



## The Full Message of God's Salvation

Acts 13:23-41

April 1, 2018

When all our praise is directed to our God, the Living God who saves us, who called us to a holy calling and who is alone worthy of all of our glory and honor and praise. Among all of his manifold mercies, our God sent Jesus Christ to live and to die, and to rise again in order to save us from our sins.

Somebody asked me what I planned to preach for resurrection Sunday. We've been working through Luke's Gospel on Sunday mornings and going through an exposition of that wonderful gospel. So we're stepping away today from that study to celebrate Christ's resurrection, and so somebody asked me, what are you going to preach? And I told them, I'm going to preach somebody else's sermon on Sunday and it's true. I am going to be plagiarizing pretty significantly today, but I can commend the sermon to you and the source, it's found in Acts chapter 13.

This sermon gives us, some significant insight into the preaching of the apostle Paul. In the gospel that Paul preached every time he came into a new city, attended synagogue and proclaimed the gospel to a new group of people. This is the earliest recorded sermon that we have from Paul, but it is typical of what he'd been preaching for quite some time since his conversion in Acts chapter 9. That dramatic encounter with the risen Christ as he was heading north to Damascus to persecute Christians, drag them off into prison, he encountered the risen Christ on the Damascus Road.

Paul was the last apostle chosen by the Lord, he was thoroughly prepared to minister to fellow Jews, and yet the Lord set him apart to evangelize, Gentiles, like us. After Paul's conversion, according to the autobiographical material in Galatians 1 and 2, the Lord instructed Paul in the Gospel. He spent his earliest years in Damascus and also the Arabian desert, learning the faith becoming established by Christ in the faith and beginning to preach and to confront his fellow Jews, and even to confound them with his insistence that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, and that he has indeed, risen bodily from the dead.

And after about three years, in that early time in his life, Paul made a visit to Jerusalem and then due to more controversy over his preaching, he left, he was sent off by the disciples to Tarsus, the city where he was raised. And then we're going to pick up the story here in Acts 13 verse 1, where he's with Barnabas and the saints in a nearby city of Antioch, Asia Minor, where there was a very strong church there.

It says in Acts 13 verse 1, "There were in the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and a member of the court of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul, who was also called Paul. And while they were worshipping the Lord, and fasting. The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' And then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

And thus begins the first of three missionary journeys that Paul took in the book of Acts. It's recorded in the book of Acts. Three Missionary Journeys, which as James Boyce once

wrote, changed the history of Europe forever and as a result, the history of the world. That is no overstatement by Doctor Boyce. That is exactly what happened as a result of Paul's missionary journeys at the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

First, missionary journey began here in Antioch of Syria. Barnabas and Paul left Antioch, they traveled sixteen miles to Seleucia, the closest port. They boarded a ship to set sail for Barnabas's home, where he was raised on the island of Cyprus and after they preached the Gospel to the people on the whole island of Cyprus, they sailed to the mainland of Galatia, the southern coast of what we now know as the country of Turkey.

They landed at Perga in Pamphylia, which is west of the Taurus mountain range and from the coast they traveled on foot northward to another city called Antioch, but this is an Antioch that's located near Pisidia in what was then called Galatia. Antioch of Pisidia was a Roman colony, it was situated about 3600 feet above sea level, that's just 1000 feet below us, and there's a strategic point, this city was along the Imperial Road

system. And because of its strategic location, troops traveling on those roads, commercial traffic constantly passing through the city, Antioch as a city rose in prominence.

There were several cities, Roman Colonies established in Pisidia and Antioch became one of the capital cities of the Galatian province. And that is why Paul and Barnabas chose to visit Pisidia Antioch, because it was at the crossroads in a, crossroads city in the Roman Empire. It was a great place, to find people, many people of all kinds.

But in typical fashion they started ministry with the kinds of people with whom they were most familiar, fellow Jews. Says there in verse 14 that Paul and Barnabas attended the synagogue for the Sabbath day service. They heard readings that day from the law and the prophets, which was normal. And then at the invitation of the synagogue rulers, it says in verse 16, Paul began to address the people with his message and it was a Gospel message.

Sermon itself runs from verse 16 down to verse 41. It's a total of 25 verses in this sermon. So let me begin by reading it in its entirety. Look at Acts 13, verse 16, middle of the verse, Paul said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel, chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about 40 years he put up with them in the wilderness, and, then after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.

"All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel, the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for 40 years. When he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart. Who will do all my will.'

"Of this man's offspring, God has brought to Israel a Savior Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John had

proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

"Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 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.

"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. 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 spoke, 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.

"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. 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 someone tells it to you.'"



Now that reading took what maybe three to five minutes? Clearly, clearly that is not all Paul said when he addressed the synagogue on this occasion, and it is not just that I, as a preacher, refused to believe that Paul preached a five minute sermon, it had to be longer. But it is typical for the biblical writers, it was typical for Luke, who faithfully captured the essence of Paul's Sermon; his recording Paul's wording, his order, his expression, all the rest, but he has boiled the full length sermon down to its essence for the sake of this written record. Just a comment or two about the sermon itself, it divides into three parts. There's an introduction, there's a main body or a main point, and then a conclusion, very simple structure.

