

32b ACTS

Let's resume our study in Acts chapter 13. We are in the middle of the first recorded sermon by the Apostle Paul, and it is interesting to observe the content of this because it has a relationship to an earlier sermon in this book. You remember back in Acts chapter 7 when Stephen delivers his great oration just prior to checking out and going to glory, he rehearses the history in the Old Testament, doesn't he? And he spends quite a bit of time going through, and he comes up to a certain point and then kind of jumps to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul here picks up almost where Stephen leaves off, where Stephen emphasized things that happened before the time of David, talked about Abraham and many of the patriarchal stories. Here, Paul really picks up at that point and starts us at Moses and comes forward through the judges to David and talks about the son of David fulfilling the promises that were made for us, their children, in that he has raised up Jesus. We were talking not long ago in one or another of our studies, because we're here, we're looking at our Bibles, we've got our concentration focused and everything, but most of the time our Bible is sitting somewhere else and we're out there driving and sitting and doing and talking and just interacting and getting through our day, right? And challenges come, the unexpected happens, whether it's good or bad.

We tend to think, well, all good stuff is a blessing and all bad stuff is a test, but sometimes our good stuff is a test and sometimes our bad stuff is a blessing. We just don't know it at the time. But regardless, our task, the trickiest thing that we have to do is to try to reach back and remember that all of those things that we saw in the Word of God when we were sitting in class are supposed to be bubbling around and being active and making a difference in the way we think and the way we act in the moment.

And that is one of the hardest things. We tend to kind of, especially men, women are very synthetic. Everything is a fabric.

This is why Mrs. Clinton wrote the book, *It Takes a Village*. She's a synthesizer. Everything has to blend and weave together.

I mean, it's not a criticism. That's the way women are built, especially in the largely domestic area where they've been charged by God with responsibility. Men have been charged by God with responsibility in the business and income area.

Women have been charged in the domestic area. In the domestic area, you need to be able to synthesize. Everything is related to everything else.

Things interconnect. Men are much more segregationist. We put things in boxes.

Here's this project. Here's this thing. Here's this thing.

My wife is upset today. OK, I'm real sorry about that. But I got to put that in the box because the game is coming on or I have a job or whatever.

It's the way we're built. Understanding this goes a long way to smoothing over domestic difficulties because you just have to realize we as men have to realize that women don't just put something in a room and shut the door on it and come back later. It's going to surface.

It's going to circulate. It's going to be there. And we think, what's the matter with you? Why can't you put that in the room and shut the door and we'll come back to it later? We're just built differently.

Well, the whole I'm in danger of even losing the train of my thought as I as I talk about this. But as we go through the day, one of the things that we tend to do is we everybody, women and men, when it comes to spiritual things, we tend to be men. We tend to put things in a box.

My spiritual life comes out when I'm in Bible class or when I'm in a jam and I need to pray. You know, I open up that door and out comes the stuff I need. But the rest of the time I kind of put it in and shut the door and I'm busy doing other things.

And we have a real hard time remembering who we are and why we're here and that our spiritual life, God's truth is supposed to synthesize. It's supposed to be a part of the fabric of what we do. So we need to be more.

In the integration and application mode than we typically are. So the other day we were talking about, well, how do we do this when you suddenly hit a situation? Maybe it's rapturous joy, although that doesn't happen so often as the shocking, unexpected dilemma, right? It hits us and our brain tends to vapor lock. We were going along thinking and acting and we had a pretty good set of priorities and values and goals.

And then this thing blindsided us. And it can be a very small thing. You can be going along and someone can word a sentence the wrong way.

I had this happen to me the other day and I almost stepped outside myself and watched it happen in kind of a clinical sort of out of body experience because I was going along doing something I really wanted to do, talking with someone that I care about very much. And. Of course, this is also one of the hazards of instant messaging is you can't convey a tone quite as well in writing as you hopefully can in speaking.

