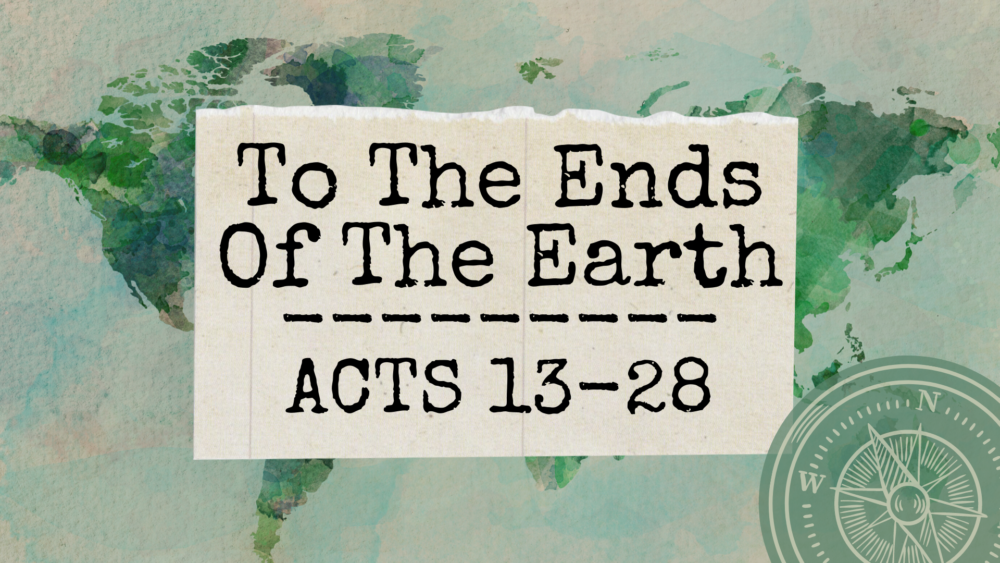
**The First Mission Trip**



**Acts 13:2–41**

I love mission trips. There are some mission trips I just love, and if you’ve been on one, you know why I love them because you probably love them too. Mission trips start with a dream, which leads to a team, then leads to a plan, to a ticket, and then you travel with a suitcase and a backpack. You eventually show up to a place where you have been praying for these people, specifically, and you know exactly what you are there to do. Probably my favorite thing about mission trips is just the clarity. You know why you are there, you know what is going to happen Monday morning; you are going to go and share the gospel. That is the agenda, and that is why I love mission trips. For several days, you are there to share the gospel with that group of people. It brings so much clarity.

Sometimes, what is not so clear is what the church’s role in missions is. We have mission organizations and parachurch ministries that do missions, but exactly what is the local church’s role and responsibility when it comes to missions? I know that we have people in the church who leave to go on mission trips and come back, and we also send missionaries out. But what is the role of the church when it comes to missions? We will see in chapters 13 and 14 that when it comes to missions, missions belong to the church for the church. Yes, organizations and other entities can do missions and you can go with organizations to do missions, but God gave the local church the responsibility to take the gospel to the nations. The local church owns missions, but what is neat is that missions actually helps create more local churches. We have this idea that missions belong to the church, but it is also for the church.

**Paul’s First Missionary Journey from Antioch, Syria**

We are going to see Paul’s first missionary journey, the first mission trip the church took. The church in Antioch is going to get prompted by the Holy Spirit to go on a mission trip, and they are going to send Paul and Barnabas on this mission trip. We are going to see what you do on a mission trip, what the purpose is, and how the church fits into all that because we want to be a church that does missions like the New Testament tells us to do. We want to be a church that is for missions, and also produces more churches that are then about missions. Throughout the next couple of lessons, we are going to see that the church owns missions and it is also for church. In Acts chapter 13, we are going to hear this sermon Paul is going to preach, and what we will hopefully see throughout all of the work they start to do, is that the work of God is accomplished by the Word of God. That is the big idea. It is the Word of God that does the work of God. When we think about missions, whether you go on missions, pray for missions, or give toward missions, we have to keep that front and center. We will see Paul and Barnabas taking the Word of God, and it is the Word of God that does the work of God. During part of his preaching that Word to these people, we are going to encounter the heart of his message.

