

CHAPTER 13

We have not yet met with any things concerning the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles which bears any proportion to the largeness of that commission, “Go, and disciple all nations.” The door was opened in the baptizing of Cornelius and his friends; but since then we had the gospel preached to the Jews only, ~~4119~~ Acts 11:19. It should seem as if the light which began to shine upon the Gentile world had withdrawn itself. But here in this chapter that work, that great good work, is revived in the midst of the years; and though the Jews shall still have the first offer of the gospel made to them, yet, upon their refusal, the Gentiles shall have their share of the offer of it. Here is,

- I.** The solemn ordination of Barnabas and Saul, by divine direction, to the ministry, to the great work of spreading the gospel among the nations about (and it is probable that other apostles or apostolical men dispersed themselves by order from Christ, upon the same errand (v. 13).
- II.** Their preaching the gospel in Cyprus, and the opposition they met with there from Elymas the sorcerer (v. 413).
- III.** The heads of a sermon which Paul preached to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, in their synagogue, which is given us as a specimen of what they usually preached to the Jews, and the method they took with them (v. 14-41).
- IV.** The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles at their request, and upon the Jews' refusal of it, wherein the apostles justified themselves against the displeasure which the Jews conceived at it, and God owned them (v. 42-49).
- V.** The trouble which the infidel Jews gave to the apostles, which obliged them to remove to another place (v. 50-52), so that the design of this chapter is to show how cautiously, how gradually, and with what good reason the apostles carried the gospel into the Gentile world, and admitted the Gentiles into the church, which was so great an offence to the Jews, and which Paul is so industrious to justify in his epistles.

ACTS 13:13

THE MISSION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

We have here a divine warrant and commission to Barnabas and Saul to go and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and their ordination to that service by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer.

I. Here is an account of the present state of the church at Antioch, which was planted, ^{<4117>}Acts 11:20.

1. How well furnished it was with good ministers; there were there *certain prophets and teachers* (v. 1), men that were eminent for gifts, graces, and usefulness. Christ, when he *ascended on high*, gave *some prophets and some teachers* (^{<4011>}Ephesians 4:11); these were both. Agabus seems to have been a prophet and not a teacher, and many were teachers who were not prophets; but those here mentioned were at times divinely inspired, and had instructions immediately from heaven upon special occasions, which gave them the title of prophets; and withal they were stated teachers of the church in their religious assemblies, expounded the scriptures, and opened the doctrine of Christ with suitable applications. These were the prophets, and scribes, or teachers, which Christ promised to send (^{<4234>}Matthew 23:34), such as were every way qualified for the service of the Christian church. Antioch was a great city, and the Christians there were many, so that they could not all meet in one place; it was therefore requisite they should have many teachers, to preside in their respective assemblies, and to deliver God's mind to them. Barnabas is first named, probably because he was the eldest, and Saul last, probably because he was the youngest; but afterwards the last became first, and Saul more eminent in the church. Three others are mentioned.

(1.) *Simeon*, or Simon, who for distinction-sake was called *Niger*, *Simon the Black*, from the color of his hair; like him that with us was surnamed the Black Prince.

(2.) *Lucius* of Cyrene, who some think (and Dr. Lightfoot inclines to it) was the same with this Luke that wrote the Acts, originally a Cyrenian, and educated in the Cyrenian college or synagogue at Jerusalem, and there first receiving the gospel.

(3.) *Manaen*, a person of some quality, as it should seem, for he was brought up with Herod the tetrarch, either nursed of the same milk, or bred at the same school, or pupil to the same tutor, or rather one that was his constant colleague and companion that in every part of his education was his comrade and intimate, which gave him a fair prospect of preferment at court, and yet for Christ's sake he quitted all the hopes of it; like Moses, who, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Had he joined in with Herod, with whom he was brought up, he might have had Blastus's place, and have been his chamberlain; but it is better to be fellow-sufferer with a saint than fellow-persecutor with a tetrarch.

2. How well employed they were (v. 2): *They ministered to the Lord, and fasted.* Observe,

(1.) Diligent faithful teachers do truly minister unto the Lord. Those that instruct Christians serve Christ; they really do him honour, and carry on the interest of his kingdom. Those that minister to the church in praying and preaching (both which are included here), *minister unto the Lord*, for they are the church's servants for Christ's sake; to him they must have an eye in their ministrations, and from him they shall have their recompence.

(2.) Ministering to the Lord, in one way or other, ought to be the stated business of churches and their teachers; to this work time ought to be set apart, nay, it is set apart, and in this work we ought to spend some part of every day. What have we to do as Christians and ministers but to *serve the Lord Christ*? ^{<5124>}Colossians 3:24; ^{<5148>}Romans 14:18.

(3.) Religious *fasting* is of use in our ministering to the Lord, both as a sign of our humiliation and a means of our mortification. Though it was not so much practised by the disciples of Christ, *while the bridegroom was with them*, as it was by the disciples of John and of the Pharisees; yet, after the bridegroom was taken away, they abounded in it, as those that had well learned to deny themselves and to endure hardness.

II. The orders given by the Holy Ghost for the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul, while they were engaged in public exercises, the ministers of the several congregations in the city joining in one solemn fast or day of prayer: The *Holy Ghost said*, either by a voice from heaven, or by a strong impulse on the minds of those of them that were prophets, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* He does

not specify the work, but refers to a former call of which they themselves knew the meaning, whether others did or no: as for Saul, he was particularly told that he must *bear Christ's name to the Gentiles* (^{<4095>}Acts 9:15), that *he must be sent to the Gentiles* (^{<4021>}Acts 22:21); the matter was settled between them at Jerusalem before this, that as Peter, James, and John laid out themselves among those of the circumcision, so Paul and Barnabas should *go to the heathen*, ^{<4017>}Galatians 2:79. Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for this service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest: *Thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe*, ^{<6445>}Revelation 14:15. The orders were, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul*. Observe here,

1. Christ by his Spirit has the nomination of his ministers; for it is by the Spirit of Christ that they are qualified in some measure for his services, inclined to it, and taken off from other cares inconsistent with it. There are some whom the Holy Ghost has separated for the service of Christ, has distinguished from others as men that are offered and that willingly offer themselves to the temple service; and concerning them directions are given to those who are competent judges of the sufficiency of the abilities and the sincerity of the inclination: *Separate* them.

2. Christ's ministers are separated to him and to the Holy Ghost: *Separate them to me*; they are to be employed in Christ's work and under the Spirit's guidance, to the glory of God the Father.

3. All that are separated to Christ as his ministers are separated to work; Christ keeps no servants to be idle. *If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*; that is what he is separated to, *to labour in the word and doctrine*. They are separated to take pains, not to take state.

4. The work of Christ's ministers, to which they are to be separated, is work that is already settled, and that which all Christ's ministers hitherto have been called to, and which they themselves have first been, by an external call, directed to and have chosen.

III. Their ordination, pursuant to these orders: not to the ministry in general (Barnabas and Saul had both of them been ministers long before this), but to a particular service in the ministry, which had something peculiar in it, and which required a fresh commission, which commission

God saw fit at this time to transmit by the hands of *these prophets and teachers*, for the giving of this direction to the church, that teachers should ordain teachers (for prophets we are not now any longer to expect), and that those who have the dispensing of the oracles of Christ committed to them should, for the benefit of posterity, *commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able also to teach others*, ⁻⁵¹¹²2 Timothy 2:2. So here, Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, faithful teachers at this time in the church of Antioch, *when they had fasted and prayed, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them away* (v. 3), according to the directions received. Observe, 1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren that are their fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers.

2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations, v. 3. Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night-fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer.

3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby,

(1.) They gave them their manumission, dismissal, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging that they went off not only fairly and with consent, but honourably and with a good report.

(2.) They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that *they might be filled with the Holy Ghost* in their work. This very thing is explained ⁻⁴⁴⁴⁵Acts 14:26, where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that from *Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled*. As it was an instance of the humility of Barnabas and Saul that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and *they sent them away* with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

⌄ ACTS 13:413

ELYMAS STRUCK WITH BLINDNESS

In these verses we have,

I. A general account of the coming of Barnabas and Saul to the famous island of Cyprus; and perhaps thitherward they steered their course because Barnabas was a native of that country (~~⌄~~ Acts 4:36), and he was willing they should have the first-fruits of his labours, pursuant to his new commission. Observe,

1. Their being sent forth by the Holy Ghost was the great thing that encouraged them in this undertaking, v. 4. If the Holy Ghost send them forth, he will go along with them, strengthen them, carry them on in their work, and give them success; and then they fear no colours, but can cheerfully venture upon a stormy sea from Antioch, which was now to them a quiet harbour.

2. They came to Seleucia, the sea-port town opposite to Cyprus, thence crossed the sea to Cyprus, and in that island the first city they came to was Salamis, a city on the east side of the island (v. 5); and, when they had sown good seed there, *thence they went onward through the isle* (v. 6) till they came to Paphos, which lay on the western coast.

3. *They preached the word of God* wherever they came, *in the synagogues of the Jews*; so far were they from excluding them that they gave them the preference, and so left those among them who believed not inexcusable; *they would have gathered them, but they would not.* They did not act clandestinely, nor preach the Messiah to others unknown to them, but laid their doctrine open to the censure of the rulers of their synagogues, who might, if they had any thing to say, object against it. Nor would they have acted separately, but in concert with them, if they had not driven them out from them, and from their synagogues.