So anyway, a thing came across. It wasn't for anybody that's present here, but it just came across and it struck me the wrong way. And I found myself having sort of a violent reaction.

And I thought, well, and then I became detached and I looked at it and I thought, well,

what is it about this? But it just stopped all of my thinking. Yet the priorities, the need I have for a proper business relationship with my employee and with other people in my organization, this was a work related thing. I just found that my it was like somebody had stuck a big iron bar in the gears of my mind.

So this happens to us all the time, doesn't it? Surely I'm not the only one just unexpectedly out of nowhere. It may just be you thought, well, this is just a fly on the windshield of my day. But actually it wound up being a big bug splat that just obscures the whole highway.

You can no longer see to drive. Well, anytime something like this happens. We need a way to unjam the gears.

We have to get thinking, not just any kind of thinking. The human brain has a way to start up again, and it's usually reaction. We react.

We react emotionally. A lot of people, their default action in time of vapor lock is a fit. I will just go off.

And this is a coping mechanism. It is actually if you get past what's being said and the vituperation and so on, it's a coping mechanism. This person is trying to reestablish order in their thinking.

And the way they do it is they're blasting away whatever it is that jammed up their thinking and with a fit of anger or with a fit of verbal response. So this is not the response we're after. This is not what God is looking for.

How can we unjam our thinking in a way that is pleasing to God? Well, we reach and we draw on truths that we know. We start with the character of God. We remember that God is even there.

This is a major step for a lot of us. When we first are in the infancy of learning how to do this, we can't really think complex doctrinal thoughts. We don't come up with the seven kinds of scriptural baptism or the twenty five things that happen at the point of salvation.

Or, you know, we need something quick and simple. And so we say, well, God is watching me. This is kind of the idea behind the what would Jesus do bracelet.

You know, I need to stop and think in the context of God and his plan. And we grab basic truths. God is in his heaven.

God is in control of this situation. God says, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those that spitefully use you. I am certainly being spitefully used here at

the moment. So what should I do? I need to have a response of sympathy.

Did you hear me? Somebody has attacked me. Somebody has really done me dirty. My response should not be anger in kind.

It should be sympathy. How miserable does a person have to be to act that way? What kind of a miserable life is that person living that they've got nothing better to do than pick on me? That they don't have a God to go to. They don't have a walk with Christ to comfort them.

That that the only way they can find happiness is by creating unhappiness for someone else. Is this the life they lead? I need to pray for that person. This person is worse off than I am.

This person needs God in their life. This person needs the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to learn to think that way.

It's a much more, in fact, it's infinitely more productive because that is divine good. This is the thinking of Christ who, when he was despised and rejected of men, prayed for them, said, Father, forgive them. They have no idea what they're doing.

We can do this, but we have to want to and we have to practice. And we can practice in small ways on small things. Well, here, Paul is confronting these Christians, actually, these Jewish worshippers is all we can call them at this point, in Antioch of Pisidia on the Sabbath day in the synagogue.

And so what does he do? He takes them to something they know. He takes them to something familiar. He puts them on some solid ground.

And he says, look, you remember the history. This is the same thing Stephen did. He's trying to reach them by stabilizing them with something they know.

Here's some things you know. You know what the Old Testament teaches. And this new message that you're getting about the Lord Jesus being raised from the dead is just the continuation of the old.

I heard that the, what, the 12th book in the Left Behind series is about to come out. I think they have a total planned of 14. And the next book, whichever one it is in the series, is coming out like next week or this month or something.

Isn't it interesting that there is such a rash of interest in things Christian on the media? The 20/20 and Nightline and all of these other. It has become fashionable to take another look at Christianity in the wake of the Passion movie and so on. And it shouldn't.

It's like a surprise. It's like it's a new thing. But better than 90 percent of people in the United States believe in a God.

Six out of 10 people claim to be Christians in this country and claim to believe the Bible. Six out of 10. So what is the surprise? Why is the media just now saying, hmm, why don't we? There seems to be a resurgence in the faith movement.

