

His Name Spreads (Acts 13)

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Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] So I think next, just before Pastor William comes and preaches, I'm going to invite Angel to do the Bible reading for us today. So it's on the whole Acts chapter 13, but I think Angel's going to read just a portion of it.

So I'll be reading from Acts chapter 13, and I'll be reading the NLT version. Among the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon, called the black man, Rousias from Cyrene, and Manain, the childhood companion of King Herod, Antipas and Saul.

One day, as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them. So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. There in the town of Silamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God.

John Mark went with them as their assistant. Afterward, they travelled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Pathos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus.

[1 : 29] He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God.

But Almas, the sorcerer, as his name means in Greek, interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.

Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. Then he said, You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, an enemy of all that is good, will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord?

Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time. Instantly, mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around, begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship to Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga.

[2 : 42] There, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. But Paul and Barnabas travelled inland to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath, they went to the synagogue for the services.

After the usual readings from the book of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message. Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it.

So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. Man of Israel, he said, and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me. The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors and made them multiply and grow strong during their stay in Egypt.

Then with powerful arm, he led them out of their slavery. He put up with them through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to Israel as an inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. After that, God gave them judges to rule until the time of Samuel the prophet. Then the people begged for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Kish, a man of tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for 40 years.

[3 : 57] But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, I have found David, son of Jess, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.

And it is one of King David's descendants, Jesus, who is God's promised saviour of Israel. Before he came, John the Baptist preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptised.

As John was finishing his ministry, he asked, Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not. But he is coming soon. And I am not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.

Brothers, you sons of Abraham and also you God-fearing Gentiles, this message of salvation has been sent to us. The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognise Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about.

Instead, they condemned him. And in doing this, they fulfilled the prophets' words that are read every Sabbath. They found no legal reason to execute him.

[5 : 04] But they asked the Pilate to have him killed anyway. Then they had done all that the prophecies said about him.

They took him down from the cross and placed him in the tomb. But God raised him from the dead. And over a period of many days, he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem.

They are now his witnesses, the people of Israel. And now we are here to bring you this good news. The promise was made to our ancestors. And God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus.

This is what the second psalm says about Jesus. You are my son. Today I have become your father. For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave.

He said, I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David. Another psalm explains it more fully. You will not allow your Holy One to rot in the grave. This is not a reference to David.

[6 : 04] For after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried with his ancestors. And his body decayed. No, it was a reference to someone else. Someone from God raised and whose body did not decay.

Brothers, listen. We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus, there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight.

Something the law of Moses could never do. Be careful. Don't let the prophet's word apply to you. For they said, Look, you mockers. Be amazed and die.

For I am doing something in your own day. Something you wouldn't believe, even if someone told you about it. As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged him to speak about these things again next week.

Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas. And the two men urged him to continue to rely on the grace of God. Thank you, Angel.

[7 : 10] The chapter does continue. So please keep your Bibles open in front of you. And I have a spare Bible and there's a few out the front as well. And so if you're here and you don't have a Bible, you don't have to raise your hand or maybe you want to.

I'd love to give this to you or lend you one. So just make sure you can follow along. It is a long chapter. And actually, this is God's Spirit speaking to us, isn't it? God breathed, profitable for everything we need in the next few moments.

So come grab a Bible off me if you're brave enough or come grab it from one of the ushers as well. Otherwise, yeah, we're going to hear what God has to say to us from this amazing chapter.

If we haven't met, my name is William. I'm one of the pastors here. It's a privilege to open up God's Word. And yeah, let's pray with the words of Psalm chapter 1. Father, you call us blessed when we don't walk in the way of sinners or stand in the way of scoffers and sit in the seat of mockers.

So Father, help us as we delight in your Word today. This is a long passage, and yet it is rich of truths about you and your Word and your Son, Jesus.

[8 : 24] So Father, may your Spirit speak to us even right this moment. Do clear our hearts of all the distractions that might just stop us from hearing about how your name is worthy to be spread all over the earth.

