

"The Effect of Preaching"
Acts 13:5-13
(Preached at Trinity, May 10, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we began **Chapter 13** last time we found the chapter opening with the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas to go to the mission field to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and their ordination service with fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands.
2. Having received their call and commissioning from God and having been confirmed by the church they immediately left on their journey.
They began by traveling to Seleucia which is on the coast north of Jerusalem. From there they sailed to the island of Cyprus. This was the home of Barnabas and he would have been very familiar with the area. On Cyprus they went to the city of Salamis.
3. They were called to the busy ministry of the Word so they gave themselves to preaching.
Acts 13:5 - "And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister."
4. This was their method. It must be the priority of every pastor and missionary.
 - Paul's words to Timothy: (it was Timothy's charge, his calling)
2 Timothy 4:1-2 – "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
 - Preaching is God's means and method of calling forth the elect unto salvation
1 Corinthians 1:21 - "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."
5. Tonight as we continue looking at this passage I want to direct your attention to the effect of preaching. There are many ways people respond to the preaching of the Gospel. We find several of them illustrated in this passage.
 - I. Some simply disregard the message of the Gospel – it has no relevance in their lives
 - A. Their first stop on Cyprus was at a synagogue at Salamis
 1. Luke usually recorded successes of the Gospel
For example in **Chapter 4** –
Acts 4:4 – "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."
Again in **Chapter 6** -
Acts 6:7 – "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
Or of Antioch Luke recorded in **Chapter 11** -
Acts 11:21 – "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

2. Of the Jews at this synagogue Luke records nothing
 - a. Luke's silence gives us reasonable certainty that nothing happened here. The preaching was not fruitful.
 - b. It's not that they reacted violently against it. They had no reaction at all. The Gospel message had no value to them.
 - c. Jesus spoke of this spirit of unbelief
Luke 22:66-67 – "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, ⁶⁷ Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:"
 In other words, even if they had certain proof that Jesus is the Christ, they would not believe. Jesus just didn't interest them.
- B. This is the way most people receive the Gospel
1. Men love their sin
John 3:19 – "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."
 - a. Lost humanity is comfortable in their sin
 - b. A man who doesn't see his peril will have little interest in a Savior.
 2. The lost man has no comprehension of spiritual issues
 - a. It is like reading algebra to an infant – it is just noise
 - b. Satan seizes the Word from this man even before he considers it
Matthew 13:19 – "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."
 The lost man cannot understand God properly
 That God is holy, That He maintains absolute sovereignty, that He must judge sin.
 - d. The lost man cannot understand himself properly – he doesn't see himself as evil and wicked
 - f. The cross of Christ has no value for him
 A well man needs no physician.
 The cross only has value to those who are perishing
1 Corinthians 1:18 – "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"

II. Some become inquisitive seekers

Verse 7 – "desired to hear the word of God."

- A. **Verse 7** describes this government official as being a prudent man – the word literally means intelligent.
 1. The official was curious, inquisitive
 2. He had heard of Paul and his message and wanted to hear it for himself
 3. This was the attitude of King Herod when Pilate sent Jesus to him
Luke 23:8 – "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him."

- B. Many people today fall into this category
1. Some are curious about Christ
 - a. All men have a natural interest in religion
 - b. Their interest is not in submitting to Christ – only in knowing more about religion
 2. There are many who are enamored by theology
 - a. There are many different systems of theology to be studied, investigated
Eschatology, charismatic theology, Reformed theology
 - b. They love to discuss and debate theology; they identify themselves by their theology.
 - c. They have a greater love for theology than for Christ
 - d. This isn't to diminish the importance of theology – You cannot worship Christ apart from theology.
But theology without Christ is the worst kind of hypocrisy
2 Timothy 3:7 – "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
2 Corinthians 4:4 – "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

- III. Some actively oppose the Gospel and seek to hinder its spread
- Verse 8** – "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by Interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."
- A. Many hate the and despise the Gospel
 1. The very mention of Christ causes great anger
(the message left on the church answer machine)
 2. They will discuss many different subjects but not Christ
 - B. Many of these people are members of Christian churches
 1. They hate the Bible - They misrepresent it, they argue against it
If we try to tell them something from the Bible they boldly assert, "That is just your opinion."
 2. They refuse to hear the truth
2 Timothy 4:3-4 – "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."
 3. While they may profess Christianity they are actually the enemies of Christ
Philippians 3:18 – "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:"
 - C. Such people are unwitting agents of Satan
2 Corinthians 11:13-15 – "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

1. Such was this sorcerer
2. There are countless individuals throughout time who have been used of Satan to oppose the people of God
 - a. Such were those who opposed Moses

Numbers 16:3 – "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye *take* too much upon you, seeing all the congregation *are* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"
 - b. Such were those who opposed Isaiah (these were religious people)

Isaiah 30:9-10 – "That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: ¹⁰ Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:"
 - c. Such are those who oppose the work of God today

IV. Some believe

Verse 12 – "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

- A. Even among those who believe, many do not believe to the saving of the soul
 1. It is hard to know of a certainty whether or not the deputy truly believed
 2. Christianity is a narrow way

Matthew 7:13-14 - "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
 3. Christianity is more than just a knowledge of some Biblical truths
Christianity is more than just agreement with the Christian religion
Christianity is more than just identifying with a particular congregation
 4. Jesus told a parable of a sower – **See Matthew 13:18-23**
 - a. Notice in **Verse 20** that some receive it with joy but do not continue
 - b. In **Verse 22** we find the cares of this world strangling the Word
There are many who are reasonable, prudent people – they are friends of Christianity
 - (1) They attend services. They may be glad to hear a good sermon.
 - (2) There is no reality of Christ within them
2 Timothy 3:5 – "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."
- B. We can only hope that this official believed to the saving of the soul
 1. He was astonished at the teachings (**διδάχη**) concerning Christ
 2. It was the preaching that drew him
Romans 10:17 – "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

3. It was the preaching that astonished him
It was the preaching of Christ that astonished him

Conclusion:

1. There are dangers here for all of us.
 - A. It is possible for any of us to be more in love with a doctrine than with Christ.
 1. There are many who are very proud of their doctrine
Eschatology, Charismatic, Reformed
 2. There are many who are very proud of what they know
1 Corinthians 8:1-2 – "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.
² And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."
 3. It is just empty vain religion that is void of Christ
Isaiah 29:13 – "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me"
 4. They often look down pridefully upon others
Luke 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
 - a. Are you Pharisaical? Judgmental? Mean spirited?
 - b. God hates pride
2. It is possible for us to believe many of the facts about Christ without embracing Christ.
 - A. Do you know Him?
 - B. Have you fallen in love with Him?
 - C. Does your life demonstrate this love?
Matthew 13:23 – "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
Matthew 7:16-23 – "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."