Clarity & Urgency in Gospel Ministry—Acts 13:38-43—11/22/26
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Today we come to the **climax & conclusion** of Paul's sermon in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch on his 1st missionary journey.

> Turn to **Acts 13** & let's read Paul's **culminating** words & the initial response in **verses 38-43**—Acts 13:38-43. [READ]

If you **look back over** Paul's sermon, you see **verses 16ff** where he began by addressing his listeners as ***men of Israel & God-fearers*** & then told of **God's grace through Israel's history**.

> He led up to the **ministry of John the Baptist** in this message of **salvation** that had come in the **promised Savior**, Jesus.

Then in **verses 26ff** he addressed his listeners as ***men & brethren*** & referred to them as ***sons of Abraham's family & God-fearers***.

> Then he explained how it was **prophesied & expected** that the Savior would be **rejected & suffer & die & rise again**.

And that was Good News of the promise because Jesus was that Savior who **fulfilled** what was **written** & could **give** the **promised blessings**.

> The specific calls to his listeners in **verses 16 & 26** marked those first & second **sections** of Paul's message.

And today we come to the **3rd section** in verses **38-41** where he again referred to his listeners as ***men & brethren*** or ***brothers***.

> English translations only include the word *brothers*, but it's the **same 2 Greek words**—men, brothers—in verse 26 & verse 38.

Paul's use of that **rhetorical** address **organized** his line of reasoning to the **climactic conclusion** that we study today.

> So **how did** Paul press in the **weight** of this powerful message? How did he convey the **glorious goodness** & the **urgent seriousness**?
>
> To awaken us to this need, listen to the words of **one of our members** serving overseas in **potential danger**.

David Gillam recently wrote this—Thank you for the prayers and we will certainly need them. I would **specifically ask** for everyone to pray for the Lord to work in the men here who are **not believers**. I've been slowly growing the congregation here but there are **some seriously hardened hearts** around. I've been **openly made fun of** and **mocked** for reading my Bible and going to service.
There seem to be two types of Soldiers around. Guys that are **reading their Bible** every day and guys who would **burn** the Bible given the opportunity.
I am completely and utterly unconcerned about my fate here. I without a doubt know the Lord's will **shall be done** and I have **peace** knowing **if the Lord decides my mission is over**, I'd spend the rest of time with him. **But** I have a hard time conveying **how concerned I am** for the **salvation of some of the men around me** and that is where I'd like our prayers to be focused.

> **Amen!** How **precious & right** to be **secure** in our **heavenly hope** & yet **deeply burdened** for the **lost** all around us!

That pairing of **supreme comfort** & **serious concern** is what Paul's **conclusion** to this message conveys that I want us to grasp.

> Today I want us to **feel** that **mix** of **rest for our own souls** & **unrest for the lost** that **motivates** us to share the Gospel more.

I pray Paul's example leads us to **greater clarity & urgency** as we see **4 essentials** he made known to conclude his sermon in Acts 13:38-43.

> Paul modeled **4 essentials of Gospel proclamation** in its **straightforward beauty** & the **pivotal response required**.

The **1st essential** we see today is in **verse 38**—so read that. [READ]

As we noted, Paul was concluding here as the word ***therefore*** indicates & also as shown in the address to hearers as ***brothers***.

Yet this was a **command** like Peter gave in Acts 2:14 & 4:10—***let it be known*** is imperative—this **must be** known.

And Paul directly appealed to them—***to you*** *plural*.

What was the capstone not to be missed in grasping Paul's message?

What was so important to build on all that Paul already said?

Here it is—literally in order for significance—***that through this One to you forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed***.

This One is the One whom **God raised from the dead**, the Promised ***Holy One*** & Son of David & Son of God.

Through **Him** God will give the ***holy & sure mercies of David*** & God will **fulfill** the promise of the **Savior** & grant **salvation**.

That's what's been said of **this One** & Paul **summed it up** in this **offer of freedom** from the guilt & punishment of sins.

This **proven Savior** Jesus can provide **release** from the **captivity** to sin's penalty & power.