Let’s read verses 38-39 of chapter 13, our two key verses, and then walk through this passage of Scripture.

**Scripture**

***“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man*** [Jesus Christ] ***forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.”***

I want us to just do the bookends of chapters 13 and 14 to get the overall view of where we are going. Today, we are really going to settle on that it is the Word of God that does the work of God. We will start this missionary journey, and in the weeks to come, we will complete this missionary journey. Let’s begin in chapter 13:2 at what the Holy Spirit is saying about the people, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” We have that little phrase, ‘for the work.’

There is a local church in Antioch, sort of like Hardin Baptist. There are believers who have congregated. They worship together, pray together, give together, and they are growing together. Now the Holy Spirit says *hey, I've got two guys in the congregation that need to be ejected. They need to be sent out because I have a work for them.* The Holy Spirit sets these two apart for the work. So, what exactly is the work? It says they are set apart for the work, what is the work? It is a short term mission trip that they will go on and then come back from. How do we know that? If you turn to the end of chapter 14, we will bookend with verse 26, “and from there they sailed to Antioch, [they are back to their church] where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.” There is that phrase again. The big picture in chapters 13 and 14 is that Paul and Barnabas are sent by a local church to carry the gospel to places that it’s not. They will get a ticket, board ships, cover some ground in probably a two year journey, and they will proclaim the gospel to various places. We are going to see that they don’t just proclaim the gospel, they don’t just have converts, but they actually start congregations. These converts actually plant churches, set up pastors, and they strengthen the believers so that when they come back, there are not just more Christians there are actually more churches.

That is the work to which God has called each local church to be involved in. The missions belong to the church, but it’s also for the church. The work they had was to proclaim the gospel, and then those who got the gospel were to connect together in congregations. They were to become churches that would then become congregations who would send out people to carry the gospel to places it hadn’t been. We see this work of the short term mission trip that Paul and Barnabas take. We want to gain clues on how to do short term missions from what these guys do so that all of our missions would have an eye on producing local churches in other places, and that those places could worship God and send out more missionaries to the mission field. Evangelism and missions are ultimately connected to church planting.

So, on this first part of Paul’s missionary journey, what I want us to lean into is that it is truly the Word of God that does the work of God. They proclaimed the Word of God, they proclaimed the gospel, and through the gospel, God is going to do a mighty work. Let’s get our tickets, let’s get on a ship, let’s get our luggage packed, and let’s take a journey with Paul and Barnabas as they go to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. We see this transitional point in chapter 13. It’s been Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and now we will see in the rest of Acts the start of the process of the gospel getting to the ends of the earth.

**Encounter with Bar-Jesus at Cyprus**

The Word of God says in verse 6, “When they had gone through the whole island [the island of Cyprus] as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus.” Some of your bibles say sorcerer, but we get some information on this magician, or sorcerer. His name is Bar-Jesus. We get a lot of information about this guy they run into. If you’ve been on a mission trip, there is always some guy or girl that everybody comes home talking about. This is Paul’s person; he's probably going to tell the church all about this Bar-Jesus when he gets back. Bar-Jesus means the son of Jesus. Now, this isn’t the same name as the Messiah Jesus. Jesus, from the Old Testament, is that name Joshua, it’s that name Savior. Here is a guy, the son of savior, and he is a false prophet. Here is a guy who thinks he's somebody great, he's naming himself somebody great, ‘the son of salvation,’ but he's also a magician, a sorcerer. He's got a little bit of mixed up knowledge about the Old Testament because sorcerers and magicians are forbidden, but he practices it. He is a guy of great influence on this island, as we’re going to see. So here is Bar-Jesus who is actually tries to bar a guy from Jesus.

