

The First Missionary Journey

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[0:00] Wow, just what you prayed there at the end, that we are filled with joy when we respond! As we were worshipping, I was reminded of one of my favourite books. It's called The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, The Horse. If you've heard me talk about it, Queenie's nodding because it's her favourite book. You've bought 10, 20 copies over the years, at least, I'm sure.

It's just these bite-sized quotes. I'm not a very intellectual person, so I need to read cartoon pictures with short sentences, and there's one page that says this, one of the greatest freedoms we have is how we react to things. And as we were singing, I was like, God, you're so good. I was like, why do you have us sing that song to you, God? Where's that coming from? Are you kind of self-centred and narcissistic, and you want us to focus on how good you... And then I realised, wow, when we do that, when we respond to his goodness, we are just filled with joy. I don't know what you've been going through, and I've been at a conference this week, a little bit under the weather, but being filled with joy because I've had friends and colleagues from all around the world, from young life, and that verse, Hebrews 12, keeps popping up, that song keeps popping up, so turn your eyes to Jesus, and why? Why does he say look at him and not at anything else? Because he says when you look at anything else, when you worship anything else, when you focus on anything else, those things all have the power to consume you, to corrupt you, but if you look at me, I am the only one who can complete you. And that's what he's saying, and when we focus on him, I think that's why we gather here, right? That's the first one, that we would know him and that we would enjoy him, that there would be joy in what we're doing here, and then we respond out of that joy. And that's really what it's all about, and it's just so great to see all these faces that I am growing and growing to love, that we get to do live together. Or just a slight update, I see Hank and Agnes here, so it reminds me to remember.

We have completed signing the agreement on the fifth floor, so that's done. We have got contractors in giving us quotes, and we've chosen one, so that's done. So now we are putting in a kind of application to the building to let us start working, and so hopefully in a month or two or three, we will be able to worship downstairs, which will be great. We'll have a bit more space than this, and the kids will be able to be released from those rooms of chaos as well. So that's just a little update. My prayer is that we'll have a wonderful Christmas service down there at the very latest. That's what I'm hoping. But just know that it is happening, things are happening behind the scenes. There are lots of WhatsApp groups and lots of chats that are talking about this. So I just thank you for bearing with us as we pile on top of each other. But we pile on top of each other, we gather because we're responding to the gospel.

And I hope that's why we're here. Those gathering statements, we just keep reminding ourselves of that. And then I say, let's gather, but then let's scatter. Because we don't want this place to be too comfortable. We don't want those couches to be too comfortable, because if you end up staying on that couch, then the good news doesn't get to be spread to other people. And so we've been going through the book of Acts, and we've been just seeing time after time from Acts 6, when they chose some deacons to help distribute food. And then one of them gets killed, but his face is just glowing just before he gets killed. Stephen, why?

[3:16] Because his eyes are on Jesus. And then in Acts 8, you see Philip just go from Samaria and then go to meet the Ethiopian, and he is just filled with joy and bringing joy to the city of Samaria. Acts 9, Paul responds and sees the glowing light of Jesus and is blinded, but then is completely converted. Acts 10, Peter is praying. Cornelius is praying. And then Jesus encounters them, and they are converted. The story just continues. Acts 11, they get to Antioch, and you see Gentiles, people who weren't Jews, not the originally chosen group, not the OGs, but the OGs turned the gospel down. So now it goes to the Gentiles, and now phase 3 kicks in where we are

going towards the ends of the earth. And of course, last week, Gabe preached so wonderfully well for us on Acts 12, where you saw Herod respond poorly to the good news. He responded with pride, and it didn't end well. And yet you see Peter just humbly just walking through door after door after door. And now we reach Acts 13, where actually the church itself is really starting to grow. And before we read the word of God here, I want to ask you a question. How are you responding? What is your response to the gospel right now? How have you been responding? Maybe you've been a Christian for, I don't know,

Hank, how long have you been a Christian for? 45 years. Wow. And so whether you've been a Christian for 45 years, or whether you are not yet a Christian, is how are you responding to this good news? First of all, in your own heart, and then to the mission of actually keeping this news as news, because it only stays news when you keep passing it on. Otherwise, it just becomes stale, and it just becomes within you. How are you responding to the good news? We see here something is really interesting that happens is Paul, Barnabas, Peter, Cornelius, they keep responding, and they keep acting, putting it into action. You might sit here and go, well, okay, I kind of want to. I have kind of become a Christian, a bit of a lukewarm one, to be honest, because I'm so distracted and so busy with my life here in this city. But I am trying to respond to him. But James, what you're saying, I'm okay with the gathering. You're actually already quite lucky that I'm gathering here at church today, because I used to be able, I used to be doing it online during COVID, and that was much easier. But now I'm actually here, so I'm responding in some way. But the scattering part, where you're saying that I have to go and share with Jesus, share people about Jesus, oh, that's hard. And I would say, if you feel insecure about that,

