

**PAUL'S FIRST SERMON**  
**February 19, 2017 morning service**  
**Acts 13:16-41**

Glory to God. Take us up to the King. Lay us in front of His Glory. Praise His blessed name. Well I was 17 years old when I preached my first sermon. Boy it was something too. I went forward in a church, my home church, and made my call public. In a little church five miles from my house, the New Home Baptist Church heard about that and called me and said, "Would you come next Sunday and preach for us?" I'd been in this business one week. I said, "Yeah, I'll come." Man, I studied everything I knew to study. I didn't know how. I'd preached a little.

Brother Lionel Patton had a few of us that were thinking we might be preachers. He put me in the back seat of his four-door car and he had two big bullhorns, one on each side sticking out the back windows. We had a microphone and he'd go out through the country and we'd preach. I remember asking him one day. I said, "Brother Lionel, there are not any people around here." He said, "When you're ready for people we'll go there." He said, "You just practice on these cows for a while. We'll be alright." So I started preaching to a bunch of cows. Then New Home let me preach and a few weeks later I preached at my home church.

You know, if you're going to be a preacher you've got to preach your first sermon. That's what we find today in this series of messages that I'm in. Ten Great Sermons recorded in Acts and we come to the Apostle Paul's first sermon. That may not have been his first sermon but it's the first sermon that's recorded. It's the first sermon written down. It's the first sermon we know about and it's in Acts chapter 13. So you find that in your Bible. If you don't have a Bible you find one like this one. It's right there in the pew rack in front of you. These Bibles are scattered all over this room. This is a new copy that'll be placed there. Families put these Bibles in the pew racks and they place them in memory of someone. The Wilcox family is placing this Bible today in memory of their son who died way too early, way too young, Todd Alan Wilcox. They said that to me this week and I said, "Well let me just have that Bible and we'll dedicate it unto the Lord and we'll place it out there with the rest of them." I said, "Let's just let it rest in the pulpit for this sermon this morning."

So you've got your copy of scripture or maybe you don't have one, then you reach over and get a book like this and find the book of Acts and open it to chapter 13 as I'm doing with this Bible this morning. As it's opened right there we come to find Paul. He is in Pisidian, Antioch on the first missionary journey. They left Syrian Antioch, sailed to Cyprus, left Cyprus, turned north of Pisidia and they came to the city of Antioch, Pisidian, Antioch as it would be known. It was in a different region. It would be like Columbus, Ohio and Columbus, Georgia. If you just say Columbus you've got to know which one you're going to. Well this is Pisidian, Antioch, not Syrian Antioch on this first missionary trip. As they come there he's in the synagogue. They read the Old Testament law and they asked Paul if he had a word of exhortation in verse 15 for the people. We find beginning in Acts 13:16 these words.

*Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, [you've got to learn to know what to do with your hands if you're going to be a preacher. It's one of the hardest things to learn. Some people just want to stick their hands in their pockets. You ought to preach in pants with no pockets. Don't stick your hands in your pockets when you're talking to people. Use your hands for something. Now don't be like the preacher that said when the roll is called up yonder I'll be there (pointing down). Don't do that, alright? You've got to know what to do with your hands. Well Paul motioning with his hands. He had something to say. He stood up and we find him motioning with his hand.]*

*"Men of Israel, and you who fear God [What he's saying is, to you that are Jews and you Gentiles, you men of Israel, the Jew, you who fear God, the Gentile], listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 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. After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'*

*"Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God [Jew and Gentile], to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.' As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm [here he's quoting Psalm 16], 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and*

*through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:*

*'Behold [quoting from Habakkuk, behold], you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; For I am accomplishing a work in your days, A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.'*<sup>1</sup>

Then Paul went out from the people and they asked him to come again and speak more to them. Paul was a preacher and here we find his first sermon. He was not only a good preacher, he was a good listener because his sermon sounds oh so much like Stephen's sermon that we see Paul, Saul standing there as we talked about a couple of weeks ago that they laid the garments at Saul's feet when they stoned Stephen after he'd preached and the outline that Stephen preached we find much of it right here at Paul's first sermon. He looks back at history. He then runs to the cross and the empty tomb and then he presses toward personal invitation. Paul sounds a lot like Stephen. "How will they hear," Paul later would write in Romans 10:14, "without a preacher?" He would later say to Timothy in II Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2, "Preach the word in season, out of season, preach, preach, *kerusso*, preach, preach, preach." Preaching. We find these great sermons being preached all through Acts and here we come to the greatest theologian the New Testament era knew, Paul and his first sermon. What did Paul say in this message? Well there's a lot there and I'm going to drain some more juice out of it even tonight but I want us to look at the overarching themes of Paul's message. There are three of them that I find in this text.