4. *They had John for their minister*; not their servant in common things, but their assistant in the things of God, either to prepare their way in places where they designed to come or to carry on their work in places where they had begun it, or to converse familiarly with those to whom

they preached publicly, and explain things to them; and such a one might be many ways of use to them, especially in a strange country.

II. A particular account of their encounter with *Elymas the sorcerer*, whom they met with at Paphos, where the governor resided; a place famous for a temple built to Venus there, thence called *Paphian Venus*; and therefore there was more than ordinary need that *the Son of God* should there *be manifested to destroy the works of the devil*.

1. There the *deputy*, a Gentile, *Sergius Paulus* by name, encouraged the apostles, and was willing to hear their message. He was governor of *the country*, under the Roman emperor; proconsul or propraetor, such a one as we should call *lord lieutenant of the island*. He had the character of a *prudent man*, an intelligent, considerate man, that was ruled by reason, not passion nor prejudice, which appeared by this, that, having a character of Barnabas and Saul, he sent for them, *and desired to hear the word of God*. Note, When that which we hear has a tendency to lead us to God, it is prudence to desire to hear more of it. Those are wise people, however they may be ranked among the foolish of this world, who are inquisitive after the mind and will of God. Though he was a great man, and a man in authority, and the preachers of the gospel were men that made no figure, yet, if they have a message from God, let him know what it is, and, if it appear to be so, he is ready to receive it.

2. There Elymas, a Jew, a *sorcerer*, opposed them, and did all he could to obstruct their progress. This justified the apostles in *turning to the Gentiles*, that this Jew was so malignant against them.

(1.) This Elymas was a pretender to *the gift of prophecy*, a *sorcerer*, a *false-prophet* that would be taken for a divine, because he was skilled in the arts of divination; he was a conjurer, and took on him to tell people their fortune, and to discover things lost, and probably was in league with the devil for this purpose; *his name was Barjesus the son of Joshua*; it signifies *the son of salvation*; but the Syriac calls him, *Bar-shomathe son of pride*; *filius inflationis the son of inflation*.

(2.) He was hanging on at court, *was with the deputy* of the country. It does not appear that the deputy called for him, as he did for Barnabas and Saul; but he thrust himself upon him, aiming, no doubt, to make a hand of him, and get money by him.

(3.) He made it his business to withstand Barnabas and Saul, as the magicians of Egypt, in Pharaoh's court, *withstood* Moses and Aaron, ² Timothy 3:8. He set up himself to be a messenger from heaven, and denied that they were. And *thus he sought to turn away the deputy from the faith* (v. 8), to keep him from receiving the gospel, which he saw him inclined to do. Note, Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men of power, to keep them from being religious; because he knows that their example, whether good or bad, will have an influence upon many. And those who are in any way instrumental to prejudice people against the truths and ways of Christ are doing the devil's work.

(4.) Saul (who is here for the first time called Paul) fell upon him for this with a holy indignation. *Saul, who is also called Paul*, v. 9. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew, and of the tribe of Benjamin; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome. Hitherto we have had him mostly conversant among the Jews, and therefore called by his Jewish name; but now, when he is sent forth among the Gentiles, he is called by his Roman name, to put somewhat of a reputation upon him in the Roman cities, Paulus being a very common name among them. But some think he was never called Paul till now that he was instrumental in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to the faith of Christ, and that he took the name Paulus as a memorial of this victory obtained by the gospel of Christ, as among the Romans he that had conquered a country took his denomination from it, as *Germanicus, Britannicus, Africanus*; or rather, Sergius Paulus himself gave him the name Paulus in token of his favour and respect to him, as Vespasian gave his name Flavius to Josephus the Jew. Now of Paul it is said,

[1.] That he was *filled with the Holy Ghost* upon this occasion, filled with a holy zeal against a professed enemy of Christ, which was one of the graces of the Holy Ghost *spirit of burning*; filled with power to denounce the wrath of God against him, which was one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost *spirit of judgment*. He felt a more than ordinary fervour in his mind, as the prophet did when he was *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord* (³ Micah 3:8), and another prophet when *his face was made harder than flint* (³ Ezekiel 3:9), and another when *his mouth was made like a sharp sword*, ² Isaiah 49:2. What Paul said did not come from any personal resentment, but from the strong impressions which the Holy Ghost made upon his spirit.

[2.] He *set his eyes upon him*, to face him down, and to show a holy boldness, in opposition to his wicked impudence. He set his eyes upon him, as an indication that the eye of the heart-searching God was upon him, and saw through and through him; nay, *that the face of the Lord was against him*, ^{
}Psalm 34:16. He fixed his eyes upon him, to see if he could discern in his countenance any marks of remorse for what he had done; for, if he could have discerned the least sign of this, it would have prevented the ensuing doom.

[3.] He gave him his true character, not in passion, but by the Holy Ghost, who knows men better than they know themselves, v. 10. He describes him to be, *First*, An agent for hell; and such there have been upon this earth (the seat of the war between *the seed of the woman and of the serpent*) ever since Cain *who was of that wicked one*, an incarnate devil, *slew his brother*, for no other reason than because *his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*. This Elymas, though called *Bar-jesusa son of Jesus*, was really a *child of the devil*, bore his image, did his lusts, and served his interests, ^{
}John 8:44. In two things he resembled the devil as a child does his father.

1. In craftiness. *The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field* (^{
}Genesis 3:1), and Elymas, though void of all wisdom, was *full of all subtlety*, expert in all the arts of deceiving men and imposing upon them.

2. In malice. He was *full of all mischief* a spiteful ill-conditioned man, and a sworn implacable enemy to God and goodness. Note, A fulness of subtlety and mischief together make a man indeed a child of the devil. *Secondly*, An adversary to heaven. If he be a child of the devil, it follows of course that he is *an enemy to all righteousness*, for the devil is so. Note, Those that are enemies to the doctrine of Christ are enemies to all righteousness, for in it all righteousness is summed up and fulfilled.

[4.] He charged upon him his present crime, and expostulated with him upon it: "*Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord, to misrepresent them, to put false colours upon them, and so to discourage people from entering into them, and walking in them?*" Note, *First*, The ways of the Lord are right: they are all so, they are perfectly so. The ways of the Lord Jesus are right, the only right ways to heaven and happiness. *Secondly*, There are those who pervert these right ways, who not only

wander out of these ways themselves (as Elihu's penitent, who owns, *I have perverted that which was right and it profited me not*), but mislead others, and suggest to them unjust prejudices against these ways: as if the doctrine of Christ were uncertain and precarious, the laws of Christ unreasonable and impractical, and the service of Christ unpleasant and unprofitable, which is an unjust perverting of the right ways of the Lord, and making them seem crooked ways. *Thirdly*, Those who pervert the right ways of the Lord are commonly so hardened in it that, though the equity of those ways be set before them by the most powerful and commanding evidence, yet they will not cease to do it. *Etsi suaseris, non persuaseris* You may advise, but you will never persuade; they will have it their own way; *they have loved strangers, and after them they will go.*

[5.] He denounced the judgment of God upon him, in a present blindness (v. 11): “*And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, a righteous hand. God is now about to lay hands on thee, and make thee his prisoner, for thou art taken in arms against him; thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.*” This was designed both for the proof of his crime, as it was a miracle wrought to confirm the right ways of the Lord, and consequently to show the wickedness of him who would not cease to pervert them, as also for the punishment of his crime. It was a suitable punishment; he shut his eyes, the eyes of his mind, against the light of the gospel, and therefore justly were the eyes of his body shut against the light of the sun; he sought to blind the deputy (as an agent for *the god of this world, who blindeth the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the gospel should shine unto them,* ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 4:4), and therefore is himself struck blind. Yet it was a moderate punishment: he was only struck blind, when he might most justly have been struck dead; and it was only *for a season*; if he will repent, and give glory to God, by making confession, his sight shall be restored; nay, it should seem, though he do not, yet his sight shall be restored, to try if he will be led to repentance either by the judgments of God or by his mercies.

[6.] This judgment was immediately executed: *There fell on him a mist and a darkness*, as on the Sodomites when they persecuted Elisha. This silenced him presently, filled him with confusion, and was an effectual confutation of all he said against the doctrine of Christ. Let not him any more pretend to be a guide to the deputy's conscience who is himself struck blind. It was also an earnest to him of a much sorer punishment if he repent not; for he is one of those *wandering stars to whom is reserved*

the blackness of darkness for ever, ^(11B)Jude 1:13. Elymas did himself proclaim the truth of the miracle, when *he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand;* and where now is all his skill in sorcery, upon which he had so much valued himself, when he can neither find his way nor find a friend that will be so kind as to lead him!

3. Notwithstanding all the endeavours of Elymas *to turn away the deputy from the faith,* he was brought to believe, and this miracle, wrought upon the magician himself (like *the boils of Egypt,* which were upon the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses, ^(11M)Exodus 9:11), contributed to it. The deputy was a very sensible man, and observed something uncommon, and which intimated its divine original,

(1.) In Paul's preaching: he was *astonished at the doctrine of the Lord,* the Lord Christ, the doctrine that *is from him,* the discoveries he has made of the Father, the doctrine that *is concerning him,* his person, natures, offices, undertaking. Note, The doctrine of Christ has a great deal in it that is astonishing; and the more we know of it the more reason we shall see to wonder and stand amazed at it.