Then, verse 7 says, “He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the Word of God.” Proconsul is a Roman leader. He had a lot of influence on this island of Cyprus. He would have been kind of like the governor. He is the one in charge and making the rules, and Bar-Jesus is his buddy. You can imagine that these two guys have a lot of power and influence. But here are Saul and Barnabas who have come to their island and they have a reputation for talking about the Word of God. From every step of this mission trip, we will see the power that Barnabas and Saul bring is the Word of God. They don’t have anything else. They don’t have a magic trick, they're not sorcerers, or calling down some power that is unknown. They are proclaiming the Word of God and the governor of the island says *I've heard about these guys who keep talking about the Word of God. I want to hear them myself.* He wants to hear the message firsthand from them.

Verse 8 says, “But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” Bar-Jesus also has another name, Elymas, which is very common in biblical days. Everybody has multiple names, so it’s a little hard when reading the Scriptures, but we’re just going to call him Bar-Jesus. So the buddy (who is in charge of the city) of Bar-Jesus (the Jewish false prophet who is also a sorcerer/magician) wants to hear what Saul and Barnabas have to say. He wants to hear what the Word of God has to say, and Bar-Jesus doesn’t want him to hear it so he opposes this meeting. He is like *don’t meet with them. These guys are crazy! What you need are my magic tricks, my power, my sorcery. I can tell you what the Bible actually says.* Bar-Jesus is wanting to keep his friend away from Barnabas and Saul.

Saul, of course, is not happy with this and he has much to say. Verse 9 says, “But Saul, who was also called Paul…” Again, there are a lot of names for a person in the Bible, kind of like your mom calls you this, but your grandma calls you that. It’s another statement, but I don’t think it is just a statement of names. I think Luke is doing something intentional here. The reason we think Luke is doing something here is because from this point on Saul is going to be known as Paul. Saul was his Hebrew name, and Paul is his Greek name. Why does Luke now insert his Greek name and begin to call him that? It is because there is a transition happening in Acts. Acts 1-12 is the gospel going to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Acts 13-28 is the gospel going to the ends of the earth. Peter was our man, but now Paul is going to become the man. Paul will be front and center. He will be highlighted as that one who will take the gospel to the nations, so they go by his Greek name, the one that corresponds to the mission that he's been given, as we will see especially at the closing of this chapter.

Verse 9 continues into verse 10 (speaking of Bar-Jesus), “But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “You son of the devil...” There is a little irony here. You’ve got Bar-Jesus, son of salvation, and Paul is calling him the son of the devil. A play on words here, he is actually trying to show who this guy really is.

Verse 10 continues through verse 11, “…you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time. Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.” Paul just calls him out…*you're not son of salvation. You're son of the devil. You are actually the enemy. You are not righteous; you are unrighteous.* Then Paul says…*the hand of the Lord is going to be you*. Now, normally when we think of the hand of the Lord, that is a good thing. It has been throughout Acts. The hand of the Lord is usually a blessing, but here, the hand of the Lord is actually a curse. The hand of the Lord comes upon Bar-Jesus and he is struck with blindness. He is groping about and has to get somebody to lead him. There is some irony going on here because it was Saul who the Lord struck with blindness to get him to see who Jesus is. Now Saul, who has Jesus, runs into another guy who doesn’t know Jesus, and he is now struck with blindness. The hand of the Lord, this judgment, is upon him.

I think there's a deeper irony here because you have a Jewish guy, Bar-Jesus, who is trying to keep a Gentile, a Roman governor, from coming to Jesus, from coming to the gospel, from coming to God. Why is there irony in darkness? If you go to Isaiah, for instance, the whole point is God made Israel a great nation so the Jews would be a light to the Gentiles. So here is a guy who is supposed to be a light to this Gentile guy, but instead, he is being darkness to this guy, so God makes him dark. God takes the light out of him, and now he can't see. He's in opposition. He's supposed to be the bridge between God and this man, but he's being a stumbling block and God’s hand of judgment removes him.

