

than he realized. For it is by the cross that God can offer to you the "freeway" to eternal life. It is free to you, but it cost God dearly. Soon we were riding on the freeway. No one stopped us to collect a toll. We simply drove on to it. Now the freeway cost many millions of dollars, but it was ours simply for the using. Our refusal to ride upon it would have been our loss.

Beloved friend, therein is a tremendous truth for you. God in Christ has provided a "freeway" for you. It is yours simply by placing your faith in it. To reject it will be for your eternal damnation. For Romans 1:18 says also that in the Gospel, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

•Third, note the result of refusal. Paul concluded his sermon with a warning. "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish . . ." Paul's congregation is composed of Jews and Gentiles. In I Corin-

thians 1:23 Paul says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." The Jews sought salvation through ceremonial works. The Greeks relied upon their abstract philosophical ethics. To the one the "freeway" was a stumbling block; to the other it was foolishness, or moronic, as the word says. Both were "despisers" of the way of salvation offered by God in Christ. No wonder Paul warned, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish . . ."

I would leave this solemn truth with you. By your ceremonial deeds and abstract philosophical ethics you cannot be justified. Justification for you will come only through your faith, whereby God will pick you up out of your sin and put you down in His righteousness as though you had never sinned. If you rely upon Him through faith in Jesus you will be saved. If in wonder you despise God's grace you will perish. My prayer to God and my plea to you is that you will enter His "freeway" by the way of the cross!

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## THE TRAGEDY OF UNBELIEF

May 30, 1959

Scripture: Acts 13:44-48

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"—Acts 13:46

It was a time of crisis in the spread of the Christian Gospel. On the previous Sabbath Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers had heard the preaching of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, requesting that they hear more. Now on the next Sabbath a multitude, including Gentiles with no connection with Judaism, gathered to hear the Gospel. This was too much

for the Jews. So they, filled with jealousy, spoke against Paul's message, contradicting him even with blasphemy. To which Paul and Barnabas replied that since the Jews rejected the Gospel, according to God's word in Isaiah 49:6 they turned to the Gentiles.

Therefore, we ask you to consider this incident under three headings: first, the twofold nature of the message; second, the twofold response to the message; third, the twofold result of the response.

First, note the twofold nature of the message. Careful study reveals that Paul probably based his sermon on Isaiah 49. It is one of the great Messianic chapters of the prophet, wherein he presents the

Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Its central theme is in verse 6. "It is a light thing (only a small thing) that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved (desolations) of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Thus you see the twofold nature of the Messiah's work. He is to be the Saviour of the Jews. But that is the lesser of His ministries. He also is to be the Saviour of the Gentiles, of the whole earth. It was probably the latter theme upon which Paul dwelt on this second Sabbath, since the multitude of pagan Gentiles came to hear him.

On the first Sabbath preaching to Jews and Gentiles who worshipped according to the Jewish religion, Paul simply preached Jesus as the Saviour. To this the Jews responded with great interest, desiring to hear more. For such a message did not necessarily conflict with their own concept of God's redemptive method. To them salvation was for the Jews only. For a Gentile to be saved he must first become a Jewish proselyte. The Suffering Servant to the Jewish mind was Israel itself. The Messiah was to come out of Israel, so that He would be little more than the greatest of God's prophets. Any redemptive ministry on His part would still be that of the nation Israel. Therefore, Gentiles still must become a partaker of their religion in order to be saved.

But when Paul, on the second Sabbath, preached to pagan Gentiles that Jesus was the Suffering Servant, the light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the whole world, without reference to the Jewish nation, the Jews were "filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming."

There is modern significance in this picture. One great segment of historical Christianity seeks salvation for the whole world. But, say they, in order to be saved you must become one of us, for we alone

are the dispensers of God's grace. In their written declarations is the assertion that apart from their ministrations there is no salvation. Note that to the Jews salvation for the pagan involved not only becoming one of them, but faithful observance of all of their rites and ceremonies. Some of these rituals were found in their Old Testament scriptures, but many of them were the fruits of their traditional teachings with no scriptural basis. Of such Jesus said in Matthew 15:8-9, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain (without meaning) do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments (precepts) of men." To you I would say, "Beware of any religious body which places its own traditions and precepts above that of the Bible!"

Which suggests another thought inherent in this passage. Note that when Paul spoke to the Jews he referred to the "word of God" (Acts 13:46), but when the Gentiles rejoiced they "glorified the word of the Lord" (Acts 13:48). There is significance in this distinction. The Jews recognized Isaiah 49 as a portion of God's Word, but they saw it as a glorification of God's Suffering Servant, Israel. The Gentiles, on the other hand, saw in this portion of God's Word the revelation of Jesus as Lord, as the Suffering Servant and their Saviour. Many modern students of the Bible, identified by the name Christian, still insist that the Suffering Servant is not a Person but the nation of Israel. Consequently, when they come to Jesus in the New Testament they present Him far below the level of God's Divine Servant suffering for the sin of the world. They study the "word of God," but they do not glorify the "word of the Lord." Thus, they, too, teach for doctrines the precepts of men.

Note that some of the Jews in Antioch, not all, were saved (Acts 13:48). They were saved not because of their traditional belief, but in spite of it. Their faith swept aside those things which dimmed

their regard for Jesus so that they beheld "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). If you would be saved the same must happen to you.