First of all, I see that Paul proclaimed God's faithful path. When you begin in verse 17 you see that Paul goes all the way back. Paul's a Jew. He was raised in a synagogue. He knows his Old Testament and he now has seen the fulfillment of the Old Testament in his Savior, the Lord Jesus. He goes back and he begins to teach them about Egypt and the Exodus and how the strong arm of God brought the Jew out of Egypt into Exodus and then how God went with them for 40 years. Paul said, "He put up with us as we wandered in the wilderness." And for 40 years then God disbursed seven nations out of Israel, out of Canaan, out of the Promised Land, and he ran all the "ites," the Canaanites and the Hittites. He ran all the "ites" out and destroyed those seven nations so that they could go in.

Then He gave them judges. The judges came among them. The most famous of those that we know best are Gideon and Sampson but the one who served them the longest 80 years was Ehud, E-H-U-D, Ehud the judge. After the period of the judges then Paul says came the kings, Saul, and then he talked about David and how David died. Then he said coming out of the lineage of David was God's faithful path that led all the way to Bethlehem and the birth of a Savior, Jesus our Lord. Amen. I'm telling you, God is faithful and He can be trusted. What you need to learn today is when you

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look back at your life, God is faithful and He can be trusted. Look back at the life of Olive Baptist Church. He's faithful. He can be trusted.

Over 120 years ago, 12 people came from Canoe, Alabama and planted this church. Twelve. Now God's grown it to where we are today. The pastors that we know best are Brother Jeff Rousseau, 17 years. Rousseau Hall was named after him. I used to visit with Brother Jeff right out here in the foyer. He'd be in his wheelchair every Sunday. He was rolling through. He always had a funny story for me and then a pointed word. Dr. Passmore came after him. Brother Jerry is still a part of our family after having pastored here 17 years and taking this church on a path almost straight upward of growing. I'm telling you, God's been faithful to this place.

Then we watched the hand of God as we began to expand and build this building, the children's building and more and more people came and joined us here. Then just two weeks ago opening this new structure for these middle schoolers. I'm telling you, the Chief of Police in Pensacola, I saw him this past Thursday afternoon at a meeting. We'd been on the front page of the *News Journal* and he looked at me and he said, "Pastor, did you really build that building just for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders?" I said, "Yes, sir. That's what we did." He said, "Thank you for doing it. It is the most vulnerable group of young people. It is the most needy group of young people. It's the folks we must reach with the gospel." This is coming from a political person who's a gospel preacher. I love David Alexander. He just put his big old arm around me and he said, "Well done." I said, "Well we've tried to lead but it's our church. They've got a heart for doing that and then with the Ministry Village and reaching out and doing all of that.

I was on the campus in New Orleans seminary and several people walked up to me. "Thank you. Thank for your Ministry Village. It's a great template so we can teach our young people how to do ministry of preaching the gospel and touching the least of these." I'm telling you, God is faithful. We look back at Egypt and we run all the way through the judges and the kings, all the way to the cross. Oh God is so faithful and now He brings us a new mission field of going over to Warrington and being a part of that and sending out some missionaries from here to go and replant and refurbish a place that God, I believe, will raise up right at the mouth of NAS Pensacola as those folks go. Not only into NAS, there's another field right north of there. Two of our military bases, that church sits right between them. We will go and touch not only the military base but people that are all around in the area and the hospital sits out in that area.

My goodness, God is faithful. Can I get an Amen? I'm telling you that He is and that's exactly what Paul said. He proclaimed God's faithful path that He has from the beginning led us all the way from the Exodus to the judges to the kings to the Savior and He's built His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

He proclaimed God's faithful path. Secondly, he then proclaimed God's fulfilled promise. His fulfilled promise. Look at it right here in this text. First in verse 23, Paul said these words: *From the descendants of this man [Who? David], according to*

*promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior [and what's His name? Say it out loud.] Jesus. That is His name. Look in verse 32. And we preach to you the good news of [the what?] the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.'* It is God's fulfilled promise and Paul preached this fulfilled promise. The fulfilled promise is Jesus coming out of the Jews.

