

Preaching from the Old Testament—Acts 13:14-25—10/25/26
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Open your Bibles to Acts 13 & let's read the next section we'll be covering over the next few weeks with an extended sermon by Paul.

This is the first missionary journey by Barnabas & Saul—and Saul had begun to be called Paul in the Gentile regions.

We covered through verse 13 last week, but let's pick up & read this sermon through verse 43—read along in Acts 13:13-43. [READ]

Paul began preaching after his conversion in Acts 9 & preached in synagogues in Cyprus, but this is his first recorded sermon.

This is likely an example of how he preached in other synagogues too.

Since not NT Scripture was written at this point except maybe James, this was the typical way to preach Jesus as the Christ.

This sermon by Paul has similarities to Peter's sermons earlier in Acts & also Stephen's sermon in Acts 7.

I described Stephen's sermon as **Historical Theology** because he walked through Israel's history & explained it theologically.

History is **God's** story—He's writing & conducting & guiding & governing & He has important emphases along the way.

Many of those emphases answer the questions of our existence that nag the human conscience & beg for meaning in life.

They are vital to grasp personally & to explain evangelistically.

Such connections may be lost if evangelism is oversimplified.

Well-meaning efforts to make the Gospel easier to remember & share have often ended up minimizing vital Gospel truths.

A basic Gospel plan to memorize & share can be helpful, but we must **not** sacrifice the significance of the larger storyline.

We must **not** detach the coming of Jesus from its roots in creation & God's redemptive plan through the ages.

Jesus did not fall out of heaven in the middle of nowhere.

He is the fulfillment of promises that stretch back to the beginning.

As people are increasingly detached from biblical roots, we need to explain those connections.

We need to help people see how the storyline of history has meaning that has been revealed progressively by God.

We need to be able to preach God's purposes through the OT.

Can you do that?—can you explain the OT in a way that leads to need & expectation for Jesus as the Promised Savior?

That's what a sermon like Paul's in Acts 13 can help us to do.

So today we're going to let Paul remind us how to preach the Gospel from the OT & how to preach from the OT in general.

I'll outline 4 emphases of faithful preaching from the OT to learn from the first part of Paul's sermon in Acts 13:14-25.

The **first** of those is to **preach with authority from the OT**.

This context shows how Paul emphasized the commitment to **preach with authority from the Old Testament**.

And the pattern of synagogue gatherings provided the perfect starting place for Paul's philosophy of ministry because they honored the OT.

Synagogues were central both for reading & explaining Scripture & also for community relationships & conversations.

So in Cyprus, that's where Paul's ministry in each place began.

And read Acts 13:14-16 as that pattern continued. [READ]

They had sailed from Paphos on the western side of Cyprus north in the Mediterranean Sea to a southern region of modern-day Turkey.

Whether by navigable river or by land, they went from the coast inland to the city of Perga in the region of Pamphylia.

It does not seem that they did much ministry there initially, but they did preach there as they returned in Acts 14:25.

Travel from Perga was 100 miles across the steep Taurus mountains with dangers from cliffs & rivers & robbers that Paul may have alluded in 2nd Corinthians 11:26.

But Luke's focus was their arrival at Pisidian Antioch, one of 16 cities named after a father of a general of Alexander the Great.

Luke clarified this as Antioch in Pisidia, another region in Asia Minor in modern-day Turkey.

This was far away from Antioch in Syria, which was the home sending church of Barnabas & Saul on this missionary journey.

Imagine a map of this region like your hand in a flat backward letter 'C' & the middle is the Mediterranean Sea & Syrian Antioch is on the palm side & Pisidian Antioch is on the top.

Despite that distance from Israel, Pisidian Antioch did have a sizable Jewish population who had settled there.

So they had a local synagogue where they would gather on each Saturday—the Jewish Sabbath Day.

Their typical service started by reciting the Shema from Deuteronomy 6—Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One—and then they prayed & read from various portions of Scripture.