(2.) In this miracle: *When he saw what was done,* and how much Paul's power transcended that of the magician, and how plainly Elymas was baffled and confounded, he believed. It is not said that he was baptized, and so made a complete convert, but it is probable that he was. Paul would not do his business by the halves; *as for God, his work is perfect.* When he became a Christian, he neither laid down his government, nor was turned out of it, but we may suppose, as a Christian magistrate, by his influence helped very much to propagate Christianity in that island. The tradition of the Romish church, which has taken care to find bishoprics for all the eminent converts we read of in *the Acts,* has made this Sergius Paulus bishop of Narbon in France, left there by Paul in his journey to Spain.

III. Their departure from the island of Cyprus. It is probable that they did a great deal more there than is recorded, where an account is given only of that which was extraordinary the conversion of the deputy. When they had done what they had to do,

1. They quitted the country, and *went to Perga.* Those that went were *Paul and his company,* which, it is probable, was increased in Cyprus, many being desirous to accompany him. *Anachthentes hoi peri ton Paulon* Those that were about Paul loosed from Paphos, which supposes that he went

too; but such an affection had his new friends for him that they were always about him, and by their good will would be never from him.

2. Then John *Mark* *quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem*, without the consent of Paul and Barnabas; either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother. It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again.

⌂ ACTS 13:14-41

PAUL AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

Perga in Pamphylia was a noted place, especially for a temple there erected to the goddess Diana, yet nothing at all is related of what Paul and Barnabas did there, only that *thither they came* (v. 13), and *thence they departed*, v. 14. But the history of the apostles' travels, as that of Christ's, passes by many things worthy to have been recorded, because, *if all had been written, the world could not have contained the books*. But the next place we find them in is another Antioch, said to be in Pisidia, to distinguish it from that Antioch in Syria from which they were sent out. Pisidia was a province of the Lesser Asia, bordering upon Pamphylia; this Antioch, it is likely, was the metropolis of it. Abundance of Jews lived there, and to them *the gospel was to be first preached*; and Paul's sermon to them is what we have in these verses, which, it is likely, is the substance of what was preached by the apostles generally to the Jews in all places; for in dealing with them the proper way was to show them how the New Testament, which they would have them to receive, exactly agreed with the Old Testament, which they not only received, but were zealous for. We have here,

I. The appearance which Paul and Barnabas made in a religious assembly of the Jews at Antioch, v. 14. Though they had lately had such good success with a Roman deputy, yet, *when they came to Antioch*, they did not enquire for the chief magistrate, nor make their court to him, but they applied to the Jews, which is a further proof of their good affection to them and their desire of their welfare.

1. They observed their time of worship, *on the sabbath day*, the Jewish sabbath. *The first day of the week* they observed among themselves as a

Christian sabbath; but, if they will meet the Jews, it must be on the seventh-day sabbath, which therefore, upon such occasions, they did as yet sometimes observe. For, though it was by the death of Christ that the ceremonial law died, yet it was in the ruins of Jerusalem that it was to be buried; and therefore, though the morality of the fourth commandment was entirely transferred to the Christian sabbath, yet it was not incongruous to join with the Jews in their sabbath sanctification.

2. They met them in their place of worship, *in the synagogue*. Note, Sabbath days should be kept holy in solemn assemblies; they are instituted chiefly for public worship. *The sabbath day is a holy convocation*, and for that reason *no servile work must be done therein*. Paul and Barnabas were strangers; but, wherever we come, we must enquire out God's faithful worshippers, and join with them (as these apostles here did), as those that desire to keep up a communion with all saints; though they were strangers, yet they were admitted into the synagogue, and to sit down there. Care should be taken in places of public worship that strangers be accommodated, even the poorest; for, of those of whom we know nothing else, we know this, that they have precious souls, for which our charity binds us to be concerned.

II. The invitation given them to preach.

1. The usual service of the synagogue was performed (v. 15): *The law and the prophets were read*, a portion of each, the lessons for the day. Note, When we come together to worship God, we must do it not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God; hereby we *give him the glory due to his name*, as our Lord and Lawgiver.

2. When that was done, they were asked by *the rulers of the synagogue* to give them a sermon (v. 15): They sent a messenger to them with the respectful message, *Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on*. It is probable that the rulers of the synagogue had met with them, and been in private conversation with them before; and, if they had not an affection to the gospel, yet they had at least the curiosity to hear Paul preach; and therefore not only gave him permission, but begged the favour of him that he would speak a *word of exhortation to the people*. Note,

(1.) The bare reading of the scriptures in the public assemblies is not sufficient, but they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of

them. This is spreading the net, and assisting people in doing that which is necessary to the making of the word profitable to them—that is, the applying of it to themselves.

(2.) Those that preside, and have power, in public assemblies, should provide for a word of exhortation to the people, whenever they come together.

(3.) Sometimes a word of exhortation from a strange minister may be of great use to the people, provided he be well approved. It is likely Paul did *often preach in the synagogue*, when he was not thus invited to it by the rulers of the synagogues; for he often preached *with much contention*, ~~1~~ Thessalonians 2:2. But these were more noble, more generous, than the rulers of the synagogues generally were.

III. The sermon Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews, at the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue. He gladly embraced the opportunity given him to preach Christ to his countrymen the Jews. He did not object to them that he was a stranger, and that it was none of his business; nor object to himself, that he might get ill-will by preaching Christ among the Jews; but *stood up*, as one prepared and determined to speak, *and beckoned with his hand*, to excite and prepare them to hear. He waved his hand as an orator, not only desiring silence and attention, but endeavouring to move affection, and to show himself in earnest. Perhaps, upon the moving of them *to give an exhortation to the people*, there were those in the synagogue that were ready to mutiny against the rulers, and opposed the toleration of Paul's preaching, and that occasioned some tumult and commotion, which Paul endeavoured to quiet by that decent motion of his hand; as also by his modest desire of a patient impartial hearing: "*Men of Israel, that are Jews by birth, and you that fear God, that are proselyted to the Jewish religion, give audience; let me beg your attention a little, for I have something to say to you which concerns your everlasting peace, and would not say it in vain.*" Now this excellent sermon is recorded, to show that those who preached the gospel to the Gentiles did it not till they had first used their utmost endeavours with the Jews, to persuade them to come in and take the benefit of it; and that they had no prejudice at all against the Jewish nation, nor any desire *that they should perish, but rather that they should turn and live*. Every thing is touched in this sermon that might be proper either to convince the

judgment or insinuate into the affections of the Jews, to prevail with them to receive and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah.

1. He owns them to be God's favourite people, whom he had taken into special relation to himself, and for whom he had done great things. Probably *the Jews of the dispersion*, that lived in other countries, being more in danger of mingling with the nations, were more jealous of their peculiarity than those that lived in their own land were; and therefore Paul is here very careful to take notice of it, to their honour.

(1.) That *the God of the whole earth* was, in a particular manner, *the God of this people Israel*, a God *in covenant with them*, and that he had given them a revelation of his mind and will, such as he *had not given to any other nation or people*; so that hereby they were distinguished from, and dignified above, all their neighbours, having peculiar precepts to be governed by, and peculiar promises to depend upon.

(2.) That he had *chosen their fathers* to be his friends: Abraham was called *the friend of God*; to be his prophets, by whom he would reveal his mind to his church, and to be the trustees of his covenant with the church. He puts them in mind of this, to let them know that the reason why God favoured them, though undeserving, and ill deserving, was because he would adhere to the choice he had made of *their fathers*, ^{<CR1>}Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. *They were beloved purely for the fathers' sakes*, ^{<S13>}Romans 11:28.

(3.) That he had *exalted that people*, and put a great deal of honour upon them, had advanced them into a people, and raised them from nothing, *when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt*, and had nothing in them to recommend them to the divine favour. They ought to remember this, and to infer hence that God was no debtor to them; for it was *ex mero motu* out of his mere good pleasure, and not upon a valuable consideration, that they had the grant of the divine favour; and therefore it was revocable at pleasure; and God did them no wrong if he at length plucked up the hedge of their peculiarity. But they were debtors to him, and obliged to receive such further discoveries as he should make to his church.

(4.) That he had *with a high hand brought them out of Egypt*, where they were not only strangers, but captives, had delivered them at the expense of a great many miracles, both of mercy to them and judgment on their oppressors (*signs and wonders*, ^{<CR1>}Deuteronomy 4:34), and at the expense of a great many lives, *all the first-born of Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his*

host, in the Red Sea; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, gave men for thee.

^{<38B>}Isaiah 43:3, 4.

(5.) That *he had suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness*, v. 18, *Etrophophoresen*. Some think it should be read, *etrophophoresen he educated them*, because this is the word the Septuagint use concerning the fatherly care God took of that people, ^{<61C>}Deuteronomy 1:31. Both may be included; for,

[1.] God made a great deal of provision for them for forty years in the wilderness: miracles were their daily bread, and kept them from starving: *They lacked not any thing*.

[2.] He exercised a great deal of patience with them. They were a provoking, murmuring, unbelieving people; and yet he bore with them, did not deal with them as they deserved, but suffered his anger many a time to be turned away by the prayer and intercession of Moses. So many years as we have each of us lived in this world, we must own that God has thus been as a tender father to us, has supplied our wants, has *fed us all our life long unto this day*, has been indulgent to us, a God of pardons (as he was to Israel, ^{<46T>}Nehemiah 9:17), and *not extreme to mark what we have done amiss*; we have tried his patience, and yet not tired it. Let not the Jews insist too much upon the privileges of their peculiarity, for they have forfeited them a thousand times.

(6.) That he had put them in possession of the land of Canaan (v. 19): *When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan*, that were doomed to be rooted out to make room for them, *he divided their land to them by lot*, and put them in possession of it. This was a signal favour of God to them, and he owns that hereby a great honour was put upon them, from which he would not in the least derogate.

