



Small group questions

The work of God through the Word of God – Acts 13

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact the preacher!

1. Mark suggested that if you're a believer it's due to the *work* of God through the *word* of God. Can you see – and share – how that was the case with you?
2. You may enjoy reading Acts 12 again. Did anything stand out for you from the passage? Or is there anything about which you need clarification?

THE WORK OF GOD THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD

3. How did Saul and Barnabas come to set out on mission together?
4. Why did the proconsul send for Barnabas and Saul and why did he end up believing?
5. Vv13ff – why did the synagogue rulers ask Paul and his companions to bring a message of encouragement?
6. What was the simple aim of Paul's first recorded sermon? How did he go about achieving that?
7. When Paul's message reaches its 'take home' value, what is it that he wants his hearers to know? (vv38ff).
8. What might it mean to try and justify yourself to God and what does Paul mean that we can be justified *through Jesus*?
9. Note the hunger for the word of God in vv42ff. Why does Paul decide to turn to the Gentiles as a focus for his work?
10. Paul and Barnabas were run out of town. Why were they filled with joy?? V52?

TAKE HOME

11. Like episodes of MasterChef, we sometimes wonder whether "we've done enough" or whether we can make up for past failures. What will be the answer to this question always be and why?
12. What do you think is the key to learning to revel and rest in the work of God for us?
13. How will the Lord be at work in Noosa (and the world) today and what are the implications for us?

Pray that we revel in the forgiveness and justification that comes through Jesus and immerse ourselves in God's word and see him marvellously at work in and through us.

Date: 07 May 2017
Services: 730am, 930am (P), 630pm
Series: Saved by grace (Acts 10-18)
Passage: Acts 13
Title: When people want to hear the Word of God
Outline:

1. The work of God...
2. Through the word of God...

- If you're a believer here this morning, it's due to the work of **God**... through the **word** of God //
- In the life of the early church – as we've been exploring it these past couple of weeks, there came this great awakening... that the Good news of Jesus was not just for Jews... but amazing and wonderfully for Gentiles too – for people like you and me!!
- So when the church leaders and Jerusalem hear that even Gentiles are receiving the HS and being baptised... how do the leaders react? – 11:18 *So then, God has granted even the Gentiles, repentance that leads to life.*
- So we see that repentance itself – when you turn your life around from a life lived for self to a life lived for Jesus – is a **gift** from God... it's only by **his** enabling that that happens.
- and *how* did it come about? As the Gentiles **heard** the **word of God**...!
- So this morning in **Acts 13** we are going to chase those twin themes through – **God's work** and **God's word**...
- And rather than working through those two points sequentially, we'll explore them **together**... //
- We didn't read the beginning of the chapter... but if you'll turn there with me... I want you to notice that we find ourselves reading about the first ever **missionaries** on the first ever missionary **journey**...
- And what do we discover? That this was not *their* idea... it didn't arise out of **strategy planning sessions** as such... but **God** by his **Spirit** set apart **Paul** and **Barnabas** for this work...
- V2 look with me – while the church at Antioch *were worshipping the Lord and fasting* (note that that fasting is described simply as something Christians normally did)... *the Holy Spirit said "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"*. *So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*
- **Whose work? God's work! His calling. His choice. His sending out** – and v4 *The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit...* sailed to Cyprus.
- Now I want you to note that **real** places in **time** and **history** are mentioned as to **where** they went.
- So we can put up a **map** and **trace** the trip.
- They sailed to **Cyprus**, landed at **Salamis** and what did they do? **Proclaim the word of God!**
- They travelled through the whole island until they came to **Paphos**... //
- A roman ruler (v7) sent for Barnabas and Saul because *he wanted to hear the Word of God*
- **He wanted to hear the Word of God!**
- Now the evil one was a work to **prevent** that from happening... An **attendant** of the roman ruler was a **sorcerer** and **opposed** Barnabas and Saul and tried to put the Roman ruler **off**...
- But God's **work** and **word** **can't** be **stopped**...
- And Saul filled with the Holy Spirit speaks powerfully to the sorcerer and he ends up temporarily **blinded**...
- But v12 – *when the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.*
- God's **work**... **through**... God's **word**... the official was amazed – not because of his attendant's

temporary **blindness**... but **because of the teaching about the Lord**...