Notice what the response is. Verse 12 says, “Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” This Roman guy, this Gentile, believes in what Paul is saying. I think you can argue that he believes in the gospel. He believes when he saw what had occurred. He sees the signs and wonders and now he believes, and the verse ends with “he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” I find that a little bit strange because this guy is a governor, a Roman, and he has heard bits and pieces of the Old Testament from his Jewish false prophet friend who is also a magician. This guy has some buddy issues, but he is hearing some things, and all of a sudden, his buddy gets struck with blindness. This buddy says Paul is wrong and he's going to prove it, and then he was struck with blindness…but that doesn’t astonish him! It just says he saw that his buddy was struck with blindness, but something else astonished him. For me, I think that would be my astonishing point. If I see my buddy, who is misleading me, get struck with blindness and there is this misty haze over him…this is like Pirates of the Caribbean type stuff! Crazy things are happening…that would be my astonishment! But that is not what astonished him. What astonished him was the teaching of the Word. He was astonished, not by the miracle, not by the sign that he saw, but by the words that Paul proclaimed. What astonished him was the gospel. What astonished him was the news about the Lord Jesus Christ. We see this pattern continue; it is the Word of God that does the work of God. It’s not just a blind man who gets struck with blindness; it is the Word that is proclaimed in light of that. That is what is astonishing, that is what is life changing, that is what caused this man to become a believer. It wasn’t looking at the blind man; it was looking at this man, Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead. That is the astonishing part. That is the part that he believed in.

**The Missionary Journey to Antioch, Pisidia**

Now, Paul and companions are going to pick up, pack up, and move on and continue their missionary journey. The end of 13 and the first part of verse 14 says, “Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.” There is a little footnote here that says John, who is John Mark, left. He deserted them. He doesn’t say he deserted them, but later, Paul tells us this, and he's not happy about what John Mark did. Why did he leave? We don’t really know because it doesn’t say in the text here. But I was thinking about what this trip would be like if we sailed and touched down on land to this other Antioch. I did a little research about what the land and the topography was like. They would have had to cross a mountain, the Tarsus Mountain. When they landed, they would have had to cross that to get to Antioch. Can you imagine looking at that 12,000 feet tall mountain and having to scale that? My guess…John Mark was like *uh, guys…I'm out. Nope. I'm going back home to church and you guys keep going forward.* It might not have happened, but that is my sanctified imagination prediction.

When we look at the maps in the back of our bibles, we can’t see how far or appreciate how hard the travel was. These guys would have had to scale that mountain! Paul and Barnabas know that Antioch is on the other side of that.They are like*, hey, there are people in Antioch who don’t know the true gospel, so we’re going to have go through there, and there might be bears, I don't know, but it doesn’t look nice!* There is this conviction that people need to hear about Jesus, and so they are going to take the gospel anyway they have to. They will go down rivers or scale mountains. They have to get to where people are because people need to hear the gospel.

Let’s look at the map of their journey to get our bearings on where they were coming from and where they are going:



At the bottom on the right, you see Jerusalem and Damascus. That is the Holy Land. If you follow Damascus straight up, you will see Antioch in Syria. That is where the church is that has sent Paul and Barnabas out. You can trace the path of the blue line from there where they get on their boat and sail to Cyprus, the island where Bar-Jesus is. Then, we see from verses 13-14 that they sail to Perga and hike up to Antioch in Pisidia. That is where we are at now.

When we just read those verses, we think *wait, they just came from Antioch*, but from the map, you can see there are two different cities of Antioch. If you tell somebody you're going on a mission trip to Paris, they would be like, “Really!” You say, “Yeah, I'm going to Paris Tennessee…” That is different, right? Paris, Tennessee, and Paris, France, are two different places. So this is not the same Antioch and they are traveling from one to another. As we set up shop in Antioch, Pisidia, Paul is going to go to church. He's going to go to the synagogue.