(7.) That he had raised up men, inspired from heaven, to deliver them out of the hands of those that invaded their rights, and oppressed them after their settlement in Canaan, v. 20, 21.

[1.] He *gave them judges*, men qualified for public service, and, by an immediate impulse upon their spirits, called to it, *pro re nataas the occasion required*. Though they were a provoking people, and were never in servitude but their sin brought them to it, yet upon their petition a deliverer was raised up. The critics find some difficulty in computing

these four hundred and fifty years. From the *deliverance out of Egypt* to David's expulsion of *the Jebusites from the stronghold of Zion*, which completed the casting out of the heathen nations, *was four hundred and fifty years*; and most of that time they were under judges. Others thus: The government of the judges, from the death of Joshua to the death of Eli, was just *three hundred and thirty-nine years*, but it is said to be [os] as it were *four hundred and fifty years*, because the years of their servitude to the several nations that oppressed them, though really they were included in the years of the judges, are yet mentioned in the history as if they had been distinct from them. Now these, all put together, make *one hundred and eleven years*, which added to the *three hundred and thirty nine*, make them *four hundred and fifty*; as so many, though not really so many.

[2.] He governed them by a *prophet, Samuel*, a man divinely inspired to preside in their affairs.

[3.] He *afterwards* at their request *set a king over them* (v. 21), *Saul, the son of Cis*. Samuel's government and his lasted *forty years*, which was a kind of transition from the theocracy to the kingly government.

[4.] At last, he made David their king, v. 22. *When God had removed Saul*, for his mal-administration, *he raised up unto them David to be their king*, and made *a covenant of royalty with him, and with his seed*. When he had removed one king, he did not leave them as sheep without a shepherd, but soon raised up another, raised him up from a mean and low estate, *raised him up on high*, ^{<OR>} 2 Samuel 23:1. He quotes the testimony God gave concerning him, *First*, That his choice was divine: *I have found David*, ^{<OR>} Psalm 89:20. God himself pitched upon him. Finding implies seeking; as if God had ransacked all the families of Israel to find a man fit for his purpose, and this was he. *Secondly*, That his character was divine: *A man after my own heart*, such a one as I would have, one on whom the image of God is stamped, and therefore one in whom God is well pleased and whom he approves. This character was given of him before he was first anointed, ^{<OR>} 1 Samuel 13:14. *The Lord hath sought out a man after his own heart*, such a one as he would have. *Thirdly*, That his conduct was divine, and under divine direction: *He shall fulfil all my will*. He shall desire and endeavour to do the will of God, and shall be enabled to do it, and employed in the doing of it, and go through with it. Now all this seems to show not only the special favour of God to the people of Israel (with the acknowledgment of which the apostle is very willing to oblige

them) but the further favours of another nature which he designed them, and which were now, by the preaching of the gospel, offered to them. Their deliverance out of Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, *were types and figures of good things to come*. The changes of their government showed that it *made nothing perfect*, and therefore must give way to the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, and which, if they would admit it and submit to it, would be *the glory of their people Israel*; and therefore they needed not conceive any jealousy at all of the preaching of the gospel, as if it tended in the least to damage the true excellences of the Jewish church.

2. He gives them a full account of our Lord Jesus, passing from David to the Son of David, and shows that this Jesus is his promised Seed (v. 23): *Of this man's seed, from that root of Jesse, from that man after God's own heart, hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus*, who carries salvation in his name.

(1.) How welcome should the preaching of the gospel of Christ be to the Jews, and how should they embrace it, as *well worthy of all acceptation*, when it brought them the tidings,

[1.] Of a Saviour, to deliver *them out of the hands of their enemies*, as the judges of old, who were therefore called *saviours*; but this *a Saviour* to do that for them which, it appears by the history, those could not do *to save them from their sins*, their worst enemies.

[2.] A Saviour of God's raising up, that has his commission from heaven.

[3.] Raised up *to be a Saviour unto Israel*, to them in the first place: *He was sent to bless them*; so far was the gospel from designing the gathering of them.

[4.] Raised up *of the seed of David*, that ancient royal family, which the people of Israel gloried so much in, and which at this time, to the great disgrace of the whole nation, was buried in obscurity. It ought to be a great satisfaction to them *that God had raised up this horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David*, ^{([413](#))} Luke 1:69.

[5.] Raised up *according to his promise*, the promise to David (^{([421](#))} Psalm 132:11), the promise to the Old-Testament church in the latter times of it: *I will raise unto David a righteous branch*, ^{([425](#))} Jeremiah 23:5. This promise was it *to which the twelve tribes hoped to come* (^{([447](#))} Acts 26:7);

why then should they entertain it so coldly, now that it was brought to them? Now,

(2.) Concerning this Jesus, he tells them,

[1.] That John the Baptist was his harbinger and forerunner, that great man whom all acknowledged to be a prophet. Let them not say that the Messiah's coming was a surprise upon them, and that this might excuse them if they took time to consider whether they should entertain him or no; for they had sufficient warning by John, who *preached before his coming*, v. 24. Two things he did: *First*, He made way for his entrance, by preaching *the baptism of repentance*, not to a few select disciples, but to *all the people of Israel*. He showed them their sins, *warned them of the wrath to come, called them to repentance, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, and bound those to this who were willing to be bound by the solemn rite or sign of baptism; and by this he *made ready a people prepared for the Lord Jesus*, to whom his grace would be acceptable when they were thus brought to know themselves. *Secondly*, He gave notice of his approach (v. 25): *As he fulfilled his course*, when he was going on vigorously in his work, and had had wonderful success in it, and an established interest: "Now," saith he to those that attended his ministry, "*Whom think you that I am?* What notions have you of me, what expectations from me? You may be thinking that I am *the Messiah*, whom you expect; but you are mistaken, *I am not he* (see ~~ACT~~ John 1:20), but he is at the door; *behold, there cometh one immediately after me*, who will so far exceed me upon all accounts, *that I am not worthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, no, not to help him on and off with his shoes whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose*, and you may guess who that must be."

[2.] That the rulers and people of the Jews, who should have welcomed him, and been his willing, forward, faithful subjects, were his persecutors and murderers. When the apostles preach Christ as *the Saviour*, they are so far from concealing his ignominious death, and drawing a veil over it, that they always *preach Christ crucified*, yea, and (though this added much to the reproach of his sufferings) crucified by his own people, by *those that dwelt in Jerusalem*, the holy city the royal city, and *their rulers*, v. 27. *First*, Their sin was *that though they found no cause of death in him*, could not prove him, no, nor had any colour to suspect him, guilty of any crime (the judge himself that tried him, when he had heard all they could say

against him, declared he *found no fault with him*), yet they desired Pilate that he might be slain (v. 28), and presented their address against Christ with such fury and outrage that they compelled Pilate to crucify him, not only contrary to his inclination, but contrary to his conscience; they condemned him *to so great a death*, though they could not convict him of the least sin. Paul cannot charge this upon his hearers, as Peter did (~~4123~~Acts 2:23): *You have with wicked hands crucified and slain him*; for these, though Jews, were far enough off; but he charges it upon the Jews at Jerusalem and the rulers, to show what little reason those Jews of the dispersion had to be so jealous for the honour of their nation as they were, when it had brought upon itself such a load and stain of guilt as this, and how justly they might have been cut off from all benefit by the Messiah, who had thus abused him, and yet they were not; but, notwithstanding all this, the preaching of this gospel shall begin at Jerusalem. *Secondly*, The reason of this was because *they knew him not*, v. 27. They knew not who he was, nor what errand he came into the world upon; for, *if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. Christ owned this in extenuation of their crime: *They know not what they do*; and so did Peter: *I wot that through ignorance you did this*, ~~4124~~Acts 3:17. It was also because they knew not the voice of the prophets though they heard them read every sabbath day. They did not understand nor consider that it was foretold that the Messiah should suffer, or else they would never have been the instruments of his suffering. Note, Many that read the prophets do not know the voice of the prophets, do not understand the meaning of the scriptures; they have the sound of the gospel in their ears, but not the sense of it in their heads, nor the savour of it in their hearts. And *therefore* men do not know Christ, nor know how to carry it towards him, because they do not know the voice of the prophets, who *testified beforehand concerning Christ*. *Thirdly*, God overruled them, for the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old-Testament: *Because they knew not the voice of the prophets*, which warned them not to touch God's Anointed, *they fulfilled them in condemning him*; for so it was written that *Messiah the prince shall be cut off, but not for himself*. Note, It is possible that men may be fulfilling scripture prophecies, even when they are breaking scripture precepts, particularly in the persecution of the church, as in the persecution of Christ. And this justifies the reason which is sometimes given for the obscurity of scripture prophecies, that, if they were too plain and obvious, the accomplishment of them would thereby be prevented. So Paul saith here, *Because they knew not the voice of the prophets*, therefore

they have fulfilled them, which implies that if they had understood them they would not have fulfilled them. *Fourthly*, All that was foretold concerning the sufferings of the Messiah was fulfilled in Christ (v. 29): *When they had fulfilled all the rest that was written of him*, even to the giving of him vinegar to drink in his thirst, then they fulfilled what was foretold concerning his being buried. They *took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre*. This is taken notice of here as that which made his resurrection the more illustrious. Christ was separated from this world, as those that are buried have nothing more to do with this world, nor this world with them; and therefore our complete separation from sin is represented by our being *buried with Christ*. And a good Christian will be willing to be buried alive with Christ. They laid him in a sepulchre, and thought they had him fast.

