

LESSON 2

Equipped to Preach Christ: The Church in Pisidian Antioch

Acts 13:13–52

Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers and sisters, that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. Everyone who believes is justified through him from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38–39).

Class Overview: Acts 13:13–52 records Paul’s first sermon and stands as one of the clearest examples of gospel preaching in the New Testament. Speaking in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, Paul explained how all of Israel’s history pointed to Jesus, the promised Savior who offers forgiveness and justification through His death and resurrection. This lesson shows how the Holy Spirit enables believers to proclaim Christ with clarity, courage, and compassion, even when faced with rejection. Through Paul’s example, we learn that the power of the gospel does not depend on human approval but on God’s truth faithfully shared.

Class Objectives: By the end of this class, you should be able to—

1. Explain how Paul used Scripture to connect Israel’s story to Jesus as the Messiah.
2. Summarize the main points of Paul’s sermon and its emphasis on forgiveness through Christ.
3. Recognize that gospel preaching often brings both acceptance and opposition.
4. Describe how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to speak with courage and endure with joy.
5. Apply Paul’s example by sharing the gospel with others in simple, Scripture-centered ways.

Introduction:

WHEN PAUL AND BARNABAS SET OUT FROM ANTIOCH, they entered the unknown. The comfort of their home church was behind them. Ahead, there were rough roads, unfamiliar cities, and spiritual opposition. Yet, they moved forward confidently because the Holy Spirit had called them, and the message they carried was worth every risk.

Their journey first took them across the island of Cyprus and then north into the mountainous region of Galatia. It was there, in Pisidian Antioch, that Paul delivered his first recorded sermon. His message was simple and clear. It was a straightforward proclamation that God had fulfilled His promises by sending Jesus, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Through Him, forgiveness and freedom are available to everyone who believes.

This sermon serves as a model for every Christian seeking to share the gospel. Paul didn't rely on eloquence or emotion; he opened the Scriptures and demonstrated how all of history pointed to Christ. His emphasis was on Jesus: His identity, His mission, and His resurrection.

But not everyone welcomed the message. Some rejoiced, while others rejected it. Paul and Barnabas faced jealousy, opposition, and persecution, yet they refused to stay silent. Their boldness stemmed from deep conviction and trust in God's word. Even when driven out of town, they left behind new believers filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

This story reminds us that gospel work always involves both triumph and trial. The same Spirit who equipped Paul and Barnabas to preach in Pisidian Antioch equips us today. Our mission is the same. We must proclaim Christ with clarity, courage, and compassion, trusting God to bring the results.

Historical Background

Pisidian Antioch was a Roman colony in the mountainous region of southern Galatia, near present-day Turkey. It was not the same city as Syrian Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas started their journey. This Antioch was an important city along the *Via Sebaste*, a key trade route connecting the interior of Asia Minor with the coast. Due to its location

and Roman influence, the city drew soldiers, merchants, and settlers from all over the empire.

The trip there was difficult. To reach Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had to go through rough terrain and dangerous mountain passes. Bandits were frequent, and the road was tough. Paul later mentioned the challenges he faced during his travels in Galatia (2 Corinthians 11:26). Still, those hardships helped shape and prepare God's servants for endurance.

The city had a sizable Jewish population and a synagogue that also attracted many Gentile "God-fearers" (non-Jews who respected Israel's Scriptures and worshiped the one true God). This diverse crowd created fertile ground for the gospel. Paul followed his usual pattern: he went first to the synagogue, stood up to read from the Scriptures, and used that moment to proclaim Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.

Pisidian Antioch became a key turning point in Paul's ministry. Here, he first faced open rejection from Jewish leaders who opposed the gospel message. Yet it was also here that the mission to the Gentiles took clearer form. As the Jews turned away, Paul and Barnabas boldly declared, *We are turning to the Gentiles.* (Acts 13:46). From that moment, the gospel began spreading with new momentum across the Roman world.

God often opens new doors through difficulty. The same Spirit who guided Paul through danger and rejection still equips us today to carry the message of Christ into challenging and unfamiliar places.

Equipped to Preach the Word (13:13–25)

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Pisidian Antioch, they followed a pattern that would shape much of Paul's ministry: first, go to the synagogue and speak to those familiar with the Scriptures. On the Sabbath, after the reading from the Law and the Prophets, synagogue rulers invited Paul to share a word of encouragement. Paul stood up, gestured, and began to speak. What followed was a powerful, Spirit-led

message that highlighted God's faithfulness throughout Israel's history and pointed directly to Jesus as the promised Savior.

Paul starts with what his listeners already believe. He reminds them how God chose Israel, led them out of Egypt, and gave them David, a man after His own heart. Then he states that, from David's descendants, God sent the Savior, Jesus, to Israel, as He had promised. In doing so, Paul shows that the gospel is not a new religion but the fulfillment of everything God has been doing from the start.

Notice how God prepared Paul for this moment. Paul had a deep understanding of the Scriptures, and the Spirit gave him wisdom to link them to Christ. His sermon wasn't based on opinion but on revelation. This is how every messenger of God should approach the word. We speak with clarity, humility, and confidence in what God has already spoken.

Paul also honored the role of John the Baptist, demonstrating how John's ministry prepared the way for Christ by calling people to repentance. In every generation, God raises voices to prepare hearts to receive His truth. Paul understood that he was now part of that same mission: to help people see how God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

God still equips His people to speak His word at the right time and place. The gospel takes hold when we start where people are; building bridges from what they know to what they need to learn about Christ. Every Christian, whether standing before a crowd or sitting across a table, can learn from Paul's example: begin with the story of God's faithfulness and point people to Jesus, the Savior He has provided.

