why Acts chapter 13 is teaching that the work of God is done by the Word of God. The Word of God does the work of God, and the work of God is Him bringing people into a right relationship with Himself through belief in His Son Jesus Christ. What accomplishes that work is the preached Word of God, the proclaimed Word of God.

There is something powerful when a sinner sits under the preached Word of God. God effectually, in the preached Word, calls those whom He has given to Jesus, to Jesus. This excites me. It excites me because when we preach the gospel, we are releasing the power of God, we are releasing the dynamite of God; an explosion is taking place! Paul said in Romans, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined... And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." If you look at that unbreakable chain, what

determines justification in a sinner's life is the call of God, and that call of God comes from the preached Word of God.

In John 6, there was a group of people who weren't believing in Jesus, wouldn't come to Him, wouldn't taste, wouldn't drink. And Jesus said, *If you'll just taste you'll never hunger again! If you'll just drink, you'll never thirst again!* Then He said in verse 37, "All that the Father has given to me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Jesus will never cast out a person who comes to Him in belief. This is why all things work together for good. There is nothing that will happen in our lives that will cause us to be separated from God. But they still didn't believe and started grumbling and talking about Jesus. Finally, He turned and said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." At the end of that chapter when Jesus speaks some difficult words and all but a few of the whole group turns away, He watched them walk away and said, *Didn't I tell you unless my Father draws, they won't come? Unless you've been given to me by the Father, you won't come.*

Do you understand? God set His covenant love upon you before the foundation of the world! With you on His mind, He put His Son on that cross so that we could be brought into a right relationship with Him. God took the Word of God and through an effectual call of God, He brought us to Himself so that we would be part of a group of people who literally spread the Word through the whole world! It starts in *our* Jerusalem, here in Hardin, and it goes to Calloway County and Marshall County and the surrounding areas! We don't forget about the state and the United States as we try to go to the ends of the world because we believe the Word of God does the work of God!

### **Paul and Barnabas were Driven Out**

Acts 13 closes with the attention back on the Jews. Do you know what the Jews had the audacity to do? They went to some high ranking women in the community. You know the ladies we are talking about, those ladies that everybody dreams about their lives being like. They are in high places. They're on Facebook. They've got that world we all want. There is not a man in here who does not understand what it means to have the fury of a

group of ladies like that turned on them. Sorry ladies, but we know what it means to say, "If Momma ain't happy, nobody's happy." You ladies better be careful...you can go back to the book of Genesis that within every unredeemed lady in her unredeemed flesh there is that desire to rule, desire to have authority. So these Jews incite these ladies and then they get the leading men and stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and they drive them out of their district. Can you imagine this? Bar-Jesus, a Jew, tries to prevent Sergius Paulus, a Gentile governor, from hearing the Word, and now the unbelieving Jews drive Paul and Barnabas out of the district, and they did that against them.

You need to remember that for a Jew to be ceremonially clean before God, they had to make sure they didn't come into contact with even the dust where a Gentile had sat or walked. So the Jews were always shaking the dust of Gentile dirt off of themselves. Now, we have two Jews who are Christians, Paul and Barnabas, looking at the Jews who are driving them out of the district, and they are not even going to take their dust with them to the next town.

### **Let It Go!**

Please hear me...let it go! Let it go! Whatever someone has done against you, please let it go! Shake the dust off your feet and continue doing what God wants you to do, and that is to spread the Word of God. Paul and Barnabas left, and the disciples in Antioch were filled, not with jealousy, not with remorse, but with joy and the Holy Spirit. Luke wants us to know that when you looked at their lives, it was easy to see what they were full of. Can we close with this thought? It's really easy for the world to see what you're full of. The question is what are we full of? Is it joy? Is it the presence of God's Holy Spirit in our lives? Let's be joyful, Spirit filled witnesses about the work of God as we share the Word of God.