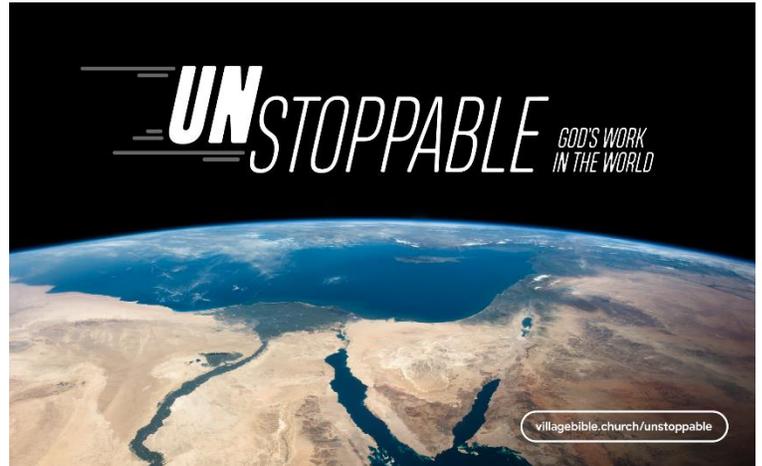




UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World

On the Road Again – Acts 13:13–41

Tim Badal | September 23, 2018



We're in the second part of our series on the book of Acts. Last spring and last fall we focused on "Unfinished" in the first 12 chapters; now we're picking up with Acts 13 under the heading "Unstoppable." Here we'll see the gospel spread throughout the known world through the work of different servants of the Lord and learn valuable lessons through these stories.

Last week in Acts 13:1–12, we saw that the church in Antioch was not that different from our church today. They were serious about God. They were worshiping and praying. As they were doing that, God sent them in a direction they hadn't planned on. We've seen God do that here as well, when He gave us some instructions and we had to decide to obey Him.

In Antioch, they were tasked with sending out two of their best leaders, Paul and Barnabas, as missionaries, without even knowing where they would be going. But these men were faithful to follow God's calling and they found themselves on the island of Cyprus. There they started preaching the gospel and as a result, one of the most influential people on the island—the proconsul Sergius Paulus—was drawn to hear more about what they were preaching. But the opportunity there was not without obstacles. A false prophet named Elymas Bar-Jesus did everything in his power to keep Sergius Paulus from believing the gospel. Paul ended up striking Elymas Bar-Jesus blind, which was part of what eventually prompted Sergius Paulus to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We then read in Acts 13:13 that Paul and Barnabas left there for the next stop on their journey. As we'll see, the story of their ministry repeats itself again and again, in different places with different people. They entered a new city, they preached the same gospel, then they encountered both people who were receptive to their teaching and those who rejected it. So, while they were "On the road again" (to quote Willie Nelson), we'll see that their ministry continued to have a significant impact.

I understand this. In my other job as a caterer, the majority of what I cook is the same food just being served to different people in different places. I might think, "What's the use?" But as I get to know the people I'm serving, I realize that each situation is unique, with different reasons to celebrate. As Paul and Barnabas took the same gospel to different cities, we might wonder if it got monotonous. But if we dig deeper into these stories, we'll see there are unique lessons in each of their experiences as they moved from city to city in what is now modern-day Turkey.

Let's look today at the story in Acts 13:13–41:

¹³ Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." ¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them

judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And 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.' ²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ 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.'

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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ 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.

³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ 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." ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' ³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

³⁶ "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, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸ 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 ³⁹ from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ⁴¹ '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 one tells it to you.'"

This is a large passage of Scripture, but it's more than just another sermon. For one thing, it is Paul's first recorded sermon, and it shows us his heart. He loves the Lord Jesus Christ, he has been changed by Him, and he longs to share what he has with anyone who will listen.

Their situation

Let's first consider the context in which Paul was giving this sermon. Looking near the bottom of this map, we see Jerusalem where the church started. That's the center of the story in Acts 1–12. But in this section, the church in Antioch becomes the hub of the church's activity.