That is the **1st essential of Gospel proclamation**—**point #1**—**make known the provision of forgiveness**.

Essential #1—make known the provision of forgiveness.

As Jesus had said in Luke 24:47, "*repentance for* ***forgiveness of sins*** *would be proclaimed* ***in His name*** *to all the nations.*"

Peter made this offer in Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; & 10:43 & it is the **need of every soul** because **all have sinned** as Paul wrote in **Romans 3:23**.

This is a **universal need** to proclaim to **all people**, as Solomon said in **1st King 8:46**, "*There is no man who does not sin*."

This was central to the **New Covenant** God said in **Jeremiah 31:34** that *I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*

This forgiveness of sins is the happy blessing David celebrated in **Psalm 32** & Paul quoted in **Romans 4**.

Get this—Paul had preached God's faith character & Israel's constant **sins** even to that present day & yet his goal was **not** to condemn.

So often when Christians are **rightly** defining evil as evil & against God's good law, people try to silence the related **hope**.

People try to **suppress the truth** of their sins & walk away or tune out or shout louder or file complaints or seek arrests to avoid hearing it.

That is to be **expected** as **Jesus predicted it** & it has happened to faithful messengers all through history.

But still, let's try **not** to be silenced in offering the **forgiveness of sins**.

Be ready to tell people **why** we point out what God calls sin.

We do it so people can **repent & find forgiveness of sins** in **Christ**.

That is what all people need as their **conscience** is telling them.

As **Romans 2:14-15** says, they "*show the work of the Law* ***written in their hearts****, their* ***conscience bearing witness*** *and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them*."

So we want to **explain historically** who Jesus is, as Paul did.

And we want to **confront sin** so people turn from it & come to Christ.

But as we sum up the Gospel, we must **proclaim forgiveness of sins through Jesus** as Paul did here.

That is the **1st essential of Gospel proclamation**—**point #1**—**make known the provision of forgiveness**.

I almost phrased this point as the **PLEASURE** of forgiveness because it's such a **happy relief & eternal rest** to know this!

We **all** know we've done **wrong** that we'd **never** want others to know.

You would be **ashamed** to admit it & that's why it is **so thrilling & freeing** to be **forgiven** for **all** our sins!

That's why we **must prize & proclaim** the **wonder** of **forgiveness**.

But we must **also** know **how** a **holy** God can **so freely** forgive?

How can God **look** at the **victims** of murder & theft & rape & abuse & adultery & slander & lying & tell them He has **handled it all rightly**?

How can God be faithful to **Himself** when all those sins are **1st** against **Him** as are all sins like blasphemy & idolatry?

To be faithful to **Himself** & **His own holiness** & to the **victims** of all evils & injustices throughout all history, **God must punish sin**.

And since we are **all** sinners, we **all** deserve **punishment**.

Since verse 38 offered forgiveness of sins, let's **pay attention**.

The first words of that offer were ***through this One***—through Jesus the Promised & Risen Savior—forgiveness is offered.

And read what **verses 26-29** said about Jesus to recall that. [READ]

The message of salvation had been **sent & spoken** through the prophets & it was **fulfilled** by those in Jerusalem & their rulers.

How was it fulfilled?—they put the **Holy One** to death—they asked Pilate to execute Him though they found **no guilt in Him**.

They fulfilled **all that was written about the Christ** suffering & dying for the sins of His people like in **Isaiah 53**.

On the cross, He **took the curse** of hanging on a tree & He was buried.

That's **how God's justice would prevail** & be proven.

That's **how God would be both just & the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus, as Paul phrased it in **Romans 3:26**.

God can forgive because Jesus was **the Lamb of God** who died as the **substitute** sacrificed to pay sin's penalty for others.

We know that **great exchange** of the Gospel—that Jesus took our sins & paid the penalty & He credited His righteousness to our account.

That's **how God can forgive** & therefore **free** us from the **penalty & power** of all our sins if we trust Him.

That's what Paul **further explained** in **verse 39** so **read** that. [READ]

This explanation **contrasts** Jesus & the law of Moses.