[3.] That he *rose again from the dead*, and saw no corruption. This was the great truth that was to be preached; for it is the main pillar, by which the whole fabric of the gospel is supported, and therefore he insists largely upon this, and shows,

First, That he rose by consent. When he was imprisoned in the grave for our debt, he did not break prison, but had a fair and legal discharge from the arrest he was under (v. 30): *God raised him from the dead*, sent an angel on purpose to roll away the stone from the prison-door, returned to him the spirit which at his death he had committed into the hands of his Father, and quickened him by the Holy Ghost. His enemies laid him in a sepulchre, with design he should always lay there; but God said, *No*; and it was soon seen whose purpose should stand, his or theirs.

Secondly, That there was sufficient proof of his having risen (v. 31): *He was seen many days*, in divers places, upon divers occasions, by those that were most intimately acquainted with him; for they *came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem*, were his constant attendants, and *they are his witnesses unto the people*. They were appointed to be so, have attested the thing many a time, and are ready to attest it, though they were to die for the same. Paul says nothing of his own seeing him, which was more convincing to himself than it could be when produced to others.

Thirdly, That the resurrection of Christ was the performance of the promise made to the patriarchs; it was not only true news, but good news: "In declaring this, we *declare unto you glad tidings* (v. 32, 33), which should be in a particular manner acceptable to you Jews. So far are we

from designing to put any slur upon you, or do you any wrong, that the doctrine we preach, if you receive it aright, and understand it, brings you the greatest honour and satisfaction imaginable; for it is in the resurrection of Christ that *the promise which was made to your fathers is fulfilled to you.*” He acknowledges it to be the dignity of the Jewish nation that *to them pertained the promises* (~~4006~~ Romans 9:4), that they were the heirs of the promise, as they were the children of the patriarchs to whom the promises were first made. The great promise of the Old Testament was that of the Messiah, *in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed*, and not the family of Abraham only; though it was to be the peculiar honour of that family that he should be raised up of it, yet it was to be the common benefit of all families that he should be raised up to them. Note,

1. God hath *raised up Jesus*, advanced him, and exalted him; *raised him again* (so we read it), meaning *from the dead*. We may take in both senses. God raised up Jesus to be a prophet at his baptism, to be a priest to make atonement at his death, and to be a king to rule over all at his ascension; and *his raising him up from the dead* was the confirmation and ratification of all these commissions, and proved him raised of God to these offices.

2. This is the fulfilling of the promises made to the fathers, the promise of sending the Messiah, and of all those benefits and blessings which were to be had with him and by him: “This is he that should come, and in him you have all that God promised in the Messiah, though not all that you promised yourselves.” Paul puts himself into the number of the Jews to whom the promise was fulfilled: *To us their children*. Now, if those who preached the gospel brought them *these glad tidings*, instead of looking upon them as enemies to their nation, they ought to caress them as their best friends, and embrace their doctrine with both arms; for if they valued the promise so much, and themselves by it, much more the performance. And the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, which was the great thing that the Jews found themselves aggrieved at, was so far from infringing the promise made to them that the promise itself, that *all the families of the earth should be blessed* in the Messiah, could not otherwise be accomplished.

Fourthly, That the resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God, and confirms what was written in the second Psalm (thus ancient was the order in which the Psalms are now placed), *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. That the resurrection of Christ from the dead was designed to evidence and evince this is plain from that of the apostle (⁴⁰⁰⁴Romans 1:4): *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*. When he was first raised up out of obscurity, God declared concerning him by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son* (⁴⁰⁰⁷Matthew 3:17), which has a plain reference to that in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son*. Abundance of truth there is couched in those words: that this Jesus was *begotten of the Father before all worlds was the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person*, as the son is of the father's, that he was the *logos*, the *eternal thought of the eternal mind*, that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin; for upon this account, also, *that holy thing was called the Son of God* (⁴⁰¹⁵Luke 1:35), that he was God's agent in creating and governing the world, and in redeeming it and reconciling it to himself, and *faithful as a son in his own house*, and as such was *heir of all things*. Now all this, which was declared at Christ's baptism and again at his transfiguration, was undeniably proved by his resurrection. The decree which was so long before declared was then confirmed; and the reason why it was impossible he should be held by the bands of death was because he was the Son of God, and consequently had *life in himself*, which he could not lay down but with a design to resume it. When his eternal generation is spoken of, it is not improper to say, *This day have I begotten thee*; for *from everlasting to everlasting* is with God as it were one and the same eternal day. Yet it may also be accommodated to his resurrection, in a subordinate sense, "This day have I made it to appear that I have begotten thee, and this day have I begotten all that are given to thee;" for it is said (⁴⁰¹⁸1 Peter 1:3) that *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as our God and Father, *hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

Fifthly, That his being raised the third day, so as not to see corruption, and to a heavenly life, so as no more to return to corruption, that is, to the state of the dead, as others did who were raised to life, further confirms his being the Messiah promised.

a. He rose to die no more; so it is expressed, (⁴⁰¹⁹Romans 6:9: *As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to*

corruption, that is, to the grave, which is called *corruption*, ^{<874>}Job 17:14. Lazarus came out of the grave with his grave-clothes on, because he was to use them again; but Christ, having no more occasion for them, left them behind. Now this was the fulfilling of that scripture (^{<258>}Isaiah 55:3), *I will give you the sure mercies of David; ta hosia Dabid ta pista the holy things of David, the faithful things*; for in the promise made to David, and in him to Christ, great stress is laid upon the faithfulness of God (^{<381>}Psalm 89:1, 2, 5, 24, 33), and upon the oath God had sworn *by his holiness*, ^{<385>}Psalm 89:35. Now this makes them sure mercies indeed that he who is entrusted with the dispensing of them has risen to die no more; so that he ever lives to see his own will executed, and the blessings he hath purchased for us given out to us. As, if Christ had died and had not risen again, so if he had risen to die again, we had come short of the sure mercies, or at least could not have been sure of them.

b. He rose so soon after he was dead that his body did not see corruption; for it is not till the third day that the body begins to change. Now this was promised to David; it was one of *the sure mercies of David*, for it was said to him in ^{<360>}Psalm 16:10, *Neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption*, v. 35. God had promised to David that he would raise up the Messiah of his seed, who should therefore be a man, but should not, like other men, see corruption. This promise could not have its accomplishment in David, but looked forward to Christ.

(*a.*) It could not be accomplished in David himself (v. 36), for *David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, who raised him up to be what he was, fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption*. Here we have a short account of the life, death, and burial, of the patriarch David, and his continuance under the power of death.

[**a.**] His life: *He served his own generation, by the will of God*, before he slept the sleep of death. David was a useful good man; he did good in the world *by the will of God*. He made God's precepts his rule; he *served his own generation* so as therein to serve God; he so *served and pleased men (as whatever the king did pleased the people,* ^{<108>}2 Samuel 3:36), as still to keep himself the faithful servant of God. See ^{<410>}Galatians 1:10. He served the good of men, but did not serve the will of men. Or, by the will of God's providence so ordering it, qualifying him for, and calling him to, a public station, he *served his own generation*; for every creature is that to us which God makes it to

be. David was a great blessing to the age wherein he lived; he was the *servant* of his generation: many are the curse, and plague, and burden of their generation. Even those that are in a lower and narrower sphere must look upon it that they live to *serve their generation*; and those that will do good in the world must make themselves *servants of all*, ^{<419>}1 Corinthians 9:19. We were not born for ourselves, but are members of communities, to which we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference between David and Christ, that David was to serve only his own generation, that generation in which he lived, and therefore when he had done what he had to do, and written what he had to write, he died, and continued in the grave; but Christ (not by his writings or words upon record only as David, but by his personal agency) was to serve *all* generations, must ever live to reign over the house of Jacob, not as David, for forty years, but for all ages, as long as the sun and moon endure, ^{<498>}Psalm 89:29, 36, 37. His throne must be as the days of heaven, and all generations must be blessed in him, ^{<427>}Psalm 72:17.

[b.] His death: *He fell asleep*. Death is a sleep, a quiet rest, to those who, while they lived, laboured in the service of God and their generation. Observe, He did not fall asleep till he had served his generation, till he had done the work for which God raised him up. God's servants have their work assigned them; and, when they have *accomplished as a hireling their day*, then, and not till then, they are called to rest. God's witnesses never die till they have finished their testimony; and then *the sleep, the death, of the labouring man will be sweet*. David was not permitted to build the temple, and therefore when he had made preparation for it, which was the service he was designed to, he fell asleep, and left the work to Solomon.

[c.] His burial: *He was laid to his fathers*. Though he was buried in *the city of David* (^{<412>}1 Kings 2:10), and not in the sepulchre of Jesse his father in Bethlehem, yet he might be said to be *laid to his fathers*; for the grave, in general, is the habitation of our fathers, of those that are gone before us, ^{<409>}Psalm 49:19.

[d.] His continuance in the grave: *He saw corruption*. We are sure he did not rise again; this Peter insists upon when he freely speaks of the patriarch David (^{<422>}Acts 2:29): *He is both dead and buried, and his*

sepulchre is with us unto this day. He saw corruption, and therefore that promise could not have its accomplishment in him. But,

(b.) It was accomplished in the Lord Jesus (v. 37): *He whom God raised again saw no corruption*; for it was in him that the sure mercies were to be reserved for us. He rose the third day, and therefore did not see corruption then; and he rose to die no more, and therefore never did. Of him therefore the promise must be understood, and no other.

c. Having given them this account of the Lord Jesus, he comes to make application of it.