Those portions of what we now call the OT were the Law & the prophets—the 1st 5 books by Moses & those after Moses.

After such Scriptural readings & prayer, a synagogue service would have explanation or exhortation from those passages.

And if visiting scholars or preachers were attending, they might be asked to comment as happened here with Paul.

They sat down in the service but must have been somehow recognized or known, perhaps as their gathering allowed for informal fellowship.

Luke recounted the initiative of the synagogue officials who sent to Paul & his companions inviting them to speak.

Those synagogue rulers asked if these men & brothers had in them a word of exhortation or encouragement for the people.

If so, they were welcomed—even commanded—to speak.

That led to Paul standing & motioning with his hand to call for attention as he seized the chance to speak.

He addressed the gathering of both Jews & Gentile God-fearers who were not ceremonially Jewish.

Paul commanded these groups to hear in a way that readily responded.

Even in a time when new revelation was being written, the focus was on proclamation & response to the OT.

The OT was not a bygone relic that had no use after Jesus came.

The OT was **not** a mere history manual for background information but with no lasting significance for the church.

The OT was the Word of God that Paul preached **evangelistically**.

And he **preached it with authority**.

I do not want us to miss that—I want us to learn from that example.

We **should not be ignorant of the OT** & we should **not** treat the OT as obscure or hard to understand or less important.

For example, we **cannot** do what many have done in caving to the lies of evolution & undermining the foundational truths of Genesis.

We cannot do what some cults do & disregard the OT as not valuable for teaching about who God is.

We must **preach with authority from the OT** & we must do so with the **proper emphases that God intended** as Paul brought out next.

As we read the history of man, we find the sad entrance of sin into the world & the spread of sin that led to the global flood & then man's pride continued & God confused their language.

So **man's initiative** each time was **bad** & warranted punishment.

But **after** the universal judgments of the curse on sin & the global flood & the scattering of the nations, God showed grace.

And that's where Paul began his sermon here—with **God's grace** to choose His people Israel, to exalt them & rescue them & persevere with them & give them the Promised Land.

Read verses 17-19 to see all that stated. [READ]

The emphasis here is **God's** action, **God's** initiative, **God's** provision.

The God is emphasized first & He is the subject of every verb.

The emphasis of each action is **God's grace**, starting with His choice of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, the fathers of this people Israel.

Against the known backdrop of the scattering of the nations for their rebellion at the Tower of Babel, God **chose** Abraham.

That was God's **sovereign mercy**, not something Abram or his family deserved or that set them apart from all the other scattered rebels.

God **simply chose** the fathers of the people of Israel.

That is **fundamental** to understanding & preaching the OT.

Not only must the OT be preached with authority as we noted first, but **2ndly**, we must **preach with grace from the OT**.

Point #2 today—we must **preach with grace from the OT**.

Repeatedly throughout Israel's history, from Abraham's time to Moses' words in Deuteronomy to the historic reviews by the prophets, God highlighted **His grace** in His choice of Israel.

That **electing** or **choosing grace** is stated as **foundational** to all that Paul would preach from the OT in this synagogue setting.

For his hearers to **understand the OT rightly**, they had to grasp the **centrality of God's grace**.

Skimming through history, Paul jumped from God's gracious choice of the fathers to **God's gracious exaltation** of the nation in Egypt.

God **lifted up** this same chosen people in their **sojourn** in the land of Egypt & then **led them out** of it by **His uplifted arm**.

Despite the sins of Joseph's brothers, God had worked for good to **multiply** Israel in number & then to **show His power** in their rescue.

God showed His grace by caring for them in the wilderness for 40 years when their sins repeatedly warranted God's wrath.

Then Paul told of God's gracious giving of the land as an inheritance promised after the iniquity of the Canaanites was complete.

Israel did not deserve that, but God gave it through Joshua after He had conquered those seven nations in the land of Canaan.