And Paul spends a bit of time as we saw in introducing the subject to his mostly Jewish audience in a Jewish context of the synagogue, that's in verses 16 to 25. Then he preaches a full message of The Gospel in verses 26 to 39, and then he concludes with a call to action, there in verse is 40 to 41. And that call to action is basically consists of a warning to those who do not obey the Gospel.

At the heart of his Gospel, as you heard read, is the doctrine of the resurrection. The main section on the Gospel, verses 26 to 39 that main section comprises 13 verses. But notice that eight of those 13 verses, it's about the resurrection. The resurrection was a big, big deal in Paul's preaching. We heard that earlier in the service from First Corinthians 15, "I delivered to you as a first importance, what I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures that he was buried that he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures. And that he appeared to Cephas, the twelve, to more than five hundred, and all the rest."

So the death, the burial, the resurrection of Christ, the appearance of Christ, it justifies the prominent place of the resurrection in Christian preaching. The doctrine of the resurrection in fact, deserves a prominent place in our evangelism as well, as we preach the Gospel to unbelievers. That's what Paul is doing here, he's preaching the Gospel to an unbelieving audience. Resurrection we can see in the book of Acts is prominent in Peter's preaching too, and I can just say,

beloved, the resurrection ought to be prominent in our Gospel testimony and preaching as well.

Today we're going to find out why. We obviously don't have to a, a time to do a full exposition of this sermon, but just a few thoughts as we work our way through it. What I want you to see is we get into the first point in our outline. The outline should be there printed in your bulletin, but I want you to see in this first point that Paul addresses, number one, the true recipients of God salvation, the true recipients of God salvation.

Paul began speaking in verse 16, and when he did, text says there that he motioned with his hand, basically getting everybody's attention, telling them this is what I'm going to speak on. Calling their attention to himself and then he addressed the synagogue congregation this way, "Men of Israel," he's speaking to his fellow Jews there, and then "You who fear God," that's addressing the Gentiles, God fearers who believed in the God of Israel. So speaking to both Jew and Gentile in the Jewish mind, that would be the entire world of people. Jew and

Gentile, Paul begins by commanding their attention, "Listen," listen.

In the Jewish context, as we read, he began with a bit of historic retrospective. You'll notice in verses 17 to 22, Paul is outlining points along Israel's history; points which they were all familiar with, exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wanderings, the people's establishment in the promised land, Israel's time under the judges where God ruled through human judges, but then their demand for a king, they chose King Saul.

God removed King Saul to establish David. Those points may have been connected to the readings earlier mentioned in verse 15, the law and the prophets, but Paul is also mentioning these points and drawing them to their attention to draw them to the one who fulfilled all the law and the prophets, the son of David, who is Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel.

And as I said, Paul began in verse 16 by addressing, "Men of Israel," and "You who fear God." After that introduction, he gets to the Gospel, in verse 26. The beginning of that main

section and notice how he introduces that section. Talking to his audience again, and he marks them out in this way.

"Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God."

That reconnects with verse 16, but then he adds this in verse 26, "to us has been sent the message of this salvation." "To us," Paul has included himself among those he identified as men of Israel as the sons of the family of Abraham, and most significantly, those among you who fear God, in that, in in other words, that is to say, not all the people in attendance that day. He's addressing those in their midst, who fear God just like he and Barnabas and the rest of their companions fear God.

Paul has delineated his audience here, he's speaking to those who fear God to those who have been prepared by God, to those who are ready to hear what he has to say. So after going through key points in Israel's history, Paul wants these Jewish people and these God fearers to know that it's not enough to be citizens of Israel. It's not enough to be descendants of

Abraham, it's not enough to be physical members of Abraham's family, it's not enough to have inherited tradition, a religious background.

After outlining their shared history, he comes to the point of divergence, the line in the sand, in verse 23, a dividing line at the coming of Jesus, the one who was preceded by John the Baptist. Look at the text there in verse 23, instead of this man's offspring, though virgin born, Jesus traces his physical lineage back to David through Mary and his legal lineage back through to David through his supposed father, Joseph.

Physically, legally, he is the bona fide son of David, so verse 23, "Of David's offspring, God has brought to Israel a savior Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he, no, but behold, after me one is coming the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'"

"Brothers," Paul says "Sons of the family of Abraham, those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation." Listen, for those who fear God, that section of Scripture brings us to the vital, to the indispensable realization that we actually need forgiveness. That is the dividing line that separated the people attending the synagogue that day into two groups. Those who refuse to see and admit their sin and those, on the other hand, who readily confess their sins.

Those who are broken and contrite over their sins, they are the ones with a true spiritual connection to Abraham, with all those who fear God, including the great Apostle Paul. Before we can seek forgiveness, we must first realize that we have sins against a holy God that indeed do need to be forgiven. Every conscience knows its own guilt before God. But not every heart is willing to admit it, to confess it, to forsake it.

What Paul says here makes personal recognition of sin and the need of forgiveness. It makes it an indispensable part of gospel preaching. In verse 23 we read that, "God has sent a

savior, He has brought a Savior Jesus." A name that means Jehovah saves or Yahweh saves. Just slowing down and thinking about that, reflecting on it, unpacking a bit, think about the implications of what was just said that God has brought a Savior, Jesus.