After the church lays hands on Paul and Barnabas and sends them out to do ministry, they leave from the port city of Seleucia to go to Cyprus. They first visit Salamis in Cyprus, but it's in Paphos where they meet the proconsul Sergius Paulus and where they defeat Elymas Bar-Jesus.

From there they go northwest to Perga, where they spend a little time. But this sermon is preached in another city named Antioch, in Pisidia. Actually, there were five cities with that name in Bible days, all of which were named after Antiochus Epiphanes, who conquered and ruled all of the known world in his day.

This might be compared to the way many of our founders have cities or states named after them. It's a way in which we revere them as important people. During this time, Antioch was a common name, so this particular city can be called Pisidian Antioch, reflecting the region in which it was located.

In Acts 14, we'll see them travel on to Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, then back to Iconium. At the end of chapter 14, they return to the Antioch in Syria, where this journey began. These are all real places. In fact, Dave Haas, our director of missions, has visited many of these places and given me some beautiful photos I'll be sharing with you. In fact, there are pictures of structures that may have existed during biblical times.



So now that we have a sense of where they go and realize these are real places, there's a lot more we need to think about. For example, when the proconsul of Paphos came to know Jesus, it would be like our state governor coming to Christ through our

ministry here. Acts 13:12 tells us that Sergius Paulus was *“astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”* If we had a part of reaching our governor with the gospel, we’d be pretty excited about that. We’d enjoy the notoriety that would come with this event. It’s easy to think Paul and Barnabas would feel similarly, deciding to stay longer on this beautiful island where they had experienced this ministry success. They had not only seen a prominent leader come to Christ, but also saw a prominent false teacher defeated. If they were like us, they would have seen these victories as reason to put down some stakes. But they don’t do that. Instead, they quickly move on to another city.

Again, they had no idea what they would be facing or what kind of reception they would get in other places. Sometimes God doesn’t want us to linger on our successes, but to go out by faith to the next place, even when you have no idea what that next step will involve.

We’re told in Acts 13:13–14 that *“Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.”* This might seem like boring details, but Luke is telling us this for a reason. In fact, there are three valuable lessons in these two verses that appear to only be describing their travel progress.

The temporal nature of ministry

First, we must realize that all ministry is temporal. Paul and Barnabas could have stayed in one place, but they didn’t. They moved on to minister to a different group of people. In the same way, our ministry may stay the same, but we will serve different people in different places.

I recently read that the average tenure of a pastor in America is about 22–26 months, roughly two years. If you’re called to minister as a pastor, there’s a good chance you’ll go through a dozen different churches during your ministry. There are both good and bad aspects of this reality but, if nothing else, it means you’ll experience a lot of transitions.

In our church, however, this has not been our experience. I’m now celebrating my 15th year of ministry at Village Bible Church. By God’s grace and your patience, my situation has not been typical. I’ve been able to continue to lead this same congregation, but that was not true before I came here. The longest tenure of any previous pastor during the first 35 years of our history was about five years, and the average was about three and a half.

You might reasonably point out, “Tim, there is much that is temporary about your ministry.” In fact, a couple months ago as I finished a sermon, people thought I was resigning. I responded, “Did you hear something I haven’t heard yet?” They said, “No, it just sounded like you were going to resign.” I know this might disappoint some of you, but I have no intention of resigning any time soon. I really believe God is going to give us some of our best ministry in the coming years.

Even though I’ve been here as long as I have, the temporal nature of ministry is still true for me. While I didn’t change locations, the people who are here have changed. In a recent Family Forum we saw some interesting statistics. Our church has lost a lot of people in the last 8–10 months. A lot of them have chosen to move out of Illinois in the well-known migration that is taking place. In fact, we’re getting close to losing 10% of our church family in this trend. I’m starting to wonder if anyone is going to stay, but I assume there will still be reasons to keep going here. It’s hard to continually say good-bye to our friends.

Nevertheless, we haven’t really had a decrease in attendance, simply because new people are continually joining us, and our ministry keeps going. In fact, in my 15 years, most of you have joined us at some point midway. There are very few who have been here since the beginning of this chapter of Village’s history. In short, ministry here is always changing because the congregation is changing. The church is never static. We’re a growing family, and people come and go. Some even leave by going to glory—we’ve buried a couple people in the last couple days. Of course, that’s a much better transition than just moving from Illinois to Texas, which I hear is wonderful this time of year. But you hear the song of the Jeffersons TV show—“Movin’ on up...”—when you hear glory calling.