We pray that you would speak to us now in Jesus' name. Amen. This morning I visited another church, so I do pray for the saints at Ignite, the English service of the NZCMC.

I think I got that right. It's Pastor Francis and the crew. At the very start we were introducing ourselves. So what's your name? What's your name? So I'd love for you, if you have maybe for the next 20, 30 seconds, why don't you turn to the person next to you?

If it's not too personal, I want you to tell the person next to you how you got your English name. So first you've got to work out your English name, and then tell the person next to you, how did you get it? What's the story behind your name?

Yeah, so I'll give you a few moments to do that. All right. Anyone brave enough to share?

[9 : 29] Yeah. Rachel, how did you get your English name? It just came up. Just magic. Okay, your parents picked it. Was there a story behind anyone else's name?

Anyone? Yeah. I mean, Jennifer, how did you get your English name? Yeah, yeah. Your dad gave it.

Okay, all right. Is there any reason why he picked Jennifer? No? Okay, no reason. Just picked it from a book or something. Okay. All right. So let me tell you how I got my name. So how I got the name William was that my dad, he was studying medicine in the UK for a while, and I think he really fell in love with the royalty side of things, you know, and I think he felt that his sons should have nice royal names.

So I'm one of three brothers, and so my older brother got named after Richard the Lionheart, and then there was William and Henry. So, yeah, I'm named after royalty, but that doesn't count for anything.

Yeah. I tried to, yeah, yeah. Long story. Yeah. Anyways, it doesn't count for anything. So, anyways, it goes to show every name has a story. So I'm sure your name has a story somewhere, even if it's boring, even if it's not exciting.

[10 : 41] Every name has a story. Whether it's the reason behind the names of your passport, or you can ask my kids why they call me Pastor Sauce. There's a story behind every name. Or even why the new monarch, right?

God saved the king. Charles III. Why Charles III? Every name has a story. You have to find that one out yourself. And I think in the same way, in chapter 13 of the book of Acts, every name tells a story.

Well done, Angel, for reading that passage. And there are a lot of names, right? And I wonder if you noticed. I wonder if you're even keeping count. For example, there's a bunch of names in the opening verses.

The Antioch, the leaders. There's Jesus, of course. And there's a Bar-Jesus, right? What's up with that? And I wonder if you noticed how the names actually changed. All right, verse 2.

Have a look in your Bibles, right? It goes from Barnabas and Saul, verse 2. And then if you scroll down to verse 50, it's Paul and Barnabas. What's up with that? Just as your name has a story, every name in this chapter tells a story.

[11 : 45] As we walk through this account together, let me suggest that for every new name, we're going to pause and ask, what's the story? What's the story? And I hope you'll see the story of who God is and what it looks like to faithfully proclaim his name to the ends of the earth, to the nations.

So as Venus hinted, this chapter actually marks the start of our church's third and final series through the book of Acts. So as some of you know, if you attend the other services, we're going through the same book together as a family.

And we've seen so far, right, in chapters 1 to 7, how the gospel of Christ empowered the first Jewish background believers, didn't they? Creating a radically different community.

One that was very attractive. One that actually also drew opposition to them. And yet, the message of the risen Lord Jesus could not be stopped. And then we saw in chapters 8 to 12, kind of a new season in the growth of the church.

How the gospel started to break boundaries in who the gospel is for, right? Breaking boundaries in who the gospel is for. It's not just for Jews, but Samaritans as well.

[12 : 54] It's not just for Greeks, it's also for Ethiopians too. As we heard from Pastor Johan last week, actually God even breaks our boundaries of understanding of what God is like.

How he answers prayer. How despite opposition, our Bible verse says, the word of God kept increasing and multiplying. And so as we turn the page, the chapter 13 over here, Luke is starting a new section.

And so this is a new series. And so I think today, for chapter 13, I've tried to break it down, but I think the first thing we see in the first few verses are the names of the first mission team to the unreached.

So let's have a look first at the names of the first mission team to the unreached. And let's see what the story is behind them. So verse 1 says, Now in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers. Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul.

