

A Word of Encouragement (Part 2)

Acts: The Spirit Moving / Acts 13:26-43 / November 2, 2025

Introduction:

If you were asked to share a word of encouragement with a group of people, what would you say? Really think about it for a moment. If you could say anything, what would it be? Last week, we began to unpack how Paul responded when given that opportunity. In verse 15 of Acts 13, Paul was asked if he had any word of encouragement for the people during a synagogue service at Antioch in Pisidia, and he began his teaching by revealing God's sovereign activity through redemptive history to bring the Messiah to Israel, who is Jesus. This morning, we will continue that sermon in Acts 13 to see how he focuses his encouragement on the hope of the gospel message. Start in verse 26 with me, "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation." Note his identification of two groups of people again, the "sons of the family of Abraham" and "those among you who fear God," or God-fearing Gentiles. Then, he introduces the main point of this sermon, "to us has been sent the message of this salvation." "Us" includes each group of people present, including Paul and his companions. And "this salvation" points back to God's work in bringing Israel's Savior, Jesus, as He promised. Paul is saying the message of God promised salvation, through the Messiah, has come to all who will hear, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Now, notice how verse 27 starts, "For..." This term indicates Paul is about to explain what the message of this salvation is. We discover three essential truths about it in verses 27-39. First, we see,

The Message of Salvation is Anchored in the Promised Death of Jesus

Look for Paul's repeated emphasis in verses 27-29. Start in verse 27, "For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb." He begins by speaking of those in Jerusalem who heard of Jesus and rejected Him, both the people and their rulers. Note the reason he gives for their rejection. It was because they failed to recognize who He was and understand what God declared through the prophets, things Paul says were "read every Sabbath." Do you remember where this sermon falls within the synagogue service from verse 15? It is the teaching meant to explain that day's readings from the Law and Prophets. However, instead of explaining the particular readings on that day, Paul explains the purpose of every reading. They all point to Jesus and God's message of salvation. Then, at the end of verse 27, Paul shows those who rejected Jesus became the ones who fulfilled the words of the prophets. As Paul continues, he explains that fulfillment by focusing on four things: the lack of guilt found in Jesus, Jesus' trial before Pilate, His crucifixion on the tree, and burial in the tomb. And between these things, Paul repeats how they "carried out" what the Prophets wrote about Jesus. Paul is firmly establishing that what took place in the trial, crucifixion, and death of Jesus was what God promised would happen to bring this salvation. Church, God promised beforehand all that would happen to Jesus in writings of the prophets, the most pointed being Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:3 says, "He was despised and rejected by men... he was despised, and we esteemed him not." God promised the Messiah would be rejected by God's people, and He was. Isaiah 53:5 says, "he was pierced for our transgressions." God promised the Messiah would be pierced, not for his guilt but our transgressions, which took place as He hung on the tree. Isaiah 53:7 says, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent." God promised the Messiah would be led to die, giving no word of defense, as Jesus did when He stood before Pilate. And Isaiah 53:9 says, "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death." God promised the Messiah would be buried in a rich man's tomb which happened when Joseph of Arimathea provided the tomb. There are more fulfilled promises we could speak of.

Prophecies from Psalm 22, 34, 35, 41, 69, and 118. Others from Zechariah 11 & 12, and even more from Isaiah. We could fill our whole time simply reading fulfilled prophecies delivered hundreds of years before Jesus's death, all showing how God's salvation would come through the Messiah's death. Know for certain the message of salvation is anchored in the promised death of Jesus. The second essential truth is in verses 30-36,

The Message of Salvation is Confirmed in the Promised Resurrection of Jesus

When studying scripture, pause when you see the term "but" to consider the contrast being made. Look at verses 30-31, "But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people." Yes, God promised the Messiah would be put to death, but God also promised death could not hold Him. I love what I. Marshall Howard says about this, "Over against the hostile action of men (which was nevertheless part of the divine plan) is now placed the action of God himself in raising Jesus from the dead (cf. 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40), and this is immediately followed by a reference to the repeated appearances of the risen Jesus to his followers" (I. Marshall Howard, Acts: An Introduction and Commentary, p. 239). God's power in raising Jesus, Jesus' appearance to the apostles, and their witness to the people of Israel stand over against the ignorant hostile actions of men. Notice how Paul continues in verses 32-36, "And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.' And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption." In verse 23, Paul moves from "they" to "we," showing continuity and continuation of the apostles' witness with his. Then, he establishes the gospel as the fulfillment of all God promised to the patriarchs by stringing together three Old Testament passages. The first declares Jesus as the Son from Psalm 2:7. This has both divine and messianic connotations. The full context of Psalm 2 speaks of the promised Davidic king set on the throne in Zion in verse 6, before the pronouncement of him as God's son in verse 7, and how His forever kingdom reign would expand to the ends of the earth in verse 8. Following this, Paul shows this is confirmed through His resurrection. First, he partially quotes Isaiah 55:3, which speaks of the Davidic covenant promises to God's people, and quickly adds Psalm 16:10 where God promised his Holy One would not see corruption. Then, to make sure they understand, Paul concludes by showing how David is buried and saw corruption, but, though He was buried, Jesus did not see corruption. Paul is establishing how the resurrection proves Jesus is the Holy One of God, through whom God's covenant promises come. Know for certain the message of salvation is confirmed in the promised resurrection of Jesus. This brings us to Paul's final essential truth about the message of this salvation,

The Message of Salvation includes Forgiveness & Freedom Only Coming Through Jesus

The gospel message must include what Christ's death and resurrection accomplished. Look at verses 38-39, "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." This is the crux of Paul's appeal as he brings everything to its appropriate conclusion. Consider, first, how he calls them all brothers as he appeals for them to know this. Family, this is how we should appeal to people when sharing the gospel. The gospel is not simply a matter of facts to recite. It is an appeal, from brotherly love, to know what Jesus' life, death and resurrection means. And what does it mean? First, Paul says, "forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." We must begin with the necessity of forgiveness. Romans 1:18 says, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." God's wrath stands against humanity's sin. Now, we need to understand the true nature of sin. We often only think of sin only in terms of morally right and wrong actions.

