SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
13:39

DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Thirteen, Verses 1–52

Sent Out: A Light for the Gentiles — a praying church, a blinded sorcerer, a synagogue sermon, and a word that ran through a whole region

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

While a church at Antioch fasts and worships, the Holy Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul; on Cyprus a sorcerer goes blind and a Roman governor believes, and in Pisidian Antioch Paul preaches a risen Savior who frees from all things the Law could not — and when the synagogue pushes the word away, the Gentiles rejoice. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 13:1–52

sent · Cyprus · sermon · freed · Gentiles

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Six movements from the church at Antioch to the joy of new disciples in Pisidian Antioch

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"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." — Acts 13:38–39

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 13:1–52

Sent Out: A Light for the Gentiles — The Holy Spirit sends Barnabas and Saul, and the word of the Lord crosses from synagogue to Gentiles

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 13 in 6 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 13:38–39

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that ☆through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him ☆everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which ◷you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

† Before the Passage

Acts turns a corner here. Chapters 1–12 have followed the word from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria, mostly through Peter. Chapter 13 opens the second half of the book, where Luke follows Paul "to the remotest part of the earth" (1:8). The base is no longer Jerusalem but Antioch in Syria, the city where believers scattered by the persecution after Stephen first preached to Greeks, and where "the hand of the Lord was with them" (11:19–21). Barnabas fetched Saul from Tarsus to teach there for a year, and "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (11:25–26).

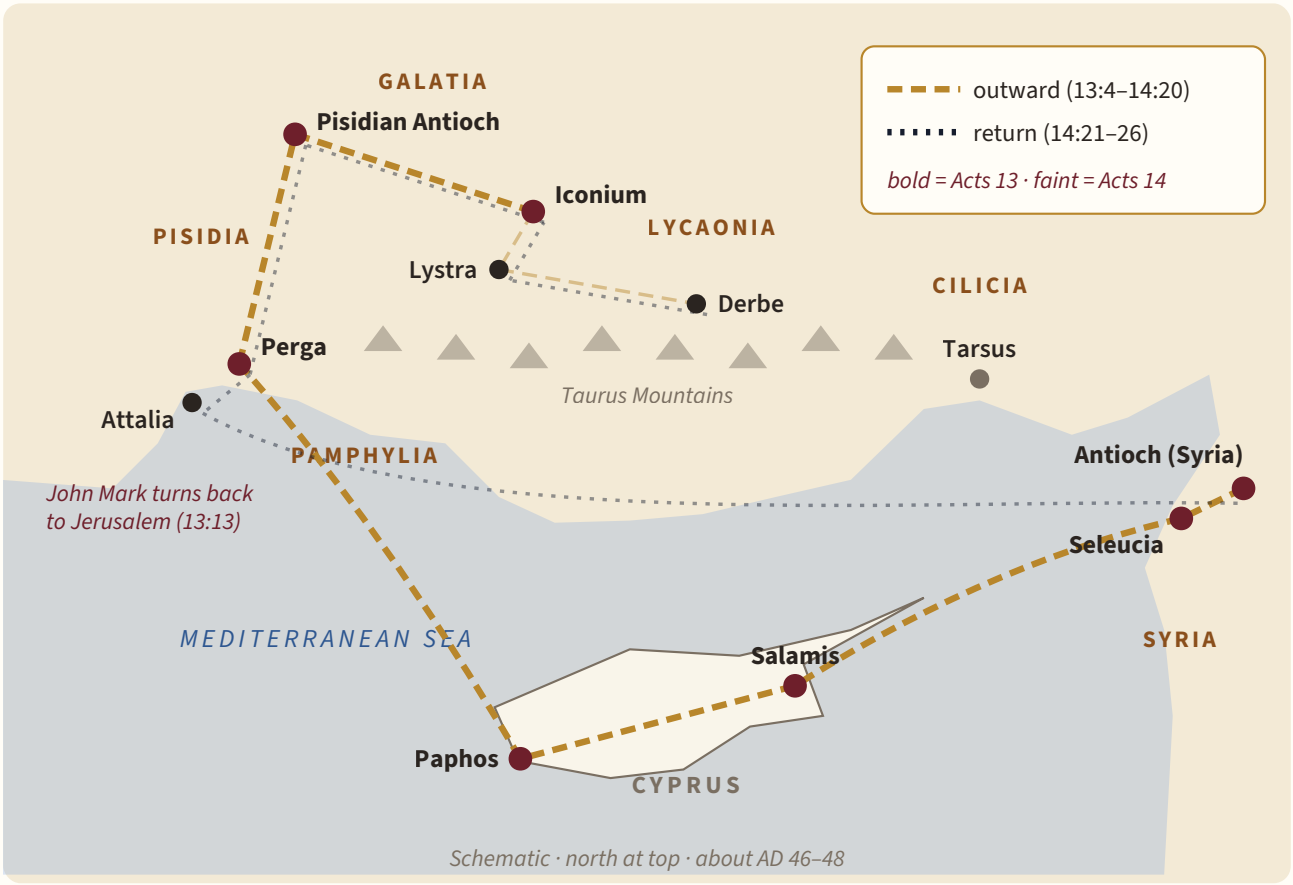
The leaders listed in verse 1 are a picture of what the gospel was already doing: Barnabas, a Levite "of Cyprian birth" (4:36); Simeon called Niger (Latin for "black"); Lucius from Cyrene in North Africa; Manaen, raised with Herod the tetrarch — the Herod who killed John the Baptist; and Saul, the former persecutor. From this

