

If Paul could say one thing... - Jewish edition– Acts 13

Opener: One of our favourite TV shows is The Checkout on ABC. Consumer rights presented in an amusing way. I'm married to probably the best legal mind never to have obtained a law degree. One section is "If I could say one thing..." each week, an expert from the legal or financial sector gives their 2cents worth to help viewers be better able to defend themselves against dodgy retailers or bankers. What they say could save you thousands!

Today, we are looking at the apostle Paul giving his 2 cents worth to a bunch of people he's just met, and what he says could save your life!

Context: series on Acts, last week, what happened with Peter, this time we pick up what happens with Saul. In ch9 you may remember he was a leading Jewish rabbi who was persecuting the Christian church, but God changed all that! He stopped Saul in his tracks, he became a Christian! In ch 11 he formed a partnership with Barnabas. They have been working with the church in Antioch, where people like us were first called 'Christians'. At the start of this chapter, God has told the church to send out these two for the work God has called them to: to preach the message of Jesus wherever he sends them. They've just done that through the island of Cyprus (where Saul became Paul without any reason given), now they are back on the mainland, in a different place called Antioch. They go to the synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, and after the Bible readings (all Old Testament of course!) the leaders of the service send to Paul and Barnabas in v15, "hey guys, how about doing the sermon?" I thought I might try that this morning with...[insert parishioner].

Big Question: If Paul could say one thing, what would it be?

Answer: God delivers on his promise to do the impossible

If you follow his sermon in v16-41, it's a bit like the time Jesus was approached by four men carrying their paralysed friend [hole in roof]. What did Jesus do? He did two impossible things: he forgave the man's sins, and he made him walk again. He did the impossible thing you could see [made him walk] to show his power to do the impossible you could not see [forgive sins]. So, Paul tells how God delivers on an impossible promise you could see and on an impossible promise you could not see. What you are about to hear could save your life!

Part One: v16-37 – God delivers on his promise to raise Jesus from the dead...

Part One: v16-26 – God delivers on his promise to send a savior

¹⁶Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, ¹⁸he endured their conduct^{F47} for about forty years in the desert, ¹⁹he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰All this took about 450 years.

²¹"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²²After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

²³"From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

²⁶"Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.

Who's he talking to?

V16 – Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God..

And he goes WAY back in their history, right to when God chose their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – v17, right through to Jesus in v 23.

Notice how in all of these verses, God is the hero. If I can get a bit technical, God is the subject of all the verbs – he is the doer of all the doing words.

Chose their fathers – v17

Made Israel prosper in Egypt – v17

Muscled them out of Egypt – v17

Endured their conduct – v18 (parents, it's hard!)

Drove nations out of the promised land... – v19

...to give it to his own people – v19

[WHEW, THAT'S 450 YEARS OF HISTORY ALREADY!]

He gave them judges – v21

They asked for a king (OK, they did that one) – v21

And he gave them Saul – v21

He removed Saul – v22

He made David their king – v22

...a man after God's own heart who would do everything God wanted him to do.

But even now, David is not the top of the pile. God had promised his people somebody far greater, so we skip over another thousand years of Israel's history to v23 [read out]

And to make sure there was no mistaking it, God sent one last prophet, John the Baptist [some of the people listening to Paul had probably been baptised by him and recognised him as a prophet] and what was his message? V25 – "I'm not the big deal; the one coming after me is the big deal!"

And so Paul points to 1500 years of history, the history of him and his hearers, and says v26...

Illustration: It's like when your favourite book is

made into a movie and you are hanging to see it. Rumour...actors and director...poster...trailers...finally it's here!

Application: Jesus is the great saviour that all of Israel's prophets were pointing to.

He is the great saviour that all of Israel's history was building towards. He is the big deal!

God had promised. Many times it appeared impossible, but now God had delivered, and all Israel has seen it.

Part two: v27-37 – God delivers on his promise to raise Jesus from the dead

²⁷The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

³²"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

" 'You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.^{F48} ^{F49} ³⁴The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

" 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.^{F50} ³⁵So it is stated elsewhere:

" 'You will not let your Holy One see decay.'^{F51}

³⁶"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

Once again, it looked like God's plan to send a saviour had come unstuck. The people of Jerusalem rejected him - v27

They had him killed – v28

They took him off the cross and buried him – v29

But as Paul says, this was all part of God's plan!

Even in their evil actions, they fulfilled the words of the prophets! – v27

They did what was written about him! – v29

And most importantly, they had him killed and buried him, BUT, v30, God raised him from the dead – and there are eyewitnesses!

People have seen the impossible! A dead man raised to life. God promised it and God has done it. He promised it through Jesus' ancestor, king David – look at the prophecies in v33 and 35. These looked like promises FOR David, but they weren't. They were promises for his descendant, Jesus.

As Paul says to the people:

³²"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.

V36 - when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

Once again, God has delivered on his promise to do the impossible, and the people have seen it.

Illustration: Lee Strobel, 'The Case for Christ' a journalist investigates the resurrection. He knows that if the resurrection can be disproven, the whole of Christianity is a house of cards... but what does he find out? Go and read the book!

Application: The resurrection of Jesus is THE historical fact that our faith is based on. If you can prove to me that it's not true, don't look for me here next Sunday, I'll be at the beach.

But it was promised beforehand, many times. When Jesus rose again, he was seen, many times. And the people who saw him preferred to be beaten and killed themselves rather than admit it was a tall tale.

Why would they be prepared to die rather than renounce their faith? Because they believed it was true. And because they knew that death is not the end for them, because God raises the dead. He proved it by raising Jesus!,

So, God has delivered on his promises to do the impossible things that could be seen:

He raised up a saviour from Israel when all appeared lost

He raised Jesus from the dead!

But in doing so, he delivered on another impossible promise of something that could NOT be seen.

Paul comes to that now in v38-41

Part three: v38-41 – God promised to forgive sins

³⁸"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

⁴¹" 'Look, you scoffers,

wonder and perish,

for I am going to do something in your days

that you would never believe,

even if someone told you. ^{F52} "

READ v38 TOGETHER

God gave the people the Law through Moses. It showed the people God's perfect standard. But people are sinful! They couldn't keep the law! And so the law could not justify you. It could not make you right with God, because it could not take away sin. All it could do was to show you just how far up the creek you were!

Flick to Galatians 3:10...(see below)

If you stick to trying to keep the Law, all you get is the curses for not keeping it!

But if you trust in Jesus, forgiveness of sins is yours!

God has delivered on his promise

Galatians 3:¹⁰All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."^{F9} ¹¹Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."^{F10} ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."^{F11}¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."^{F12} ¹⁴He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Illustration: Voucher for Big W... a voucher is effectively a promise. I could buy a new microwave with confidence!

But what if I hadn't trusted in the promise?

Application:

- 1) You can absolutely trust God to save you through Jesus. He promises to forgive you and justify you
- 2) Some of Paul's listeners didn't like the message. They stirred up trouble for the apostles and drove them out of town!
- 3) **But v48 -** ⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

What about you? Where do you stand with the promises of God? Do you believe in what Jesus has done for you?