So, what's the story behind their names? That these five particular men, leaders, tell us something that actually Isaac touched on two weeks ago. We were looking through chapter 11, the church of Antioch.

[14 : 11] Antioch was actually a very diverse church. It was a diverse leadership, it sounds like, as well. Actually, it's hard to know here from words on a page, but actually, I think there are different ethnicities represented.

Barnabas is a Levite from Cyprus. Simeon, he's probably an African-American. Sorry, African, sorry, black African from, yeah, yeah, from Africa.

That makes so much sense, doesn't it? And Lucius is from Cyrene, which is in North Africa as well. Okay, so already, you're getting a picture of a very diverse leadership in the first Gentile church.

There's also different backgrounds. Think about Saul. Okay, Saul grew up in Tarsus. He probably, if he was alive today, he'd probably go to like, you know, top schools. Very well educated, Pharisee.

And then, what about Manan? It sounds like Luke wants us to know that he grew up in King Herod's household. Okay, so someone who's politically connected, perhaps. Someone who might be running for MP, one day, who knows?

[15 : 14] Well before Justice League, well before, you know, Amazon's Lord of the Rings, new group of elves that fight each other, and fight, you know, I don't know. God was showing us what the value of multicultural leadership looks like.

Teams with different gifts, different life experiences, empowered by the Spirit of Christ. And the church in Antioch points to us the way forward, right? To what gospel-powered leadership could look like for a church like ours.

For workplaces, even our families, even living here in multicultural New Zealand. And it seems like these are five names who, in verse two and three, they seem to pray and fast, and they obey the Spirit's call, and they send two of their best among them, Barnabas and Saul, to bring the gospel to the nations.

This is a key moment in the history of the church. This is the first time a church outside Jerusalem joins in God's global mission. We've heard in chapter 11, not only were they financially generous, okay, when Jerusalem needed help, they offered and gave.

Here now, they offer two of their most senior leaders as missionaries. Isn't that a challenge for us? Imagine if we sent Pastor Albert and Pastor James off to a missions trip, okay?

[16 : 38] Let's send our best. Let's send our best. Because Antioch City Church knew that this missions trip was not actually for them. It was actually God's work that they are joining in.

This is His calling that they are just following and obeying. He is the one who calls, He's the one who empowers us for every good work, to be His witnesses, to break boundaries, and to share Christ with those who have not yet heard.

So I don't know, if God is calling you to give up what's good for what's better, will you go? PCBC, if God calls us, from us, some of the best among us, to move countries, to move cities, to labor in God's harvest, will we be stingy?

Or will we be like these guys and send them gladly? Antioch Church did. They team up to send the first Gentile mission team.

That's fantastic, isn't it? Let's have a look. Verse 4 and verse 5. Let's keep going. The two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. They went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

[17 : 50] So that's their first stop on their missions trip. So you can see Antioch on the right, and then you can see that bold arrow. They kind of hit Cyprus. That's the first stop. And this actually makes a lot of sense, if you want to think about it, because who comes from Cyprus?

We've just read it. Use your Bibles. Okay. Actually, we didn't just read it. The first time we read it was in Acts chapter 5, so you actually have to have good memories. So Barnabas, when he was first introduced, he was introduced as someone who had originally come from Cyprus.

So he's actually going back to his home turf. And that makes a lot of sense. If you want to go reach some people who haven't heard about Jesus, let's go back to your hometown first. See what that's like. And so that's where his story began.

And so as Barnabas and Saul move through the island, you can see they move from east to west. And as they do that, they begin to proclaim, verse 5, the gospel.

They proclaim the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. And in the rest of this chapter, it is the word of God, the word of the Lord that is the focus.

[18 : 57] I don't know what you think about when you hear the word mission, but what mission cannot be is absent the word of God. The verbal proclamation of the word of God has to be done.

It cannot be avoided. It can't be outsourced. It's the responsibility of every ambassador of Christ. Yes, mission does mean building bridges and relationships.