church the Holy Spirit sends out the first planned mission to the Gentile world. Barnabas and Saul take John Mark, who had come back with them from Jerusalem (12:25).

The route, usually dated about AD 46–48, runs from Antioch to its port at Seleucia, across to Barnabas' home island of Cyprus (Salamis in the east, Paphos in the west, the seat of the Roman proconsul), then north to Perga on the coast of Pamphylia and up over the Taurus range to Pisidian Antioch, a Roman colony on the high plateau. Chapter 14 carries on to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe and then home. Paul later reminds Timothy of "persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra" (2 Timothy 3:11).

The chapter's centre is Paul's first recorded sermon (vv16–41). It sounds like Peter at Pentecost and Stephen before the council: the history of Israel, David, a Savior from David's line, a cross and an empty tomb, and the Psalms that proved it — Psalm 2, Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16. Then it does something new: it offers a freedom "from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (v39), the first plain statement in Acts of the gospel Paul will set out in Galatians and Romans.

FIGURE · THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



Follow the gold line from Antioch in Syria across Cyprus to Perga and up to Pisidian Antioch — the ground of Acts 13; the faint legs and the dark return line belong to chapter 14.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:1–3

Set Apart for the Work

A praying church at Antioch, the Spirit's call, and hands laid on two men

> [1] *Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.* [2] *While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "△ Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* [3] *Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*
>
> ACTS 13:1–3

> *"and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."*
>
> ACTS 11:26

ἀφορίσατε

APHORISATE · "SET APART" · G873

From *aphorizō*, to mark off by a boundary, to separate. The Spirit's command is urgent (an aorist imperative, with the little particle *dē*: "now, then"). Paul later uses the same verb of himself — "set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1) and set apart "from my mother's womb" (Galatians 1:15). The former Pharisee (whose name may come from the Hebrew for "separated one") is now separated, not from sinners, but to them.