And so there was a special on the news about the Left Behind series. There was a special on the news about the Purpose Driven Church. There's a special on the news about all different kinds of things.

They've had Franklin Graham out asking him what he thinks about the movie and this, that and the other. And I think it's great if people are reminded that there is a God. That's a great starting point.

That's what the Apostle Paul is doing here. Now, I have come down squarely on both sides of the movie and a lot of other things that come out in the popular culture. As we saw in our study last week, I think it is in the realm of meat offered to idols.

If you in your context and in your periphery and in the things that you do and what you're involved in. If that movie seems to be an open door for evangelism or an encouragement or an inspiration or something that drives you to go in the scriptures and get the rest of the story, then it's great. If you think it's a distraction and that it may misrepresent or fall short or be considered by people as an alternative to the inspired account and that it is somehow maybe a better gospel than what God gave us in the Bible, well, that's not so good.

It's what you make of it. It's meat offered to idols. Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 8. You're not the better if you eat, you're not the worse if you don't eat.

It all depends on what you think and how you think it in that area. That's not true of every issue. There are issues of morality where it isn't what you think, it's what you do.

If you kill someone with premeditation, that's murder and it's always wrong. It's not what you were thinking at the time. But there are other issues that are in the realm of discretion.

It's what you make of it. Some people should not have a TV anywhere in their house. Some people shouldn't have a computer hooked up to the Internet in their house because it is a stumbling block and a snare and a trap and it ought to just go.

For other people, it isn't a problem. A lot of us have a lot of areas of discretion. But when we find ourselves challenged, when we find ourselves facing an issue, we need to make a decision.

Go to what you know. Go to what you know. This is what Paul does.

This is what Stephen does. This is what the Bible does time after time after time. Jesus in

his parables, what did he do? He taught spiritual truth to things people knew.

The mustard seed, the servant, the field, the sun in the sky, the change of the seasons. Jesus used common examples, started people with what they know. Well, we typically seize up and we just about the only avenue that seems open to us is emotion.

And we're either going to weep or we're going to go into shock or we're going to get angry or we're going to retaliate in some way. If we stop ourselves and say, what do I know? We know there is a God. We know he has a plan.

And as soon as we start our mind down that road, more and more of our spiritual knowledge will come into our mind. And we say, wait a minute, there is an alternative here. I see the right answer.

A soft answer turns away wrath. It's grievous words that stir up anger. So this is what Paul is doing.

He tells them what they know. He reminds them and then he tells them about the resurrection of Christ. He was seen.

And notice when Paul is talking to people who need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, who have an interest, they've come to synagogue because they care about the things of God. They've invited them to come and speak. They're anxious to hear what they have to say.

This whole section was introduced by Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man who wanted to know the truth. That's what these people are like. What does Paul dwell on? Does he show them the passion of the Christ? Does he give them a six paragraph description of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross? When he starts them with what they know, puts them on familiar ground with the Old Testament, then he comes through.

He says, they condemned the Lord. They put him to death. And when all that was fulfilled that had been written concerning him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

There is not a word of the suffering in this gospel presentation, not a word. There is not a lash. There is not a nail.

There is not a thorn prick. There is not a bruise. There is not a whisker pulled out of the beard.

There is not a single mention made. Why? Because the good news of the gospel is, while it certainly encompasses the crucifixion, it is all about the resurrection. God raised him from the dead.

He was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem.

So what is the point here? If you get the chance to talk about the Lord Jesus with someone, are you going to say, you really need to come to Christ because you just can't imagine the kind of suffering that he went through on your behalf? Taking nothing away from the suffering of Christ, that is not the message. The message is, the Lord Jesus Christ has conquered death.

He has conquered sin. He has conquered all of the evil that makes this world what it is, that makes us what we are, corrupt and fallen, enemies of God, alienated from the life of God, without hope in this world. Because he is the Lord of life, how does John start his gospel? He was the light, and that light was the life of men, or that life was the light of men.

