

After their first stop in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas and their assistant John (John-Mark 12:25) journey on. In Cyprus we have a brief mention (v5) of their preaching in a Jewish synagogue, and then a longer description of an encounter they had with a Gentile individual by the name of Sergius Paulus.

Now they arrive in a region called Galatia, and we have a very detailed look at what sort of things Paul and Barnabas would say when they “proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews”¹ Since Paul was a trained Rabbi (and perhaps still wore the religious garments that identified him as a Pharisee on occasions like this) he was often asked to speak.

This sample sermon gives us a bit of insight into all of his other sermons:

he starts with the Old Testament, showing God’s faithful provision and rescue for His people, then goes to Jesus of Nazareth, the Ultimate Provision and the Ultimate Rescuer of God’s people, and he concludes with an appeal for his hearers to believe and be saved, and a warning for those who spurn God’s Messiah.

Big Idea: Through the risen Christ we can have forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt.

1. History of Israel (16-23)

What God has done BEFORE sending Jesus

- a. Brief overview of some of the important milestones of what God has done to bless, protect and lead the nation of Israel.
 - i. v17a Calling of the Patriarchs (Genesis)
 - ii. v17b Rescue of the people from Egyptian slavery (Exodus)
 - iii. v18 Wilderness wanderings (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
 - iv. v19 Giving them the land of Canaan as their inheritance (Joshua)
 - v. v20 Gave them judges (Judges)
 - vi. v21 Samuel the prophet, Saul and David (1&2 Samuel)
 1. v22 God promised David that His descendant would always rule over God’s people, He would be the anointed King, from age to age, with all glory, honour and power. and the Apostle Paul tells everyone gathered at the synagogue that morning that the promised Son of David has come and *His name is Jesus of Nazareth*.
- b. We see that all of Israel’s history was on a “Christ-ward trajectory”
 - i. God had a plan, that was His steadfast commitment to the world throughout all of the wanderings and wonderings; throughout all the surety and the question marks - He was arranging all things for the “fulness of time” and the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus: His life, death and resurrection (23-37)

- a. He is the Son of David (v23 again)
- b. He is greater than John the Baptist (24-25)
 - i. A famous prophet who who ministered in the Judean wilderness by the river Jordan. He drew massive crowds from all over the country. He stood up for righteousness and would not back down nor compromise. It was said that among all those born of women, there was none greater than John the Baptist, which is another way of saying ‘he was the best guy in the world’
The Jewish historian Josephus penned a lengthy paragraph describing JTBs preaching and influence and fame; Josephus includes this statement: “He was a good man.”²
 - ii. But John himself says that he is NOTHING compared to Jesus.
- c. Spoken of by the Prophets that were read weekly in the synagogue meetings (v27)

¹ Before the focus on Paul’s preaching begins, there is a brief mention v13 of John leaving and returning to Jerusalem. This is an important event, relationally, and I’m looking forward to revisiting it in about 4 weeks time!

² Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Chapter 5,2

- i. Since all of Israelite history was on a Christ-ward trajectory, it only makes sense that their sacred scriptures would be full of promises and predictions and hints about what He would be like when He arrives, and what to look for.
- ii. Jesus said to the religious teachers of His day: **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.**

(John 5:39-40)

1. I am especially passionate about this : to preach the scriptures and to not show how Jesus Christ is the Hero of the story and that He is the source of life, wether OT or NT, is really just a waste of everyone's time. - in 2 weeks time I will be in Costa Mesa CA for the CC Pastor's Conference, and I get to lead a workshop on "Christ Centred Preaching" where I get 90 minutes to try to convince a few thousand pastors that the most faithful way to preach any passage of the Bible is to connect its themes and motifs to Jesus Christ, and then to try to teach them how to do it.
2. Would you please pray for me? This method of teaching is not as widespread as it should be and I want to use the time that I've been given as wisely as possible.

Executed though innocent (v28-29)

- iii. Pontious Pilate famously washed his hands of Jesus, stating that he didn't find anything wrong with Him.
 - iv. That was the whole point: He was morally pure - innocent in every sense of the word. Peter speaks of Jesus as "a Lamb without spot or blemish" (1 Peter 1:19) He was the sacrifice, The Just for the unjust (1 Peter 3:8) The innocent for the guilty.
- d. Raised from the dead (30-32)
- i. Jesus, who was a public figure, was killed publicly, and then rose from the grave, and He was seen by a large number of people, from varying backgrounds - believers and unbelievers alike, individuals and crowds.