λειτουργούντων

LEITOURGOUNTŌN · "MINISTERING" · G3008

Leitourgeō, to perform a public service; in the Greek Old Testament it is the priests' service at the altar, and it gives English the word "liturgy." The call came while they were "ministering to the Lord and fasting" — not while they were planning a mission. Guzik: "This is the first job of any servant of God, to minister unto the Lord." Worship came first; the sending grew out of it.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notices the order of verse 2: the leaders were worshiping before anything was said about mission. "This is the first job of any servant of God, to minister unto the Lord." The call came to men already serving in their home church, and the church then fasted, prayed and laid hands on them. He also notices what they did not take: no committee, budget or strategy paper is mentioned — "Barnabas and Saul went out without any of these things, only with the call and power of the Holy Spirit."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Paul at Cyprus" (22 Aug 2004) Sproul dwells on the fact that the sending in Acts 13 is first the Spirit's and only then the church's. The church at Antioch fasted, prayed and laid on hands, but the power for the work had to come from God: "We can commission people, but we have no power." Verse 4 says the same thing in Luke's words — they went "being sent out by the Holy Spirit." A church that ordains and sends must never mistake its blessing for the power that does the work.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry admires the variety of gifts at Antioch and notes that the church did not send its men off coldly: "They prayed for them." The Spirit names the work as His own: "Christ's ministers are separated to him and to the Holy Ghost," and the call is a call to labour, not to honour — "Christ keeps no servants to be idle." The laying on of hands added no grace of its own; it solemnly set apart for the work men whom God had already chosen.

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:4–12

The Hand of the Lord on Cyprus

Synagogues in Salamis, a sorcerer at Paphos, and a Roman governor who believes

4 *So, △ being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*
5 *When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the ⟳ word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.* 6 *When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus,* 7 *who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the ⟳ word of God.* 8 *But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.* 9 *But Saul, who was also known as Paul, △ filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,* 10 *and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to ⚠ make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?* 11 *"Now, behold, △ the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.* 12 *Then ☆ the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*

ACTS 13:4–12

μάγος

MAGOS · "MAGICIAN" · G3097

The same word as the "magi" who came from the east to worship the newborn King (Matthew 2:1). The word could mean a wise man of the Persian priestly class or, as here, a practitioner of sorcery. Bar-Jesus ("son of Jesus/Joshua") was a Jew who sold spiritual power to a Roman official. Luke sets him against the apostles as Simon the magician was set against Philip and Peter in Samaria (8:9–24): the gospel keeps running into religion for sale.

διαστρέφων

DIASTREPHŌN · "MAKING CROOKED" · G1294

Diastrephō, to twist or distort; the interlinear glosses it "perverting." Elymas was "seeking to turn the proconsul away (*diastrepsai*) from the faith" (v8), so Paul charges him with twisting "the straight ways of the Lord" (v10) — the very ways Isaiah 40:3 and John the Baptist called Israel to make smooth. The punishment fits the sin: the man who twisted the way can no longer see the way, and must be led "by the hand" (v11; mist, *achlys*, G887).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the team began in the synagogues, and that the hard words to Elymas are Spirit-filled, not bad temper. "Paul was harsh in his confrontation against Elymas because the eternal destiny of the proconsul was at stake." The blindness was a sign as well as a judgment — temporary, a mercy that left room for repentance — but Guzik adds a sober note: "Sadly, we never hear of Elymas repenting, as Paul did." Paul too had once been struck blind and led by the hand.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Paul at Cyprus" sets the scene: Cyprus was Barnabas' home ground — "That island was in Paul and Barnabas' vision as they set sail" — and Sergius Paulus represented Rome itself: "Sergius Paulus was from the West." The judgment on the sorcerer was limited: "This would not be forever, but for a time during which he would be stricken with blindness." And Sproul insists the governor's faith rested on more than a spectacle: "He did not believe simply because he was an eyewitness of the judgment"; verse 12 says he was "amazed at the teaching of the Lord."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is encouraged by verse 4: "Their being sent forth by the Holy Ghost was the great thing that encouraged them in this undertaking." He reads Elymas as a pattern: "Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men of power," because if he holds them he holds many. Then Henry marks the change of name: "Saul (who is here for the first time called Paul) fell upon him for this with a holy indignation." From this point Luke puts Paul first, and Paul leads the mission.