God has brought the Savior, God himself. We're talking here about the eternal, all knowing, creator, God. He is infinite, He is timeless, He is everlasting, unchanging, all powerful, immeasurable, that God. You think Facebook or Google or even the NSA knows a lot about you? Think again, we all live beneath the watchful eye of the God who knows all things, sees all things, every detail of our lives.

He has observed all our actions and our inactions. He's heard all of our words, whether voiced or thought. He has listened to all of our thoughts. He discerns all of our motives. He perceives all of our imaginations. This is the one who looks down from heaven on our lives and says, These people need a savior. David writes in Psalm 14:2-3, "The Lord looks down from



heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God."

You know what he finds? "They've all turned aside, together they have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one." Why is that? Why are there none among mankind who understand, none who seek the true and living God? Why have all turned aside to pursue corruption, that which defiles, that which degrades? Why is there no one who does good, not even one?

Because the Bible tells us that we've all been born in the likeness of Adam. The one who originally transgressed God's command. And receive the just reward which God promised on the day you eat of this you will surely die. And Adam died, and Eve died, and all those born in Adam are born in his fallen likeness, and we too, die.

That's why Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1-3, that even though born and even though animated and walking around and breathing. Ephesians 2:1-3, says "We're dead in our trespasses and sins." We're fallen, we're born into sin. We follow the

course of this fallen world, we follow the prince of the power of the air. That's the voice we listen to.

The spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience. Fallen Mankind lives according to the passions of flesh, carries out the desires of the body and the mind. They are, by nature, children of wrath. Look, all of us are sinful people. Every single one we've broken God's holy law. We are dull, born dull and calloused, we're blind to spiritual realities. We don't see God, we are oblivious in our state of rebellion.

The Bible says all through from cover to cover that we are corrupt people. Even the best of our deeds, we what we might call our righteousness, the Bible says, No those are filthy rags before God, because when we are measured against the perfect standard of the goodness of God, it is clear and it is obvious, as corrupt transgressors, we are a people who do no good thing. So how are we, people like this, people like us, like you and like me, how are we to recognize a Savior when God sends him?

But the dead, must first have life. That is God's doing by his grace, that's called being born again. We must be born again, and when God gives us life when he gives us eyes to see and ears to hear, when he gives us a heart that understands that soft and responsive and has life coursing through it.

The very first sign of spiritual life, is Spiritual self-awareness. We become aware that we are not what we ought to be. We become aware that we are fallen, that were corrupt, and that by ourselves were without hope, and that is why God, in his compassion, in his mercy, he sent his son and he sent before sending his son, he sent his messenger, a messenger to come before the savior to get the people ready.

Look at verse 24, before his coming, it says "John proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." We know even in reading about that testimony from the Gospels, that not only did the people of Israel listen, but Gentiles heard as well; Tax collectors, soldiers came, they all heard. They responded many of them as John was finishing his course verse 25. He said, "What do you suppose that I am? I'm not he.

No, but behold, after me is one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie."

We've been studying through Luke's Gospel Sunday mornings. Our churches recently learned about the significance, the great significance of John the Baptist. His profound significance has been, we might say, sort of diminished over many centuries of, of church history. That's understandable in light of the glory of Christ. And that's exactly how John would have it. In fact, he said, "He must increase," speaking of Christ, "and I must decrease."

But in the First Century, in many places, and among many people, especially among unbelieving Jews, John the Baptist was more popularly celebrated than Jesus Christ. He had a much bigger fan base, much bigger following. John's ministry had nothing to do, though, with establishing his own brand. Had nothing to do with building his own following, rather his entire life's work, his entire course was to point people to God's salvation. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." That's what he said. Salvation of God is found in

the savior that God sent, who is Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

As great as John was, and he was a great man, is a great prophet. The greatest prophet of the Old Testament era. John says, "I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals." That's a reference to the very lowliest of low slaves, to stoop down to dirty feet and untie the sandals for the master. He says that, I can't even do that, I'm not even worthy to touch his feet.

What's John's message? Repent, what's John's message to everyone? Repent. He proclaimed a baptism of repentance and that's why he came to them with confrontational preaching. He was getting in people's faces. He was discomforting the comfortable. He was upsetting the self-assured, he was ruffling the feathers of the proud and the self-satisfied why? To be unkind? No, not at all. He was calling 'em to repentance, he preached a hard message to soften people's hearts to make them ready when the Savior came, it is the spirit of prophetic ministry to do that.

Like Hosea said, "Sow for yourselves, righteousness, reap steadfast love, break up your followed ground." You know what followed ground? We ask a farmer, it's hard packed soil. It needs to be broken up. "For it is time to seek the Lord. That he may come and reign righteousness upon you." You've plowed iniquity, you've reaped injustice, you've eaten the fruit of lies because you've trusted in your own way.

That's the people of John's day, it's the people of our own day. God wanted a people by sending John and he wanted the people to recognize their sin. And he wants us to recognize our sin too, that we might be ready to see our need for the Savior he sent. That's why Paul says in verse 26 "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation."