It does mean serving the marginalized to show the hands and feet of our Lord Jesus. But mission is ultimately to proclaim the word of God about Jesus Christ to those who need him.

I'll say that again. Mission is to proclaim the word of God about Jesus Christ to those who need him. And so that's exactly what Barnabas and Saul do.

They have actually got an assistant now, right? Verse 5. John Mark was with them as their helper. And so BJS, right? This crew, they, with their home church's support, they come out and they head out, not on a holiday in the Mediterranean, but they go to proclaim the word of God.

[20 : 07] Not just in synagogues, but later on we'll see in the courts of Gentiles as well. And it looks like that it's in Paphos, that's what it says here in verse 6.

That's where they came to, on the west side of the island, where they meet a new character. All right? And here's some more names. So here we're going to see the names of two of the unreached in Cyprus.

And so what's the story behind the name Bar-Jesus? Bar means son, okay, in Aramaic. So really it's son of Jesus. The original text actually says, not that they just met Bar-Jesus, they actually searched for him.

They found him out. That's what the original Greek says. So do you remember last week, Pastor Johan was telling us about his experience in Thailand, tried to have a big party for the whole village, and he forgot to invite who?

Do you remember? The chief, right? The chief of their village. And so actually perhaps the Cyprus mission team had a similar experience, going around and starting a party, and they realized, we need to speak to the chief.

[21 : 10] Who's the chief? All right? It's apparently this Roman governor called Sergius Paulus, and the way to get to him, it seems like it's through this middle man, Bar-Jesus.

And so that's why they went looking for Bar-Jesus, to try and get an introduction, as it were. But Bar-Jesus is an interesting name. And I think Luke, you know, what's in the name?

Luke tells us. Okay, he's I think slipped in a bit of intentional irony here. So here's Bar-Jesus. He's son of Jesus. But now we're going to see a son of Jesus opposing the sons of Jesus.

You get it? All right? It's deliberate. And not only that, we're told he has a different name. Okay? So he's got like a secret agent name, Elnias. So he's actually a Jew pretending to be a Greek.

Okay? Perhaps for his job or whatever reason. So there's a little bit of kind of, yeah, double crossing going on here that Luke wants to draw attention to. There's a little bit of déjà vu as well.

[22 : 10] Okay? So maybe Luke is throwing back to someone else because what's Bar-Jesus' job? He's a Jewish sorcerer. Anyone remember a sorcerer in the book of Acts so far?

Yep. Nodding. Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Okay. In chapter 8, right? Okay? Chapter 8. Simon the sorcerer. Do you remember that? Remember that guy? He tried to buy from Peter the authority of baptizing believers in the Holy Spirit.

Okay? He got told off. Here at the start of a new phase of God's mission, we have another sorcerer, right? Trying to resist the gospel. Okay? Trying to turn his boss away from the faith.

That's what we see, don't we? And then so, verse 9, then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elemas and said, you child of the devil.

Just like Peter rebuked Simon previously, now Saul announces God's judgment on fake Jesus. Because his trickery, his deceit, right?

[23 : 13] It doesn't put him with Jesus, with team Jesus, but with team Satan. And I wonder if you were Sergius Paulus, right? What you would have thought.

Okay? So, what's the story behind his name? Here is the Roman representative, and it says here in the text, right? What was his response? He was astonished.

Right? Verse 12. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he was amazed at the teaching of the Lord, and he believed. So, that's an amazing response, isn't it? Now, Sergius' story, it was probably one of power and privilege.

Okay? You don't get to be a ruler of an island, unless you have a lot of money and connections, probably. He was probably appointed to Cyprus to kind of represent Caesar, the Roman emperor.

Represent him as the king of kings. He's kind of like a governor general that we have in New Zealand. And yet, he has just met a power encounter that is irresistible, that astonishes him.

[24 : 17] He has just heard the word of the Lord from Saul and seen Jesus' power back him up. And at this, it says that he believed.

