

These Are Given (Acts 13:14-52)

Paul's first missionary journey (band, breakup, north into Turkey—Pisidian Antioch)

Intro

- Kate, I, and the kids were at the beach the other day with some friends (another family)
- This guy shows up...
- I want to be really, really fit and strong like that... but I never will be
- But, I realized this week, that I am also attracted to the strength represented in v. 52 (**Acts 13:51a & 52, NIV**)
 - I want to be that strong

The disciples were:

- Far from home
- Working hard
- Had sacrificed much
- Experiencing rejection and persecution
- And they were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"
 - And that represents a deep, deep strength

I want to be that kind of strong

- When I am tempted
- When I am disappointed
- When I am rejected
- When I am attacked
- When I feel deserted
 - The disciples (because of this strength they possessed) were able to **shake it off** (T. Swift)

Here is what gives me hope

- That guy on the beach did that for himself
- This text is about what God has done for us
 - You cannot **fill yourself** with **joy** or the **Holy Spirit** (the verb is in the passive voice in Greek)
 - **These are given**

Paul and the rest of them, were experiencing what they preached

Because Christianity is not about what you can do for God—but what God has done for you

- This is important to remember in **The Book of Acts** and a study of it

In the beginning of our text for today, Paul is invited to share at the local synagogue (**Acts 13:14b & 15, NIV**)

- Remember what Paul's mandate and goal is here (it is the same as ours)
 - To **make disciples**...
 - So, here we see how disciples are made... and we learn what they are substantively made of

I'd like us to read the first Part of Paul's sermon again, and let's try to catch the thrust of it (what it's all about)

- Is Paul telling his audience what they must do for God?
- Or is he telling them about what God has done for them?

Read **Acts 13:17-23, NIV** noting the **key words** that retell what God has done for them

- God **chose** them
- God **prospered** them
- God **led** them
- God **endured** their conduct
- God **overthrew** their opposition
- God **gave** them **land, leaders**, and a **good king**
- God **brought to them** the Savior Jesus

Notice, the story that is told is about all the good stuff that God had done for them

- It could have been a different story (which would have also been true)
- It could have been a retelling of all the ways the people had failed God (and there were many)
- But, this was the story of what God had done—And the Good News that God was still at work for them
- **"We tell you the good news: What God has promised... He has fulfilled for us..." -Acts 13:32a & 33a**

Both stories are true (ours and God's), but only one is supreme and ultimate

- Paul mentions human failure here—He is not hiding or dismissing sin (he goes big) (**verses 26-29**)
- But, that evil failure is subsumed by what God does next (**But God...**) (**Acts 13:30, NIV**)

Today, let the story of all your failures be subsumed by the story of what God has done, and is doing, for you

- We need to change the story that is shaping us (ruling us)—we are given a better story than our failures
- Hear the conclusion to Paul's sermon (**Acts 13:38-39, NIV**)
 - **Forgiveness of sins** (do not hold against yourself what God does not)
 - **Set free from every sin** (the penalty and the power)
 - **Justification by grace** (you were not able to obtain this)
- God has done these things for you in Jesus
 - **These are given**
 - **And so must be received**

Today, let the story of all your successes be subsumed by the story of what God has done, and is doing, for you

- And hear the follow up exhortation of Barnabas, the encourager (**Acts 13:43b, NIV**)
 - Continue in **grace**—not attempted merit

So, this story is not another one of what we must do. It is the one about what has been done for us.

If we cannot see, or we forget, or we try to deny everything God has done for us that is good, kind and generous...

- ... We cannot possibly miss, forget, or deny this— The Cross of Christ
 - **Romans 5:8, NASB** (demonstrated)
 - So, take your greatest failures and your best efforts to the foot of the cross (both pale there)

You cannot say, "**But look what I have done**" and have it possess any real weight or merit in the face of the cross

- Both in a positive and a negative sense
- Not that those things are meaningless (they have profound meaning)
- But, there is a bigger story that provides ultimate meaning

Now, what about this desire I expressed at the beginning? (**Acts 13:51a & 52, NIV**)

- **These are given**
- **John 15:11, NASB**
- **Romans 15:13, NLT**
 - **The joy of the Holy Spirit** (1 Thessalonians 1:6)
 - **The Fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22)
 - **The joy of the LORD is your strength** (Nehemiah 8:10)
 - That is the **strength** we really want

Press into the Lord (and His story of what He has done for you) to pursue these things (rhythms and practices)

- **John 16:24, NASB**
- **These are given**—but they must also be received (Jesus has done the work for us)

But also, we cannot escape the context...

- The disciples experienced these things as they were living life on mission (and not for themselves)
- We have so often bought the lie of living for self (and we find we lack joy and are full of ourselves)
- Grace enables us to live into God's—it does not excuse us from them
- This is not to say we earn these—God is once again doing for us as He saves us from selfish living