Not only do the people and places change, but our partners in ministry will also change. If we look forward in Acts, we’ll see that Paul goes on three missionary journeys. On the first one, he’s with Barnabas. On the second, he’s with Silas. On the final journey, he travels with Timothy. Thus, we should not think, “I’ll only serve God as long as this certain person is with me. If we’re a team, we’re good to go.” It’s not that I would want to lose any of my team, but the gospel can go forward no matter who I’m with. Even if I don’t have a certain person in my Sunday School class or on my missions team, ministry still continues.

Trouble with the teams

With all the changes of place and people, there can also be trouble with teams. We read in Acts 13 that John Mark left Paul and returned to Jerusalem. As Paul and Barnabas go north to Perga, John Mark goes in the opposite direction, back to Jerusalem. What in the world happened there? We don't know.

John Mark was the youngest member of their team, a follower of Christ from Jerusalem. Many believe it was in the upper room of his home where the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples took place. He's the one who eventually wrote the original Gospel, the Gospel of Mark. But as a young man, for some reason he was sent back home. We can speculate what might have caused that split. He might have given up because of the arduous nature of the journey. The prospect of always moving from place to place might have been too much for him. Maybe he was homesick. Maybe the whole encounter between Paul and Elymas Bar-Jesus frightened him.

Think about it. You're hanging with your pastor. Your pastor gets in an argument with a guy who doesn't like Jesus, so the pastor strikes the guy with blindness. That would be pretty intimidating—what if he got mad at you? I gave Keith that power in the first service, so now nobody wants to hang around with Keith anymore.

A possible clue to the second thing that might have caused their parting of ways is found in the phrase, "Paul and his companions." Before Luke always says, "Barnabas and Paul." Now Barnabas' name isn't even mentioned; it's Paul and his team, or his companions, or his associates. This could have been an issue for John Mark, as Barnabas was his cousin. Barnabas had a special place in his heart for John Mark. In fact, Barnabas defended John Mark later in this book when Paul had no desire to have John Mark join him in ministry.

Perhaps John Mark simply didn't like Paul—possibly because Paul had a very dominant personality. Maybe John Mark resented Paul's centrality or his authority. We need to realize that there will be people in our church whom we don't like. But if the church was a place where everybody liked everybody in Paul's day, he probably wouldn't have spent so much time urging them to be compassionate, to forgive each other, to love and care for each other. He wouldn't have warned them against malice and slander and gossip.

But Paul realized that in the church at Antioch—and in Village Bible Church—brothers and sisters in Christ still have different personalities and weaknesses. It's a struggle for people to like each other. I am encouraged that Luke includes these things, but he doesn't imply that any of these men were bad Christians. Paul and Barnabas were phenomenal believers; John Mark was a great man of the faith as well. Yet they still had personality conflicts along the way. And for us as a church, in that we make working in teams one of our core values, conflicts will arise along the way.

One final possibility that many have suggested for John Mark's departure is that he simply quit. Maybe he was bored or discouraged. We should realize that none of us ever really retire from ministry. None of us can say, "I've done my time and that's enough." Still, we will see that John Mark's choice to go in the opposite direction makes a strong statement to Paul and affects his future decisions.

Tenacity is required



One final lesson to be found in these two verses is that tenacity is required in ministry. Paul and his companions headed to Perga, but this took some grit. They would come face to face with an obstacle unlike any they'd faced up to that point. If you look on the map at the line between Perga and Pisidian Antioch, that represented a problem.

Perga was a nice port town, but north of Perga they would have come upon the Taurus Mountains. These mountains stood between them and Antioch Pisidia. There was no way to go around them; they had to go over them.

We might just wonder if John Mark realized what that would mean and decided, "I'm out." How many of you would struggle with the prospect of crossing these mountains on foot? Some of you Alpiners are thinking,

"Oh, that's awesome—let's do it! That's my kind of missions trip."