Folks, all of this, as you can see from the text, is what God has done. Notice, how the verbs highlight God's action and the subject of those verbs, is God. All this points to his incredible mercy toward us in Christ, God has brought a savior. God is the one who gave the promise, verse 23. God sent John the

Baptist to prepare hearts, verse 24. He sent John to point the people to the coming one, verse 25. And God is the one who sent us, verse 26 the message of the salvation.

All that history, all that preparation, all that care, concern, mercy and compassion, all that forbearance with unholy rebels, transgressing his holy command. We need to pay very careful attention to what comes next, don't we? For those who listen to Paul that day, who didn't fear God? All those words of grace and mercy would fall on deaf ears.

But for the true recipients of God's salvation, that is, those who truly fear God. They would recognize that they are sinners before a holy God and in need of his forgiveness. Is that you today? Do you fear God? If you do, pay close attention to what comes next because it is the full message of God's salvation.

Point two in your outline, the full message of God's salvation. For those who are in the condition of spiritual deadness, it's fair to say that they might have trouble seeing

clearly, right? Deadness affects your eyesight, it affects a lot of things, but particularly your eyesight. You can't see anything, those who are spiritually dead are in desperate need of clarity and that's what we find here, two parts to Paul's explanation of the Gospel.

First clarity about Christ and secondly, clarity about the nature of divine salvation. People to whom Paul spoke like most people today, they lack clarity about both. They didn't understand Christ and they didn't understand the true nature of salvation. Again, very much like people today, they don't understand Christ, and they don't understand what he came to do. Christ came not to elevate your following or give you more money or to make you even, preeminently happy. He came to make you holy, and that comes through travail and pain, and sadness, and sorrow.

That's why Jesus says, "Blessed, are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn." If we don't have a clear understanding of Jesus, we're not gonna understand anything. He is the one who came to make the Father known, John in 1:18, so



if we fail to have clarity about Christ, we're not going to understand God. If we don't understand God, we don't understand his salvation, or any other spiritual truth for that matter. It all starts with clarity about Christ.

That's why Jesus own people didn't embrace him as Savior and king, but instead did the opposite. They rejected him and crucified him. They did so because they were spiritually dead, they were blind, they were unable to perceive who Jesus really is. Look at verses 26 to 28, "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For, those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers."

Notice the present tense there, they currently live there, still living, the ones who crucified Christ. "They did not recognize him, nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath. And they fulfilled them by condemning him, and though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed."

Paul returns to the same thought in writing to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 2:8, he explained the spiritual deadness of those who crucified Christ, Jew and Gentile alike, all of them, he says, none of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

That's who Jesus really is, he's none other than the Lord of Glory. Their spiritual condition, which recul, resulted in spiritual blindness is evident in the fact that they killed the very person God sent to save them. They killed their deliverer. They murdered their own savior; can anything be more bitterly ironic and as tragic as that?

Get this, these are no dummies. They're not uneducated people, these are intelligent, educated, accomplished people. Remember, Paul is speaking here in Pisidia in Antioch, which is a Roman colony. He's speaking here in a synagogue to Bible believing people. They had just finished reading the law and the prophets, that's a tradition they practice every single Sabbath day.

According to verse 27, then they're just like the ones who were in Jerusalem, who do the very same thing. Those people also practice the tradition of, of Bible reading. They were Bible readers, they did their devotions. They were instructed by educated men, learned scholarly rabbis, and yet, they missed all that had been written about Christ in the Old Testament.

Just goes to show you, intelligence isn't the issue, education isn't the issue, mirror familiarity or even scholarly familiarity with the Bible, that is not the issue. What is the issue? The presence or the absence of spiritual life, that is the issue. They were so spiritually blind, not only did they fail to understand Jesus, but in their hurry to reject him as their Messiah, they acted in total contradictions to the Bible they read in the teaching that they had heard.

As is read in the Gospels, the High priest examined Jesus and in so doing, the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders, they totally ignored the jurisprudence that God gave to Moses. They utterly abandoned due process by delivering Jesus over to

Pontius Pilate to have him crucified, they condemned an innocent man. They betrayed innocent blood, without equal, this is the greatest miscarriage of justice in all of human history.

Not just because of how blatantly they violated their own law, but more importantly because no one else in human history has ever been this innocent. Jesus, absolutely sinless, and they condemned him. Guilty of what? And yet, unwittingly, without knowing it, their criminal, murderous rejection of Jesus the Christ, fulfilled exactly what God decreed from the very beginning of time, from before time began.

What he revealed clearly in the Old Testament, Paul says in verse 27 that although they were ignorant and unwitting, those who crucified Christ actually fulfilled the prophets, when they condemned him. As verse 29 says, "When they carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree where they killed him, being fully culpable, guilty of their crime. They took him down from the tree and they laid him in a tomb."

It's a very precise statement, actually, so precise was their fulfillment of all that was prophesied about Christ in the Old Testament. That when his dead body was removed and brought down from that cross rather than burying his body in the ground, which is what they always did to the bodies of Jews who were crucified. Gentiles being crucified, their bodies were just thrown into a trash heap, just thrown on a rubbish pile.

But God had commanded the Jews something special about their own people, in Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "If a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land, that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance." Jesus died as a curse, a curse of God, curses of God as all who are hanged on a tree.