I'm going to challenge you and encourage you at the same time. I'm going to pat you on the back and then slap you at the same time and say, actually, that insecurity that you have is actually pride. Because actually, pride and insecurity are the same thing, in my eyes. It's just a continuum. It's just a loop. Think of the most, and I've said this before, think of the most proud person that you know, the one who feels as though they have to tell you everything about everything they've done, where they studied, everyone they know. At their heart, what are they? Insecure. Because they're trying to show you that they belong, that they want you to see them. And someone who's insecure, or if you say, well, I can't do that. I can't come up and open up the Bible and talk. I just don't know enough. Well, actually, I would say, well, actually, you're prideful too. But because who said anything about that you're the one who's doing it? Have we learned anything from the book of Acts? Not the acts of the apostles, but the act of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. All of this is the Holy Spirit. And you will see this again and again. And it always seems like, wait, this is getting a bit tedious. The Word of God.

Why do you keep reminding us that it's the Holy Spirit that's doing this stuff? It's because, well, I don't know about you, but for me, I always forget. I always think it's me that's doing it. But I don't think that's what Peter felt. I don't think that's what Paul felt. I think they were just like, what is God doing? What is the Holy Spirit doing? I would love to just follow and just go along with him. And you see it here in the chapter 13. And actually, the mission starts, actually, I've got a, I just wanted to briefly introduce you to, I've got a group of friends here, all from Young Life in different parts, from Latin America, from Africa, and from Europe.

There's been a global leaders conference where all the leaders of Young Life get together to talk about, well, just how to continue to share the good news and share the mission. And we've been talking a lot about how to do that, how to strategize, how to plan. Of course, the other evening, we had a mentor of mine come and speak to us and kind of blew all that out the window. Because the whole goal is to keep your eyes on Jesus. And it's fascinating. You see it aligned here that the strategy and the mission of the kingdom of God moving starts with a church service. And I want to challenge you here today. You may have just showed up because it's what you do.

[8:10] It's part of your muscle memory now. But what if God showed up today and spoke to you and said, I want you to do something? One, would you hear it? And two, would you respond to it?

My prayer is that now, not all of us are going to get that. Not everyone gets it here. But can we be prepared? Can we be prepared for the living God who's right here now, probably sitting next to me here to speak to us and for us to respond? On that note, I'm going to invite us to stand for the word of the Lord. And I'm going to ask, actually, ask my friend Kathy from Canada to come and read it to us. Acts chapter 13, verse 1 to 12.

All right. Hello. Okay. Acts 13. Now, now they were in the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, a lifelong friend of Herod, the Tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them. Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they had John to assist them. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus.

He was with the procouncil, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elimus, the magician, for that is the meaning of his name, opposed them, seeking to turn the procouncil away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, You son of the devil, 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. Then the procouncil believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. The word of God. Praise be to God. Thank you, Kathy. Please take a seat.

Holy Spirit, we pray, as you were there at that time in that church service, we know that you are here. And you've called us to be set apart. Lord, we are ready. Would you speak? Your servants are listening.

[11:38] We seek to respond to you in any and every way that you call us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So, the church starts to grow in Antioch, the city that's so connected. And actually, it's beautiful just to have friends come and, I know we have Young Life, we have Bible Project friends coming here, and it would have felt a little bit like this. A group of people gathering in one place, and then visitors coming in as well. And actually, you see here later in this chapter, that actually, then they were, Paul and Barnabas would visit different churches, and then they would be asked to speak. Now, whether they were received well or not is what we're going to find out, but that is how it would have felt.

And so, they're in this church service, and it starts out, and I'm just going to go through verse by verse. And so, if you have your Bibles, remember, only paper Bibles. Mrs. Brown, do you have your paper Bible with you? You don't. Every time you...

Never mind. We'll leave it there. 52 verses. So, I'm going to have 52 points this morning, but we're just going to go through each one. First, now there were a church in the Antioch, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manine of a lifelong friend of Herod, the Tetrarch, and Saul.

Talking about different people in the church, I was like, why are you writing this list, Luke? I think he's telling us again that, hey, this church was eclectic. It was a mixed bag of people from all over, of different kinds of races and cultures.