I misspoke in the first service and said these mountains were 4,500 feet above sea level. I was corrected—they are 4,500 meters above sea level meaning the highest peak is over 14,700 feet. I think there's only one mountain on our continent that's higher than that—Mt. McKinley at just over 20,000. This is a pretty tall mountain range, and these men faced the prospect of climbing this treacherous terrain without really knowing what was on the other side.

If I had gotten a letter from someone that said, "We live on the other side of this mountain—come tell us about Jesus," I might consider climbing that mountain. But they had no idea who was on the other side and whether they would want to hear the gospel or not.

If we don't look carefully at these things, we might miss the grit and tenacity Paul and Barnabas had when they decided to climb these mountains with no guarantee of what kind of reception would be on the other side.

This begs the question: what are we willing to do? What real or symbolic mountain are we willing to cross for unbelievers who need to find Christ? We may have a little too much John Mark in us, tapping out way too early. But Paul and Barnabas were rewarded for their grit and tenacity, as we'll see, when a large group of people found Christ who otherwise never would have known about Him.

So, they set sail, they landed in Perga and made their way to Antioch Pisidia. When they arrived, what was the first thing Paul and Barnabas did? They did what they did again and again and again. They found a city and sought out the God-fearing Jews by going to the synagogue. There wasn't always one to be found, but there was one in Antioch.

Why would there be Jews so far from Jerusalem? Remember that after the great persecution broke out in Acts 8, many Jews were scattered. Also, because of the Roman Empire, travel and commerce increased across the land, resulting in people moving around. It was reasonable for Paul and Barnabas to look for Jews in this city, and the easiest way to find them was to find their synagogue and go there on the Sabbath.

When they got there, Luke tells us the chief priests and leaders of the synagogue asked, "What's happening in Antioch of Syria? Tell us what's happening with the synagogue. Tell us what's happening with the Jewish people. You're from Antioch in Syria. Tell us some encouraging things. Give us a report." Why would they do that? Why would they give their pulpit over to people they didn't know? Back in those days, and even as recently as a century ago here, church visitors often came from some distant place. What better way to get to know them and learn what was going on in other parts of the world than to ask them to speak? Maybe they even had friends or relatives there. After all, before the telephone, news traveled slowly if at all.

In any event, they were given the opportunity to speak. Perhaps some of you are guests and you're wondering if I'm going to do the same. "Stand up and tell us who you are and where you're from." We don't do that today as much as we used to a hundred years or so ago, as well as in the days of the Bible.

His "story"

What did Paul do with this invitation? He could have talked about himself, or about his travels with Barnabas. Instead of sharing his story, he decided to share His story—God's story. This should remind us that when we talk with people, every opportunity to engage in conversation is an opportunity to take the spotlight off ourselves and our activities, pointing instead to God. This is important.

Paul could have talked about his own life—but he didn't. He spoke of the Lord and the work and plans of the Lord. If we look back on most days, throughout the day, we've only talked about ourselves. We rarely talk about the Lord Who has given us life and breath.

Sometimes when I'm on a catering job, my pastor vocabulary slips into my conversations. One day someone came up to me and said, "That was the best pork chop and chicken I've ever had." I said, "Praise the Lord." The guy looked at me and said, "Praise the Lord? I'm giving you a compliment and you're bringing up the Lord." God bless him, the guy started saying, "You know what? You're right. God made the world, you're in the world and you cooked the pork chops. And pigs and chickens—they're in the world. God created them. Then God created the grill and the charcoal...yeah! Praise the Lord!" I couldn't believe how the guy had just set me up, so I sat down with him and told him why I think the Lord deserves praise, that whether we eat or drink, we do all things to the glory of God.

While we were working through that I was thinking, "Why don't I do this more often? Why don't I segue into the things of the Lord? Why do I compartmentalize my life, thinking now is not the time to evangelize?"

All they were asking Paul to do was tell them a little bit about himself and where he came from, so they could be encouraged. Instead, Paul shared God's story, not his own.

The gospel should be an encouragement.