And so, can you see now why it's at this verse that Luke tells us that Saul is also called Paul? Right? It's almost as if Luke wants to change the name right at this moment to tell us something new.

You see, among believers in Jerusalem, right, Saul is his Hebrew name. It makes a lot of sense. Here in the halls of empire, what matters now is his Greek name, Paul.

And you notice it sets him side by side with Sergius Paulus. Sets him side by side with the other Paul, right? There's two Pauls. It's like, here's Paul one, and this Paul has just converted him.

So who's better? Right? This king. His king. See, Apostolus Paulus, right, is like introducing Sergius Paulus to King Jesus. And what we have here is really Luke trying to tell us.

[25 : 23] Jesus wins. God's ambassador wins and is much better than Rome's ambassador. God's kingdom will outlast Rome's kingdom.

And we need to know this, right? This is a fantastic reminder for us. Every name tells a story. We need to know this because we might feel like, I don't know, the kingdom of God doesn't seem very spectacular amidst all the things around us, right?

You know? And so we want to be a reminder of this truth. And I think this section also reminds us when someone seeks to hear the word of God, I think we should be prepared, prepared for the devil to do whatever it takes to put a stop to it.

You know, and sometimes it will be pretty spectacular. It might be a showdown like this where you have to call out the devil very strongly. But often the evil one will employ very sneaky but standard methods.

Last week, some of the brothers and sisters in our prayer group, they were praying over an opportunity for me to share the gospel with one of my relatives who wasn't a Christian. And it was this same week that there were just so many problems happening in my life.

[26 : 40] Miscommunications, my own sin and temptations. It was like the enemy was loving it. This option was coming up, I'm just going to fire dart after dart after dart at you. How are you going to take that?

So we should expect the same. Let's not be naive to the way that the evil one works. But don't lose heart. Let's lift up our shields of faith.

Our salvation goes on. The sword of the spirit we carry with us, the word of God. And we just declare the message of the risen Lord Jesus. That cannot be stopped. The evil one won't win.

We won't be beaten by false prophets. We won't be beaten by our own failure and sin and not by powerful rulers. So friends, every name tells a story, right, so far.

Whether it's Simeon, Lucian, Manan, Barnabas and Saul, fake Jesus, Caesar's Paul, Jesus's Paul. Another name comes up now. And this is probably the most important name, isn't it?

[27 : 43] Actually, before that, let's take a little sidetrack and we'll go to verse 13 and 14. Have a look here. This is from Paphos. Paul and his companions sailed to Perga and Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

Okay, so quick backstory to the guy named John. His full name's John Mark. And so actually, if you've ever read Mark's gospel, it probably came from this guy. And he seems to be closely connected to the apostle Peter, right, who was in Jerusalem at the time.

And so that's why, you know, a lot of Mark's gospel is like kind of Peter's inside story of what happened in the life of Jesus. And actually, if you remember, last week when Johan told us about how, you know, Peter was a miraculous escape, he ended up going to John Mark's mum's house, right, after he's rescued from Herod's clutches.

And so it seems like from then till now, he's been kind of traveling with Barnabas and Paul, helping them out on their outreach. But as Paul kind of leaves Cyprus and then goes to Perga and they're about to travel on to the next town, Mark kind of gives his apologies, says, you know, yeah, I've got to go back home.

You know, maybe I miss my mum's cooking or something. So I'm off home. It's just the two of you now. So that's why he leaves the picture here. And we'll carry on his story in a few weeks. But now we're in Perga, okay?

[29 : 09] So Perga's just at the top. And from Perga, it seems like the two mission team members, they end up in a place called Pisidian Antioch. Okay, so this is different to Antioch where they came from.

So you can call it Antioch P if you like. But here they are in the new Antioch. They're looking for the Jewish synagogue. And when they enter it, they sit down, perhaps in the back row.

Don't want to be, you know, conspicuous. But some of you know what it's like to visit a different church, right? Often you stand out. So, sorry, guys. And as soon as the church, right, has read kind of the regular readings, the Jewish scriptures, the Torah and the prophets, it sounds like, you know, one of the synagogue leaders, what do they do?