[13:06] And you hear this time and time again, and later in Acts 16, you'll see the birth of the Church of Philippi, and again, a random collection of people. There's a prison officer, there's a slave girl, there's a businesswoman, and they're all sat together in the same room.

This is really interesting to me, because how often do we go looking for churches to find the people who look like us, sound like us, and basically think like us? And then we're looking for small groups that I need to find people who I vibe well with, who are in the same stage in life as I, who are single like me, who are married like me, who are married for five years like me, who are married for 25 years like me, who have children who are newborn like me, who have children who are just about to enter the teenage years like me, who have adult children like me, and you wonder, oh, I don't know if I saw that in the early church. And I'm not here saying, hey, actually, those complaints are invalid, because I think there is something about doing life with a group of people who truly understand where you're coming from. I get that.

But there's also this beautiful chance where you're talking to someone who is from a different place, different country. My friend Power here serves in Africa and is the lead for Zimbabwe, and he's going to be developing Young Life in Nairobi and in Cape Town, and I'm like, God, him and I don't

look alike, don't think the same way. And if I'm honest, it's harder talking to him than talking to my brother, who grew up in the same house as me. But he's so much better and smarter and better looking than my brother. There's something there that really blesses me.

There's something beautiful about being with different people, and so there's that balance, and I get it. But if you're sat here looking around at this church and going, there's no one who is like me here, I'll say then, perfect, you're in the right place. You are representing you.

The church of God is a mosaic of different kinds of people, not just one copy and paste across the whole land. I think that's why Luke is showing that to us here. And verse 2, while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them.

[15:11] I would love that. I would love that for me, and I would love that for you. Well, when we're worshipping and praying, suddenly God says, all right, Josh Shum and Josh Piano, set them apart.

They're going to head to Latin America to serve. That'd be so clear. But yet, that's often not what happens. What happens afterwards, they hear that, and then after fasting and praying, they lay their hands on them and set them off. This tells me one thing.

The mission of God is not ours. We did not invent the mission of God. David Platt says this, missioning, just being missionaries or just pursuing and growing the mission is not our idea. It's not because we're doing it out of the goodness of our own hearts.

This is God's idea. And we're just simply just going along for the ride. You know, and for those of us, maybe not for the average person who's working in an office and just trying to figure out how to involve Jesus in your life.

For those of us who have given our lives up to trying to follow, we're trying to think, well, what's the strategy? How do we do this? For a few years, I was strapped in fear of the verse, without vision, people perish.

[16:19] And so I kept thinking, what's my vision? What's my strategy to go and spread the gospel? Until I found out that passage in Proverbs 29 isn't talking about my own vision and my own strategy. It's without prophetic vision, people lack restraint.

Without a visual on God, without seeing God himself, you won't know where to go. You will lack focus, is what it's actually saying. The first kickoff of missions committee meeting here was through prayer and fasting.

That was it. Francis Chan says this, we've made the great commission about our strategies, but the early church knew it was the spirit's work. They just obeyed.

Tozer says the spirit himself is the very strategy of God. That's it. Do we as a group come together enough to worship and pray and fast and go, God, where do you want to send us?

And it will all be to different places. Paul and Barnabas get sent here. Josh and Danny get sent there. And that's the beauty of it. As followers of Christ, we're following.

[17:28] Yet so often we think, okay, as leaders, we have to make up where we're going. We have to decide, no, no, no. If you look at the leaders here, they were simply following. And so they go.

Well, actually, after that, they hear that and they continue to then fast and pray and then they lay their hands on them and then they are sent off. Verse two says, the Holy Spirit says.

In verse four, so being sent out by who? Not by the church. By the Holy Spirit. Again, so it's, can I, have I said that enough? Did I say that today? It's all about the Holy Spirit. It's all about God.

It's all about going, God, where do you want to send me and will you come with me? And so they go, verse four, and they actually, they start their missionary journey. Something else here. Acts nine, which was only three, four chapters ago, that's when Saul was converted.

We think, sometimes we look at this, we read this, all the highlights of it and we think immediately he then went to his first missionary journey. He spent about 10 years. He went home and he was just mulling over the scriptures.

[18:25] He was mulling over his encounter for 10 years before it was time to go on this first missionary trip. Sometimes we're just in a rush. Sometimes we want out of our eagerness, out of our passion for God and yet here we see Paul waits 10 years before God sends him out.

And so he goes and they go on this little journey. They go on this little road trip and they go to Cyprus first and then what I'm going to focus on today is actually as they share the gospel, there are different reactions to the gospel and I think they are the different reactions that we will see today also.