It is all about the light. It is all about the life, not the death. God raised him from the dead.

We declare to you glad tidings, the promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us, their children, in that he crucified Jesus? No, in that he raised Jesus. The promise is fulfilled in the raising.

When we get knocked down, when we get the wind punched out of us, when we face a trial, when we face a test, and they are not all unexpected blows to the side of the head that we didn't see coming. Some of them are ongoing endurance matches. It's the one we had last year, and the one we had last month, and the one we had last week.

We had it yesterday, we have it today. There seems to be a foreseeable future where we are going to have that same burden to bear. We can look back and see footsteps in the dusty road going back to the horizon.

We look ahead and we see the road equally long, and we've got that burden chafing our shoulder. What is the truth of God that gives us hope and gives us strength? It isn't, and understand me, you know I'm not diminishing in any way the work of Christ on the cross or his suffering on our behalf, but the gospel, the good news, is the result, not the means. Christ's death on the cross is a means of achieving salvation.

The salvation itself is not the suffering on the cross. His suffering accomplished something that gives us a gift, and that gift is life. It is light.

It is hope. It is resurrection from the dead in every different level of life. You have death in the area of productivity.

A tree that doesn't produce any fruit, even if it's alive, it's not a useful tree. It's alive when it pushes out fruit. We declare to you glad tidings, that promise God has fulfilled in that he has raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second psalm.

You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Notice, this is often associated with the

incarnation, the birth in Bethlehem.

Where does Paul put it? Sunday after Passover, 31 AD. This day I have begotten you. It is Christ's new life that Paul sees spoken of in the second psalm.

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.

The sure unassailable mercies of God are bound up in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He would not be there to give them to us if he was not raised. For David, after he served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.

Once again, almost universally in the New Testament, when you see Paul talking about death, he refers to it as sleep, the Lord Jesus. When he talks about those who are dead, he says they are asleep. We've talked about the similarities there and what I think is likely to happen at the point of death.

David saw corruption, but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren. Once again, he has started with a known fact.

You know that David lived, he died, his body went away. Let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man, the Lord Jesus, is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of our sins is tied not to the death of Christ, but to his resurrection.

Because if you have a sin situation and God forgives and cleanses, it's kind of like looking at the cross or looking at the resurrection. You can look at the fact that the sin was cleansed and the sin was forgiven, but the biblical view is, now what? There was a reason God forgave. There is a reason God cleanses.

It's not just that, oh my goodness, I've got a sin on me, oh Lord, wash it off. Now it's gone, oh great. God's purpose in forgiving us and cleansing us is so that.

There is a so that. There is a life that is to be lived in the absence of that sin, after the cleansing, after the forgiveness. This would be, someone goes in, they have a chemical that they have found, I saw a report on, that apparently cures heroin addiction, that cures cocaine addiction in one administration.

It tips those buckets I talked about before back into place. Oddly enough, that is the exact phraseology that the reporter used when he was talking about this. It reverses the addicting mechanism that happens in the brain.

That would be a great thing. You go down a wrong road, you get all tangled up with substance abuse and there is a magic bullet and it cures you. Well, what's the point? You don't just sit there in the hospital waiting room chair saying, boy, I sure feel a lot better

now.

I mean, there's a reason. You want to go out now and live a life free from addiction, free from slavery. That's what we have to remember about the grace of God through Christ.

Why does this sermon and why does the Bible emphasize the resurrection of Christ? Because that's the point. The point is not, this is why Christians who are not Catholics don't put a crucifix up that has the body of Christ on the cross. It's the empty cross.

It's the empty tomb. It's the life that is ours. The death he died, he died to sin, Paul says in Romans 6. The life he lives, he lives to God.

And it's the life. It's after forgiveness. It's after cleansing.

It's after resurrection. And in a very real sense, it is the life you and I are going to live after resurrection. That is the point.