**Paul at the Synagogue**

We are going to get insight into what synagogue life was like. What did the people of God do for thousands of years before Christ came? What did it look like to be the congregation? What did it look like to be the people of God before Jesus came? We are going to get a snapshot. The end of verse 14 through verse 15 says, “And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” Going to the synagogue is what Jews have been doing for a long, long time. Every Saturday, every Sabbath, they go to synagogue, or temple. What do the people of God do when they congregate together? They read the Word of God. They read the Scriptures.

I want to point out that we have been doing this for a long time. Even before Christ came, the people of God have been congregating and gathering together to put themselves under the hearing and preaching of God's Word. We see Ezra doing this in Nehemiah. We see him opening the Bible and everybody standing while he read the Scriptures, and then he explained the Scriptures, gave reason from the Scriptures, and showed how the Scriptures applied to their lives. God’s people have always been Word-driven. They have always been a people centered around the Word of God. Our God had spoken, so we want to center our lives around what God has said. We get a snapshot of, really, expository preaching in the synagogues. They read the Scriptures and then expound the Scriptures.

**Paul Preaches a Sermon**

It just so happened on the day Paul was there that there were a few more members in the audience. So the leader of the synagogue reads from the prophets, reads from the Law, and then, as was the custom, they asked who would be giving the sermon. Paul was like *I got this!* Verse 16 says, “So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand…” He stands up, starts motioning, and gets ready to preach his sermon. I can just imagine Paul hearing them read the Old Testament knowing they are missing all of the promises that are there, missing all the connections, not knowing who Jesus is, and him just thinking if he just had a moment he could connect the dots.

I remember when we did a men’s mission trip in the mountains of Nicaragua. There weren’t any churches there and one of our tasks was to try and find a church or to plant a church. We got wind that there was a healthy church in the next community, so we went to church there to try to invest in the pastor. We thought that maybe it could be the church that we could bring people to, and from that church, we could birth other churches throughout the mountains. We get there and he stands up and preaches a sermon from Joshua about how to be strong and courageous, and if you're strong and courageous and do really good, God will love you. My heart just sank a little bit. The more he preached, it continued to be ‘do good, try hard, and if you are good God will love you.’ We were a bunch of Americans there, we had probably doubled their church that day, and at the end of his sermon he asked if anyone else would like to share a word…I heard that little voice in me saying, *no, don’t do it,* but instead, I said yes. I wanted to try and be as humble as I could, but I wanted to connect the dots. I said, “Yes, Joshua wanted us to be strong and courageous, but it’s not to be strong in yourself; it’s to be strong in the Lord. I tried to be strong, I tried to be good, and it didn’t work, and what I needed was Jesus.” As a team, we were able to connect the dots for that congregation, “You have the Word, you have the Bible, but you are missing the gospel. You are following rules and think that by the rules God will love you, but what you need is the one who fulfilled the rules and who gives you His blessing.” We were able to help this little congregation see those connections.

* **Israel’s Rebellion**

That is what Paul does here in the synagogue. He is hearing the Law, hearing the reading, but these people are missing the promises. Paul gets to lean into the promises. Let’s hear part of Paul’s sermon, the first recorded sermon in Scripture in verses 16b-18. “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness.” That is a great line!

What Paul is going to do in this sermon, which I think is a really good pattern for sermons, is start with the greatness of God, then he shows the sinfulness of man, then our need for Christ, and then he's going to ask for a response. That is a really good pattern for a sermon. Start with how great God is, how great we’re not, how we really need Jesus, and then ask us to repent and believe in Jesus.

I love how he starts with the greatness of God. *Friends, children of Israel, let me tell you this…let’s think about who God is. God chose our forefathers.* In other words, Abraham wasn’t great, he wasn’t special; God chose him. They didn’t just happen to be the best of the best, most of them were actually the least of the least, but God chose them, He set His love upon them, and then He made them great. Israel’s greatness, any greatness they had, is because of God. God chose them, God made them great, and then God rescued them; God led them out with a strong hand.