But the Jews knew that they had to bury the body of a fellow Jew, no matter how despicable, because he's cursed by God. But rather than being buried in the ground, body, Jesus'

body was laid in a tomb in the ground of a tomb, again fulfilling the scripture. Surprising manner of the burial of this cursed man should have pointed the people back in their minds to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. Again, the prophets being read every Sabbath.

We read that earlier in the service where it says in verse 9, "They made his grave with the wicked." That is, he was crucified between two criminals and yet, he was with a rich man and his death. That was fulfilled when his body was buried in the tomb of a very wealthy man. The brand new tomb, hewn out of a rock by Joseph of Arimathea. Jews and the gentiles, all of Israel conspiring within herself, and then collusion with the Roman overlords whom they hated, but they all came together to reject Jesus the Christ. None of them recognized him for who he truly was, the Lord of glory. It's an unwitting act of tragic, irony that they crucified their own salvation.

And yet all by God's perfect design, all according to his perfect wisdom, this became the means of their salvation, this is all according to his plan. As Isaiah prophesied, "We esteemed

him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted," which he was. But, "pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, with his wounds we're healed, the Lord Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He's cut off from the land of the living, stricken." Why? For the transgression of my people.

Is Jesus here an unwitting victim, conspiracy of sinful man and even God the Father in heaven, is he an unwitting victim? Not according Isaiah this is God's doing, it's the will of the Lord to crush him to put him to grief. And then According to him, Jesus' own testimony, he's not a victim. He says, "I laid down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord, I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

That last line, charge, "received from the Father," that shows that Christ the son of God submitted his will. He used the authority that he had over his own life to lay it down in submission to the will of the Father. It was the will of the

Father to crush him. The will of the Father, to put him to grief. And Jesus said, Yes Father, not as I will, but as thy will.

Brings us back to what Paul preached in Antioch. He told those who feared God, that the condemnation of Christ, the murder of Christ, for which the Jews and Gentiles are truly guilty. This crucifixion of Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father. Though they acted as free moral agents, though they did exactly what they wanted to do, there's a sovereign God above them, accomplishing his perfect will, according to his eternal decree.

We need to understand that about Jesus, we need to get Jesus right. And in understanding Jesus and the clarity of his purpose as savior, Paul then turns to provide further clarity about the nature of God's salvation. Recognizing who Jesus really is, that is how we're going to come to understand what God has actually done in the primary purpose of this Gospel. Yes, it's about saving guilty sinners. I'm so thankful for that, aren't you?



Yes, it's about eternal life. Yes, it's about living even now in the power of a resurrected life. But most fundamentally, most essentially, this Gospel is about the glory of God in redeeming guilty sinners. Because how can a just God who demands full punishment for every single sin against his holiness; how can that just God justify the ungodly and still remain just?

This message of salvation it reveals the greatness of the God who can do that, the God who can save. That's fundamentally what the resurrection is about. The supernatural act of raising Jesus from the dead, that's what the resurrection is. But what the resurrection means is divine approval, and for that we look at verses 30 to 39. "The Savior God promised whom he sent has died on the cross. He is buried in a tomb, but God" verse 30 "raised him from the dead." That is, a point, is pointing to the historical fact. Look at verses 30-31, "God raised him from the dead," fact, "and for many days he appeared to those who had come up from a with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people."

There's a historic fact, the resurrection. There's an eyewitness, many eyewitnesses, and now they testify and witness to the people telling the truth about what they've seen? We don't have time at this point, to deal with all the ignorant ravings of skeptics who are blinded by a deep seated anti supernatural bias. But, for many decades in our country, from childhood through university, we have learned science from a fundamentally irrational point of view. When they say all that exists is matter.

When they say, atoms are all that is and atoms, matter, is eternal. Therefore, in the atheistic secularist worldview for them, matter is God, stuff is God, atoms are God. Impersonal atoms are what decided to bond, and form, and break, and reform over millions, oh no, billions of years; no wait a minute, trillions of years, we can move the marker back as far as we need to go, but the bonding of these atoms. These natural processes consisted in a series of random but oh so happy accidents, which is what we are. They move from simple to complex. To eventuate in all that we see and know and experience today.

They say we're supernatural miracle believers, what in the world is that? We're taught these days to believe that personality, can arise from impersonal atoms. We're taught to believe that intelligence can arise from non-intelligence. We're taught to believe that creativity, and communication, and virtue, and love, and justice, and free will, and right, and wrong, and good, and bad, and all the rest; we're taught to believe that all of this came from a god called matter. Which could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor will anything to be at all, it's very strange myth.

It's one that's captured the mind of modern man, imprisoning the soul in a cage of ignorance and skepticism. They call it naturalism or materialism, or empiricism. And by it they deny the supernatural, they deny miracles. They call creation by God in six days, in a moment, they call it a myth. They call the resurrection a fairy tale.

If we set aside, the myriad of philosophical and metaphysical problems with an atheistic secularist materialistic worldview, for a moment. There is nothing so stubborn as the

fact that Jesus tomb was empty. When someone came looking for his body, the angel said, "He's not here, for he has risen." That fact is not going to change, there's no body to be found because God raised his body from the dead. Jesus ascended into heaven in his resurrected body, and he is now at the Father's right hand and will return one day. But when he returns, he'll come and judgment.