Somebody would ask you and say, "Well how do you know the word of God is the word of God?" Just one word. The Jew, the Jew. Read Psalm 89. Though they are faithless, God is faithful to them. The nation Israel was not built on their faithfulness but God's faithfulness. God made a promise and said, "Those are my people." Zechariah chapter 12 tells us that there is a day coming when Israel will be such a heavy stone that anyone who tries to move that stone will be sliced into pieces. It is God's promise. God promised us that He had a people and that out of that people would come a Messiah and Jesus is His name. The very people that He came out of had a part in crucifying and they killed Him and He died for you and He died for me but He wouldn't stay dead. God raised Him up. He was born. That was His promise. He lived. It was the promise. He died. It was the promise. He arose. Hallelujah, He arose. It is the fulfilled promise of God.

To my Jewish friends that may be watching this today or listening, all the Jewish folks that come into this room and some come and visit with us from time to time, let me say to you. Read the word of God. I was talking to one of my Jewish friends just this week and pointing Him to Psalm 89, to Zechariah 12, and saying, "Read about your people. Jesus has come."

Sometimes a Jewish people will say to me, "Well you shouldn't proselytize the Jews. You shouldn't try to make." I said, "Listen, friend. A Jew proselytized me. His name is Jesus." Amen. He took me out of my nothingness and put me into His somethingness. He took me out of my lostness and put me into salvation. He is the Promised One and Paul proclaimed the fulfilled promise of God. Paul proclaimed God's faithful path. Then Paul proclaimed God's fulfilled promise. Thirdly, the third overarching theme of Paul's message is that Paul proclaimed God's forgiving power.

Now notice it in verse 38. Paul said all of that history, therefore. He said everything he said to get to this. *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him [that is through Jesus] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him [that is through Jesus] everyone who believes is freed from all things [from all their sin], from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.* He proclaimed the forgiveness of sins.

I used to take courses, of course, in high school and college and there were core curriculum and in the core curriculum there was math and I was okay. The sciences I loved. I loved the sciences. I loved to study biology and zoology. It always was a favorite of mine. Chemistry I was not as good at it but I liked it. As a matter of fact, when I graduated from high school they used to give gifts, funny gifts to everyone. They

gave me a beaker. It has the bell at the bottom of it. Not just a tube but it had the bell at the bottom because I blew the bottom out of one, one time. Glass went everywhere in chemistry class. I love the sciences. I loved to do that in the lab. English not so much. Literature not at all. They'd make us read these old people. Shakespeare, weird words. English that in northeast Alabama was very hard to understand.

On a given day they put in front of us *Macbeth*. Read *Macbeth*. Well I tried. When I got to the killing part it got better. You know a grade school kid. He took that dagger and plunged it. Then in that text there's old English and then it's written in new English. Macbeth says, "Will all the water in the ocean wash this blood from my hands?" "No," he says, "but my hands will turn the green oceans red. Out, spot, out." No, no. He had blood on his hands. He was vile. He was wicked. He was sinful.

Dear friend, you have blood on your hands. You are a sinner and the oceans of the world cannot cleanse your soul. I am amazed at other religions. You go to a Bogota. You go into a Muslim Mosque. There are washings. You wash your feet, wash your hands, wash your body. Why? The Hindus wash. Why do they wash? They're trying to wash away their sin. Hear this preacher. All that need be done to wash away your sins has been done. He went to the cross and His blood washes your sin away. Lord God, can I get a witness from somebody? Yes. Paul proclaimed it here. Hallelujah. He says the forgiveness of your sins is preached to you. That that the law could not do, you're set free from your sin.

I want to ask you today, friend. When you die and you will, will you die in your sin or will you die having known that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from your sin? You're going to die one of those ways. There's all kinds of Bible promises. Listen to several of them. I want to give you this day. Listen to Psalm 103:12. *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.* How far is the east from the west? He's taken your sin infinitely in distance away. Hallelujah. Listen to the word of God in Isaiah 38:17. *Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For You have cast all my sins [Lord] behind Your back.*

God doesn't look at your sin anymore. He put your sin behind Him. He forgave your sin and put the sin as far as the east is from the west. He put your sin behind His back. Isaiah 44:22. *"I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."* "I have wiped it away."