- The **work** of God, through the **word** of God! //
- And it's exactly what we see in the **second** episode in this chapter... which we read...
- From **Paphos**, they sailed to **Perga** and then by land to **Pisidian Antioch** (as opposed to the Antioch from where they first left).
- On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and following the reading from the Law and the Prophets (that's our Old Testament), the synagogue rulers ask "*if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak*".
- ...perhaps because there were visitors... and Paul was a Pharisee.... He's invited to speak... They want to them reflect on the readings... the readings from the Word of God...
- and we see here recorded for the first time, one of Paul's sermons...
- it's decidedly **Jewish**... It's on the **Sabbath**, it's in the **synagogue** and it's based on the **readings** read in the gathering...
- and Paul's message is entirely consistent with **Peter's** sermons recorded earlier – namely – that the man Jesus Christ is the **fulfilment** of all the **Old Testament prophecies and promises**... //
- and if you ever wanted an Old Testament overview in just a few sentences... here it is... as Paul argues that **Jesus** is sent from **God**.
- Let's trace briefly what Paul points out
 - He starts with **Israel** in **Egypt**...
 - Israel prospered in Egypt
 - Rescued from Egypt
 - Desert wandering
 - Promised land
 - Judges
 - Kings
 - Saul >> David
 - Jesus descended from David
- He then proceeds to tell the story of **Jesus**...
- That the people of Jerusalem did not **recognise** him... that they **condemned** him just as the prophets had foretold...
- ... that even though there was **no grounds** for a death sentence they convince Pilate to have him **executed**...
- that his body was taken from the **tree** and laid in a **tomb**
- ...that God **raised** him from the dead and he was **seen** by those had been with him from the beginning... who now witness to this amazing event...
- so – here is his point – v38 – here's the bottom line – the take home of Paul's message – *I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses*...
- through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is **proclaimed** to you... that's the **word** of God – the word of God telling of the **WORK** of God...
- namely – that everyone who believes is **justified** [inference – by **God**] from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses...
- the law of Moses could only show people where they went **wrong**... how they fell **short** of what God wanted... it couldn't actually make things **right**...

- but those who believe in **Jesus** – who **entrust** their lives into Jesus' **hands** – than they **can** be justified – put right with God by God //
- now let me ask you – have you ever tried to justify yourself when you've mucked something **up** or done something **wrong**?
- ...well I was only trying to help
- ...well my intentions were good...
- well – I was distracted...
- ...well the devil tempted me...
- ...well I couldn't help it... it was like a power over came me...
- In the end – such **self**-justification doesn't work... and we're left without **excuse**..
- And if **unforgiven**... we will **be** without excuse when we stand before **Jesus** as **Judge**... //
- But when we believe in **Jesus** – **entrust** ourselves to **him**...
- ...we're no longer left trying to justify **ourselves** with our **pathetic excuses**...
- because **Jesus' justifies us**...!!
- instead of us speaking up and trying to get something out – to justify ourselves - Jesus speaks up for us and says – **Mark's OK – I died for him**...
- ...his **sin** is **covered**... his **debt** his **cancelled**... his **slate** is **clean**... he's **good to go**!! //
- That's the **work** of God
- **Entirely** the **work** of God! /
- ... and we know it and take hold of it by the **word** of God. //
- now when God is at work through his word, you know what happens?
- ...people want to hear more....
- Have a look with me at v42 *As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the **grace of God**. On the next Sabbath almost the **whole city** gathered to hear the word of the Lord... !*
- Population of Psidian Antioch? Something in the order of 50,000
- Now it could have been a general statement – “the whole of Noosa was at the Anzac service last week” - but nonetheless, it indicates that there were a lot of people there...
- But you will have noted that there was a divided reaction...
- Some of the **Jews** on the one hand – were filled with **jealousy** at the attention Paul was getting... but Paul said we had to go to you Jews first... Jesus is in fulfilment of promises made right throughout your history to you!! – you deserved to hear first!!
- But now – if you don't want this news... then now we will go to the **Gentiles**...
- And the Gentiles?? – v48 *they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord...*
- *AND all who were appointed for eternal life believed*
- God's **work** – by his **word**!!
- ...and v49 *the **word** of the Lord spread through the whole region...*
- good news **spreads**... and the news of **forgiveness** spread all over the place...
- [but the good news of Jesus also **divides**... and we see that the Jews incited **persecution** - so much so that Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the region and so they shook the dust off their feet in protest and went to Iconium... ///