Actually, just as a show of hands, who's ever attempted to share the gospel with someone who is not a Christian? Can you just put your hand? Amazing.

I was so afraid that there'd be five people and they'd be all in this corner. Can we just see that again and then just look around?

If you've ever tried to share the gospel, that is so harmony. That is it. If you haven't put your hand up, don't worry.

[19:38] You will put your hand up at some point because as long as you're open, God will use you. But I want to warn you today, when you do do that or those of us who have done that, we often receive with different responses.

Pastor Gabe, when you've shared the gospel, what responses have you had? Sometimes people say, like, I don't believe. Yeah. It's like, okay, that's good that you believe this. That's good for you. But, you know, I'm happy living my life. Yeah. It's a cool story, bro. Someone, yeah, but it's for you, but it's not for me. I don't believe. And then, or just, I just don't care.

Shigala, what about you? When you share the gospel, what reactions have you received? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, there she goes, Shigala, talking about that Jesus again.

Wouldn't it be amazing if Shigala made it into the Bible and the one line of descriptor for her was she just kept talking about Jesus. Wouldn't that be cool? Wouldn't that be cool of all of us? Caleb, what about you?

[20:45] Indifference. Indifference. I think that's probably the biggest one. And I actually think that might be the most dangerous one. When they're kind of like, hmm, okay.

And we move on. And then we're, because sometimes I find I get, I do better, I mean, I've told you before when I argue with my wife, I get smarter and smarter and wittier and wittier when the fight gets more and more heated.

Sometimes I find when I get more resistance, I know what to say more, or at least I know what not to say more. But when it's indifference, when there's nothing to bounce off, it's kind of like, hmm. Well, we see here that actually there are lots of different kinds of responses.

The first one is a guy called Bar-Jesus. Ironically, that means the son of Jesus, but Luke does tell us another name, which is Elimas, which means magician. So they go to Cyprus and they start sharing the gospel there in the synagogue.

Again, Paul and Barnabas at this point, their strategy, Holy Spirit sends them, but where do they go when they turn up to a new town? What do you do? Well, first of all, I'll find where the best place to have noodles is.

[21:48] Once I've found out where the noodles are, I'll have noodles, and then for them, they will then head to the synagogue. That is the first place they go. Why? Because the gospel, the message will come through the Jews. And so, okay, I'm going to go and speak to whoever will listen in the synagogue because that's what they do.

They get there and they see two guys. They see two people. The first guy that Luke talks about here is the false prophet Bar-Jesus, also known as Elimas, and the other is the proconsul, the governor of Cyprus, basically, Sergius Paulus.

I'll talk about Bar-Jesus first. His name is Elimas, the magician. Often in those days for powerful people, they would surround themselves with, well, yes men, and they would also surround themselves with sorcerers.

Magicians. Why? To tell them the future. Hey, tell me, mirror, mirror on the wall. Tell me how I will continue to be the most powerful of them all. And so these magicians would stay around them and whisper into their ears and say, Bar-Jesus, one of these people.

And so you can imagine he was very hostile to Paul and Barnabas. He was like, do not come near my territory. This is how I make a living, talking to this governor, trying to strike fear into him so he can remain in power so that I can remain in power.

[22:58] And so I can live a life of money and wealth and fame. And so Elimas goes to them and actually what he does, he does something in verse 8 and he opposes them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

So he's trying to completely sow deceit into this conversation right here. But on the other hand, there is the governor, Sergius Paulus, who, again, I would love to be described as this, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

This guy was smart and this guy was hungry and this guy was powerful. So he hears about Paul and Barnabas, hey, can you come and tell me about this because I've heard that some things are happening here.

Would you tell me what you are talking about? The magician next to him goes, don't. Don't listen to them. It's false. This tells me one thing. When we go and share the gospel, we will have opposition. You will. Every time you try and stand up, Ephesians 6, talking about the spiritual warfare that happens, what's the thing that is that just stand, just remain firm and stand and the wind will blow and the resistance will come.

[24:06] So let's not be surprised when that comes in my earliest. So when Christine and I, we first decided we're going to quit our jobs and go into ministry. In that moment, in those first few months, we just kept getting wave after wave of attack of different kinds of things.

And on one hand, you know what, God, I don't, I don't, I actually don't know if this is worth it. I think it might actually, maybe I'll just go back. Maybe I'll just lie back down again. It's like if you're standing in a typhoon, maybe it's easy just to lie down and just let it go over you.