However, the nature of sin goes deeper than just morality. As Paul continues in Romans 1:18-21, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.” Sin is ultimately a suppression of the truth that there is one true God we are called to know and honor. So, in theory, you could fulfill every moral standard, but if you are not doing it to honor God, you are still in sin. In Jeremiah 2:12-13, God sums up all of Israel’s evil, not by the ways they broke His moral law, but how they had forsaken Him as the source of life and turned to other things. This is the root of sin, turning away from God’s all satisfying nature, and to other things we think will satisfy. And the first thing Paul says is “forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.” Second, Paul says “everyone who believes” can be freed from what the law of Moses couldn’t free you from. What could the law of Moses not free people from? The law of Moses exposed sin, but it could not free you from sin’s power and penalty. Paul tells us in Romans 6:17, we are “slaves of sin” apart from Jesus. Sin is not something we do, it is something we are enslaved to. In Romans 6:23, we discover “the wages,” or due payment “of sin is death,” separation from God and receiving the full weight of His wrath. Why could the law of Moses not free us from the power and penalty of sin? Paul says in Romans 8:3, “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.” Our flesh, or human nature, is too weak to overcome sin. So, we needed something more powerful to conquer it. What was that? Paul continues in Romans 8:3-4, “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” This is why Paul says in Acts 13:38-39, “through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed.” When Christ took on flesh, He lived the righteous life we couldn’t live, and His death condemned sin. When God the Father laid the guilt of your sin on God the Son, and poured out His wrath revealed towards it, He condemned your sin in Christ. And He did this so the righteous requirement of the law could be fulfilled in those who believe and walk by faith through the Spirit. This is the message of salvation. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided what was needed to receive forgiveness and freedom from sin’s power and penalty. But, that only comes through Jesus by faith. So, what should be done with the gospel message? After sharing these truths, Paul ends with a negative exhortation and Luke relays the people’s response to drive the point home. Look at verses 40-41, “Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’” Paul gives a warning intended to call for a specific response. He sums up all of the warnings from the prophet’s with Habakkuk 1:5. We studied Habakkuk together last year if you are interested in digging deeper into it. Habakkuk 1:5 begins God’s warning of the coming Chaldean invasion of Israel to call His people to repentance. Following verse 5, God discloses the Chaldeans were the instruments of His judgment towards Israel, and Paul is saying that judgment is a prophetic warning for those deny the message of the gospel. If you haven’t responded to God’s message of salvation, read Habakkuk and realize what it speaks of pales in comparison to the wrath to come. Then, as Paul says here, don’t let that come about for you. Fall to your knees in repentance and find mercy today. Verses 42 and following, then, show the positive and negative responses from the people who heard this sermon. In Biblical narrative literature, stories of responses are designed to drive our application. We’ll conclude with the positive responses today and consider the negative responses next week. Look at verses 42-43, “As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.” Luke first records those present begging to hear more on the next Sabbath. Let this initial response sink in. As their hearts were pricked, they desired to know more.

When you hear the truths of the gospel, do you long to go deeper in your understanding of them? The next thing we see is how “many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,” stressing how Paul’s teaching reached even the most devout men in the synagogue. Yet, note how Luke ends verse 43. Paul and Barnabas, “urged them to continue in the grace of God.” They had begun well but they would need to continue in God’s grace in the gospel. The proper response to the gospel is initial belief that desires to know more, and a life that continues in the grace of God.

Conclusion:

As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of reflection and response, let me bring this to a close with one question for application in light of this,

Are You Clinging to the Astounding Grace of God?

We need to go deeper in our understanding of God’s grace in the gospel and constantly cling to it as our only source of hope and satisfaction. Family, is your belief firmly placed in the astounding grace of God in the gospel? We began this worship gathering with the song, “In Christ alone.” Are you trusting in Christ alone? Is He your light, your strength, your song, and solid ground? Is Christ Jesus the one who satisfied God’s wrath for you? The one on whom your sins were laid? Has sins curse lost its grip on you because you have been bought with His precious blood? Have you found no guilt in life, or fear in death? Do you stand in the power of Christ? Place your hope in Christ alone. Trust in His power to change your heart. Recognize His promise that the Spirit of God now dwells in you. And cling to the astounding grace of God in the gospel until Christ returns or the Lord takes you home. Family, this is what the Christian life is all about. As Paul says to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” Hold fast to the gospel Paul preached. Don’t believe in vain. Let its truths move you to run to Christ, asking His Spirit to transform you as you behold His glory. During this time, sit and reflect, stand and sing, or come and kneel before Him in a posture of humility as you seek His face. We also have a team of people ready to pray with you and for you, who will be worshipping with lanyards on in the front rows. Would you pray with me as we respond together?