Then, that last line says that for forty years He put up with them! Paul is like, *yeah synagogue people, just so we’re clear, because we usually paint a better picture of our past, just think about as God made, chose, and made great, He also had to put up with them. They weren’t a great people. They continually complained. They continually rebelled. They were continually unfaithful. They did not believe. They set up idols for themselves. They went all different ways. They did not obey the commands. God, in His longsuffering, put up with our forefathers for forty long years.* God put up with them for a lot longer than that, really. I think that also speaks to us a little bit. When it comes to our story, the reason you are here is because God chose you, God made you, and God rescued you. Part of the deal is God also puts up with you sometimes. Often, we do wrong. We don’t do what He says, we don’t follow right, but God is longsuffering. He is gracious. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in steadfast love. That is what we see here, a great God putting up with a rebellious people. Paul is alluding to…*we are actually not that great. We are pretty sinful, and though God rescued us, He also has to put up with us, and what we need is a Savior.*

* **God Blesses Israel**

Then, Paul says in verses 19-20, “And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.” So God destroyed their enemies and He gives them land and leadership. All of the verbs here point to God as the one doing all of these things. It is not the Israelites; it is God. He chose them, He blessed them, He rescued them, He put up with them, He defeated their enemies for them, He gave them land, and He gave them leadership. God is great, He is doing a whole lot for this people, but the greatest thing He will bring them is a Savior, as we will see.

Verse 21 says, “Then they asked for a king and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.” Everyone in the synagogue knows that story, and they know it wasn’t a good moment in their history. They didn’t ask for a king like they were supposed to. Genesis hinted there would be a king, but they didn’t want a king like God wanted…*give us a king so we will be like the nations. We don’t like being holy, set apart, and different and unique. We want to be just like everybody else, so give us a king because we’re following this invisible God and everybody laughs at us. We want an actual guy on a throne so that we can worship him and everybody will think that’s better.* That is what they wanted, and what does it say? God gave it to them. He gave them Saul, son of Kish, for forty years. I find it interesting that forty years is repeated. God puts up with them for forty years in the wilderness, now they ask for a king and get King Saul for forty years. It’s as if Paul is trying to remind those in the synagogue that even after they got out of the wilderness, even when they were in the Promised Land with the king they chose, they were still forty years in the wilderness. They were still outside of God’s will and God’s plan because of their rebellion.

* **The Promised Savior**

Look at what verses 22-23 say, “And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He promised.” Paul is connecting with David, their hero…*hey remember David? He's going to have a son, and that son is going to be our Savior.* So at this synagogue, Paul is bringing them the news that that Savior has actually been born, and His name is Jesus. He is taking their Old Testament bibles and showing that all this pointed to Jesus and Jesus is here. The Savior has come “as He promised.” See, they are focusing on a law, and they forgot that law came with promises. That law talked about a coming one. What they need to hear is the one who promised to come is here, and they need to see who that is. His name is Jesus.

Notice verses 24-25, “Before His coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’” So John, who they probably knew, told about Jesus and their great need of repentance.

* **His Death, Burial, and Resurrection**

Then, verses 26-30 say, ““Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize Him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. And though they found in Him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have Him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead.” What is Paul doing? He is trying to get them to see the gospel. He is saying that just years ago, this is what happened in Jerusalem. Those rulers of the synagogues read all of the Scriptures and all of the prophets, but they actually became the fulfillers of the prophets because they crucified the one the prophets spoke about. In doing so, in their execution of Jesus, they took Him down from a tree. I think Paul is using that language intentionally. He said they took Him down, not from a cross but from a tree. Of course, He died on a Roman cross but Paul’s audience is the Jews and there is something that connects with a tree. In the Old Testament, it says, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” He is trying to show that on the cross, Jesus was the curse. He was cursed by God on the tree. How is that so? It’s because of you and me. It’s because of those sitting in the synagogue listening to Paul preach. Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, and He became a curse. The reality is that apart from Christ, we are cursed of God because of our sin. We have God’s wrath upon us, apart from Christ, because of our sin. What is the good news? The Jewish leaders had Jesus executed and He hung on a tree as the curse of God. But it wasn’t just that He was *the* curse, He was your curse, He was my curse. God put our sin on Him, and God looked at Him as if it were you. He took your curse for you.