On the one hand, through or by **Jesus**, you **can have** what you, on the other hand, **could not have** through or by **the Law of Moses**.

The lack of power or ability is not said to be in the legal quality or value of the Law of Moses—the inability is in **you, plural**.

All Paul's listeners & all people throughout history are **not able by the Law**—but **Jesus who was sinless is able**.

And what was it that Jesus **was able** do that the Law could not?

Provide forgiveness & the related freedom from sin's guilt & power.

> **All the things** from which you **could not be freed** through the Law of Moses are **all those sins** that need **forgiveness**.

Since **no works of the Law** could ever pay the penalty for sin, the **Law of Moses** was **powerless** to forgive & free sinners.

> That was **not the Law's purpose** as Romans 3:19-20 explain.

Romans 3:19-20 says: *whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, **so that every mouth may be closed** and all the world may become **accountable to God**; because by the works of the Law **no flesh will be justified** in His sight; for **through the Law** comes the **knowledge of sin**.*

> So a **right view of the law** gives the **knowledge of sin** that drives sinners to **silence**, **closing our mouths** from excuses.

That knowledge of sin makes us all **accountable** **but not justified**.

> And the word translated **freed** in verse 39 is the word for **justified** & that's probably a better translation.

The ***Legacy Standard Bible*** translation reads, "*and that in Him, everyone who believes is **justified** from all things which you could not be **justified** from through the Law of Moses.*"

> To be **justified** is to be **declared right**, to be in the right, & that is speaking particularly in relation to God here.

To be justified is to be **right with God**, to be freed from sin's penalty that **alienated** us from God & under His **wrath**.

> It is **also** to be **freed from sin's power** to walk in new life.

Verse 39 **contrasts** that you **could not** be justified through the Law of Moses but **everyone who believes** **IS justified** **through Jesus**.

> **By the Law**, people were powerless and unable, but **Jesus by justification** is powerful and able.

As Romans 8:3 says, "*For what **the Law could not do**, weak as it was through the flesh, **God did**: sending **His own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an **offering for sin**, He condemned sin in the flesh*."

> That is—because of **our** sinfulness, the Law was **not** the means for us to conquer sin's power & condemn its penalty.

You & I **cannot** **ever** be **good or moral enough** or **obey or do enough** to get right with God & earn forgiveness & be free from sin.

> But just as forgiveness of sins is offered **through Jesus**, so also **freedom** & **justification** is offered **through Jesus**.

And **justified** is probably the better translation & it clarifies the **2nd essential of Gospel proclamation** we learn from Paul's example here.

> **Essential #2—Make known the power of justification**.

(#1)—make known the provision of forgiveness, & (#2)—make known the power of justification.

> The **power** of justification is what **God can do**—God **can** righteously punish our sins & treat us as righteous before Him.

God can do so because He **punished our sins in Jesus' sinless, sacrificial death** on the cross & He **counts Jesus' perfect life** as ours.

> That transfer of our sin to Christ & Christ's righteousness to us is the **power to justify sinners** before the holy God.

That fully & only comes through faith in Christ Jesus, by trusting Him.

> Yet verse 39 says it **does** come to **everyone who believes**.

That is the power of God to freely justify **all who have faith in Jesus**.

As you know, ***believing*** is another word for ***trusting*** or ***relying*** or ***putting faith in***—it's **relational**.

So Paul **made known** that **God declares righteous** those who **trust Jesus** as a **free gift** that is **received by faith**.

And he was **making clear** that being right with God **cannot** come through **works of the Law of Moses**.

He made that clear in his **letters** to the **Romans** & to the **Galatians**, which is the region where this church in Pisidian Antioch was located.

We can see similarities in Paul's sermon here with what he wrote to the churches in this Galatian region later.

In **Galatians 2:16** he wrote: "*knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law** but through **faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be **justified by faith in Christ** and **not** by the works of the Law; since **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified***." [cf. 3:11]

Knowing that this sermon came just months before his Galatian letter helps make sense of Paul's **stern warnings** in the letter about **departing** from the true Gospel & the Spirit's work.