It says here, Brothers, if you have a word of encouragement for the people, please speak. All right, verse 15. If there's any newbies here among us, would you like to give us a word of encouragement? Come right up.

But a good thing, thankfully, don't worry, you can stay seated. A good thing Paul has had a bit of prep, right? He's a bit of a teacher himself. And so it's a great opportunity.

[30 : 17] He comes up and he gives a sermon, and that's the bulk of chapter 13. But did you notice whose name is left out in these few verses? From 13 to 15.

Whose name has just dropped off the radar a little bit? It's Barnabas. Yeah. Every name tells a story. And here, we see that here in this new place, this new opportunity, actually Barnabas, he's happy to sit in the background and be Paul's wingman, as it were, as he kind of takes the lead in this new part of the mission.

That takes a lot of courage, doesn't it? Not all of us will sit up the front or have the front row position in a mission, but, you know, we're all important.

We're all important. And so from verse 16 to 41, Luke summarizes his sermon to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch. So this is kind of like a Reader's Digest version of Paul's sermon that day.

We don't have time to comb through the whole sermon, like the Daily Bible Reading crew did this past week, but perhaps I can highlight a few things for us here as PCBC about this sermon.

[31 : 27] So four things about this sermon. One, this sermon, Paul recounts Israel's history and then preaches Christ. You notice that, right? So that first half, okay, he talks about the history of the Jews, and then he moves to Christ.

That's kind of the main thrust of the sermon. I think this is important because this is Paul's first sermon recorded in Scripture, and it's to a Jewish audience. And I think Luke wants to reassure his readers that Paul is not here to teach something brand new that is completely different.

It's heretical. He's just trying to tell them, look, you know that promise one that you read in your Scriptures? Embrace him. Let me tell you about him.

I think it's kind of like Stephen's speech, right, in Acts chapter 7. Paul's preaching here is filled with Old Testament quotations, references, and allusions. He knows his audience.

But, I mean, you and I know this. One of the hardest things about sharing the gospel and secular Aotearoa is that most people don't know the law and the prophets. They don't know who Moses is, even.

[32 : 37] Most people have no knowledge of Israel's history, right, from God's perspective. So if, say, I said to them, remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David, right, 2 Timothy 2.8, almost every word in that sentence would need some explanation, wouldn't it?

And so as parts of our country move away from any biblical literacy, one thing we can do is get into the Bible ourselves. But the other is we can be flexible how we explain the gospel.

Now hear what I'm saying. I'm not saying we change the gospel. The gospel message is the same. Christ died for sinners. But how we connect it to their lives and hopes might look different. What metaphors we use might look different.

And actually we'll notice this. This is an important part of this series. As Paul moves further and further into Gentile territory, you're going to notice how he modifies the terms and the metaphors he uses to try and connect people to Jesus.

You'll see his strategy shifts whether he's speaking to the Iconians next week or in Lystra or in Athens with the philosophers. The gospel transcends all cultures.

[33 : 46] But friends, how we explain it and present it might look different depending on who you talk to. Okay? So keep that in mind because it's going to be really important as we go through the rest of this series.

Paul recounts Israel's history and preaches Christ. But we may not need to do the same in our own evangelism. Secondly, okay, let's zoom in on that history bit. From verses 16 to 25, Paul, I think he focuses on four names, doesn't he?

And you notice them. Saul, David, John the Baptist, and then he moves to Jesus. Right? You know, what does he pick those four? People have different ideas.

Maybe those are the names that came up in the readings that they were doing during that synagogue service. So maybe he just kind of piggybacks off that. Maybe these names were particularly relevant to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch.

We're not told. But what Luke shows us in Paul's speech, right, is that there are clear contrasts between these names. Right? There's a clear contrast between King Saul and King David.

[34 : 49] And then there's a contrast between John the Baptist and who follows him, Jesus, his Savior. And so again, every name tells a story. So let's have a look at those stories briefly.