This is a brief time of training and preparation. This is our boot camp. We get wrapped up in it in the way that you go back and you look at a grade school playground.

Have you ever sat and watched, you know, sometimes I was riding my bike the other day and they were having a track meet and it just stopped me. I went over by the chain link fence sitting on my bike and just watched for about 15 or 20 minutes because it dawned on me that it has been 30 years since I went to a track meet. And I just about fell over in the street and thought, I can't be that old.

But this was 8th, 9th, 10th graders out there having a track meet and they were pole vaulting guys and sprinting guys. What do you call the hurdles? Doing the hurdles. But there were little groups, you know, standing around waiting.

And I remember what it was like. You go to a track meet and you have one event and the rest of the day you kind of goof off and it's like a big holiday at the fair. At least it was at our school, at our track meets.

And so these little groups are around. And I, you know, the little petty squabbles, you could see somebody getting into a pushing match here or girls gossiping and teasing some girl about her boyfriend over here. And it all seems so big and important and fills the entire landscape when you're in the 8th grade or the 9th grade.

As an adult, you look back on that and you think, boy, you know, if I was your age again, knowing what I know now, I wouldn't be wasting my time talking about these mundane things. If I was that healthy and that young and had that much energy, oh man, the things I could get done. You know, older and wiser and also, you know, weaker and lamer and unable to, that's why the, you know, the old thing is really true.

Youth is wasted on the young. I say, take the youth away from the young, give it to us.

We can do something with it because we're a lot smarter than they are.

But you just, you can't, you can't learn that when you're young. You think, oh, well, these old people, you know, what do they know? But the point is, you view things in a certain way and things fill your horizon. It's myopia.

It's all you can see. And we, if, just think, they've even made movies about this. Somebody transporting back in time, you know, Peggy Sue got married or whatever it was.

The gal goes back and she knows everything when she's old, but she's in her young body again. Well, you think people fantasize about this. Wouldn't it be great to be that smart? Well, listen, the word of God gives us the ability to do that.

Put yourself in the eternal future where your inheritance and your blessings and your rewards are based on what you did back in this life. Now come back to this life and say, what's really important? The squabble, the problem, the issue, the ambition, the goal, the details of this life, or that place I'm going to spend a thousand years, that place I'm going to spend an infinitude of millennia. If we can be smart eighth graders now and remember where we're going and what we're going to need when we get there, we won't waste our time.

That is the life. That's the gift that God gives us. It's the realization of the things that are ahead.

That's what Paul is talking about. He says, verse 38, let it be known to you, brethren. He says that this needs to be your knowledge set.

This needs to be what you base your thinking on. Let you know, we go through these little biblical phrases and they just kind of roll like water off a duck. Let it be known to you.

He's saying, look, this is the thing you need to think about. This is the knowledge to put in your head through this man. We're telling you about forgiveness of sins.

You can put sins behind you. You can get past them and live the new life. Die the death to sin, live the life to God by him.

Everyone who believes is justified. That means made righteous, guiltless, no penalty from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. By the law shall no flesh be justified.

Read Hebrews. Beware, therefore, first of all, he says, have this knowledge. Now he's saying, be careful, be careful.

Lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you. The prophets prophesied the

good news. They prophesied the fulfillment.

They also prophesied the penalty for failing to get the word, failing to act on this knowledge. Behold, you despisers marvel and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, even if one were to declare it to you. We were talking at the beginning tonight about somebody sitting and playing games in the middle of the highway and refusing to believe that there's any traffic, refusing to believe that there's any great semi tractor trailer bearing down on them at 75 miles an hour.

Paul says, hear this knowledge. And remember, the prophets prophesied the good news. And here's the fulfillment of it in Christ.

But remember, they also prophesied that a lot of people were not going to believe it. And you despisers are going to marvel and then perish. They're impressed, but they don't accept.

They are astonished, but they don't get the word. They can be struck blind like Bar Jesus, but all they're going to do is run around and say, somebody hold my hand like the Beatles. You can tell something was wrong with them.