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:13–25

Paul Stands Up in the Synagogue

John Mark turns back, the Law and the Prophets are read, and Paul tells Israel's story up to David's Son

13 *Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but* ⚠ *John left them and returned to Jerusalem*. 14 *But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.* 15 *After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."* 16 *Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:* 17 *"The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.* 18 *"For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.* 19 *"When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years.* 20 *"After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the*

> *prophet. 21 “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. 22 “After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, △ A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.’ 23 “From the descendants of this man, according to promise, △ God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, 24 after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 “And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’*
>
> ACTS 13:13–25

> *“But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.”*
>
> ACTS 15:38

FIGURE · PAUL’S FIRST RECORDED SERMON

PAUL’S SERMON IN THE SYNAGOGUE · ACTS 13:16–41

vv16–22	**GOD’S STORY** — chose the fathers · Egypt · wilderness · Canaan · judges · Saul · David
vv23–25	**THE SAVIOR PROMISED** — from David’s line, “a Savior, Jesus” · John: “I am not He”
vv26–31	**CROSS AND EMPTY TOMB** — rulers condemned Him · Pilate · the tomb · “But God raised Him”
vv32–37	**THE SCRIPTURES PROVE IT** — Psalm 2:7 · Isaiah 55:3 · Psalm 16:10 — David decayed; He did not
vv38–39	**THE OFFER** — forgiveness of sins · freed from all things the Law could not
vv40–41	**THE WARNING** — Habakkuk 1:5 — “Behold, you scoffers … and perish”

History leads to a Person; the Person leads to a choice — believe and be freed, or scoff and perish.

Read the bars from top to bottom: Paul walks the synagogue from Israel’s history to David’s Son, the empty tomb, three Old Testament texts, and then an offer and a warning.

παράκλησις

PARAKLĒSIS · "EXHORTATION" · G3874

"If you have any word of exhortation (*paraklēseōs*) for the people, say it" (v15). The word means a calling-alongside: encouragement, comfort, urging. The NASB renders it comfort 13 times, exhortation 7, encouragement 6. Barnabas had been nicknamed "Son of Encouragement" — the same word (4:36). Synagogue officials invited visiting teachers to speak after the readings; Sproul notes that "A rabbi with those credentials was automatically given an invitation to address the congregation."

ἐξελέξατο

EXELEXATO · "CHOSE" · G1586

Paul's first verb for God in Antioch is *eklegomai*, to pick out for oneself: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers" (v17). Sproul: "He started with the doctrine that many ministers flee from, the doctrine of election." Everything that follows in verses 17–22 is God acting — He chose, made great, led out, put up with, destroyed, distributed, gave judges, gave a king, removed him and raised up David. Israel's history is the record of God's initiative.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik does not pretend to know why Mark left — "We don't know exactly why John Mark went home to Jerusalem" — and lists possibilities: fear, the hard road over the mountains, a change of leadership from his cousin Barnabas to Paul. "Perhaps he was homesick." In the synagogue Paul begins where his hearers were, with their own history, and Guzik draws the point of it: "Jesus is the goal of history, and as we are in Jesus, we are in the flow of God's great plan of redemption."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Paul's Sermon at Antioch" (19 Sep 2004) Sproul is firm about Mark: "Luke does not tell us why he left, but he had signed up for the duration." In the synagogue Paul "gave a capsule summation of the history of redemption, beginning with the patriarchs," and he "started with the doctrine that many ministers flee from, the doctrine of election." On David: "David would not be satisfied with anything less than the heart of God." And he defines the gospel the way Paul preached it: "The gospel has to do with a proclamation of what happened in history in the person and work of Jesus."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is plain about Mark: "John Mark quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem, without the consent of Paul and Barnabas," perhaps because "either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother." "It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again" (15:38). In Paul's history lesson Henry hears humility for Israel: they should "infer hence that God was no debtor to them," for "Their deliverance out of Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, were types and figures of good things to come."