The last part of verse 29 says they took Him from the tree and put Him in a tomb. He not only hung on a tree, but He also died. Why did Jesus have to die? The Law is really clear, given Adam and Eve; if you sin, you will die. Paul repeats it in Romans, “the wages of sin is death.” That is the whole story of the Old Testament. If you sin, you should die. That is the whole sacrificial system. Every time you sin, there is a reflex…blood has to happen. Sin equals death. The Jews knew that, these synagogue leaders knew that. We are sinful, we deserve to die, and Paul is trying to connect the dots that one has died for you, that Jesus died in your place and for your sins. All of us, because of our sins, owe God death. We owe a payment to God. Because He's an eternal God, we owe Him an eternal death, which is Hell. We pay that eternally to God, eternal death in Hell because of our sin. Why was Jesus laid in the tomb? It is because He is dying in our place for our sins. Jesus, on the cross and in the tomb, is saying *I paid the debt you owed. You owed God debt; I died so that I could pay that debt for you*. That is the beauty of the cross.

Verse 30 says, “But God raised Him from the dead…” Romans 4 says that Jesus was delivered over for our transgressions; He was raised for our justification. He was resurrected from the dead to justify us, to make us right before God. Now Paul is getting to the gospel with these people. He is telling them that the cross event is the message of salvation. Christ died in your place for your sins.

* **The Gospel Story**

And then verse 31 says, “…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.” Paul is letting them know, *you can go talk to people who actually saw Him raised from the dead. It’s a true story. We’re not just making it up. There is evidence to the resurrection.*

Paul goes on in verses 32-24, “And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”

Paul quotes Old Testament Scripture. Remember, it is the Word of God that does the work of God. Paul is not just pulling something out of the air. He is showing how Jesus is the promise of the Old Testament, that Jesus is that promise.

In verses 34-35, Paul also says, “And as for the fact that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ Therefore he says also in another psalm, “‘you will not let your Holy One see corruption.’”

Paul is showing all these psalms that were about David, but they can’t be about David because David is rotting in a tomb. No, they are about Jesus. Jesus is the son of David, and who is the Son of God who rose from the dead. If we’re in Him, we get the blessing that we will not perish in a grave, but we will have everlasting life. It’s this good news, this gospel story.

Then Paul gets to the meat of the sermon. He says in verses 36-39, “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but He whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.” Paul ends with that really, really good news to a bunch of people who are at a synagogue who were listening to the Law of Moses, listening to the Old Testament, listening to the Scriptures. Every week they gathered to hear the Scriptures. Paul is telling us the problem with Moses. He said Moses can tell you that you're bad, but Moses can't make you good. That is the problem with the law. When we try to follow God through the law, it only reveals one thing…we can't, and there is no way we can. That is why we need this man, Jesus Christ.

Notice that Paul says two things about this man. First is that through this man, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. This is the heart of the gospel. Every person on the planet needs forgiveness. We all need it. Deep down, we all feel a sense of guilt and shame because we know we do things wrong, we think things that are wrong, and we’re not as good as everybody thinks we are. We have a problem; it’s called a sin problem. We are enslaved to sin and it brings guilt, shame, and separation. What we need is forgiveness. What we need is for that sin to be taken away, that sin to be dealt with, and it happens through the man, Jesus Christ. This is gospel: When Christ died on the cross, when they put Him in the tomb and He rose from the dead three days later and ascended to His Father, there is forgiveness. How is that? It is because He died in your place for your sins. All that is broken in you can be fixed through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When you believe in Him, you are taken out of Adam and put into Christ, and everything changes. You have forgiveness from God, and what you need more than anything is forgiveness from God. We are born in a broken relationship and we need forgiveness so that relationship can be mended. You were made for God, but your sin keeps you from God. There is an empty tomb in Palestine that says a man got up from the dead, and through His name, you can have forgiveness and be reconciled back to God.