Equipped to Proclaim the Gospel (13:26–37)

After tracing Israel's history, Paul turned to the heart of his message: the good news about Jesus Christ. He addressed his listeners as "brothers and sisters, children of Abraham's race, and those among you who fear God." His tone was respectful yet direct. He wanted everyone in the room, Jew and Gentile alike, to understand that the message of salvation was for them.

Paul proclaimed that the people of Jerusalem and their leaders had fulfilled the prophets' words by condemning Jesus to death. They didn't recognize Him as the Messiah, even though the Scriptures they read every Sabbath pointed to Him. Without realizing it, their rejection accomplished God's plan. Jesus was crucified, buried, and then raised from the dead, just as God had promised.

This was not just a rumor or speculation. Paul stated that many witnesses had seen the risen Lord and could testify to it. The resurrection proved that Jesus was the promised Savior and Son of God. It confirmed that death had been defeated and that forgiveness was now available for everyone who believes.

To demonstrate that this was not a new message, Paul quoted from Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16. These passages had long pointed to God's promise of a holy one who would not see decay. David died and was buried, Paul reasoned, but Jesus was raised and lives forever. In Him, the promises made to the fathers were fulfilled.

Paul's boldness stemmed from his conviction that the gospel is both accurate and trustworthy. He didn't depend on emotion or debate. Instead, he relied on Scripture and the resurrection as his authority. The Spirit empowered him to proclaim the gospel clearly, demonstrating that salvation is not earned but received through faith in Jesus Christ.

This same calling is ours. The gospel remains unchanged, along with its power. God continues to equip His people to declare it, i.e., to show others that forgiveness and new life are possible through the risen Lord. Whether we speak to one person or many, our confidence does not rest in our skill but in the truth of what God has done in Christ.

Equipped to Persevere in Mission (13:38–52)

Paul's sermon ended with an invitation and a warning. He proclaimed, *Therefore, let it be known to you . . . that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. Everyone who believes is justified through him from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses.* (vv. 38–39). These words captured the heart of the gospel: forgiveness

and justification through Christ alone. What the law could never accomplish, grace has done.

Paul's message elicited mixed reactions. Many in the synagogue were deeply touched. As the meeting ended, they begged to hear more the following Sabbath. Some Jews and God-fearing Gentiles followed Paul and Barnabas, who encouraged them to remain in the grace of God. The gospel had taken root in their hearts.

But when the next Sabbath arrived, almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of the Lord, and that's when jealousy flared up. Some Jewish leaders couldn't stand the attention Paul was getting. They began to oppose him and stir up trouble. Yet Paul didn't back down. Filled with courage, he said, *it was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Since you reject it... we are turning to the Gentiles.* (v. 46)

That statement marked a pivotal moment in the church's mission. The gospel was never intended to be limited to one group of people. God's plan had always been that all nations would hear about His salvation. When the Gentiles received this message, they rejoiced and honored the word of the Lord, and many believed. Opposition could not stop the message, as it only propelled it further.

Even after being driven out of the region, Paul and Barnabas left behind a thriving group of new Christians. Luke ends the story by saying, *And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.* (v. 52). That is the mark of a Spirit-equipped church: joy amid hardship and faith that endures when rejected.

Perseverance in mission means trusting that God is working even when the results seem uncertain. Some will resist, others will believe, but the word of God always bears fruit. Like Paul and Barnabas, we are called to keep speaking, keep serving, and keep rejoicing in the power of the gospel.

Lesson Summary and Reflection

Key Truths from Pisidian Antioch:

- God equips His servants to proclaim Christ with clarity and conviction.
- The gospel fulfills God's promises and centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Forgiveness and justification come only through faith in Christ, not through the works of the law.
- Opposition cannot silence God's word; it often becomes the means of spreading it further.
- Joy in the Holy Spirit sustains believers even when the world rejects the message.

Paul's first recorded sermon in Pisidian Antioch exemplifies gospel-centered preaching. He began with what his audience knew, the history of God's relationship with Israel, and led them to understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises. Throughout, his message focused on Christ's death and resurrection as the foundation for forgiveness and justification.

Gospel preaching isn't about personality, emotion, or eloquence. It is about truth. The same Spirit who empowered Paul to proclaim Christ equips us today to speak clearly and confidently about what God has done in Jesus. When the message of grace is preached faithfully, some will believe and rejoice, while others will reject and resist. Yet even in rejection, God's purpose moves forward.

The final image of the disciples "filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (v. 52) captures the core of this lesson. True mission is maintained not by results but through a relationship with the Lord and His Spirit. God equips His people not just to deliver the message but to persevere in it happily. As long as there are hearts that haven't heard, our mission remains the same: proclaim Christ, rely on the power of His Word, and rejoice that the gospel still transforms lives.

Memory Verse and Weekly Challenge

*Therefore, my brothers and sisters,
know that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you.*
Acts 13:38

Weekly Challenge: Share the message of forgiveness in Jesus with one person. You don't need to know everything; tell them what God has done for you. Pray for courage and trust that the same Spirit who equipped Paul will give you the words to speak.

For Reflection

1. How did Paul's understanding of Israel's history prepare him to preach the gospel effectively in Pisidian Antioch?

2. What stands out to you about how Paul connected the OT to Jesus?

3. Why is the resurrection central to the gospel message, and how does it strengthen your faith today?

4. What can we learn from Paul's courage and persistence in the face of jealousy and opposition?

5. How can your congregation cultivate the same boldness and joy that Paul and Barnabas showed in their mission?