And then Ephesians 6 just tells you, stand, stand and stand. We will get opposition. This has happened multiple times here, especially when I invite friends and who, who come and share the word with me and that week is just a terrible week.

Why? Nothing, nothing special, but other than just to distract, discourage, divide. Be prepared. So I hope you are ready for this as you put, if you put up your hand or you will put up your hand or you pray that one day you'll be able to put up your hand that you will have shared the gospel.

Just be prepared. That isn't always easy. In fact, you will have opposition. Even like here, you see that happening. And of course, it's not even Paul. Jesus himself says, blessed are you when others persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you.

[25:19] So I don't want to, I don't want to oversell it in a way that's false as well because it is good and it's just beautiful when you see people responding to the good news of Jesus. But there is, there is, it often gets harder before it gets better.

And we see that here. But, whilst there are people who are opposing, there are also people who are genuinely hungry. This intelligent, powerful man, hungry for God.

Can we just appreciate Sergius Paul is here? He didn't have to do this. He's already got all the power. He's the governor. He's, he's in charge of this whole island. He doesn't need to seek a higher power.

Especially, what it would do to him in front of his colleagues. In front of the empire. And yet, here he is saying, you know what, I just want to know the truth.

And it continues to reaffirm that message that even though you have everything that you think you want, you get to the end and you realize, oh actually, there's still something more. And I think Sergius Paul is exactly in that space. I have everything I need, yet I still don't have the one thing that I need.

[26:20] And so there will be people who are hungry. There will be people who are asking questions. There will be people who are watching us. Because how else did he hear about them?

Be prepared for all kinds of responses. Whether those who are opposing you or those who are actually hungry and wanting to ask you. And then the most crazy thing happens, verse 9.

Saul looks at Elimas and says this, You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight path 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. And immediately, mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.

Isn't it ironic that only a few chapters later, Saul, who was blinding himself as a sign and a symptom of his own spiritual blindness is now dishing it out?

[27:22] I like to think that actually Saul, and he says it's only for a time. I'm almost like, I hope Saul's praying for this guy going, Hey, you don't know now. Once you know, you're going to know.

But don't worry, you're going to be blind for a few days just like me. We don't actually hear what happens to Elimas after this. But in that, can you just see the just radical transformation when someone meets Jesus? The courage that it takes now, hey, he's calling it out.

So this is something else that we have to do. When we are sharing the gospel with people, this is my own personal experience, when I'm trying to share the gospel with Trevor, there'll actually

always be voices on either side.

It's our job to discern what the Spirit wants us to do in that moment because actually everyone here needs Jesus. Everyone here needs to hear the gospel. But sometimes there will be truths that will come out that are just so piercing and so destructive to the good news that we actually have to call out.

Do we have the courage to do that? And honestly, this, of course, I'm not saying anyone should go out now and find someone and call them the son of the devil. That's not what I'm saying.

[28:25] But how could this look? This could look like when you're in the office and someone's asking Kenneth, hey, Kenneth, like, bankers aren't usually kind and you didn't used to be kind, but now you're a little bit kind.

Why are you kind? And then Kenneth will go, well, I still want to make as much money as I can and have my business go well, but actually, ultimately, I trust that God is in control. And ultimately, it's not about money.

Someone on the side will then say, that's a load of rubbish. Money is the only thing that makes the world go around. And then, do we have the courage in that moment to go, actually, that's not true. Actually, I don't believe that. Respectfully, humbly. I don't believe that because I see people who have all the money in the world, they are just, their lives are just completely broken.

They're not happy. They're not satisfied. And I believe that the love of money is the root of all evil. Are we willing to stand up and say it in the most, I mean, Jesus, John 1, filled with grace and truth.

[29:30] Can we do the same is all we're really looking for here. So Paul confronts him and the guy gets blind, again, just a symptom of his spiritual blindness here. But we see here that actually the gospel is for everyone, even the Gentiles and even the elite.

Even the elite. Actually, in Hong Kong, we have something which is we are surrounded, of course, by capitalism and money and you see all these people of influence. And sometimes you think, well, how about we go to the people of influence?

Maybe they will change the world and sometimes I'm resistant to that because, well, Jesus didn't choose the people of influence, he just chose anyone. But it doesn't mean the people of influence are excluded from the gospel either. In fact, they have their role to play.

The Ethiopian, the CFO of Ethiopia was converted by Philip, by the Holy Spirit. he probably goes back to Ethiopia and continues to spread the gospel in the chambers of the queen.