In addition to the empty tomb, Paul tells these people in Antioch, verse 31, that for many days he appeared to those who come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. In other words, there are eyewitnesses to this risen Christ. As we read earlier, they saw him, they touched him, they even ate and drank with him. This is an actual, literal bodily resurrection. These witnesses, they didn't keep quiet about it either. They talked as you might expect, and they became, verse 31, his witnesses to the people, but notice that they didn't run off to the Far East to spin some new religion about some resurrected myth Messiah. They talked about it in the very city where Jesus died and where he was buried, that's bold.

If anyone could disprove the resurrection as a myth and believe me the Jewish leaders had every motive, motive to do so, they would have disproved the resurrection immediately by producing the body. Leadership didn't do that, they knew from the start they didn't have a body. Matthew 28:11 says, "Some of the guard that was assigned to guard Jesus' tomb. They went into the city and they told the chief priests all that had taken place." And believe me, they're quaking, they're quivering. They know that the sentence of death is over their head for losing the body.

When they'd assembled with the elders and taken council, they gave us a suff, sufficient sum of money to the soldiers. And said, "tell the people, his disciples came by night and stole him away," while they, "while we were asleep." If this comes to the governor's ears will satisfy him, keep you out of trouble. So they took the money, did as they were directed. This story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Of all the ways to explain away the fact that Jesus' tomb is empty. To deny that he rose from the dead, this is probably

the best of all the failed attempts. It's still insufficient and absolutely absurd on so many levels. Roman guards die for falling asleep on watch, or for letting a bunch of fishermen steal the body, that they're ordered to guard from a sealed tomb or even further die for taking money to lie for the Jews.

Some have proposed other theories, some try to say that Jesus didn't die on the cross, he just merely fainted from the pain. And when they took him down, he kind of got up and said, "Well, that was rough," and walked off. He recovered to live quietly, retire in obscurity. But that contradicts all the history about Jesus, which is verified unquestioned.

The Muslims say that somebody else, not Jesus, died on the cross. Someone like Simon of Cyrene, but that contradicts Jesus own testimony that he intended to go to the cross and die. Some try to say the women and the disciples simply went to the wrong tomb, merely thought he was risen, but Oh, were mistaken, went the wrong tomb. Then why not simply produce the body? Silence their silly myth, exposed their error, their mistake.

Look it is ludicrous to suppose that these once frightened, scattered disciples became ferocious, unrelenting, bold, uncompromising preachers of the resurrection, on the basis, of a lie or more silly yet, some shared hallucination, all seeing the same resurrected Jesus, maybe had the same batch of peyote the night before the wine was spiked or whatever. No, they saw the risen Christ.

First, the women, Cephas, twelve, more than five hundred brothers, James, the Lord's brother, all the apostles, last of all the apostle Paul. They all saw him, they all preached the resurrection, they all knew it to be true. That's a historical fact.

Secondly, though, what does the historic fact mean? There's the history, there's the fact, but what is, how do we interpret the facts? What is the theological meaning of the resurrection that's there in versus 32 to 39? Paul says "We bring you the good news of 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's spoken in this way,

another promise. 'I will give you the holy sure blessings of David,' and therefore he says also in another Psalm, 'You will not let your holy one see corruption.'" Why? Because he made these promises.

He won't let him see corruption, for David, after he served the purpose of God in his own generation, he fell asleep, he's laid in with his fathers. He saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. To sum all that up, in a concise way, here's what Paul is saying.

Here's the meaning of the resurrection, God has kept his word, God has kept his word. Verses 32 to 33, "What God promised, this he has fulfilled." God is the subject of both those verbs, both promise and fulfillment. God is there from start to finish and it all depends on him. That is the significance of the resurrection, that is what resurrection means.

God has kept his word. Kept his word to who? To us, yes, us. There's more than that, but at least us, "What God promised



to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus." Promises that God made to Abraham, to his offspring, to David, extending all the way to those who are of Abraham and of David by faith. But that promise isn't just to us.

Paul makes us even more fundamental than that, he points to the promises God made repeatedly to his own son. Paul quotes from three Old Testament passages there, starting with Psalm 2:7 to 8, which says "I will tell of the decree." This is Jesus, the Son of God, preincarnate Christ speaking. He says "I will tell of the decree the Lord said to me, you are my son. Today I have begotten you." Passage continues as God says, "Ask of me, I will make the nations your heritage. The ends of the Earth, your possession."

Look, God made promises to the preincarnate Christ, he made the promises to the Son and he is not going to allow the eternal Son to be cut off by death, because the nations in the end of the earth are to be his possession. He must live to rule. Paul then quotes next from Isaiah 55:3, again reinforcing the fact

that God's not going to allow his eternal begotten Son to be cut off by death and then explicitly this Psalm 16:10, "Messiah says you will not abandon my soul to Sheol. You will not let your holy one see corruption." This isn't referring to David, who is the author of Psalm 16, David died.

Same thing Peter pointed out in Acts 2:29 quoting the same psalm, Psalm 16. He interpreted it this way while filled with the Holy Spirit, he said, "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day."

Melinda and I were in London some years back, we were walking around Westminster Abbey. When we saw the tombs of many famous people in England's history, kings like Edward the Confessor and Edward the First, brilliant Isaac Newton, African explorer David Livingston, and all the rest. People can travel to London and see all those tombs of all those famous people.

