

## 47. Paul Saw Many People Show an Interest

In our last topic, we saw that Paul showed us the importance of helping our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of the death and resurrection of Christ. We also were reminded that Peter emphasized these same things in his first recorded sermon in the book of Acts. We saw that we want to help our children learn to explain the importance of the resurrection to others so that they can share the Gospel clearly with others. In this way, they will be equipped to minister to people throughout their lives. In our topic today, we are going to see that many people were very interested when they heard that Christ fulfilled the promises in the Old Testament.

In Acts 13:38-41, we read, “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: ‘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.’” In these verses, we have the conclusion of Paul’s sermon as he preached in the synagogue in the city of Antioch of Pisidia. Paul had been sharing with the people in the synagogue the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

This phrase “let it be known to you” is a command and is used several times in the book of Acts. Peter used this phrase as he spoke to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:10. That verse says, “Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” Then, Paul used this same phrase as he talked to the Jewish leaders in the city of Rome. Acts 28:28 says, “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” Here, Paul used that same phrase as he spoke to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia. The Jews were very familiar with the Old Testament. In each of these passages, they are being confronted with the fact that they must now make a choice.

Here, in Acts 13:38, we see that the Jews were being confronted with the fact that the only way that they could receive forgiveness of sins was through Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for their sin by His death and resurrection. Hebrews 9:22 says, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” The Jews knew from the Old Testament that blood must be shed as a covering for sin. Those who had true faith in God eagerly looked forward to the One that would come to take away sin. As a result, this was an exciting message for those Jews who were eagerly looking for the coming of the Promised One. This message also caused great interest among the Gentiles.

Paul went on to explain that all who believed in Christ, the One who was the promised descendent of David, are justified. Paul also reminded the people that no one could be justified by the law of Moses. The law of Moses only showed people that they were guilty of sin. The word translated “justified” means *to declare righteous or to make righteous*. As a result, this statement by Paul showed that Christ is much greater than the Law. The Law condemns while those who believe in Christ are made righteous. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin

for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ took our sin and the Father looks at us through the righteousness of Christ.

Many Jews thought that they were justified by the fact that they were circumcised and tried to keep the law. Most of the Gentiles that attended the Jewish synagogues were not circumcised and did not follow the dietary regulations given in the law. As a result, there was still a barrier even between the Jews and those Gentiles that attended a synagogue. Paul would later explain in Ephesians 2:14-16, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Suddenly, those Gentiles heard that through Christ it was possible to receive forgiveness of sins. That was good news for the Gentiles.

That was a warning to the Jews who thought they were justified, because they were circumcised and tried to keep the law. Habakkuk 1:5 says, “Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*.” Paul told the Jews who were depending on their own efforts and those who would reject Christ they would be amazed as they saw how God would work. He said that even though they saw what God would do, they would still not believe. Paul realized that both the Jews and the Gentiles needed to think and talk about the things that Paul had spoken before the Father would draw them to Christ.

Acts 13:42-43 says, “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 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.” Here, we see two very different responses by the Jews and the Gentiles. Many of the Jews politely listened to Paul and left the synagogue after he finished speaking. For these Jews, it was just another sermon they heard and ignored. In John 16:8-9, Christ said, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me.” Religious people who are depending on their own efforts for salvation do the same thing today. Often, they are not convicted of their sin of unbelief.

In contrast, we see that the Gentiles begged to hear more the next Sabbath. Here, we see that the Holy Spirit was convicting the Gentiles. In John 6:44, Christ said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” The Father was drawing the Gentiles. In Luke 19:10, Christ said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” The Son was seeking and wanted to save all who would listen. The fact that the Gentiles begged to hear more the next Sabbath was a clear indication that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, were all working in the hearts of many Gentiles to draw them to Christ.

We also see that part of the Jews and devout proselytes wanted to talk more with Paul and Barnabas. The phrase “devout proselytes” was a title given to those Gentiles who had been

circumcised and were also trying to follow the Jewish law. Such Gentiles were converts of Judaism and were given the same rights as the Jews in the synagogue. In Matthew 23:15, Christ said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” We have mentioned that many Gentiles attended the synagogues in the various cities of the Roman Empire. Most of these Gentiles liked what they learned from the Old Testament, but were not willing to be circumcised. The scribes and Pharisees would do everything possible to convince these Gentiles to be circumcised and try to keep the Jewish law. Those who became devout proselytes were law keepers just like the Jews. Many Jews and devout proselytes left the synagogue with the other Jews, but did want to talk to Paul and Barnabas.

The Jews had left the synagogue and many of them had gone home. However, part of the Jews and devout proselytes wanted to learn more. As a result, they followed Paul and Barnabas either that day or later in the week to learn more about the things that Paul had said in the synagogue. The word translated “followed” means *to go with a person, to follow or to become a disciple*. The word is used twice in Matthew 9:9 where we read, “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.” The rich young ruler spent time talking with Christ in Matthew 19:16-22 and was invited to follow Christ, but chose to follow his money instead. Here, we see that Paul and Barnabas talked with these people and also invited them to follow Christ.

The word translated “persuaded” means *to share words that would encourage a person to believe*. This word is used twice as Paul talked with King Agrippa in Acts 26. Acts 26:26-28 says, “For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.’ Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian.’”

Then, the word is used twice in Acts 28:23-24 as Paul talked to the Jews in the city of Rome. Those verses say, “So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.” We see that of those who were persuaded, some believed and some did not believe. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help others understand that they have a choice that must be made. Some will believe and some will reject the ministry of the Trinity. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to help others realize that they have a choice they must make.