(a.) In the midst of his discourse, to engage their attention, he had told his hearers that they were concerned in all this (v. 26): “*To you is the word of this salvation sent, to you first. If you by your unbelief make it a word of rejection to you, you may thank yourselves; but it is sent to you for a word of salvation; if it be not so, it is your own fault.*” Let them not peevishly argue that because it was sent to the Gentiles, who had no communion with them, therefore it was not sent to them; for to them it was sent in the first place. “*To you men this is sent, and not to the angels that sinned. To you living men, and not to the congregation of the dead and damned, whose day of grace is over.*” He therefore speaks to them with tenderness and respect: You are *men and brethren*; and so we are to look upon all those that stand fair with us for the great salvation as having the word of salvation sent to them. Those to whom he does by warrant from heaven here bring the *word of salvation* are,

[a.] The native Jews, Hebrews of the Hebrews, as Paul himself was: “*Children of the stock of Abraham, though a degenerate race, yet to you is this word of salvation sent; nay, it is therefore sent to you, to save you from your sins.*” It is an advantage to be of a good stock; for, though salvation does not always follow the children of godly parents, yet the word of salvation does: *Abraham will command his children and his house-hold after him.*

[b.] The proselytes, the Gentiles by birth, that were in some degree brought over to the Jews' religion: “*Whosoever among you that feareth God. You that have a sense of natural religion, and have subjected yourselves to the laws of that, and taken hold of the comforts of that, to you is the word of this salvation sent; you need the further discoveries and directions of revealed religion, are prepared for them,*

and will bid them welcome, and therefore shall certainly be welcome to take the benefit of them.”

(b.) In the close of his discourse he applies what he had said concerning Christ to his hearers. He had told them a long story concerning *this Jesus*; now they would be ready to ask, What is all this to us? And he tells them plainly what it is to them.

[a.] It will be their unspeakable advantage if they embrace Jesus Christ, and believe this word of salvation. It will relieve them where their greatest danger lies; and that is from the guilt of their sins: “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren* we are warranted to proclaim it to you, and you are called to take notice of it.” He did not stand up to preach before them, but to preach to them, and not without hopes of prevailing with them; for they are men, reasonable creatures, and capable of being argued with; they are *brethren*, spoken to, and dealt with, by men like themselves; not only of the same nature, but of the same nation. It is proper for the preachers of the gospel to call their hearers brethren, as speaking familiarly to them, and with an affectionate concern for their welfare, and as being equally interested with them in the gospel they preach. Let all that hear the gospel of Christ know these two things:

Ist, That it is an act of indemnity granted by the King of kings to the children of men, who stand attainted at his bar of treason against his crown and dignity; and it is for and in consideration of the mediation of Christ between God and man that this act of grace is passed and proclaimed (v. 38): “*Through this man, who died and rose again, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* We have to tell you, in God’s name, that your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and how it is come about that they may be so, without any injury to God’s honour, and how you may obtain the forgiveness of your sins. We are to preach repentance for the remission of sins, and divine grace giving both *repentance and remission of sins*. The remission of sins is *through this man*. By his merit it was purchased, in his name it is offered, and by his authority it is bestowed; and therefore you are concerned to be acquainted with him, and interested in him. We preach to you *the forgiveness of sins*. That is the salvation we bring you, the word of God; and therefore you ought to bid us welcome and look upon us as your friends, and messengers of good tidings.”

2ndly, That it does that for us which the law of Moses could not do. The Jews were jealous for the law, and because it prescribed expiatory and pacificatory sacrifices, and a great variety of purifications, fancied they might be justified by it before God. “No,” saith Paul, “be it known to you that it is by Christ only that *those who believe in him*, and none else, are *justified from all things*, from all the guilt and stain of sin, *from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (v. 39); therefore they ought to entertain and embrace the gospel, and not to adhere to the law in opposition to it, because the gospel is perfective, not destructive, of the law. Note,

- 1.** The great concern of sinners it to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in God's sight.
- 2.** Those who are truly justified are acquitted from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner he is undone.
- 3.** It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses. Not by his moral law, for we have all broken it, and are transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us it condemns us. Not by his remedial law, for it was not possible that the *blood of bulls and goats should take away sin*, should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution. See ~~399~~ Hebrews 9:9; 10:1, 4.
- 4.** By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge, but by him as our righteousness, *the Lord our righteousness*.
- 5.** All that believe in Christ, that rely upon him and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him, and none but they.
- 6.** What the law *could not do* for us, *in that it was weak*, that the gospel of Christ does; and therefore it was folly, out of a jealousy for the law of Moses and the honour of that institution, to conceive a jealousy of the gospel of Christ and the designs of that more perfect institution.

[b.] It is at their utmost peril if they reject the gospel of Christ, and turn their backs upon the offer now made them (v. 40, 41): “*Beware therefore; you have a fair invitation given you, look to yourselves, lest*

you either neglect or oppose it.” Note, those to whom the gospel is preached must see themselves upon their trial and good behaviour, and are concerned to beware lest they be found refusers of the grace offered. “Beware lest you not only come short of the blessings and benefits spoken of in the prophets as coming upon those that believe, but fall under the doom spoken of in the prophets as coming upon those that persist in unbelief: *lest that come upon you which is spoken of.*” Note, The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners is designed to awaken us to beware lest it should come upon us. Now the prophecy referred to we have ³⁰⁵Habakkuk 1:5, where the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans is foretold as an incredible unparalleled destruction; and this is here applied to the destruction that was coming upon that nation by the Romans, for their rejecting the gospel of Christ. The apostle follows the Septuagint translation, which reads, *Behold, you despisers* (for, *behold, you among the heathen*); because it made the text more apposite to his purpose. *1st*, “Take heed lest the guilt come upon you which was spoken of in the prophet the guilt of despising the gospel and the tenders of it, and despising the Gentiles that were advanced to partake of it. Beware lest it be said to you, *Behold, you despisers.*” Note, It is the ruin of many that they despise religion, they look upon it as a thing below them, and are not willing to stoop to it. *2ndly*, “Take heed lest the judgment come upon you which was spoken of in the prophets: that *you shall wonder and perish*, that is, wonderfully perish; your perdition shall be amazing to yourselves and all about you.” Those that will not wonder and be saved shall wonder and perish. Those that enjoyed the privileges of the church, and flattered themselves with a conceit that these would save them, will wonder when they find their vain presumption overruled and that their privileges do but make their condemnation the more intolerable. Let the unbelieving Jews expect that God will *work a work in their days which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* This may be understood as a prediction, either,

1. Of their sin, that they should be incredulous, that that great work of God, the redemption of the world by Christ, though it should be in the most solemn manner declared unto them, yet they would *in no wise believe it*, ²⁵¹Isaiah 53:1, *Who hath believed our report?* Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible, and of his

declaring, who cannot lie, yet they would not give credit to it. Those that had the honour and advantage to have this work wrought in their days had not the grace to believe it. Or,

2. Of their destruction. The dissolving of the Jewish polity, the taking of the kingdom of God from them and giving it to the Gentiles, the destruction of their holy house and city, and the dispersion of their people, was a work which one would not have believed should have ever been done, considering how much they had been the favourites of Heaven. The calamities that were brought upon them were such as were never before brought upon any people, ^{<42B>}Matthew 24:21. It was said of their destruction by the Chaldeans, and it was true of their last destruction, *All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the enemy would have entered into the gates of Jerusalem as they did,* ^{<231D>}Lamentations 4:12. Thus is there a *strange punishment to the workers of iniquity*, especially to the despisers of Christ, ^{<897B>}Job 31:3.

^{<413D>}ACTS 13:42-52

PAUL AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

The design of this story being to vindicate the apostles, especially Paul (as he doth himself at large, Romans 11), from the reflections of the Jews upon him for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, it is here observed that he proceeded therein with all the caution imaginable, and upon due consideration, of which we have here an instance.

I. There were some of the Jews that were so incensed against the preaching of the gospel, not to the Gentiles, but to themselves, that they would not bear to hear it, but *went out of the synagogue* while Paul was preaching (v. 42), in contempt of him and his doctrine, and to the disturbance of the congregation. It is probable they whispered among themselves, exciting one another to it, and did it by consent. Now this bespoke,

1. An open infidelity, as plain a profession of unbelief as coming to hear the gospel is of faith. They thus publicly avowed their contempt of Christ and of his doctrine and law, were not ashamed, neither could they blush; and they thus endeavoured to beget prejudices in the minds of others

against the gospel; they went out to draw others to follow their pernicious ways.

2. An obstinate infidelity. They went out of the synagogue, not only to show that they did not believe the gospel, but because they were resolved they would not, and therefore got out of the hearing of those things that had a tendency to convince them. They stopped their ears like the deaf adder. Justly therefore was the gospel taken from them, when they first took themselves from it, and turned themselves out of the church before they were turned out of it. For it is certainly true that God never leaves any till they first leave him.

II. The Gentiles were as willing to hear the gospel as those rude and ill-conditioned Jews were to get out of the hearing of it: *They besought that these words*, or words to this effect, *might be preached to them the next sabbath; in the week between*, so some take it; on the second and fifth days of the week, which in some synagogues were their lecture days. But it appears (v. 44) that it was the next sabbath day that they came together. They begged,

1. That the same offer might be made to them that was made to the Jews. Paul in this sermon had brought the word of salvation to the Jews and proselytes, but had taken no notice of the Gentiles; and therefore they begged that forgiveness of sins through Christ might be preached to them, as it was to the Jews. The Jews' leavings, nay, loathings, were their longings. This justifies Paul in his preaching to them, that he was invited to it, as Peter was sent for to Cornelius. Who could refuse to break the bread of life to those who begged so hard for it, and to give that to the poor at the door which the children at the table threw under their feet?