You know those "ites" in Deuteronomy 7:1—Hittites & Girgashites & Amorites & Canaanites & Perizzites & Hivites & Jebusites.

Sometimes not all 7 were mentioned, but God drove them out.

Again, the emphasis was upon God's grace as He worked through 400 years in Egypt & 40 years in the wilderness & 10 years of conquest.

That's the 450 years roughly referenced in verse 19.

But God's gracious care did not stop—read verses 20-21. [READ]

After the exodus & conquest, God gave them judges who were both rulers & deliverers—saving them from their enemies.

Those judges were God's gracious answers in the cycle of Israel's sins that brought judgment that led them to cry out to God for help.

Despite their evils, God was gracious to provide judges to save them until Samuel the prophet led into a next phase of history.

That next phase of the kings was in God's plan, but it was initiated by Israel's sin of seeking a king like the other nations around them.

They rejected God as their king & preferred a worldly security.

But God was gracious & gave them Saul as their king for forty years.

Do you see the theme of God's grace through all He provided for His people even from His initial choice of them?

Do you see how God persevered in showing grace even when Israel so obviously did not deserve His love & blessings?

Do you see how to preach with grace from the OT?

Do you see this 2nd point of Paul's emphasis on divine mercy despite human sin & how enduringly faithful God is with His people?

Can you remember that the next time you feel like God should give up on you or you doubt whether God can really love you?

Can you let the persevering grace of God that is the engine driving history forward be your own source of strength & faith & joy?

When we are soaking in & sharing truths from the OT, we must not miss how every narrative is saturated in God's grace.

We must not think the sins of the ancients were so much worse that we do not share the same desperate need for grace from God.

And we must not think the sins of the ancients were so much less that we also cannot repent & cry out for mercy & be saved.

The themes of God's character & His gracious dealings with His people are given both to warn us against sin & to give us hope in God.

So we must see God's grace in the OT as we also see the centrality of His promises in the OT.

We must always keep in view that the hope of believers for all time has always been in God's promise of a Deliverer to conquer sin.

We know that from the Seed promised in Genesis 3:15 & carried forward through Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob.

We see that promise passed to the tribe of Judah who would rule.

And since Saul was the son of Kish, a man out of the tribe of Benjamin, he was not from the line of promise through Judah.

So after Saul disqualified himself & God removed him, God showed His grace in raising up David to be their king.

Read what Paul said about that next in verses 22-23. [READ]

After removing Saul, God raised up the David for them for king.

That specific David, the son of Jesse, is emphasized as the one God testified of in 1st Samuel 13:14 when He deposed Saul.

In 1st Samuel 13:14, God said He had “*sought out for Himself a man after His own heart*” & then Psalms 89:20 says He had *found David*.

Because David followed God’s heart, he would do, literally all His wills, that’s plural—all His wishes & desires in the future.

And how would that happen?—verse 23—according to promise.

Paul said that this man David, from his seed—& the singular used in a generational collective sense—*from his offspring*—the one true God He would keep His promise.

That is stated in 2nd Samuel 7, which you need to know is God’s covenant with David, God’s promise to bring the Seed by David’s line.

In 2nd Samuel 7:12-13, God told David, “*When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your Seed after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*”

In 2nd Samuel 7:16 He added, “*Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.*”

Psalms 89:29 also promises this eternal king & forever kingdom

Since the hope of history hung on that promise, it was vital to track it.

That’s why there are **so many genealogies** in the Bible—because they **trace that seed line** of the **promise**.

That’s why the **Gospels** begin by linking Jesus to David & Abraham.

All those details point to God precisely keeping His promise.

That promise of the Seed, which began in Genesis 3:15, was promised to be David’s Seed, to bring to Israel that Deliverer, that Savior.

And here Paul used the past tense—God had brought—and he emphasized the One who was **by quality a Savior**.

Paul **named** that Savior, the One whose **name** means salvation, Jesus.

And **how did God carry that expectation** through the ages?