We all have our role to play whether we are elite or not. And you see, when he's preaching, he's really preaching about one thing, Jesus. So they finish one place, oh, the proconsul, the governor, looks at the magician and goes, oh my goodness, he's blind.

[30:39] And there's two things. One, he's astonished by that power. He's like, did you just, how did you just do that? There's something here that I don't understand. And second, he's astonished by the teaching.

What would have been the teaching? The teaching would have been just only one thing, Jesus, about who Jesus is. And you see a glimpse of that as we move on into the next passage. So after that, they then move on to Perga.

Perga from there in Pamphylia. And then they go, what do they do again? They go into the synagogue again. This is just, that's what they do now. This is the basically laying down the strategy for them, which is to go and speak to the Jews.

And so they go into the synagogue. They're noticed by the people in the synagogue. And then the people in the synagogue, hey, would you like to come up and share a little bit? And then Paul goes, well, I don't mind if I do. Because actually, I've been waiting 10 years for this.

I've been studying my whole life, the scriptures. And I was blind the whole time until 10 years ago. And now I want to show you. So he jumps into a sermon and you'll probably be mildly relieved that I'm not going to go through the sermon verse by verse.

[31:40] But what he does in this sermon, he splits it into three parts. He does a Tim Keller three-point sermon. And the first point, he says, actually, I need you to remind you about God's faithfulness to Israel, the covenant that he had for you guys.

And he mentions some key people. Of course, he talks about the wilderness here. We're in verse 18 now. And for about 40 years, he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them the land as an inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. I'm an impatient person, so this speaks to me all the time. I respond to Jesus and I want results and I want fruit immediately.

And yet, Saul meets Jesus, goes home for 10 years to study, finally goes on his journey and then things happen and he preaches the sermon and he reminds them, hey, the Israelites were out there for 450 years before they got what God promised.

40 years of just wandering around. And he goes through and he reminds them of this and he talks about Samuel, he talks about David, the son of Jesse after God's own heart and then he talks about John the Baptist and what he's doing, he's simply reminding them of Israel's history and then he's saying, actually, you know this history as well as I do but the one part you don't know is that actually Christ is the hinge of the history.

[33:01] Christ is that moment where things turn. God had a covenant with you guys and you kept messing up over and over and over again and you had no way of saving yourself and then one finally who came who had clean hands and a pure heart and he comes and he ascends the hill and he dies for us and sacrifices for us so that now we through him have access to the Father because of his spirit.

And so that's what he's trying to, so he says, I know what you know, Moses, Abraham, David, Samuel, I know all this stuff, I know you do too but you're missing the final piece that makes it all work together.

Jesus, I met him, I met him 10 years ago, I was trying to kill his people but then I realized when I met him that I was actually trying to persecute him because he told me so and then I changed my life completely around and please don't call me Saul anymore, call me Paul because that's my mission now to the rest of the world because I'm going to be sharing the gospel to the ends of the earth just like Jesus told me so, I need to tell you about Jesus is what his sermon was about.

He gives this lightning tour of the history of the Bible and points it all to Jesus and when he talks about Jesus and this is actually you and I can learn from this, he then goes into the Bible.

He goes into the Bible and he actually brings up three different passages from the Old Testament. Remember, Paul did not have the New Testament, he wrote a lot of the New Testament but he didn't have it himself, right? So he would have just had the Old Testament that he's been studying for the whole of his life and he picks out some key passages that he wants to highlight to people and I want to quickly show you those things because it will make sense and we will then be able to apply it.

[34:36] So the first thing he does when he talks about Jesus, he brings up Psalm 2 which is in Acts 13 verse 32, 33. You are my son, today I have begotten you. So the first thing he talks about is the identity and the divinity of Jesus.

He's like, this isn't just a nice guy. Keller said this, you cannot just say that Jesus is an interesting guy. You can't stop there. He's either Lord of all or he's not at all. C.S. Lewis says he's either liar, lunatic, or Lord.

You cannot just stop at the nice guy place. You cannot even just stop at him being a good prophet with good teachings. Paul cuts straight in and talks about who Jesus is and he says, he quotes Psalm 2, you are my son, today I have begotten you.

He jumps straight into the fact that Jesus here is the son of God. His divine nature. It needed to be this in order for him to save the sins of many because he was the only one who was sinless.

He's the only one who is the son of God sacrificed for all of us. So he jumps into Psalm 2 to talk about that and then he jumps into Psalm 16 where he says, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.

[35:44] You will not let your holy ones see corruption. That's verse 35. So he talks about the identity of Jesus and then he talks about the sovereignty of God. He's saying actually, you crucified and you know, Peter preached this in the early books of Acts as well.