- now - how did that leave them feeling? Depressed? Distressed? Ready to give it away? No – v52 *and the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit* because the Gentiles' joy at receiving the word of God is ever so much more significant than the persecution suffered at the hands of the Jews. //]
- now – what's all this mean for us??
- Well two things – one for each one of us personally and one for us as a church

1. Personal

- Are you a believer here?
- You have been justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses....
- Now – most here are Gentiles and we in fact were never under the law of Moses....
-but friends we too often think about where we stand with God on the basis of our performance...
- it's like episodes of MasterChef playing over and over again in our head where we think – I just don't know whether I've done enough not to be sent home... I hope so – I hope so – I hope I've done enough...
- if you're here this morning hoping you've done enough to get to heaven... I have bad news and good news...
- I can tell you the answer that you're wondering about...
- Have you done enough? Cooked enough? Cleaned enough? Sung enough? Served enough? Helped enough? Given enough? Prayed enough? Taken communion enough? Turned up enough? Read my Bible enough? Told others about Jesus enough? Loved my family enough?
- Stop wondering...
- The answer is NO! // You can never do enough.
- Or perhaps you're wondering if you can ever **make up** for that time you wandered right away from the Lord and all that that entailed; perhaps you're wondering if you can make up for that affair; or that sex outside of marriage; or that cheating on your tax; or your thought life or envy or out of control temper...
- **Stop wondering...**
- The answer is **NO** // you can never 'make up' for anything you've done... you **cannot** justify yourself for any of your failures...
- That's the **bad** news. The **sobering reality**. //
- But the **good** news is of course **very** good!
- The good news is that the **complete** and utter, **total** forgiveness of sins is available through **Jesus**...
- And that **through** him... everyone who believes is justified from everything they could not be justified from by **rules** and **regulations**... !
- And **you** need to – I need to – **we** need to **revel** in that and allow that to release us from the burden of guilt we often feel... and we need to rest **again** or perhaps for the **first** time in the finished work of Christ...
- It's **his** work... **God's** work... and we know that and embrace that through his **word**.
- So that's the **first** take home today and it's very **real** and it's very **wonderful**...
- And the second is this...

2. FOR US AS CHURCH

That God is still at work in the world by his word!

- We can – we must – have confidence that the work we are involved in is God's work...
- we are his co-workers – what a privilege – but it is **his** work... **he** calls, **he** equips us with various

gifts, **he** sends out... and he draws to himself... all who are appointed to eternal life...

- yes – he knows who are his... and he will call them out in Noosa... in the Springs – he has those appointed to eternal life right here!
- ...and he will soften hearts.... he will make the blind see... he will convince the sceptic – he will touch the cynic – he will give the gift of repentance... and he will save those who are his!!
- How will he do that?
- Through the **word**!
- As we **read** the word; **love** his word; grow in our **knowledge** of his word; sit under the **teaching** of his word; **share** his word, **proclaim** his word, **spread** his word!!
- that's why it's no mistake or not simply by **chance** we prioritise *clear and systematic* Bible **teaching**... there it is – our No. 1 priority in Vision 2020...
- Because we know that is how the Lord works...
- That's how he teaches and corrects us **individually** and how he equips and shapes and moulds us a **church**!
- As I've seen people come to know Jesus here – it's been through growing in **confidence** in and in **knowledge** of God's **word**
- When I've seen people grow in their understanding of the **grace** of God – it's been as they grow in their understanding of God's **word**...
- As I've seen people grow to **maturity** – become keep and equipped to serve – it's been as they've deepened their understanding of God's word
- As I've seen people grow in their **assurance** of salvation and in their **joy** in the Lord – it's as they've wrestled with God's **word**
- As I've seen people develop a deeper **trust** in God even in difficult circumstances and an abiding peace in the face of **death** – it's been as they've understood God's **word**.
- God is at **work** in the world... by his **word**....
- And as we immerse ourselves as a church in God's **word**... so will God be at **work** – both **in** and **through** us.