So verse 42, when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Notice the Jews came out of the synagogue. How do they how do the Gentiles know what words were spoken? The Jewish people that are allowed in the synagogue come out and say, I never heard anything like that.

That's the best sermon I've heard since I've been in this two bit town. You know, usually they go in there and they drone on out of the law and the prophets. I finally heard something that makes good sense.

So they're talking, they're talking in the parking lot. You know, all the ones that had to wait to get a cigarette until the service was over out there lighting up. Boy, the Baptist church is big on that.

You know, people thought there was like, you know, burnt offerings going up outside the church. People looking over, the Methodists looking over, and they're like, wow, what's that column of smoke? And they bring back the bull and the ox and all that. It's just all the Baptists out there smoking.

I can say that because I was a Baptist. So anyway, the Jews come out of the synagogue and they're all talking about this. And there's a big hubbub and all the Gentiles that are outside are saying, hey, what's going on? We want to hear this same message.

So 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, to move forward in God's plan. On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy.

And that's the big problem right there. Filled with envy. Oh, look, everybody is excited about this new thing.

Filled with envy. This is people living in the self-centered universe. And now they feel that something is being taken from them.

They're no longer the biggest wheel on the block. Somebody else has a word that people are interested in. And so they're envious.

So now they contradict. Now they blaspheme. They oppose the things spoken by Paul.

Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said it was necessary. Notice, they did not grow meek. They did not grow conciliatory and compromising.

They didn't say, well, I understand your point. And I certainly can see how you could feel that way. And let's sit down and have a chat.

They grew bold and they said it is necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you Jews first. It is necessary. How does Paul know this? This is the Paul that's later going to write to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul knows Acts 1.8. You shall be witnessed to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. That's where it has to go first. 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. This doesn't mean they're looking at themselves saying, oh, I'm not worthy of everlasting life. They have brought judgment on themselves.

And it is going to cost them everlasting life. Behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us.

Now, interestingly, he quotes an Old Testament passage. This is Isaiah 42.6. I have set you as a light to the Gentiles. That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

Heos eschatu ges. Very same phrase we had in Acts 1.8. That you should be for salvation until the end of the world. I have set you as a light to the Gentiles.

That you should be for salvation until the end of the world. Salvation is of the Jews. The Lord Jesus Christ is Jewish.

The plan of God comes through Israel. You Jews should be for salvation until the end of

the world. Notice the sequence here in verse 46.

The word of God should be spoken to you first. This is a time reference. It comes to you first.

But since you reject it, we turn to the Gentiles. Because the Jewish nation and Jewish prophets and evangelists and apostles are a light to the Gentiles until the end of the world. First to the Jews, then to the Gentiles.

Until the end of the world. That's a time reference, not a space reference. 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. Well, in the time remaining, we will not be able to discuss those that had been appointed to eternal life. So that'll be a good place for us to begin next time.

But we have the chance to avoid the mistake that is made by the Jewish crowds who heard Paul preach on this day. Not just that Christ has come, but that Christ has brought life. Each day, you and I can either live in the world of death, or we can live in the world of life.

We partake of both. The Lord Jesus partakes of heaven and of deity, and he partakes of humanity. We partake of the fallen, and we partake of the divine.

And we choose what proportion we get of each. The message is a message of life. It's a message of resurrection.

It is a message of mercy from God to live this life, and to live it in a way that counts, in a way that's going to make a difference after we're raised, after the Lord sets up his kingdom, after heaven and earth have been rolled up like a scroll. What we do now isn't just coping with today's battles. It is establishing where we will be and what we will do in the infinitude of eternity to come.

It is hugely important for us to remember who we are and why we're here, and to live in that light, the life, the light that comes through Christ. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for illustrating these truths for us in the ministry of Paul.

We pray that God and the Holy Spirit will help us to remember what we have seen and heard, and to think about it and have it make a difference in the way we think and act in the days to come. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.