He said, Jesus who came and then you put him on the cross. You killed him. But God is in control. God is sovereign and does not let his holy ones see corruption.

So these people would have heard Psalm 2, heard Psalm 16 and go, oh, I grew up in Sunday school memorizing that passage and I didn't really know who that was about. So you're saying Psalm 2 and Psalm 16 are actually about Jesus.

And then he carries on. He does another quote and then he goes into Isaiah 49 verse 6 which is our verse 47 in Acts.

I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of us. He talks about the identity of Jesus. Then he talks about the sovereignty of God using Psalm 16 and then he goes into Isaiah and says, actually, he's talking to you about the mission of Jesus.

[36:54] Isaiah 49, what's that whole passage about? It's about the servant of the Lord bringing restoration to Israel. And so they would have read that, they would have memorized that and go, well, who is the servant of the Lord? Who's going to restore Israel?

We're in a pretty bad place right now. Who is it? And then Paul's saying, it's Jesus. He will do this. I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. That would have, I guess, have been a little bit confusing for a Jew at that time because, well, I thought salvation was just for us.

I thought we were the chosen people. Oh no, it's going to be through you that the whole world is going to be saved. But you couldn't do it. Only the one who knew no sin could do it so that we would become the righteousness of God and Jesus is the one who can do that.

Jesus is the one who is doing that. And it's fascinating here as he preaches that, he gets two responses. Okay? There's a first group, verse 42. See, I'm actually going through quite quickly. As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. They have a church service. Imagine you guys all do this. You never do this, which is completely fine, by the way. But you guys, James, that was such a good sermon.

[38:01] I beg you that you keep talking about this next Sunday. Please. Feel free to do that.

I'll be around here. James, please. Come and continue to preach the good news of Jesus to us.

That's how they responded. Isn't that cool? And so that's what they were saying.

They would come, please. And actually, what's really funny is the next week, verse 44, so next weekend, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. Imagine that. Imagine the fire hazard that would be, waiting for the four lifts to bring us up here.

But how does that even happen? It happens because Joseph leaves this service and goes, I've got to go and tell people about this so they would come next Sunday. It's Kelvin going to the hospital going, okay, what I just heard on Sunday was so life-changing, I have to go and tell my colleagues. It reminds me again, Acts 11, Antioch. It's not really the main pastor that does the sharing.

Barnabas was there just to encourage. It was happening without him, without Paul.

[39:10] He's just there just to encourage them. Keep doing, stay true to the Lord is what he says. Keep going because the church grows not because of me but it's because of you. And so we go.

And so they go. So they were so hyped about last Sunday's church service that they leave and they tell all their friends and then next week everyone comes back. And he shares it again but this time there are people who are jealous.

Where is it? Verse 45. But when the Jews saw the crowds so everyone in the whole city of course not every single person but a big, big crowd when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what Paul was saying and reviling him.

And then Paul responds it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you since you thrust aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Behold we are turning to the Gentiles. So Paul comes back next weekend okay alright I'm going to keep preaching the message and the next week they come there's people who still love it and then there's people who are really really despising it and really really jealous.

And at that point does Paul go oh man people don't like my preaching. People aren't laughing at my jokes. I hope they still come back next week. No no no he doesn't say any of that. He's saying alright I've done what I have to do which is to preach the gospel to you guys first.

[40:28] If you don't receive it I will follow the next instruction which is go to the Gentiles. Go to the next group of people. And so he does that and whilst that is the Gentiles verse 48 it's like yes finally us.

These Jews they're so snobby. They think it's all about them. We get to hear this is for us. The salvation is to the ends of the earth. That includes us.

And so they're rejoicing verse 48 and when the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life they believed. They heard the good news and I thought this is the best news that we have heard.

We've always been on the outside and now we realize that we are on the inside. And we thank God because someone who was on the inside came out to get us and let us take his place. We rejoice.

And so they are super happy and the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. Again not because Paul and Barnabas were running big events but because the people were transformed and would leave the gathering and then they would start sharing with all the places that we were in.

[41:35] That's how the word of the Lord spread. But the Jews but the Jews verse 50 we keep seeing this incited the devout women and of high standing and the leading men of the city and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas.

Earlier in the chapter we see a Roman officer of power who was hungry and intelligent hungry for God being converted. and the good that that can come when people of influence in the city who are choosing to follow Christ and I know plenty of these people I'm so inspired by them and they can bring about change because God's placed them in certain places that they can really have influence.