I was coming to church this morning. I couldn't even see the road. It wasn't a mist. I'm telling you, there was a fog like no other. I was coming in. I said, "Lord, we're going to quote that verse this morning, Isaiah 44:22. I pray, Lord, that the fog will lift and that the sunshine will come and burn this fog away first of all so people can get to church and secondly I pray that the sunshine of Your grace will burn the fog away from their spiritual lives so that they can see their sins are forgiven through the blood of the Lord Jesus." He's wiped it away.

In Micah 7:19: *He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.* He's cast your sin as far as the east is from the west. He put them behind your back. He's wiped them away. He's cast them to the depth of the ocean.

Now when I was a little boy I almost drowned. I'm always very careful around water. I can swim and I enjoy the water. Different places when you go to the Caribbean or Hawaii, I enjoy getting in the water where I'm very familiar to snorkel. But now you're not going to get me to deep sea dive. You're not going to get me with a tank. I'm not doing that. I still have a healthy fear because I almost drowned as a little boy. Somebody had to come get me. I've overcome some but I'm not going there. If you want to get me to the brink of needing mental help, put me in a submarine. You can put me in a plane. That doesn't bother me but if you lock me up and lock the door and send me to the depth of the ocean. You could even name the submarine The Crimson Tide and I ain't getting in it. There's one named that, you know. I'm not getting in there. I don't know how far it is to the bottom. I'm told there are places it's five miles.

Did you know that God's taken your sin and He's cast it to the depths of the ocean? As far as the east is from the west, put it behind His back, He wiped it away. He's cast it into the depths of the ocean. Romans 5:1. The man preaching this sermon wrote Romans and he said: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* We've been justified. That word justified means it's been paid. You don't have to pay your sin. Somebody else has paid it. Chapter 5 and verse 1, chapter 5 and 9: *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*

Dear friend, He dealt with your sin. You don't have to deal with your sin. Jesus dealt with your sin. Paul said, "We've been justified. We've been freed. He has paid it all." II Corinthians 5:21. *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf. You don't have to pay it. Jesus has paid it. Hallelujah. It's good news. Friend, you've got a sin problem. We've all got a sin problem. You've got to deal with it but Jesus has paid it all for you. In Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other [how are you supposed to do that?], just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* He has forgiven you. That's how you ought to forgive one another.

Paul proclaimed God's forgiving power. But now some of you say, "Now, pastor, I've got such a sin load." Jesus paid it all. He is the spotless, sinless Lamb of God and He has died for you. It is the gospel and Paul made this proclamation. I want to show you Baptists something. I want you to look right here in verse 41. He quoted Habakkuk. He said, "You bunch of scoffers. You marvel and perish. For I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you'll never believe. I've described it to you and some of you won't believe it."

Some of you sitting in this very room, you won't believe it. I'm trying to describe it to you. I'm just doing the best that the Holy Ghost will help me do but you've got to believe it and if you will believe it, He will forgive you. He will save you. He'll wipe your sins away. You will become positionally justified and one day you'll stand before the Father just as if you'd never sinned.

Then look here in the next verse, verse 42. As Paul and Barnabas were going out the people kept begging. Begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. When they went out they kept saying, "Preach more, preach more, preach more." I want you to get that. "Do it some more. Do it some more. Do it some more. Preach some more." "Well I'm done." "Well come back next week and do it some more and do it some more and do it some more." Verse 43 says, "Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up many of the Jews and the God-fearing proselytes, those are the Gentiles, followed Paul and Barnabas who were speaking them were urging them to continue staying in the grace of God." Now look at this. Stay in the grace of God. Here's what Paul's telling you. You say, "Preacher, I've been down there and I bowed on my knees and I've been saved as you call it. I've asked God to forgive me and I've been baptized but then I sin again." Sure you do. He that's without sin is dead and in heaven. You struggle because you are not yet made perfect in sanctification and glorification but your eternal position with Christ is you are His child. You've been adopted into the family. You ever have a child that did wrong? Yeah. What do you do when they repent? You invite them home again. It doesn't mean they lose their salvation and they're gone. Stay under the grace of God. That's what Paul said. Stay under grace. Keep counting it as grace.