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:26–37

But God Raised Him

The message of this salvation: a cross, a tomb, and three Scriptures that prove the resurrection

26 *"Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation*
has been sent. 27 *"For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of*
the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. 28 *"And though they found no*
ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. 29 *"When they had carried out all that*
was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. 30 *"△ But God raised*
Him from the dead; 31 *and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to*
Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. 32 *"And we preach to you ☆ the good news of*
the promise made to the fathers, 33 *that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus,*
as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' 34 *"As for the fact that*
He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to ⇄ decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU
THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.' 35 *"Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW*
YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO ⇄ DECAY.' 36 *"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own*
generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent ⇄ decay; 37 *but △ He whom God raised*
did not undergo ⇄ decay.

ACTS 13:26–37

"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

PSALM 2:7

"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

PSALM 16:10

ἀνίστημι

ANISTĒMI · "RAISED UP" · G450

Verse 33 says God fulfilled the promise "in that He raised up (*anastēsas*) Jesus," and verse 34 repeats the verb with "from the dead." Readers differ on verse 33: some hear "raised up" as God bringing Jesus onto the stage of history as Messiah (as He "raised up" prophets and kings), others as the resurrection itself, since Psalm 2:7 is applied to the risen Christ (compare Romans 1:4). Either way Paul lands on the empty tomb: "But God raised Him from the dead" (v30, a different verb, *egeirō*).

διαφθορά

DIAPHTHORA · "DECAY" · G1312

Corruption, rotting — the breaking-down of a body in the grave. The noun appears only in Acts: twice in Peter's Pentecost sermon (2:27, 31) and four times here (vv34–37). Both apostles make the same argument from Psalm 16:10: David died and "underwent decay," so the Holy One who would not see decay must be Another — "He whom God raised did not undergo decay" (v37). Sproul: "His flesh was as secure and solid on the day of resurrection as it was on the day they buried Him."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik points to how much of Paul's sermon is simply events — a death, a burial, a resurrection, witnesses: "We should not miss an emphasis on events in Paul's preaching here; it is so evident that it can be missed." The rulers read the prophets every Sabbath and fulfilled them by condemning the One they spoke of. The cross was man's worst, the empty tomb God's answer: "But God was greater than man's sin and rebellion, and Jesus rose from the grave, winning over sin and death."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Christ and David" (3 Oct 2004) underlines the irony of verse 27: the rulers "fulfilled the very Scriptures they were reading by condemning the Son of God." Psalm 2 "is the Psalm that portrays a world in hostility against God," and in Isaiah 55 "God promised certain things to David, specifically that his kingdom would last forever." He makes Psalm 16 personal: "the physical decay of our body is inseparably related to the moral decay of our souls." David, "the great warrior-king of Israel," decayed; Jesus did not.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 26 as "To You" (9 July 1876): the gospel is not a message about others. "The word of this salvation is sent to every creature under heaven," he says, though "the great mass of mankind have not yet heard it" — and the hearer who has heard it is "put into a very responsible position." On verse 36 he preached what was published as "His Own Funeral Sermon": David served his own generation, and so must we, for "The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for all generations." "Do not want to die till you have done your work."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the Psalms as Paul did: "That the resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God," and that the promise of Psalm 16 "could not have its accomplishment in David, but looked forward to Christ." The phrase "no longer to return to decay" matters to him: "He rose to die no more." The sure mercies of David are sure because the Son of David lives forever.

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:38–41

Freed from All Things

Forgiveness proclaimed, a freedom the Law could not give, and a warning to scoffers

> 38 *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,*
> 39 *and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.*
> 40 *"Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:*
> 41 *'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'"*
>
> ACTS 13:38–41

> *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"*
>
> ROMANS 5:1

δικαιοῦται

DIKAIOUTAI · "IS FREED" · G1344

Dikaioō, to declare righteous — the verb of Romans and Galatians. The NASB renders it "justified" 24 times and "freed" 3 times; two of those three are here (v39, twice; the third is Romans 6:7). The KJV keeps "justified from all things." The Law of Moses could show sin and prescribe sacrifices, but it could not pronounce a sinner righteous before God; "through Him everyone who believes" is. This is Paul's first recorded use of the word in Acts.