Speak to the people of the city who will listen and yet it can also be the other way. You see the Jews also find powerful people to stir up persecution. it ends up even though the whole city came to their church service they ended up being driven out of the city.

And so you see there will be indifference. There will be people who are just a little bit apathetic. There may be real resistance. But I want to see I want us to see as I finish here how do Paul and Barnabas respond.

One of the greatest freedoms we have is how we react to things and how we react to things tells us a lot about what's going on inside.

[42:59] So imagine them great Sunday service one week everyone begs them to come back they come back the next week it's packed they preach a group of people super happy a group of people super unhappy drive them out of the city what would their response be verse 51 wow and just like that I finished the whole chapter but they shook off from the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit what?

They got driven out of the church and of the city and they were filled with joy because they were filled with the Holy Spirit you can see that Paul and Barnabas did not idolize the approval of men that was not their concern they weren't they weren't even really that concerned about how many people would believe and be converted to the kingdom of God they were just doing their job receiving the marching orders from the Holy Spirit and just simply responding to him and the outcome doesn't really matter to them of course there's another part which is when we share the gospel with people we hope that actually we have this compassion for them we have this love for them that our hearts break for them because they're not in the place where they are ready to hear the good news yet but yet we also have to surrender and go well that's actually not my job my job is simply just to go out and share the gospel with whoever will hear and whoever refuses to hear and then God will do his work or not at that time or at a later date

I can't imagine being thrown out of a city and yet being filled with joy yet they had that freedom to react in such a way and that freedom comes from only one place Jesus verse 38 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 that statement would have been super powerful for them to say super powerful Paul to say because he had received the forgiveness of sins from Jesus he was freed and so he could be free to react however he wanted whether it's indifference whether it's actual persecution it did not really matter we're going to finish here and I'm going to ask you to join me together as we worship and as we pray and actually in the rest of this week if you are willing to commit with me to fast okay God where do you want me to go set apart for me

Paul and Barnabas set apart for me Caleb and Jackie set apart for me Nathan and Kelly set apart for me these people to do my will and I will send them out wouldn't that be cool maybe we can come back next week and I'll ask who's managed to share the gospel this week and we all get to put our hands up and be completely freed from however other people respond to it because the only one that matters is how we respond what's your response today one to the gospel whether you've been a believer for 45 years or not how do you receive this good news let that seep into your heart when you realize the words of

Ephesians 2 that you were once dead in your sins and trespasses you were once blind you were once lost but now I am made alive together because of the people around us and Christ is the cornerstone that's a message to share would you allow that message to seep into your heart and

then how will you respond if God tells you to go now God does call some people to stay home to stay in the city that they were born to do things for him there actually Barnabas stayed in the same place for the longest time the apostle stayed in Jerusalem whilst others were scattered so there is a possibility that you don't have to move to the other side of the world but it's also unlikely that he's calling you to stay at home on your couch that'll be hard Hudson Taylor said that right he said if you're staying at home on your couch you better be sure that's your calling if not go because more often than not as we look through this book as we look at to see how we are all recipients of that good news that message that was passed it was because people got off their couch left their homes left their cities left their countries for the gospel that word go often is a soft one for those who really want to hear every now and again it'll be loud and blinding like it was for

[48:29] Paul but most of the time it's soft would you join me as we worship to ask God where are you calling me what are you setting me apart for what are you setting me apart for we're going to spend a few moments in quiet to ask the Holy Spirit to do whatever he wants to do then I'm going to invite Alex to come and feed us in a song where we can worship as a response and then I pray that you will leave the door responding to him as you go let me pray reminded of the words that Dallas Willard said missions is basically just asking God what are you doing and can I join in holy spirit would you set apart all of us here for your work to go into the different spheres of this city to do whatever it is that you ask us to do and give us the words to say we know it's not eloquent words we know it's not lofty speech or wisdom it's just the power of the cross

I'm convinced there are people in this room who you have set apart for specific missions we wait for you but we'll finish the way we started responding to the goodness of God and as we declare how good he is may that be the thing that empowers you emboldens you encourages you to go out to share the good news it's good news it's not boring news it's not tedious news it's not tiring news it's not terrible news it's good news because someone put death to death someone paid for our debts we're free we're free and it's free let's respond to how good he is

Lord thank you thank you for this time we can gather to remember what you have done that we can go anointed filled with your power healed thank you that you're a God who responds to faith like a mustard seed and multiplies it tenfold thousandfold let us respond to you in faith this week with our lives trusting not in ourselves but in you we thank you and we pray this in Jesus name amen