It was **according to promise**—you must know that to grasp the OT.

You must know that God sustains His people & proves His faithfulness & accomplishes His plan—**according to promise**.

So as a 3rd emphasis to rightly interpret & apply & proclaim the OT, we must preach with promise from the OT.

We **must preach** (1) with **authority** from the OT, (2) with **grace** from the OT, & (3) with promise from the OT.

God keeps His promises & **one promise has always been central**.

That is **the promise of the Seed**—and I know you’ve heard me say this many times as we study Acts & at other times.

I want to make sure you see this precious hope of all history that I only saw vaguely & variously until my first year of seminary.

Then in January 1997, I sat in a weeklong Winterim class as a first-year seminary student far outpaced by others around me.

But as I read books for the class & Walter Kaiser explained this central thread of the Seed promise throughout the OT, it all made sense.

I began to understand & connect the Messianic prophecies I had heard quoted each Christmas & a few other times.

All those words about Jesus at His birth were not random predictions that Christians randomly strung together to draw lines toward Jesus.

They were all **woven together purposefully** in the OT as God expanded on & specified more regarding His Seed promise.

I became aware of the connections of God's plans through OT history.

Since I did not get that as I grew up in church, I want you to **know how the Bible fits together** & be equipped to explain it.

And to understand the OT & the whole Bible in a way that **sets the Gospel in the span of all history, *you must know the Seed promise.***

To give deeply rooted answers to life's most pressing questions of human existence, ***you must know the Seed promise.***

And that's what Paul was emphasizing when he said that, **according to promise**, God had **brought a Savior, Jesus.**

Think of it—God **did not do so** according to David's good life.

Right?—David later sinned with Bathsheba & Uriah & in more ways.

He still sought God's heart as he repented in Psalm 32 & 51.

But David was **not worthy in himself** to continue the promised line & **neither was** his son Solomon **nor** all the kings after them.

No one was so good that they deserved for God to use them.

That's **sad** in one sense—but **listen**—it's **also very hopeful** & glad in another sense because **that means** God's faithfulness **depends on His own promise & grace** & not on how well we perform.

Isn't that a relief?—we can run to God's promises & trust Him & confess our sins & our need for His mercy **day after day**.

And we can **know** that He is faithful—He will show grace through His promises in Jesus Christ & that depends fully on Him.

We can see these themes in the Bible at any time in history.

We can **trust God's Word** to make sense of our lives now & to give us secure hope for this life & the life to come.

The Bible is a book that **explains our origin story**, God's creation of man & woman & God's commands for His design.

And the Bible reveals the sin of man that led to judgment & that continued into further sins & more judgment.

But the Bible is **also** a book of God's **grace**, of His mercy to forgive sinners & grant blessings to show His love & goodness.

And the Bible has always revealed that grace as coming through God's promise of salvation & hope in that **Deliverer Seed**, that **Savior**.

So in that sense, we must **preach with promise from the OT.**

We must **preach with authority, grace, & promise from the OT.**

Then **4th**ly today, we must preach with continuity from the OT because the OT was **building toward that Savior Jesus**.

Point #4—we must **preach with continuity from the OT** because the NT **continues the story** that **began** in Genesis & **expanded** through the centuries as God **carried His promise forward to fulfillment**.

The church was a new phase—*a mystery not before revealed*—but it was **still rooted** in God's promises to Abraham for blessing on all nations.

There is **continuity** in the church as God **fulfilled His Seed promise** of grace to save people from sin from all nations.

There's **continuity** in being saved by grace alone through faith alone in the Promised Christ alone to the glory of God alone.

And there's **continuity** in the Christ coming to bring salvation to Israel first & then to overflow those blessings to the nations.

There's **continuity** because God was always calling all people to repent of their sins & worship the One true Savior.

And that **continuity** is seen in **Paul's sermon** as he **continued** the narrative of history straight into the **coming of John the Baptist**.

