

Explore the Bible: The Gospel Message

November 15, 2017

- The Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 3 focuses on Acts 13:26-39.

As we begin a new season and new unit of study, we build on the foundation of our summary statement: *Christ's death and resurrection are central to the gospel message.* In fact, it is clear that without this truth, there is no gospel.

In light of this, we begin with Barnabas and Saul on their journey after they were set apart and sent by the church at Antioch. Their journey was quite young as they stopped to observe the Sabbath at Pisidian Antioch. We dive in halfway through Paul's narrative and teaching, and it is interesting to see a request prompted his oration. The rulers asked the two missionaries for a "message of encouragement." With Barnabas's name meaning "son of encouragement," we might wonder why he did not speak. Yet, Paul—formerly Saul of Tarsus—rose immediately to speak this necessary word.

Crucified (Acts 31:26-29)

After giving a "history lesson," which was not uncommon for such speeches, Paul opens this section by reiterating this word is for both Jews and God-fearing non-Jews. We must never neglect the fact that Jesus's crucifixion and sacrifice was for all.

What do we make of the accusation of those in Jerusalem? It could be read negatively as if to say, "They didn't get it, and we shouldn't follow their mistake." However, most important is the fact that the "message of

salvation has been sent.”

While the people in Jerusalem did not see it, by now many others were seeing and responding. In fact, Christ’s rejection fulfilled the prophetic words of the Old Testament. Ask your group: *What does it say about Jesus that he endured rejection so all people will have access to his salvation?*

The death of Christ had to take place, and pointing fingers at who murdered Jesus is unnecessary. In light of Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” film, many stories filled the media about “pointing fingers” of guilt for the crucifixion. Yet, if we see Christ’s death in light of the prophets’ words, we see that God himself put Jesus Christ on the cross.

Resurrected (Acts 31:30-37)

Now comes the good news: Resurrection fulfilled God’s promise. The beauty of this fulfillment is found in the fact that those who saw him were now “witnesses.” This very word that we speak as *martyr* points to a reality worth giving your life to.

Consider comparing David to Jesus in light of this section of verses. Paul utilizes two psalms and offers the comparison in verses 36-37. *What do we gain from comparing David to Jesus?*

The resurrection is the event on which our faith hinges. One year ago, Pastor Andy Stanley was caught in a public backlash because of his stance on the resurrection being our foundation rather than the Bible. While many have contested his claims, his conversation shed light on how the early church (pre-Bible) relied on uncontested witnesses to affirm Christ’s resurrection as the grand fulfillment of God’s promise.

While the Bible is where we now draw on Jesus’s own words, as well as those inspired by God to write, we should give the resurrection our clear

focus. Ask your group: *How is the resurrection event more potent than all other elements of our faith?*

Proclaimed (Acts 31:38-39)

Now for the greatest application opportunity: Paul brings the reality of Christ's fulfillment with a "therefore" that gave the listeners an open invitation to receive justification and forgiveness. These two verses hint to Paul's work in *Romans* where he developed the argument for "justification by faith."

It is clear the law was deficient for those listening, because they could not fulfill the law. Only Jesus would fulfill it. Paul's proclamation then was a detour from their deficiency. That detour is Christ's death and resurrection, received by faith. *When did you realize your deficiency?*

How does this proclamation change our view of ourselves? We tend to think we are "good enough" or "trying to be good," but really, that is meaningless to salvation. Take this opportunity to discuss with your group about how this "good news" is really good because we have no part in our own rescue other than faith.

Conclusion

Romans 5:1 strikes a similar vein as this passage: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." *How was Paul's message to Pisidian Antioch ultimately the "message of encouragement" the people asked for?*

Well-known preacher and professor Tom Long once said, "The gospel is saying to those around us, 'You don't have to live the way you're living anymore.'" This strikes a nerve in that the foundation of the good news

calls us away from how we naturally live our lives.

As Paul, Barnabas and their companions believed and proclaimed, so we also should believe and proclaim. Have each person in your group answer this question: *Who do I need to speak this encouraging message to this week?* At your next meeting, follow up with these answers, pray and continue to proclaim.

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