And in this case, they're all linked, aren't they? Right? So Saul was the kind of outwardly impressive king. And yet he would keep disobeying God's word all the time.

You know? Looked great. Seemed like he would make a great king. But actually, you know, he was hiding amongst the baggage. He wouldn't wait for Samuel to show up. And he would do the offering himself.

Eventually, God has to remove him. Right? It says here, verse 22, God removed him. He lost his authority to lead because of his disobedience to God's word. In contrast, David, King David, right?

We all love David. He's the shepherd boy. Right? He's the one who starts from humble beginnings. And God raises him up to begin a new kingly line. And yes, David is flawed.

[35 : 48] He sins big time. But he's a faithful man. And God describes him as a man after God's own heart. And Paul reminds us of this here. And it's through David's family tree, Paul reminds the Israelites, they're listening, that their long-expected Messiah will come.

The Savior Jesus, verse 23. And the first person to announce the arrival of this Savior, this Messiah, is a guy called John the Baptist. Right?

Here's another name. And he comes at a time, right, years of silence, no prophets, no word. And then he announces to everyone.

He says in Mark's gospel, prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him. He's an interesting guy, isn't he? John the Baptist, this long-haired locust eater.

And I think what he wants everyone to know and us to know is that Jesus is far greater than he is. There's the contrast, right? There's John. Sounds impressive. But Jesus is far better.

[36 : 50] I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. That's how good he is. And because Jesus is the name that tells the story we all need, Paul then moves on to Jesus and he takes center stage, right?

And so from verse 26, God has sent out Jesus, the word of salvation. And so really the third thing I want to share about this sermon is that Paul uses the bulk of it to preach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as good news to us.

Having highlighted four names that should matter to the people listening in, Paul presses home the good news to them. He presses home the good news.

He respectfully recounts the unjust way that the Jewish leaders gathered together, they crucify the Messiah after his death by being publicly humiliated, murdered on a cross.

They place him in a tomb. They assume that this Jesus guy, he's going to be forgotten. Verse 30 says, but God raised him from the dead.

[37 : 56] Isn't that amazing? And he appeared over many days to those who had traveled with him. Verse 31. And here, Paul, he tells a story in a very active way.

He's stressing to them, they are his witnesses to Israel. Okay? He's almost saying, don't believe me. Don't believe me that Jesus is alive and he's reigning.

Go ask John Mark's mom. You know, she's still in Jerusalem. Are you skeptical? Go talk to Peter. He's still around. What about Rufus and Alexander? Talk to all these guys.

Or Jesus' own mother. She could tell you if Jesus was still around. Right? Surely she'd know if it was a hoax. And then Paul keeps going in this sermon, doesn't he?

Right? He then directs them to their own writings. Right? He says, look at Psalm 2. Look at Psalm 2. Can you not see that this has to be King Jesus?

[38 : 53] Or, and he starts quoting Psalm 16. And he says, you know this word. You know these lyrics. You won't let your holy one see corruption. How can that be King David?

He's dead. It has to be Jesus, son of David. Jesus is the one God has raised from the dead. We are witnesses of this. Why do we celebrate Easter?

Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ matters. If Jesus is not alive today and risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain. Why do we sing, I believe in the resurrection?

Because without it, he's just another dead teacher. But Paul tells us in his sermon that he is alive.

And because Jesus is alive, everyone who believes in Jesus can be made right with God. Everyone.

[39 : 51] It's because Jesus' heart is still beating right now that our Lord has fully conquered sin and death for us. It's because he has walked on this earth again and even met the disciples after three days that we can be assured that we will walk with him again in the new Jerusalem.

Every one of us who puts our hope and trust in Jesus, not in themselves, receives forgiveness of sin. That's what Paul presses home, isn't it? Everyone can have forgiveness of sins.

Eternal life. Goodbye to goodbyes. This is good news for us. And you notice how Paul, he presses really hard against the false religion of trying to earn your way into heaven.