Then & now, we **must make known** the **essential distinction** between being right with God **fully & only** by trusting Christ's work **versus** the **impossibility** of being right with God by **our own** works of the Law.

We must be **clear** that **justification is by grace alone**—meaning it's a **gift** & **not** something we work to earn.

And we must be **clear** that **justification is by faith alone**—meaning faith is the way it is received.

We get it by trusting Christ & His work.

And so Paul answered the **ancient plight of all mankind**, the **question that has plagued the human conscience** for all time.

This need was as old as the oldest book as Job 9:2; 25:4 asked *how a man can be in the right before God* & *just with God*.

Christ is the answer for that need that still exists today.

So we can **gladly prize & proclaim** that **Christ** provides **both forgiveness** from sin & **righteousness** before God.

By the **power** of justification, you can be **completely** washed & **clean** & holy in God's sight with **no condemnation** as Romans 8:1 says.

So look—**Why would you not receive** this freely by faith?

And **why would you not proclaim** these precious essentials?

Often people do **not** respond to these truths because they do **not** sense the **pivotal weight** of not responding.

People are tempted to **delay** or **minimize** the demand because they do **not** realize the **opposite** response is **rejection & ruin**.

So as Paul did next, we must warn as a **3rd essential of Gospel proclamation** that Paul modeled in this sermon.

Essential #3—we must **make known the peril of unbelief**—and peril means **danger** so this is the danger of **not** believing, of not responding.

We must **make known** (1) the provision of forgiveness, (2) the power of justification, & then **(3rdly) the peril of unbelief**.

Paul **warned** of that **peril** or **danger** by alluding to the repeated theme of promised **judgment** in the **Prophets** that Israel did not listen to.

He quoted one that pointed to **unmistakable destruction**.

And the one he quoted also pointed to **unexpected plans** of God.

That's why his use of Habakkuk 1:5 was particularly poignant.

Read how he used that next in **verses 40-41** of Acts 13. [READ]

Based on the glorious offer of forgiveness & justification, ***therefore*** the concluding response should be obvious.

Yet Paul knew the **temptations** to **distraction** or **delay** or **denial**.

So he **commanded** his listeners ***to see, to look, to notice, to mark this, to pay close attention, to watch, to consider***.

He **urged** them to **beware** so that **what stands written** may **not** come.

The past anchored reality of the prophetic word was sure.

But it was **not certain yet** whether the judgment **often warned of** in the prophets would come on them.

Paul mentioned the ***prophets***—**plural**—to clue us into how he was using this quote from **Habakkuk 1:5**.

In the **context** of Habakkuk, God was predicting **judgment** on **Judah** in a way Habakkuk would not believe.

The **sins** of Judah would be **punished** by God raising up the Chaldeans or Babylonians whose **sins were even worse**.

And **that's exactly what God did** to fulfill what He said.

God **answered** Habakkuk's cries about Judah's sins in a way that showed **His sovereignty over all nations**.

And here's the thing—God **often** brought blessing or judgment on Israel or Judah by **using other nations**.

In this case, God **exalted** a nation **worse than** his own people.

So Paul's quote of Habakkuk 1:5 did **not** spiritualize or allegorize.

Paul was highlighting a **repeated theme** in the OT that illustrated **God judging** Israel & Judah in **unexpected** ways.

That's confirmed by Paul referring to **prophets**—**plural**—and **not just one** prophet Habakkuk in that one verse he quoted.

By using this quote from Habakkuk, Paul **warned** his listeners of how Judah **had not** listened & God had **punished**.

Paul's listeners **likely knew** how Habakkuk was shocked that God raised up the **wicked** Chaldeans to judge Judah.

And Paul was **warning** them of the shock that was **coming** if **they** did not listen & turn to Jesus as the Promised Savior.

Their leaders in Jerusalem had **rejected** Jesus & **not listened**.

So they would be **shocked** soon at how God **judged them**.

That would come in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD like God had also destroyed Jerusalem & brought exile after Habakkuk's time.

But **more clearly** in this **context**, God would turn **away** from the **Jews** & **toward** the **Gentiles** to **save** the nations.