καταφρονηταί

KATAPHRONĒTAI · "SCOFFERS" · G2707

Despisers, those who look down on something. Paul quotes Habakkuk 1:5 from the Greek Old Testament, which reads "scoffers" where the Hebrew has "among the nations." In Habakkuk the unbelievable "work" was God raising up the Babylonians to judge Judah; Paul warns that a greater work — the resurrection and the gospel going to the nations — can be heard and still despised. Henry: "Those that will not wonder and be saved shall wonder and perish."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik draws out the two halves of the offer. Forgiveness and justification are not the same thing: "Forgiveness takes care of the debt of sin, but justification puts a positive credit on our account before God." And neither can be earned: "We can never justify ourselves before God." What the Law could never do, faith in Jesus receives completely — "from all things." The warning of verse 41 is part of the same love: the work God is doing can be described plainly and still be refused.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul ("Christ and David") ties the resurrection directly to the offer: "with this triumph over death comes the forgiveness of sins." He hears the whole Pauline gospel in verse 39: "Paul, as he always does in the proclamation of the gospel, teaches with it the doctrine of justification by faith alone." In "Eternal Appointment" (10 Oct 2004) he turns to the Habakkuk quotation: Paul "warns the people about an impending day of doom for those who reject the gospel."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition of verse 38 ("The True Aim of Preaching") presses the size of the pardon: "When God pardons a person's sins, he pardons them all; he makes a clean sweep of the whole." Nor is it for sale: "It is a full pardon, and it is likewise a free pardon." That is why the preacher's whole aim is to let it "be known to you" — to say it plainly enough that a sinner can take hold of it today.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry puts verse 38 in the plainest words: "We have to tell you, in God's name, that your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven." Verse 39 shuts the other door: "It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses." And the warning is the reverse side of the offer: "Those that will not wonder and be saved shall wonder and perish."

VI
MOVEMENT

ACTS 13:42–52

A Light for the Gentiles

A city gathers, jealousy and joy, a turn to the nations, and the dust shaken off

42 *As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the*
next Sabbath. 43 *Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing*
proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.
44 *The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.* 45 *But when the Jews saw the*
crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were
blaspheming. 46 *Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be*
spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are
turning to the Gentiles. 47 *"For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE*
GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" 48 *When the Gentiles heard this, they*
began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life
believed. 49 *And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.* 50 *But the Jews incited the*
devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and
Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. 51 *But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against*
them and went to Iconium. 52 *And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

ACTS 13:42–52

"He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.""

ISAIAH 49:6

FIGURE · ONE WORD, TWO RESPONSES

ONE WORD, TWO RESPONSES · ACTS 13:42–52

THOSE WHO PUSHED IT AWAY		THOSE WHO RECEIVED IT	
v45	saw the crowds — filled with jealousy	v42	begging to hear it the next Sabbath
v45	contradicting, blaspheming	v43	many Jews and proselytes follow
v46	repudiate the word; judge themselves unworthy	v44	nearly the whole city assembles
v50	stir up prominent women and leading men	v48	Gentiles rejoice, glorify the word
v50	persecution — drove them out	v48–49	as many as appointed believed; word spreads

v51 they shook off the dust … v52 and the disciples
"were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"

The same word of the Lord met jealousy on one side and rejoicing on the other; notice that many Jews were among those who followed (v43).

τεταγμένοι

TETAGMENOI · "APPOINTED" · G5021

A perfect passive participle of *tassō*, to station, to set in order, to appoint — a word at home in military and official use. "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (v48). Sproul reads it as election: "Election is not by faith; it is to faith and unto salvation." Others take the passive as "disposed" or "lined up" for eternal life by a work of God already begun in them. Luke places it right beside verse 46, where the hearers "judge yourselves unworthy" — God's appointing and man's refusing stand side by side.