2. That the same instructions might be given to them. They had heard the doctrine of Christ, but did not understand it at the first hearing, nor could they remember all that they had heard, and therefore they begged it might be preached to them again. Note, It is good to have the word of Christ repeated to us. What we have heard we should desire to hear again, that it may take deep root in us, and the nail that is driven may be clenched and be *as a nail in a sure place*. To hear *the same things* should not be grievous, because it is safe, ^{<300>}Philippians 3:1. It aggravates the bad disposition of the Jews that the Gentiles desired to hear that often which they were not willing to hear once; and commends the good disposition of

the Gentiles that they did not follow the bad example which the Jews set them.

III. There were some, nay, there were many, both of Jews and proselytes, that were wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel. Those who aggravated the matter of the Jews' rejection by the preaching of the gospel, cried out, as is usual in such cases, "They have cast away, and cast off, all the people of God." "Nay," says Paul, "it is not so; for abundance of the Jews have embraced Christ, and are taken in;" himself for one, ^{<511>}Romans 11:1, 5. So it was here: *Many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas*, and received further instructions and encouragement from them.

1. They submitted to the grace of God, and were admitted to the benefit and comfort of it, which is implied in their being exhorted to continue in it. They *followed Paul and Barnabas*; they became their disciples, or rather the disciples of Christ, whose agents they were. Those that join themselves to Christ will join themselves to his ministers, and follow them. And Paul and Barnabas, though they were sent to the Gentiles, yet bade those of the Jews welcome that were willing to come under their instructions, such hearty well-wishers were they to all the Jews and their friends, if they pleased.

2. They were exhorted and encouraged to persevere herein: *Paul and Barnabas, speaking to them with all the freedom and friendship imaginable, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God*, to hold fast that which they had received, to continue in their belief of the gospel of grace, their dependence upon the Spirit of grace, and their attendance upon the means of grace. And the grace of God shall not be wanting to those who thus continue in it.

IV. There was a cheerful attendance upon the preaching of the gospel the *next sabbath day* (v. 44): *Almost the whole city* (the generality of whom were Gentiles) *came together to hear the word of God*.

1. It is probable that Paul and Barnabas were not idle in the week-days, but took all opportunities in the week between (as some think the Gentiles desired) to bring them acquainted with Christ, and to raise their expectations from him. They did a great deal of service to the gospel in private discourse and conversation, as well as in their public sermons.

Wisdom cried in the chief places of concourse, and the opening of the gates, as well as in the synagogues, ^{<303>}Proverbs 1:20, 21.

2. This brought a vast concourse of people to the synagogue on the sabbath day. Some came out of curiosity, the thing being new; others longing to see what the Jews would do upon the second tender of the gospel to them; and many who had heard something of the word of God came to hear more, and to hear it, *not as the word of men but as the word of God*, by which we must be ruled and judged. Now this justified Paul in preaching to the Gentiles, that he met with the most encouraging auditors among them. There *the fields were white to the harvest*, and therefore why should he not there put in his sickle?

V. The Jews were enraged at this; and not only would not receive the gospel themselves, but were filled with indignation at those that crowded after it (v. 45): *When the Jews saw the multitudes*, and considered what an encouragement it was to Paul to go on in his work when he saw the people thus flying like doves to their windows, and what probability there was that among these multitudes some would be, without doubt, wrought upon, and probably the greater part, to embrace Christ *this filled them with envy*.

1. They grudged the interest the apostles had in the people, were vexed to see the synagogue so full when they were going to preach. This was the same spirit that worked in the Pharisees towards Christ; they were cut to the heart when they saw *the whole world go after him*. When the kingdom of heaven was opened they not only would not go in themselves, but were angry with those that did.

2. They opposed the doctrine the apostles preached: *They spoke against those things that were spoken by Paul*, cavilled at them, started objections against them, finding some fault or other with every thing he said, *contradicting and blaspheming*; *antelegon antilegontes* *contradicting, they contradicted*. They did it with the utmost spite and rage imaginable: they persisted in their contradiction, and nothing would silence them, they contradicted for contradiction-sake, and denied that which was most evident; and, when they could find no colour of objection, they broke out into ill language against Christ and his gospel, blaspheming him and it. From the language of the carnal man that receives not the things of the Spirit of God, and therefore contradicts them, they proceed to the language

of incarnate devils, and blaspheme them. Commonly those who begin with contradicting end with blaspheming.

VI. The apostles hereupon solemnly and openly declare themselves discharged from their obligations to the Jews, and at liberty to bring the word of salvation to the Gentiles, even by the tacit consent of the Jews themselves. Never let the Jew lay the fault of the carrying of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles upon the apostles, for that complaint of theirs is for ever silenced by their own act and deed, for what they did here is for ever a bar to it. “Tender and refusal (we say) are good payment in law.” The Jews had the tender of the gospel, and did refuse it, and therefore ought not to say any thing against the Gentiles having it. In declaring this, it is said (v. 46), *Paul and Barnabas waxed bold*, more bold than they had been while they were shy of looking favourably upon the Gentiles, for fear of giving offence to the Jews, and laying a stumbling-block in their way. Note, There is a time for the preachers of the gospel to show as much of the boldness of the lion as of the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. When the adversaries of Christ's cause begin to be daring, it is not for its advocates to be timid. While there is any hope of working upon those that oppose themselves they must be *instructed with meekness* (^{<4125>}2 Timothy 2:25); but, when that method has long been tried in vain, we must wax bold, and tell them what will be the issue of their opposition. The impudence of the enemies of the gospel, instead of frightening, should rather embolden its friends; for they are sure that they have a good cause, and they know in whom they have trusted to bear them out. Now Paul and Barnabas, having made the Jews a fair offer of gospel grace, here give them fair notice of their bringing it to the Gentiles, *if by any means* (as Paul says ^{<4114>}Romans 11:14) *they might provoke them to emulation*.

1. They own that the Jews were entitled to the first offer: “*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, to whom the promise was made, to you of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom Christ reckoned himself first sent.*” And his charge to the preachers of his gospel to *begin at Jerusalem* (^{<4245>}Luke 24:47) was a tacit direction to all that went into other countries to begin with the Jews, *to whom pertained the giving of the law*, and therefore the preaching of the gospel. *Let the children first be served,* ^{<4172>}Mark 7:27.

2. They charge them with the refusal of it: “*You put it from you; you will not accept of it; nay, you will not so much as bear the offer of it, but take it as an affront to you.*” If men put the gospel from them, God justly takes it from them; why should manna be given to those that loathe it and call it *light bread*, or the privileges of the gospel forced on those that put them away, and say, *We have no part in David?* Herein they *judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*. In one sense we must all judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life, for there is nothing in us, nor done by us, by which we can pretend to merit it, and we must be made sensible of this; but here the meaning is, “You discover, or make it to appear, that you are not meet for eternal life; you throw away all your claims and give up your pretensions to it; since you will not take it from his hands, into whose hand the Father has given it, *krinete*, *you do*, in effect, *pass this judgment upon yourselves, and out of your own mouth you shall be judged*; you will not have it by Christ, by whom alone it is to be had, and so shall your doom be, you shall not have it at all.”

3. Upon this they ground their preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised: “Since you will not accept eternal life as it is offered, our way is plain, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*. If one will not, another will. If those that were first invited to the wedding-feast will not come, we must invite out of the highways and hedges those that will, for *the wedding must be furnished with guests*. If he that is next of kin will not do the kinsman's part, he must not complain that another will,” ~~Gen~~ Ruth 4:4.

4. They justify themselves in this by a divine warrant (v. 47): “*For so hath the Lord commanded us*; the Lord Jesus gave us directions to witness to him in Jerusalem and Judea first, and after that *to the utmost part of the earth*, to preach the gospel to *every creature*, to *disciple all nations*.” This is according to what was foretold in the Old-Testament. When the Messiah, in the prospect of the Jews' infidelity, was ready to say, *I have laboured in vain*, he was told, to his satisfaction, that though *Israel were not gathered, yet he should be glorious*, that his blood should not be shed in vain, nor his purchase made in vain, nor his doctrine preached in vain, nor his Spirit sent in vain,”*For I have set thee*, not only raised thee up, but established thee, to be *a light of the Gentiles*, not only a shining light for a time, but a standing light, set thee for a light, *that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*.” Note,

(1.) Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation, is himself our righteousness, and life, and strength.

(2.) Wherever Christ is designed to be salvation, he is set up to be a light; he enlightens the understanding, and so saves the soul.

(3.) He is, and is to be, light and salvation to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. Those of every nation shall be welcome to him, some of every nation have heard of him (~~¶~~Romans 10:18), and all nations shall at length become his kingdom. This prophecy has had its accomplishment in part in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this island of ours, which lies, as it were, in the *ends of the earth*, a corner of the world, and shall be accomplished more and more when the time comes for the *bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles*.

VII. The Gentiles cheerfully embraced that which the Jews scornfully rejected, v. 48, 49. Never was land lost for want of heirs; *through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles: the casting off of them was the reconciling of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;* so the apostle shows at large, ~~¶~~Romans 11:11, 12, 15. The Jews, the natural branches, were broken off, and the Gentiles, that were branches of the wild olive, were thereupon grafted in, v. 17, 19. Now here we are told how the Gentiles welcomed this happy turn in their favour.

