

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13



PROGRESS IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Scripture Text: Acts 13:14-52

Paul and Barnabas were on their first missionary journey. They came to the city of Antioch, and on the Sabbath Day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. After reading a portion of the Old Testament, the ruler of the synagogue called upon them to speak. Paul began with a brief history of Israel from the time they were in bondage in Egypt until David ruled over the land of Palestine. Then he showed that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ and that Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. He reminded the Jews of how they had crucified Christ, but that God had raised Him from the dead and that all people could be saved by believing in Him. When the Jews had left the building, the Gentiles asked that Paul preach these same things to them on the next Sabbath. When the Jews saw the multitudes that came to hear Paul, they were jealous and rose up against them and drove them out of the region.

MEMORY VERSE: *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

—*Luke 24:47*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Romans 3:9-25**— All have sinned and need Christ.

Tue.— **Romans 1:18-32** —Turning from God to sin.

Wed.—**1 John 5:1-13** — Salvation is in Christ.

Thu.—**Hebrews 9:21-28** — Christ the perfect sacrifice.

Fri.—**Isaiah 40:12-31** God gives power to man.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 24:3-14— Enduring unto the end.

An Invitation to Speak

Acts 13:14-22 Paul and Barnabas **went into the synagogue on the Sabbath** because they knew there were people worshipping there. They **sat down**. They made themselves available for God's use there. The rulers of the synagogue called upon them to speak, **if you have any word of exhortation**. Paul began with a brief history of Israel with which these people were familiar—from the time they were in bondage in Egypt until David reigned over the land.

He Preached Jesus

Acts 13:23-37 **Of this man's [David's] seed hath God . . . raised . . . a Savior, Jesus.** This was the heart of his message. **According to his [God's] promise**—fulfilling prophecy. Paul showed that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ and that Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. John the Baptist also predicted Christ's coming. The promise came first to the Jews. **And we declare unto you glad tidings . . . the promise . . . God hath fulfilled . . . in that he hath raised up Jesus again**—the Resurrection.

The Jerusalem Jews heard the Prophets (Old Testament Books) read every Sabbath (**Acts 13:27**). Yet they did not know them. When He came, they did not recognize the Christ the Prophets told about. To escape the same tragedy, we need to read and understand the Bible while we have the opportunity. Our children need to be taught the Bible. We will be judged by it and need to know what it says. Pray the Lord to open His Word to you.

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Jesus Alone Justifies

Acts 13:38-41 Through this man [Jesus] is preached . . . forgiveness of sins. All sinful humans need forgiveness more than anything else. It is only in Christ. **By him** [Christ] **all that believe**—who by faith take Him and His promise—**are justified**—cleared of guilt—**from all things**—all sins, saved to the uttermost. Justification cannot be obtained **by the law of Moses**. Paul had placed two methods of salvation opposite each other. He said one was perfectly successful, the other a perfect failure. The method he called successful was fiercely opposed by the Jews. The one he called a failure was that held by them. He warned them of the danger of rejecting Christ, quoting **Habakkuk 1:5 (verse 41)**. Their unbelief was prophesied long before.

Acts 13:42-43 There were many Gentiles in the audience who, because they believed in one God, had accepted the Jewish faith. Many of the Gentiles remained after the meeting and asked for this preaching again **the next Sabbath**. A good number of Jews and proselytes believed. They **followed Paul and Barnabas**, hungry for spiritual food. The Apostles encouraged them to **continue in the grace of God**. The Apostles' advice to them needs to be repeated over and over. Only those who endure unto the end will be finally saved (**Matthew 24:13**). To endure, we must have grace. Grace is a supply of God's own life which He pours into the lives of His children as we need it. To obtain it, stay in contact with God. Live in His strength, not yours.

The Jews followed the Law. Now the Law was fulfilled in Christ, but the Jews would not believe. They held back for the old forms and symbols. These could never save them. If we think we can be justified by our obedience to forms, by going to church, by baptism, by signing a card, by good works, etc., we are like the Jews. We can be justified only by believing in Christ.

Opposition From the Jews

Acts 13:44-52 The next Sabbath day came almost the whole city—many gathered which excited envy in the Jews. It widened the gap between them and the Gentiles. They opposed Paul's teaching, **contradicting and blaspheming**. Paul boldly told them **that the word of God** was to be spoken to them first. He told them if they rejected God's Word and everlasting life, **we turn to the Gentiles**. He recalled God's Words to him sending him to the Gentiles and to take salvation unto the ends of the earth (**Acts 9:15; Acts 22:15, Acts 22:21; Acts 26:16-18**). Gentiles believed and spread the Word to the **ends of the earth**. The Jews **raised persecution** and drove out the Apostles, who left **filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost**. **Acts 9:16** was beginning to be fulfilled in Paul.

Paul saw issues clearly. He wanted others to. God, not men, taught Paul the Gospel (**Galatians 1:11-12**). He presented it boldly to the very ones who would oppose it most. Many would fear to do so. Paul used no shallow talk of all going to the same place, or all being children of God. He knew the deadly disease these people suffered from. He knew the remedy that saved him. He knew from his experience that it would work. He laid it plainly before the people. When they refused it, he was through with them because God was through with them. They had judged themselves **unworthy of everlasting life**. By their words and conduct, they had passed sentence upon themselves and, in effect, had stated that they were unworthy of the grace of the Gospel. The Gospel was to them a savor of death unto death.

JUST A THOUGHT

**A method of finding work to do is to make ourselves available to God
and wait for an opening and His leading.**