ζῆλος

ZĒLOS · "JEALOUSY" · G2205

Literally heat, boiling — the same word can mean good zeal or bitter envy. The interlinear glosses v45 "with envy." Luke used it of the high priest's party in 5:17. The crowds gathering to hear Paul made the synagogue leaders burn; the same crowds gathering made the Gentiles rejoice. Paul later hopes the Gentiles' salvation will make Israel jealous in a better way: "by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous" (Romans 11:11).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik says the crowd of verse 44 was drawn by more than a new speaker: "Yet there was not merely the power of novelty; there was more notably the power of the word of God." When the synagogue turned hostile, Paul moved on — "Paul showed wisdom in not spending all his time trying to persuade hardened hearts." And the chapter ends with joy in a hard place: "Paul and Barnabas had joy that contradicted their circumstances."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Eternal Appointment" is mostly about verse 48. The Jews "were filled with envy and jealousy," and Paul pointed the word outward: "Beyond the shadow of the synagogue, beyond the land of Israel, to the ends of the earth." On election he says the doctrine is "not hidden in some obscure, esoteric text," and that "Election is not by faith; it is to faith and unto salvation." Yet "That does not in any way minimize the responsibility of those who rejected what they heard." When they reached the border, "they shook off the dust and went somewhere else."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon is realistic about verse 45 — "There are some, whenever the gospel is preached, who do not like it" — and finds in verse 48 a comfort for preachers: "Oh, there is the comfort!" God has His people, and the word will find them. On verse 49 ("Gospel Missions," 27 April 1856) he insists God uses means — "We do not conceive that God will do his own work without instruments" — yet "The word is able to convert, just as extensively as God the Spirit pleases to apply it." "Mental power may fill a chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is struck that Gentiles begged for what the synagogue refused: "The Jews' leavings, nay, loathings, were their longings." The opposition followed a pattern: "they contradicted for contradiction-sake," and "Commonly those who begin with contradicting end with blaspheming." He keeps Luke's order — the word first to Israel, then to the nations — and lays the blame where Paul did: "Herein they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life."

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the Servant's light to the nations to Mark made useful again

> *"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*
>
> ACTS 1:8

> *"I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,"*
>
> ISAIAH 42:6

> *"Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David."*
>
> ISAIAH 55:3

> *"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."*
>
> ACTS 2:24

> *"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet."*
>
> MATTHEW 10:14

> *"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."*
>
> ROMANS 11:11

> *"Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 4:11

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads Paul's survey of Israel's history as a warning against pride of privilege: "Let not the Jews insist too much upon the privileges of their peculiarity." The same Scriptures that promised a Savior to Israel promised light to the nations, and Paul's turn to the Gentiles (v46) is obedience to Isaiah, not a break with him.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text with an eye to the church's practice; Sproul presses the doctrine — the Spirit's power, the history of redemption, justification by faith alone, election; Spurgeon preaches the offer to whoever is listening; Henry turns each scene into counsel. They read verse 48 differently in emphasis, and none of them softens verse 39: freedom from all things comes through Christ alone.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The church sends	Worship is the first job; they went with only the Spirit's call and power.	We can commission, but we have no power — the Spirit sends.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	They prayed for them; Christ keeps no servants idle.
II · Cyprus	Harsh because the proconsul's soul was at stake; Elymas never repents.	Rome meets the gospel; blindness for a time; faith in the teaching.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Satan is busy with great men; Saul is first called Paul.
III · Israel's story	Why Mark left is unknown; Jesus is the goal of history.	Mark signed up for the duration; Paul began with election.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Mark's fault — we shall hear of it again; God no debtor.
IV · But God raised Him	Events are the sermon; God was greater than man's sin.	They fulfilled the Scriptures they read; His flesh did not decay.	"To you" is this word sent; serve your generation, then sleep.	Resurrection proves the Son; He rose to die no more.
V · Freed from all things	Forgiveness clears the debt; justification credits the account.	Justification by faith alone; a day of doom for scoffers.	God pardons all — a full and a free pardon.	Your sins may be forgiven; the Law could never justify.
VI · Jealousy and joy	Not novelty but the word; joy that contradicted circumstances.	Election is to faith, not by faith; the rejecters are responsible.	Some never like it — but "there is the comfort!"	The Jews' loathings were the Gentiles' longings.