Just like everyone in Paul's day could go to Jerusalem and visit David's tomb. Not true of Jesus, he whom God raised up did

not see corruption. There is no body in the tomb to go and visit because God raised Jesus up from the dead. He fulfilled his word not just to the fathers, but to Jesus who believed what God told him when he said, by the Holy Spirit, through the pen of David, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. You will not let your Holy One see corruption."

Jesus the Messiah believed God's promise; God fulfilled his word; God raised him from the dead and the question today is, do you believe? Jesus believed, he believed God's word. Paul has believed God's word. All of us sinners in need of salvation, we believe God's word, do you believe? Versus 37-38, notice this, this completes the meaning of the resurrection for those who fear God. This provides us with further clarity about the nature of salvation.

This is how God, the just one, holy, can justify the ungodly. 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. Forgiven and set free. That's the Gospel.

The law of Moses was for Israel, the standard of righteousness that governed their moral, civil, ceremonial life of the whole nation. Law of Moses, as I say, it was a standard. When I say that as it was the standard, I mean it was the measuring rod against which all righteousness is assessed and by which all righteousness is judged. Like the laws of our land, laws that legislate a form of morality laws that provide the boundaries of protection and penalties for transgression. Same thing with the law of Moses, except for this, unlike the US Constitution, unlike our state and city laws, the law of Moses, written by the hand of God, inscribed by the finger of God, the morality that formed the heart and foundation of the Mosaic Law, was the very character of God himself.

It's true, that we do have vestiges of that Judeo-Christian morality in our own land. They're quickly being torn away, ripped away from the foundation of our land, but still, the one place that the so called progressives, one place they can't

erase the sense of moral right and wrong, is in every human heart.

We all know Paul tells us in Romans 2:15, "The work of the law is written in our hearts. We have consciences that bear witness to the fact that we know moral right and wrong." But all the law can do is reveal the standard. All it can do is show us is when we are in compliance or in violation, and then when we're in violation to point us to the inevitable punishment for transgressing the law.

Paul says here in verse 39, "The law of Moses cannot free anyone from the penalties prescribed for violating the law." Law of Moses can do nothing to free people from the penalty of sin. We can do even less to free people from the power of sin or the presence of sin. Wasn't meant for that, like all of you, probably I've been watching as the entertainment world has been, accusing, defending, counter, accusing really rending itself in pieces with all these allegations and lawsuits.

Everyone is demanding justice, for those who've been victimized by the sinful lusts of others. And those who are truly victimized, they deserve justice. And while I've got serious doubts as to how a society that has rejected any concept of moral absolute, can provide justice to anyone. I'm seeing even less hope that any of those who are truly guilty can find anything resembling forgiveness.

I read about some of these, predators checking themselves into rehabilitation clinics. I'm frankly skeptical as to whether anyone will even be superficially helped and reformed by any attempt at therapy for some unregenerate, unrepentant heart. What I do know for sure is that the interests of justice and righteousness will not be served, will never be served by that.

Those who enter into the clinic are going to exit the clinic with the same heart, with the same enslaving lusts and desires. And it's terribly ironic because predator and prey alike are not going to find any justice. Until both of them stand before the bar of God's holy justice and they're gonna stand there united together, as fellow slaves with the

continuing presence of sin dominated by the continuing power of sin and facing the eternal penalty of sin, which is eternity in hell. Despite what Pope Francis says.

That's what makes this is such good news. To be freed from the penalty and the power and the presence of sin. This is such good news to those who were in Antioch, they heard Paul preach. They grew up studying the highest exposition of law given to mankind. The law of Moses, written by the hand of God, but that law had no power to free them from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

That's why you've heard of these rich people who want to be cryogenically frozen and science will catch up to the fact that their bodies can be reanimated and they can live forever. Bad idea, you know, why? Because the same heart they go down with is the same heart they'll come up with. They'll corrupt themselves and this world again. Those who fear God, those who long to be delivered, who long to be justified by God, declared by the Holy God who sees all things declared forgiven and judged to be righteous.

Christ accomplished that through his perfect life, atoning death, and most notably from his resurrection from the dead. God has done Romans 8:3-4, what the law could not do. "By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us."

You see there in Acts 13:39 how everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. What's translated there in the ESV is freed, is the word *dikaioo*, which is usually translated justified. The translators are here emphasizing the practical benefits of justification, which is freedom.

Paul, though, is speaking about the more fundamental legal reality of justification. It's the same thing taught from cover to cover in Scripture, starting as early as Genesis 15:6, which says "Abraham believed the Lord and God," counted, "counted it to him as righteousness." That's why Paul can say believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You believe Christ,



your sin is imputed to Christ, and he's punished. His righteousness is imputed to you, and you are blessed. God declares you righteous.

That's why God's testimony in the doctrine in the resurrection is so vital to the gospel folks. And why we need to proclaim this to others, why we need to explain it clearly whenever we share the Gospel. Just as God promised to raise Jesus from the dead, a promise that Jesus believed. And then God raised him from the dead. So also, you and I, if we will believe the promise of God, we too, will be raised from the dead, just like our Lord.