Second, consider the twofold response to the message. A comparison of Acts 13:45 and 48 reveals a contrast in responses given to Paul's sermon. The Jews were "filled with envy"; the Gentiles "were glad." The Jews "spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul;" the Gentiles "glorified the word of the Lord." The Jews contradicted and blasphemed; the Gentiles "believed." There is a progression in both instances. The Jews envied, denied, and blasphemed. The Gentiles were glad, glorified the word of the Lord, and believed. When the envious Jews saw that their contradictions were ignored by the believing Gentiles, they resorted to abusive words directed toward the apostles. This is always the resort of defeated arguments by jealous people. Why the difference in these respective responses?

The response of the Jews was that of prejudice and selfishness. Evidently Paul's interpretation of the scripture was convincing. In Jesus the Gentile had the same standing before God as the Jew. But the Jews ignored that truth. To have accepted it would have meant the end of their sense of privilege. It would have destroyed their whole system of rite and ceremony whereby they enslaved not only themselves but others also. In all probability the opposition to Paul and Barnabas was led by the rabbis. Thus their vested position was at stake.

One of the hardest things for you to do is to turn your back upon traditions and institutions about which men have woven the halo of sanctity. Such things do not die easily. This difficulty led men to crucify Jesus almost two thousand years ago. It causes you to reject Him today.

Actually these Jews had devised their own way of salvation for themselves and for the whole world. That it did not co-

incide with God's revealed redemptive will, but was only a shadow of its true nature, did not concern them. Their souls were blinded by prejudice and selfishness. Either men should be saved their way or not at all.

This is the attitude of many of you. With careful selection you have gleaned from the Bible certain teachings: the Ten Commandments; the Twenty-third Psalm; the Sermon on the Mount; I Corinthians 13; certain ethical and philosophical principles from the teachings of Jesus or others. And to the neglect of the overall basic teachings of God's Word, you mold your own little society for salvation, either personal or social. You set yourself up as the criterion of grace, contradicting all which does not fit into your pre-conceived concept. In so doing you not only condemn yourself, but all who look to you for help. No wonder that Paul quotes God's word to you as to these Jews, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." (Acts 13:41).

The response of the Gentiles, on the other hand, was that of joyful faith as they glorified the word of the Lord. Paul's sermon was to them a blast of the trumpet of freedom. Note again that Paul probably based his sermon on Isaiah 49. In this chapter is a most significant statement. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest by my salvation unto the end of the earth . . . that thou mayest say to the prisoners Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places" (vv.6,9).

These pagan people since birth had been the prisoners of dread and fear. They groped in the darkness of superstition. Seeking to appease the wrath of their gods meant living under the constant burden of rite and ceremony prescribed by their pagan priests. Even the proselytes and God-fearers found in Judaism

much of the same prospect. They still would be slaves or prisoners to a sacerdotal system, to an institution, to a ritual. The fact that it was more enlightened did not remove the burden under which they struggled.

Now for the first time they hear the Gospel of freedom, peace, light, and assurance. For Paul preached not a system but a Saviour. He offered them not ritual but grace. He proclaimed not an institution but a Person. He demanded not works but faith. No wonder that they rejoiced, glorified the word of the Lord, and believed!

One of the greatest moments in the history of the world was that second when the Holy Spirit whispered into the heart of Martin Luther, "The just shall live by faith." That is my word to you right now. It is the only verse from the Old Testament (Hab. 2:4) quoted three times in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). By this trumpet call to freedom God cuts away the shackles of your sin. He bids you to stand on your feet as the person He intends you to be! Cast behind you the trappings of rite and ceremony. Throw off the burden of fruitless works. Plant your feet upon the Rock, which is Christ. Believe not in an institution, but in a Person, Jesus, the Son of God, as your Saviour. Walk through your self-made prison gates to soul liberty. Hear the words of Jesus in John 8:32 and 36. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Third, note the twofold result of the response. To the Jews Paul said of his sermon, "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). "Put it from you" means to thrust vigorously from you. Note that they, not God, deemed them unworthy of salvation. Thus in refusal to believe the gospel they vigorously rejected Jesus, and placed themselves in the position of being unworthy of everlasting life. For that reason God turned from them—not from the Jews as a body, but from these individuals. Paul continued to preach to Jews. God continued to save them, but on the same basis as He saved other men.

The Gentiles rejoiced that they could be saved as Gentiles. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). The word "ordained" translates a military word meaning to line up as soldiers. Thus they lined up as soldiers behind Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, and marched into the land of eternal redemption.

No matter who you are, you can be saved through your personal faith in Jesus. Recently a soldier with the rank of buck private said that he had been promoted. When asked how, he said, "From a citizen to a soldier." Regardless of your racial, national, or social background you can receive this promotion. In faith swear your allegiance to Jesus. For Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

## THE BAPTIST HOUR STATION CHANGES

*(Sunday, Unless Specified)*

### NEW STATIONS

Show Low, Ariz.	KVWM	1050 kc	7:30 a.m.
Pineville, La.	KATS	La. College	See local listing
Ellsworth, Me.	WDEA	1350 kc	See local listing
Clovis, N. Mex.	KCLY	1240 kc	10:00 a.m.