ACTS 13:1–52 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The mission was born in worship.** The call came "while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting" (v2). Guzik: "This is the first job of any servant of God, to minister unto the Lord." GUZIK
- **The church sends, but the Spirit empowers.** Antioch laid on hands (v3); Luke says they went "being sent out by the Holy Spirit" (v4). Sproul: "We can commission people, but we have no power." SPROUL
- **The man who twisted the way lost his sight.** Elymas tried to "turn" (*diastrephō*) the proconsul and to "make crooked the straight ways of the Lord" (vv8, 10) — and was led by the hand, as Saul once was (9:8). THE GREEK
- **A quitter is not finished.** Henry: "It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again." Mark left at Perga (v13) and split Paul and Barnabas (15:38–39) — and years later Paul wrote, "he is useful to me for service" (2 Tim 4:11). HENRY
- **The gospel is news about what God did.** Sproul: "The gospel has to do with a proclamation of what happened in history in the person and work of Jesus." Guzik: the emphasis on events "is so evident that it can be missed." SPROUL
- **David decayed; Jesus did not.** *Diaphthora* occurs only in Acts (2:27, 31; 13:34–37). Psalm 16 could not be about David, who "underwent decay" (v36). Henry: "He rose to die no more." THE GREEK

- **Freed from all things.** *Dikaioō* — the NASB's "freed" here is Paul's word for justification. Guzik: "Forgiveness takes care of the debt of sin, but justification puts a positive credit on our account before God." GUZIK
- **The pardon is full and free.** Spurgeon: "When God pardons a person's sins, he pardons them all; he makes a clean sweep of the whole." SPURGEON
- **God appoints, and men refuse.** "Judge yourselves unworthy" (v46) stands two verses from "as many as had been appointed" (v48). Sproul: "Election is not by faith; it is to faith," yet it does not "minimize the responsibility of those who rejected." THE TEXT
- **Joy in a hard place.** Driven out of the district, the disciples "were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (v52). Guzik: "joy that contradicted their circumstances." GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **The call came while the leaders were worshiping and fasting, not while they were planning (13:2). What would it look like for me to put ministering to the Lord ahead of my plans this week?**

This is the first job of any servant of God (Guzik).

13:1–3

2 **Elymas tried to keep a seeking man from the faith. Who in my life is standing between someone and Jesus — and could it ever be me?**

Satan is in a special manner busy with great men (Henry).

13:6–12

3 **John Mark quit at Perga, and Paul later called him "useful." Where have I quit, and what would it take to get back in the work?**

It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again (Henry).

13:13; 15:37–39; 2 Tim 4:11

4 **Paul told the gospel as history — what God did. If I had three minutes, how would I tell what God has done in history and in my life?**

The gospel is a proclamation of what happened (Sproul).

13:23–33

5 **Paul says believers are freed "from all things" the Law could not free them from. What am I still trying to fix by my own law-keeping instead of trusting Christ?**

We can never justify ourselves before God (Guzik).

13:38–39; Rom 5:1

6 **Some heard and were jealous; others heard and rejoiced. What does my response to God's word this week look like — and where do I find joy when things go hard?**

Joy that contradicted their circumstances (Guzik).

13:44–52

Acts 13 begins with a few men worshiping in Antioch and ends with disciples full of joy in a city that threw their teachers out. In between, the Spirit sends, a sorcerer is blinded, a quitter goes home, and Paul preaches a risen Savior through whom "everyone who believes is freed from all things." That word is sent to you; believe it, and then carry it to someone else.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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