"If you confess with your mouth, Jesus Lord," Romans 10:9. "Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Saved from the penalty of sin, just like Abraham the father of all who believed our faith will be counted to us as righteousness, Romans 4:24. It'll be counted to us who believe in him, who raised Jesus from the dead as Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses. He's raised up for our justification.

Having been saved from the penalty of sin, which is God's eternal wrath, were being saved from the power of sin. We're no longer under sin's dominion because we're dead to sin. Romans 6:11, "We're alive to God in Christ." That means one day, when we follow Jesus into resurrection glory, we have the hope, the certain sure hope that we will be forever free from sin's presence entirely. "For this is the will of my Father," Jesus said in John 6:40, "that everyone who looks on the Son and believes on him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Folks, that is good news, that is very good news, and it is sealed by divine guarantee in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Brings us here to a final point and in our outline this morning, And it has to do with you and number three, the right response to God's salvation, the right response. Two responses to this message of the gospel, acceptance and rejection. The way you respond reveals whether or not you really want God to redeem you to himself. Whether or not you really want to be forgiven of your sins, whether or not you really want God as your reward.

Paul gives this call to action versus 38 to 41 or 40 to 41. We have to ask, do you believe? Or do you scoff? First response is to believe, to embrace by faith that leads to justification, it leads to freedom, full, final freedom. Verse 39, "Let it be known to you, that through this man, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." Who is the you? To whom Paul is speaking back to our first point? He's addressing all those and only those who fear God who recognize their sin and their need for the savior that God has sent us. We can be justified by God, verse 39, we can be freed from all condemnation of the law. That's the response that results in divine justification and leads to eternal life.

But the second response, second response is how Paul ends here. Unbelieving rejection, leads to judgment, leads to judgment. That's a warning that Paul gives him verses 40 to 41, look at it there. "Beware therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about. Look you scoffers, be astounded in perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you." That's a warning that comes from the prophecy of Habakkuk.

In Habakkuk, warned Jerusalem of a coming invasion by the Babylonians. The army was led by the Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar. And says this and Habakkuk 1:5 and following, here's the context, "Look among the nations and see; wonder be astounded. For I'm doing a work in your days you would not believe if I told. For behold I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who marched through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own.

"They're dreaded in fearsome; their justice and dignity, go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, all their faces forward." That is to say, their violent men and their courageous men. "They gather captives like sand.

"At kings they scoff, at rulers, they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, but they pile up earth and take it." That is to say, they make piles against fortresses and climb over and kill.

"Then they sweep like the wind and go on guilty men whose own might is their God!"

So when delivering this warning, to the synagogue congregation in Pisidian, Antioch, Paul, he only needed to cite one verse from Habakkuk and all the Jews felt a cold chill crawling up in their spine. The fact that they are living far from Jerusalem in these far flung reaches of the Roman Empire away from Jerusalem. It's a poignant reminder that God's prophesied judgment had in fact fallen on them. Which is why they're not living in Palestine.

It's very hard for us, here, living in Colorado, the heart of America, to understand the threat of an invading army. We have been insulated by two oceans from a lot of the world's dangers. Few times we've been attacked, you can think back to Pearl Harbor in 1941, you can think about 9/11. Those attacks sent shock and fear and dismay throughout our country.

God wants us to think about those kinds of consequences, when we think about rejecting his salvation. The consequences

are going to be more sudden, more severe, more violent than any invading army or any sudden attack. The one whom God approved by raising him from the dead is to be worshipped, not rejected. Rejecting in him is going to result in overwhelming unstoppable flood of judgment.

Descriptive language of God's judgment, sending Chaldean invaders into the Holy Land apply to that final future judgment God sends, it's not a human army, but it's an angelic host led by the Son to judge all those who reject his salvation. And like the Chaldean invasion of recorded history, the invasion of Heaven on unbelieving earth, it's also going to be just as described in Habakkuk, bitter and hasty. It's gonna be dreaded and fearsome swifter than leopards, more fierce than evening wolves flying like an eagle swift to devour.

Christ and his angelic hosts are going to come for violence. They will scoff at kings; they will laugh at rulers. They'll laugh at every human fortress, every attempt to keep him out. They will sweep through like the wind and nothing will stay his hand. Interesting, isn't that Paul ends the good news with

this warning? Severity of the warning is warranted though, by the excellence of the message of the Gospel that he proclaims.

The gracious God points us to salvation, in his one and only son, and to reject him is an eternal offense against divine kindness. God declared Jesus to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead. So all those who fear God, all those who acknowledge their sin who embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they and they alone will be saved.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the divine seal of approval, it is the stamp of his approval, it is the gavel falling and saying justified, not guilty, but righteous. And that encourages and motivates us by an internal living hope. Providing us with certainty, with unwavering confidence, and absolute hope. That is the resurrection folks, that's what we celebrate today.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Our God and our Father. You have certainly set apart your son, Jesus Christ. As the one



and only Savior. We love you, we thank you for this gospel that saves us, and we do call upon all those who do not know you, been reconciled to you by faith in your Son. We call on them to believe, to repent of their sin and put faith in you. We trust you, we love you, we thank you for this time of the year that we can set apart to worship you because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's by him that we are saved and give glory to you in his name. Amen.