Now some people take that and say, "Well you know, I'll come get saved and then I can just go live like hell and live all I want to. Just sin all I want to." That's right. You sin all you want to. When you get saved, your "want to" gets changed. You want to glorify Him, not glorify yourself. You want to live in such a way that honors Him, not that honors you, and you're changed from the inside and God makes you different.

I was walking around my circle again this week. I met an older couple. I've seen them several times but we stopped this particular morning. Sweet Methodist couple. "Preacher, how are you today?" I said, "I'm fine." I said, "Did she make biscuits this morning?" He said, "No." I looked at her and said, "What's wrong with you?" She said, "Did your wife make biscuits this morning?" I said, "No." She said, "What's wrong with her?" I said, "I don't know." We laughed. The people we bought our house from were Methodists and good friends of this couple. As a matter of fact, when she comes she stays with them. It was unbeknownst to me until this week. I said, "You know, Ms. Mavis is a real Christian." She said, "Oh yeah, preacher. She got it." I said, "Got what?" She said, "She got the grace of God and that the Lord saved her and changed her and she became one that gave grace to other people." Amen.

That's what we're looking for, isn't it? That God would change us. I don't understand it. Some people just get changed like that. Others it's more of a process that they walk through. Some places in my life I have no struggle and other places I

have struggle. It's sanctification but thank God I'm headed to a place of glorification that I'll be like my Lord. There'll be no other sin found in my life. Then we'll sing that song, "O Happy Day." Ya'll know that song? Jon, do you know that song? Come let's play that song for me, alright? Come on. This is unrehearsed. Yeah, run. Amen. You're a runner. Come on. It ain't in the hymn book. Do you know, "O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away?" Yeah. Do you know that song? Do you think you could sing that song? Sharon, do you have the words to that song? It's unrehearsed. Mmm, O happy day. What did Jesus do? He washed my sins away. That's a happy day. That's a happy day. Amen. Friend, when He washed your sins away, that's a happy day.

My momma and daddy have been married 67 years this week. They went to a Valentine banquet last Sunday night at the Pisgah church. I called him. I said, "How'd that go?" He said, "I gave a testimony." I said, "You did? What did you tell them?" He said, "I told them that when I was a 23-year-old man Jesus stepped into my heart and He washed my sins away." He said, "I married this sweet lady and I'm going to stay with her three more years and when we're on our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary we're getting a divorce." I said, "You did what?" He said, "I told them on my 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary I'm filing for divorce. We're going to get remarried and start all over again and do it 70 more years." I said, "I'll come up there and kill you if you start talking like that."

He was just in a happy day. He gets tears in his eyes and he said, "You know, if it wasn't for your momma, I wouldn't have found my sins washed away." He said, "Maybe somebody, but your momma got me to church and the preacher came by the house. He sat down with me there at the house and opened up the Bible and said if you'll ask the Lord He'll save you." My daddy was a young adult.

I believe it was the first time he led anybody to the Lord because heavy on his heart was the birth of his coming child. He knew that he needed help if he was going to be a father. O happy day. I'm so glad I was birthed into a home where daddy knew the Lord. Not everybody gets that. O happy day. It was a happy day when Jesus washed our sins away. Friend, if He's never washed your sins away then I want you to get out of your seat in a moment and we're going to sing a song. When we sing that song, I want you to get out of your seat and walk right down here and take me by the hand and say, "Pastor, I need to be saved today. I want to trust Him today." "I've been saved but never been baptized. I want to be baptized like a Baptist." So you come. You say, "I've been saved and baptized and want to join this church. I want to be a part of this church. We just moved to town."

We had two families that joined our church last Sunday and last Sunday was the first time they'd ever stepped foot in here. One sweet couple from Houston walked down from Second Baptist Church Houston and said, "We've never been here before but the Spirit of God told us we need to be here today." They came to Sunday School this morning. I saw them walking out. She said, "My husband's got to fly back to Houston and just finish up everything else we've got to do and we'll be back next Sunday, pastor. We came to small group but we've got to get him to the airport." I said,

“Glory to God.” I don’t know. You may have been here for years. You ought to make this O happy day.