So don't miss that this chapter **closes** with Paul & Barnabas **being rejected by Jews** & **turning to the Gentiles** with the Gospel.

God was **again raising up Gentiles** in an **unexpected** way.

But this time it was to be **saved** in what Paul later called a **mystery** not before revealed in passages like Ephesians 2-3.

So it was **so fitting** for Paul to quote **Habakkuk** in this allusion to the theme of **judgment by other nations** in the **prophets**.

Paul was **not** claiming a **direct prophecy** or **fulfillment**.

He was making a **theological argument** & **application**, taking a **principle** & theme to remind his hearers of how this happens.

He quoted this **rebuke** as a **warning** lest this come on them.

The rebuke began in verse 41 with a **call to attention**—behold.

God **commanded** the despisers to be **astonished** but **not** for their own benefit because the next command was **to perish**.

Amazement came in Habakkuk's time when the evil Chaldeans were the means of with **destruction** in **judging** Judah.

And **marveling** would come in Paul's time when unbelieving Jews **perished** & their **unbelief** led to **Gentile salvation**.

As in Habakkuk's time, the **result** then would be a **work God worked** that was **unbelievable** even if it was **detailed** to them.

So those hearing Paul needed to **take heed** not to be judged.

They needed to **receive** the warning & trust Jesus as the Christ.

That was Paul's **burden** to make known **the peril of unbelief**.

And that **must be our burden also**—we must **make known** the **reality** of **judgment** with **urgency** and **clarity**.

We must **warn** of the **danger** of walking into God's **judgment** that is **surely promised** & that has been **repeatedly proven**.

And I must ask you & we must ask others—**why** would you **perish**?

Why would you **choose** to **rush into judgment**?

Why would you **delay & doubt** God when **His Word is clear**?

Do **not think** you will escape judgment if **you do not repent**.

We must **press home** this reality in our own **proclamation**.

Please hear & heed & respond to Jesus & tell others of Him.

Make known (1) the provision of forgiveness, (2) the power of justification, (3) the peril of unbelief, & then **4thly the path of grace**.

Essential #4 to note today—**make known the path of grace**.

By that I mean we make known the **way to follow Jesus** is **by grace**, is by becoming a **disciple** or **learner** who grows in God's **grace**.

You come as an eager seeker who pursues God in His Word & then you **remain steadfast** in God's **grace** in Jesus Christ.

Read **verses 42-43** to see that as some responded. [READ]

The **picture** here is like the end of our gatherings when people are going out & **talking** with one another & hanging out.

Paul & Barnabas were being urged to speak these words another time.

More so, after the synagogue dismissed, **many followed** them.

That included **Jews** & those who had formally **converted** to Judaism called **proselytes** who were **God-fearing** worshippers there.

Whether they were **fully convinced** of Jesus as the Christ & **truly saved yet** or not, it's **hard to be certain**.

But minimally they were eagerly seeking & responding in some **faith**.

So Paul & Barnabas were **persuading** them to **stay the course** in the **grace of God**.

This was an **ongoing conversation** as Paul & Barnabas were convincing these followers to remain in God's grace.

Forgiveness & justification in Christ could **only** be enjoyed **by God's grace** & believers needed to press on **in God's grace**.

That was the **Christian walk** then & it **still is** the Christian walk now.

We must make known that **path of grace** for the Christian life.

This was a vital exhortation to those in the Galatian region who would "***so quickly be deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ***" as Paul said in **Galatians 1:6**.

Galatians 5:4 says soon after this some were ***seeking to be justified by law*** & had ***fallen from grace***.

I do not want that for any of us—we must continue in God's grace.

I want to be sure we all grasp the provision of forgiveness, the power of justification, the peril of unbelief & the path of grace.

If you do not know those essential truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, please let someone help you & pray for you.

As Peter warned in Acts 3:22-23 & 4:11-12 & 10:42, not trusting in this glorious Jesus will bring judgment on you.

So please turn from your sins & receive forgiveness in Jesus.

And if you know these essential truths we studied today, pray that God will embolden & burden you to make them known.

Let's pray for our response as we close.