Read **Acts 13:24-25** to see that. [READ]

John the Baptist did not fall out of nowhere to announce Jesus.

He fulfilled promises of a **forerunner** of the Messiah clearing the way as **Isaiah 40:3-5** predicted & **Luke 3 & John 1** told.

In the **last OT prophet**, in **Malachi 3:1**, God said, "*Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.*"

So John the Baptist was preparing the way for the Lord, **publicly proclaiming before the presence of His entrance**.

John's message was to repent for the King was at hand.

Repentance—which was turning from self-trust & sin—was demonstrated by a ceremonial cleansing of baptism.

That showed the need for washing away sins & the need for the promised Savior ***for all the people of Israel***.

While John was **fulfilling the mission** God gave him, he was **regularly speaking** of the **far greater One** coming after him.

Because of his public prophetic ministry, people asked who he was.

And he was clear that **no one should suspect** him to be the expected One, the long-awaited Messiah King & Savior.

That promised One was a hope **known by everyone** in Israel in that day, even by **Samaritans** as the woman at the well said in **John 4**.

John **simply had to say** that he was not that one—I am not He.

Then John would call for attention—**behold**—One is coming after him whose sandals of His feet John was not worthy to untie.

John the Baptist clarified that He was **not worthy** to do the **lowest servant's task** for the supremely exalted coming One.

John knew his role & knew the majesty of the Coming Christ.

And **how** did John know that?—because **he knew the OT**.

John knew the **expectations** of his time that flowed **from the OT**.

John knew the **continuity** of the story from the beginning & he knew the mission or course he was completing in that story.

And **Paul knew** that role of John the Baptist & **connected** John's preaching of repentance with the **preparation for the Messiah**.

Paul linked John the Baptist with the **prophets that preceded him**, especially the final predictions of **Malachi**.

So **Paul preached with continuity from the OT** in that synagogue in Pisidian Antioch as he explained the ministry of John.

Apparently, they had heard about John the Baptist there as others had also heard of him in Ephesus in Acts 19.

Especially with Jews traveling & scattering, John's preaching was known & yet people needed to see him as **announcing the Messiah**.

Paul preached Jesus as the Savior whom John announced.

He is the **Savior of the world**—the only One qualified by His own **sinless life** to sacrifice Himself in our place to pay for our sins.

He is God the Son who became a man & **proved** He could be the spotless Lamb to substitute for us.

He showed His power in His life & overcame death in His resurrection to leave **no doubt** He is the promised Seed who crushed sin & Satan.

He is the Savior **expected from the beginning** who came once & will culminate history in His earthly kingdom & eternal rule.

And we'll **continue seeing next week** how Paul preached Jesus.

But today you have heard enough & know enough to trust Him.

So **do not delay any longer**—do not cling to your sin or self-rule & believe your life is better without the one true hope of all history.

That's been proven wrong all through history & it will finally be proven disastrous in the fires of hell forever.

Don't wait for that & don't risk another day outside of God's authority communicated in His Word with **marvelous grace & promise**.

Turn to Jesus Christ as your Lord & Savior & **have life** today.

We'd love to **pray** for you & **help** you if you will simply **ask**.

King Jesus is **worthy of praise** & we **love to talk about Him**.

I pray that **we are all stirred** to more **gladness & boldness & clarity** in sharing about Jesus with others after what we've studied today.

And listen—most of you should never hesitate to share Christ because **you know these truths well enough**.

You just need to **step out in faith & speak**, to **practice relying on God's Spirit** to help you speak His Word.

You **are equipped**—in some ways, some of you young people are blessed to know more than I did when I started seminary.

Don't take that for granted & don't take that stewardship lightly.

Be **prayerful** & ready to preach Christ from the **whole Bible**.

I pray you are **better equipped** to preach with **authority, grace, promise & continuity** from the OT as you preach Jesus.

Pray with me & **let's respond to God's Word** as we close.