Consider world religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Consider the abhorrent offshoots of historic Christianity: Mormonism, the Marian devotions and apparitions in Knock, Medjugorie etc etc. As diverse as these faiths are - what they have in common is that someone has a private experience; whether it is a dream, a vision in a cave, an angel in the woods, or an idea that strikes them - that person goes out and tells everyone what happened to them in private.

Contrast that with the foundation of Christianity: Jesus, who was a public figure, was killed publicly, and then rose from the grave, and He was seen by a large number of people, from varying backgrounds - believers and unbelievers alike, individuals and crowds. And those people went everywhere telling everyone what they had seen in public.

e. His resurrection was promised in the OT scriptures as well (33-37)

- i. Psalm 2, Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16 are quoted as hints and clues / foreshadows of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave.
- ii. Psalm 16 was the same verse that the apostle Peter quoted in his pentecost sermon - showing that God's plan was to not let the Messiah rot in the grave, but raise and never see corruption.

3. Through the risen Christ we can have forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt.

(38-39)

a. "through this Man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you"

i. **Sin** is any act of disobedience that separates us from God.

1. All things, either in thought, word or deed that deviate from God's perfect holy standard.

Sin is Not only wrong things that we *do*, and the right things that *we leave undone*.

2. The weight of the mountain of our personal sins is enough to bury us from the presence of God forever, it is **heavy** enough to drag us all straight to hell.

ii.

iii. The Sin that would have separated us from God, heaven and every good thing FOREVER were placed on Jesus at the cross.

He was separated from His Father temporarily, so that we could be forgiven, and be united to the Father ETERNALLY.

b. "and by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses."

i. Not just forgiven; but freed from all that you could not do from your efforts at law-keeping and moral living.

1. two blessings from the resurrection - forgiveness of sins and justification before the throne of God.

ii. The word that Paul uses here is *Dikaioo*, and it is a favourite word of his. It is usually translated as "justified" (30x) and here it is translated "freed" in the ESV. [NIV and NKJ render it justified]

1. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in His eyes. We are absolved (cleared and freed) from every charge

a. Every sin of ours is taken away and all of the righteous life of Christ is copied and pasted into our account!

b. Sinners are pardoned, no longer estranged from God, given the gift of righteousness and we are permanently accepted for Jesus' sake

2. Paul writes the books of Galatians and Romans to explain this doctrine that he hints at here: God justifies the ungodly who trust in Christ! (Romans 4)

3. In [Romans 4:25](#), Paul writes that Christ was "delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

4. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) No trace of judicial guilt is left upon you. In the eyes of God the Judge - you are not guilty, you are innocent, you are clear of all charges. There is no stain of defilement on you. you are clean. you are no longer exiled, but you are invited in. You are welcomed. You are family. You are loved.
5. If you have received justification from God the judge of all, no other judgment matters, it holds no weight.
 - iii. "The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus *a pardon* receives" I love this line and I sometimes get choked up when I sing it; knowing that it is singing about me. And it is true; that moment of belief was also the moment of my pardon; but I would say that it is NOT TRUE ENOUGH. There is more that could be said - I receive more than just a pardon, I am justified in God's sight.
 - iv. Jesus does not only forgive us, but we are also justified by Him. Forgiveness takes care of the debt of sin, but justification puts a positive credit on our account before God.
4. Warnings against refusal (40-41)
 - a. Quotation from Habakkuk about a coming judgment that was in store for the people of Israel of 600BC for their refusal to heed to instructions of God.
 - b. If Paul's hearers of his day refuse to heed the instruction of God to place their faith in Jesus, then something similar (and worse) will happen to them.
 - c. And I warn you today: Jesus Christ saves us from the wrath to come. He absorbed God's wrath against our sin upon the cross - through faith we benefit from that payment; but if we reject His gracious offer, then the bill is given to us. We have to pay it ourselves and face the darkness of God's wrath.
5. Available to ever kind of person imaginable. (42-52)
 - a. Not just for Jews, for all people.
 - b. do not think you are too old, too young, too educated, too unschooled, too rich, too poor, too pure, too defiled for Christ's offer.
 - c. You all can be forgiven and justified by placing your faith in Him.

As we conclude - my hope for you is that in this retelling of the ancient story of the gospel that you would find yourself in there. For those of you who wouldn't say that you know Jesus personally yet, or have entered into a saving relationship with Him, the message is clear.

Through the risen Christ you can have forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt. - and by believing in Him you avail of all that His sacrifice purchased for you.

For those that **do** know Him; the message is clear: You are not *just* forgiven - you are justified **Through the risen Christ you have forgiveness of you sins and you have freedom from your guilt.** Isn't that astounding?

So we respond with singing songs of praise, the elements of communion, and receiving prayer and the giving of our tithes and offerings.