1. They took the comfort of it: *When they heard this they were glad.* It was good news to them that they might have admission into covenant and communion with God by a clearer, nearer, and better way than submitting to the ceremonial law, and being proselyted to the Jewish religion, that the partition-wall was taken down and they were as welcome to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom as the Jews themselves, and might share in their promise, without coming under their yoke. This was indeed *glad tidings of great joy to all people.* Note, Our being put into a possibility of salvation, and a capacity for it, ought to be the matter of our rejoicing; when the Gentiles did but hear that the offers of grace should be made them, the word of grace preached to them, and the means of grace afforded them, *they were glad.* "Now there is some hope for us." Many grieve under doubts whether they have an interest in Christ or no, when they should be rejoicing that they have an interest in him; the golden sceptre is held out to them, and they are invited to come and touch the top of it.

2. They gave God the praise of it: *They glorified the word of the Lord*; that is, Christ (so some), the essential Word; they entertained a profound veneration for him, and expressed the high thoughts they had of him. Or, rather, *the gospel*; the more they knew of it, the more they admired it. Oh! what a light, what a power, what a treasure, does this gospel bring along with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! How far transcending all other institutions! How plainly divine and heavenly is its origin! Thus they *glorified the word of the Lord*, and it is this which he has himself *magnified above all his name* (^{<HXD>}Psalm 138:2), and will *magnify and make honourable*, ^{<3QD>}Isaiah 42:21. They glorified the word of the Lord,

(1.) Because now the knowledge of it was diffused and not confined to the Jews only. Note, It is the glory of the word of the Lord that the further it spreads the brighter it shines, which shows it to be not like the light of the candle, but like that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength.

(2.) Because now the knowledge of it was brought to them. Note, Those speak best of the honour of the word of the Lord that speak experimentally, that have themselves been subdued by its power, and comforted by its sweetness.

3. Many of them became, not only professors of the Christian faith, but sincerely obedient to the faith: *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed*. God by his Spirit wrought true faith in those for whom he had in his councils from everlasting designed a happiness to everlasting.

(1.) Those believed to whom God gave grace to believe, whom by a secret and mighty operation he brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ, and made willing in the day of his power. Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual. It is called *the faith of the operation of God* (^{<5QD>}Colossians 2:12), and is said to be *wrought by the same power that raised up Christ*, ^{<4IB>}Ephesians 1:19, 20.

(2.) God gave this grace to believe to all those among them who were ordained to eternal life (for *whom he had predestinated, them he also called*, ^{<4BD>}Romans 8:30); or, *as many as were disposed to eternal life*, as many as had a concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God hath treasured up that life (^{<4IB>}1 John 5:11), and who is the only way to it; and it was the grace of

God that wrought it in them. Thus all those captives, and those only, took the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation, *whose spirit God had raised up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem*, ^{<415>}Ezra 1:5. Those will be brought to believe in Christ that by his grace are well disposed to eternal life, and make this their aim.

4. When they believed they did what they could to spread the knowledge of Christ and his gospel among their neighbours (v. 49): *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region*. When it was received with so much satisfaction in the chief city, it soon spread into all parts of the country. Those new converts were themselves ready to communicate to others that which they were so full of themselves. *The Lord gave the word, and then great was the company of those that published it*, ^{<481>}Psalm 68:11. Those that have become acquainted with Christ themselves will do what they can to bring others acquainted with him. Those in great and rich cities that have received the gospel should not think to engross it, as if, like learning and philosophy, it were only to be the entertainment of the more polite and elevated part of mankind, but should do what they can to get it published in the country among the ordinary sort of people, the poor and unlearned, who have souls to be saved as well as they.

VIII. Paul and Barnabas, having sown the seeds of a Christian church there, quitted the place, and went to do the like else-where. We read not any thing of their working miracles here, to confirm their doctrine, and to convince people of the truth of it; for, though God then did ordinarily make use of that method of conviction, yet he could, when he pleased, do his work without it; and begetting faith by the immediate influence of his Spirit was itself the greatest miracle to those in whom it was wrought. Yet, it is probable that they did work miracles, for we find they did in the next place they came to, ^{<444>}Acts 14:3. Now here we are told,

1. How *the unbelieving Jews* expelled the apostles out of that country. They first turned their back upon them, and then *lifted up the heel against them* (v. 50): *They raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas*, excited the mob to persecute them in *their* way by insulting their persons as they went along the streets; excited the magistrates to persecute them in *their* way, by imprisoning and punishing them. When *they could not resist the wisdom and spirit wherewith they spoke*, they had recourse to these brutish methods, the last refuge of an obstinate infidelity. Satan and his agents are most exasperated against the preachers of the gospel when they see them

go on successfully, and therefore then will be sure to raise persecution against them. Thus it has been the common lot of the best men in the world to suffer ill for doing well, to be persecuted instead of being preferred for the good services they have done to mankind. Observe,

(1.) What method the Jews took to give them trouble: *They stirred up the devout and honourable women* against them. They could not make any considerable interest themselves, but they applied to some ladies of quality in the city, that were well affected to the Jewish religion, and were proselytes of the gate, therefore called *devout women*. These, according to the genius of their sex, were zealous in their way, and bigoted; and it was easy, by false stories and misrepresentations, to incense them against the gospel of Christ, as if it had been destructive of all religion, of which really it is perfective. It is good to see honourable women devout, and well affected to religious worship: The less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their souls, and the more time they should spend in communion with God; but it is sad when, under colour of devotion to God, they conceive an enmity to Christ, as those here mentioned. What! women persecutors! Can they forget the tenderness and compassion of their sex? What! honourable women! Can they thus stain their honour, and disgrace themselves, and do so mean a thing? But, which is strangest of all, devout women! Will they kill Christ's servants, and think therein they do God service? Let those therefore that have zeal see that it be according to knowledge. By these devout and honourable women they stirred up likewise *the chief men of the city*, the magistrates and the rulers, who had power in their hands and set them against the apostles, and they had so little consideration as to suffer themselves to be made the tools of this ill-natured party, who *would neither go into the kingdom of heaven themselves nor suffer those who were entering to go in.*

(2.) How far they carried it, so far that *they expelled them out of their coasts*; they banished them, ordered them to be carried, as we say, from constable to constable, till they were forced out of their jurisdiction; so that it was not by fear, but downright violence, that they were driven out. This was one method which the overruling providence of God took to keep the first planters of the church from staying too long at a place; as 403 Matthew 10:23, *When they persecute you in one city flee to another, that thus you may the sooner go over the cities of Israel.* This was likewise a method God took to make those that were well disposed the more warmly affected towards the apostles; for it is natural to us to pity those

that are persecuted, to think the better of those that suffer when we know they suffer unjustly, and to be the more ready to help them. The expelling of the apostles out of their coasts made people inquisitive what evil they had done, and perhaps raised them more friends than conniving at them in their coasts would have done.

2. How the apostles abandoned and rejected the unbelieving Jews (v. 51): *They shook off the dust of their feet against them.* When they went out of the city they used this ceremony in the sight of those that sat in the gate; or, when they went out of the borders of their country, in the sight of those that were sent to see the country rid of them. Hereby,

(1.) They declared that they would have no more to do with them, would take nothing that was theirs; for *they sought not theirs, but them.* Dust they are, and let them keep their dust to themselves, it shall not cleave to them.

(2.) They expressed their detestation of their infidelity, and that, though they were Jews by birth, yet, having rejected the gospel of Christ, they were in their eyes no better than heathen and profane. As Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, are equally acceptable to God and good men; so, if they do not, they are equally abominable.

(3.) Thus they set them at defiance, and expressed their contempt of them and their malice, which they looked upon as impotent. It was as much as to say, “Do your worst, we do not fear you; we know whom we serve and whom we have trusted.”

(4.) Thus they left a testimony behind them that they had had a fair offer made them of the grace of the gospel, which shall be proved against them in the day of judgment. This dust will prove that the preachers of the gospel had been among them, but were expelled by them. Thus Christ had ordered them to do, and for this reason, ^{<014>}Matthew 10:14; ^{<015>}Luke 9:5. When *they left them, they came to Iconium*, not so much for safety, as for work.

3. What frame they left the new converts in *at Antioch* (v. 52): *The disciples*, when they saw with what courage and cheerfulness Paul and Barnabas not only bore the indignities that were done them, but went on with their work notwithstanding, they were in like manner inspirited.

(1.) They were very cheerful. One would have expected that when Paul and Barnabas were expelled out of their coasts, and perhaps forbidden to

return upon pain of death, the disciples would have been full of grief and full of fear, looking for no other than that, if the planters of Christianity go, the plantation would soon come to nothing; or that it would be their turn next to be banished the country, and to them it would be more grievous, for it was their own. But no; *they were filled with joy* in Christ, had such a satisfactory assurance of Christ's carrying on and perfecting his own work in them and among them, and that either he would screen them from trouble or bear them up under it, that all their fears were swallowed up in their believing joys.

(2.) They were courageous, wonderfully animated with a holy resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever difficulties they met with. This seems especially to be meant by *their being filled with the Holy Ghost*, for the same expression is used of Peter's boldness (~~408~~ Acts 4:8), and Stephen's (~~405~~ Acts 7:55), and Paul's, ~~403~~ Acts 13:9. The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face the difficulties we meet with in the profession of godliness.