God's story should serve as an encouragement to those who hear it. After all, Paul was asked to give "*a word of exhortation*" (verse 15). They were asking him to encourage them. He didn't respond with, "Actually, I can't encourage you, because without Jesus, you're going to hell. Bad news for you; good news for me."

No, within the gospel there is inherent encouragement. That's why it's called good news. It should bring hope and joy to those who hear it. Will it always do that? No. However, the message itself is positive. Looking back at Luke's Gospel, we're told in Luke 2:10 that when the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds, they were bringing "*good news of a great joy.*" They told the good news—*euaggelion* in the Greek—about Jesus Christ.

How was the gospel encouraging to these people? Notice that Paul does not mention Jesus in the first half of his sermon. Instead, he focused on their common heritage as Israelites. In our evangelism as well, we are wise to look for our commonality with the person with whom we're speaking. Maybe it's the person next to you in the office, or the student sitting next to you in third hour class, or maybe it's your neighbor. Paul demonstrated this principle of finding common ground. "You and I both know the history of Israel. We've all seen God's goodness to His people. We agree on this." This gave him a real point of connection with his audience.

For us, it's valuable to take time to really get to know a person and discover the struggles we both may share, things like the frailties of life, tomorrow's unknowns, or even life's tragedies. With these as a starting point, the person is naturally looking for encouragement. We can then explain how God sustained us in these situations and how other Christians have come alongside us in our times of need. We can be an encouragement to others by being the Lord's hands and feet. That's what Paul was doing by connecting with them through a commonality, and we can do that as well with someone who doesn't know the teachings of Christ.

The gospel needs to be explained.

Paul then took that starting point and began to weave in how their common history pointed to a specific hope in God. He reminded them that they had long been waiting for their Messiah, which meant that there was a need for them to be saved. We too should begin with our common place of weakness and brokenness. Don't say, "You're a sinner"—say, "We are sinners." We are all in the same boat; we all need a Savior.

When we are honest about our own frailty, failures and despair—our sin—then the person we're talking to will want to know what solution we have found. But when we point fingers at their sin without acknowledging our own, we earn the criticism of being judgmental. Instead, we must realize that we need Jesus just as much as they do.

Paul didn't beat down his audience, but rather reminded them that they were waiting for a Savior to fill their need, to fill the hole in their hearts. He did this by reviewing the historical events that showed the clear activity of God in the lives of their forefathers; then he told them that God had sent Jesus to them. We can understand that up until he mentioned Jesus, Paul was "preaching to the choir." No one disagreed about their history. He mentioned Abraham. "Amen!" He mentioned David. "Amen!" He talked about their escape from Egypt. "Amen!" But Paul knew there would be a gap to bridge once he came to the current day and his desire to exalt Jesus. Notice how he did this.

Acts 13:22 begins, "*Of this man's offspring...*" Whose? David's. They had no problem with that—they knew the Messiah would come through David. Paul continued, "*...God has brought to Israel a Savior.*" They're still okay with that. They knew they had a need, that they were sheep without a shepherd, all going astray in their own way as Isaiah 53 described them.

Then Paul uttered a name he knew would upset them: Jesus.

Have you ever noticed in our culture today that no one has a problem talking about God? If you keep Him generic—a god who can be reached by many ways—most people are fine with that. Hollywood celebrities thank God all the time. But when you mention Jesus, the world throws up its arms and says, "You're out of bounds."

The gospel must always exalt Jesus Christ.

We sometimes think we're doing evangelism well because we're a shining light to our friends and neighbors. We encourage them. We even mention how our religion or spirituality affects our lives and makes us the kind of people we are. Again, that's important, but if we never specifically say, "Apart from the work of Jesus on the cross, I would be lost. And just as I was lost, so you are lost and in need of a Savior." Until we say that, our evangelism is incomplete. *"There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Your name won't work. Moses' name won't work. David's name won't work. The names of those people in the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith that we just studied won't work. The only name that worked in the first century and the only name that works in the 21st century is the name Jesus Christ, the name before which one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess (Romans 14:11).