* **Freedom in Christ**

The gospel offers us forgiveness, but secondly, the gospel also frees us. Notice what Paul said in verse 38. It said that through this man there is forgiveness of sin, and by Him, (Jesus) everyone who believes is free from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses. In Christ, there is not just forgiveness there is also freedom. Here are a people who are gathering to hear…*give us more law, give us more rules, because through law and rules we can be free.* What they find is that through laws and rules, you are only led to slavery. You can't obey the laws God has given because you have a sin nature that is broken. You are separated from God, so the more you try to fulfill the law, the more you try to do good, the more you see you are actually a slave to your sin. The law can't fix you. The law says you're bad, but it can't make you good. What you need is a Savior who can actually change you, can actually free you. That is what the good news of Jesus Christ does. When you repent and believe in the gospel, Jesus says you get a new birth. It’s like being born brand new, says John 3. You're a new creation. You get a new spirit. You get a new heart. Everything about you changes. You are regenerated. You’ve moved from death to life. That is the picture of the gospel. Christ not only forgives you, He changes you. He frees you so that now you are not enslaved to sin. Now you're enslaved to God, Romans 6 teaches us. Before, you were enslaved to sin, but when Christ died and rose again, He not only dealt with the penalty of sin, (which is Hell for you and separation from God) He also defeated the power of sin in your life. No longer are you enslaved. No longer do you have to sin. Now, as Paul will teach in Galatians, there is a reality that you are free from sin and you can walk in righteousness. You can walk with the Spirit and not gratify the desires of your flesh.

These people are gathering around the law because they think the law is going to make them good, the law is going to fix them. But the law can only say you are condemned; it can't say you're free. Paul is standing up with the Word of God, preaching the Word of God, sharing the gospel with them and saying there is a death, burial, and resurrection, and if you believe in Christ, you are not only forgiven of your sin, you are actually freed from sin. You can now obey God by walking in the Spirit because of the power of Christ in you. From righteousness, you can walk in righteousness. From salvation, you can live out a saved life, a sanctified life, a life that really does glorify God. The great news of the gospel is that when you believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, it forgives you of your sins. You are forgiven of your sins, and that is great news. The other part of that news is you are not just forgiven you are also freed. You're free where you don’t have to rebel. You don’t have to sin. You don’t have to walk away from Him. You can walk in the Spirit, not gratify the desires of your heart, and you can live out the will of God for your life. That’s the good news of the gospel; we are forgiven and we are also free.

I love missions. I love just thinking about going with Paul on a ship with a suitcase and a backpack and hiking up mountains. I love taking mission trips because there is so much clarity. What is the clarity? We touch down and we start spreading the gospel. That is why we are there, that’s what it’s for. As we will see in these two chapters, missions are connected to the church. The church owns missions. The church is who does missions, but missions also produce churches. Both of those things are a reality. Missions should involve this idea of not just converts, but congregations, as we will see when Paul circles back around. What we have seen, mainly, in this one is the reality that it is the Word of God that does the work of God. Everybody Paul encountered he proclaimed to them the word of God. He didn’t do a magic trick, he didn’t say some eloquent thing; he proclaimed the gospel, proclaimed Christ from the Scriptures. That is what we must do as a church on every mission trip we go on. Every mission trip we pray for must be Word-driven mission trips. We will proclaim the gospel to people because it is only the gospel that forgives us and actually sets us free. Let’s be those people. Whether we’re on a mission trip or just walking through out day tomorrow, let’s be the people who proclaim Christ, because in Him, there is forgiveness and there is also freedom. For those of us who have been forgiven, let’s lean into that freedom. Let’s lean into walking in the Spirit. The closer we get to Jesus, the more we pursue Christ. The more we walk in the Spirit, the less we will want to do those things that break our hearts and His heart. Instead, we want that freedom that is promised through the gospel.