Did you notice verse 39? You, who are unable to be justified in the law of Moses. The law is good. The Ten Commandments are helpful.

But ultimately, they are a mirror for our hearts. They show us that we need a Savior. They show us that by our own strength, we cannot save ourselves. If you're here today and you're trying to make yourself right with God, forget it.

[41 : 05] It's by faith alone, in Christ alone, that you can be made right with the God of the universe. Every other religion on this planet says, I obey, therefore I'm accepted.

But only Christianity, only Jesus says, I'm accepted, and then I'll gladly obey. You see the difference? So can I encourage you, if you are not a Christian today, if you haven't yet committed your life to Jesus, follow him.

Come to Jesus today. Submit to him as the king who is alive. The king who can rule over your life, your work, your career, your relationships.

Every name tells a story. And in Jesus' name, there is hope beyond the grave. In Jesus' name, there is rest from your burdens. In Jesus' name, there is peace that nothing else in this world can bring.

That is the gospel. It's interesting. One commentator points out in this section. Whenever Paul preaches good news, right, especially to a Jewish audience, he often sounds a note of warning.

[42 : 17] Do you notice that at the end? So this actually goes beyond what Angel read. So have a look with me. I'll read it out to you. All right. Take care then, verse 40, what the prophets have said does not happen to you.

Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I'm going to do something in your days that you would never believe even if someone told you. What's Paul doing here? It's an interesting thing he's doing.

It sounds like he's ending his sermon with a note of warning. All right. Here he's quoting a guy called Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 5. He's one of the Jewish prophets. And kind of just like Peter's sermon at Pentecost had a note of warning at the end, Paul ends his sermon with a note of warning.

He says, beware, don't turn into scoffers and unbelievers like the first heroes of Habakkuk did. And because what happens in the rest of the chapter is that we sadly see a mixed response, don't we?

All right. Some of them, Paul and Barnabas, were urged to continue in the grace of God. But then the rest of the chapter, actually what we see, verse 45, there were Jews that saw the crowds who were filled with jealousy.

[43 : 25] And they began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Some turned to Jesus that day. They even brought their friends and family next Sabbath.

Yet some will oppose Paul and Barnabas. And Paul says, beware. Beware if you are just sitting here and scoffing every week.

Beware. By contrast, right, the Gentiles, those who aren't Jewish, when they hear this good news, they rejoice in the Lord. As people who are outsiders of God's covenant, they are now joined into God's family through Jesus.

He is the one who can bring salvation to the ends of the earth. All right. And that's what we're reminded. This is what the Lord has commanded to us. I have made you a light for the Gentiles, verse 47, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Quoting Isaiah 49. And Luke uses kind of the last few verses to sum up. The gospel keeps spreading. His name is the one that spreads out.

[44 : 35] Doesn't matter if the Jews reject and oppose, even throw Paul and Barnabas out of the city. Despite all that opposition, the disciples of Jesus, what are they doing?

They are filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy. And they just keep going. And friends, that is the story of the church. That is the story of the church.

The story of Christianity is not one of failure. It's not one of disappearing into nothing. The story of Christianity is one where God's Spirit keeps working.

Where men and women, failed and flawed as they are, bring the name of Christ to the ends of the earth. And so we want to be inspired by that and challenged by that.

PCBC. Let's rejoice that God's salvation plan cannot be stopped. That in AD 40-something, it's small. Seems so insignificant.

[45 : 30] And yet, thousands of years later, Christianity, Christians can be named in every continent in the world. Let's rejoice in that.

God's salvation plan cannot be stopped. And so let's encourage one another to stand firm, to keep preaching God's word in the name of Jesus, our King of Kings.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you so much that, though we are weak, you are strong.

Though we are jars of clay, you are a strong tower. Father, help us to just be your faithful witnesses in our workplaces, in our families, in our schools.

Forgive us for times where we have failed, or where we have not cared enough about the perishing around us. Father, help us to be faithful proclaimers of your name.

[46 : 34] And help us to be confident that you will spread your name from sea to sea to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.