When we faithfully exalt the name of Jesus, the world will come against us. The Elymases of this world will fight us. But also, the proconsuls of the world may be drawn to that name and find salvation. Paul proclaimed the gospel to these Jews, explaining that it was only through Jesus that their hope would be realized. He told them that all of human history hinged on the Person and work of Jesus Christ. We too must be bold to tell people this. As we sing, we must "crown Him King of all."

Our solution

Jesus is our solution. The message of Israel's history is a synopsis of human history: rebellion against God and the futility of man. Since the beginning of time, instead of choosing God's way, we have chosen to go our own way. Paul's thesis in all these verses can be put this way: **Restless hearts can find rest in the Redeemer.** Paul's audience included people who feared God and wanted to know more about Him. They also knew they were restless and needed rest. Paul told them what they were looking for could be found in Jesus, the Redeemer.

This offer extends to all.

What do we need to know about God's offer? We read in Acts 13:38–39, *"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."* Those are big statements—everyone and everything.

Paul told them, "God in His mercy, after putting up with us as sinful people, has given us this indescribable gift of His Son. He came in the flesh and made His dwelling among us. He lived a perfect life and died for us in our place, so that through His grace we might understand the fullness of what it means to live in relationship with God."

God's offer is to everyone—every man, every woman, all the rich, all the poor, the old and young, those who are saints in their own eyes or those who are known to be sinners. It doesn't matter what you've done or where you've been. The blood of Jesus covers all of that. You can find rest in that. You don't have to pick yourself up. You don't have to clean yourself up. You can come to Jesus as you are, and He will extend His love and mercy to you. He forgives you of all unrighteousness. Praise be to the name of Jesus Christ!

This offer impacts everyday life.

Christ's salvation impacts everyday life. These men and women had been in bondage, trying to figure out how to live without Jesus. They worked hard, trying to make things right using Moses' law. And people today still do the same, although they may not realize it. The most common answer to the question "How do you know you'll go to heaven when you die?" is to point to the good things they've done. But this puts them in bondage as they try to do more and more good. Little do they realize that their most righteous deeds are but filthy rags in the eyes of God (Isaiah 64:6). They need Jesus. The most liberating news in the world is to be told, "There is a God—and you're not Him. There is a Redeemer—and it isn't you. You cannot redeem yourself, your family, or your friends. But there is One Who can, and if you put your faith and trust in Him, you will be able to live in freedom instead of bondage."

There were some in Paul's audience—and there are some in this audience here today—who live in bondage, trying to figure out this life on their own. They need to hear Jesus say, "Come to Me, all who are weary, all who are looking for rest. You will find rest for your souls in Me" (Matthew 11:28–30).

This offer has eternal consequences.

We also need to realize this offer has consequences. Paul ended his sermon with a warning in verses 40–41: *“Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish.’”* If you turn away from Jesus, it may not be today or tomorrow, but the patience of God has limits. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”*

You can play the game, thinking, “I’m not going to die for a while.” Yet Scripture tells us we don’t know the hour of our death. We never know what any day might bring. At some moment, your breath will be taken away and your life will end—and it could be sooner than you think. In that moment, if you are still in a posture of scoffing, the only place you will go is hell. God’s patience and mercy do have a limit. For you, in that moment, God will cease to be a Savior and will become your Judge.

Scoffers cannot expect otherwise, nor should they be surprised at their destiny. There may be scoffers in this room today and I want you to know that your scoffing will one day end. You will bow the knee to Jesus, but it will be on God’s terms, not yours. But for today, Paul quotes God’s word from Habakkuk 1:5: *“For I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.”*

God wrote this story in Acts 13, calling us to share this gospel with our lost friends and neighbors. It might begin by inviting them to the Barn Bash. It might begin by inviting them to a small group gathering. You need to continue cultivating these relationships and conversations, to the point that you can look them in the eye and say, “Apart from Jesus, you and I can do nothing. Bow the knee to Him, then you will find eternal rest in Him.”

Paul and Barnabas were on the road again—and we find ourselves there as well. Each week we’re in different places, different settings, but what remains constant is the truth that our God will not change, and His gospel message needs to be proclaimed. It’s the old, old story that needs to be told again and again and again, until every ear has heard the glory of the exalted One, Jesus Christ.