

Divine Sovereignty - Acts

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[0 : 00] Gary and Carolyn Harple are going to be gone for the next three weeks or so. They're both retired now, and they're going to be off on a couple of hundred-mile bike rides that cover 100 miles on a weekend.

I put those people right up there with skydivers who jump out of perfectly good airplanes. And I think they're going to take in the huge hot air balloon festival they have every year down in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

And they're going to cap it off with a dog show. Going to witness hundreds and hundreds of wagging tails in some dog show.

So varied interests there. And in Gary's absence, would you turn, please, to Psalm 100, one of my favorite psalms. Psalm 100.

I know there are several different translations represented out there, so with whatever you have, if you will just follow along.

[1 : 21] As I read, I'll be reading from the New American Standard, Psalm 100. It's only five verses, but they are a wonderful expression of thanksgiving. Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.

We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him.

Bless His name. For the Lord is good. His loving kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.

In this brief psalm, we find both designations of the deity. Well, actually, when I say both, there are multiple, but we find two here.

[2 : 23] In particular, verse 3, know that the Lord Himself is God. And the reason for both of those words, of course, is in the Hebrew, it's quite clear.

That God, G-O-D, that we find so often in our Bibles, particularly, you'll note in verse 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And the word in the Hebrew is Elohim, and it is plural. But translators couldn't bring themselves to translate it, in the beginning, God's created the heavens and the earth, because that sounds polytheistic.

So, why did they translate it with a singular, when it is clearly a plural in the Hebrew? And I suspect that it is because they saw some problems there, as thinking there was promoting the idea of multiple gods.

So, they still rendered it with a singular. But we are persuaded that this is indicative of the triune nature of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit subsist in three distinct persons, yet the Scriptures teach very clearly that there is but one God.

[3 : 44] Many times, Christians are accused of believing in three gods, and this is particularly what Muslims believe about Christians. They think that we believe in three gods. We do not.

We believe in one God, subsisting in three persons. Well, how does that work? I have the foggiest idea. But I do know that the Scriptures teach it, and they teach unequivocally that the Father is deity, and that the Son is deity, and that the Holy Spirit is deity, and that is unmistakable.

And yet, it also teaches, as in the Shema of Israel, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. So, God in the Hebrew, Elohim, is the generic term for the deity.

That is a broad, general term. In other words, we can say this. God is what? He is. He is deity. But Lord, particularly when it is utilized with all capital letters, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, that in the original is the tetragrammaton, or the four letters, and that is the word from which we get

the English word Yahweh or Jehovah, and that is the personal name of the deity.

So, God is what he is. Jehovah, or Lord, is who he is. If it helps to understand, man is what I am.

[5 : 25] But Marv is who I am. Man is very generic. But when you put a personal name on the generic, you particularize so that when I say Marv, I'm not talking about just any man.

I'm talking about this man in particular. So, when we use the term God, there are God's many and Lord's many, as the scriptures say. But there is one Jehovah.

And in verse 3, it is, know that the Lord himself, Jehovah himself, is God, the one and only true God.

So, having said that, it has absolutely nothing to do with my message. So, if you will come back to Acts chapter 13, we will look at the text for the morning.

And it is a very powerful text, particularly when it's misunderstood. But it is powerful in the wrong direction. The verse that we are looking at today is verse 48, and we will consider the context of it.

[6 : 46] But it is a verse that, as much as any, and perhaps more than most, is used as an absolute slam-dunk proof text for our Calvinist friends who want to propose the idea of unconditional election, that is, that God, of his own sovereign choice and will, selects or predetermines, without the individual having anything, whatever to do with it, God pre-selects or predetermines or chooses certain individuals for salvation, having nothing to do with their works, their lifestyle, their attitude, or anything.

He just chose them because he chose them, and we don't know what criteria he used for choosing them, but that's reserved unto him. And he chose or designated those individuals for salvation.

They will be saved no matter what. And everyone else who is not elect or not chosen is consigned to perdition. Their will had nothing whatever to do with it.

That's unconditional election. We're not going to go through the tulip again. We've already spent some time on that, but what we are going to do now is consider, in addition to the verses we've looked at in John's Gospel, that teach we are not made alive before we believe, but we believe and are made spiritually alive as a result of that.

And I think that the verses we've already considered in John have spelled that out sufficiently, but now we turn to Acts in chapter 13, and this is a favorite verse of the Calvinists to buttress their arguments, and I know that for a fact because I've used it.

[8 : 33] I used it for years, and I thought that it taught what they say that it teaches, but I have since reversed myself, and it simply does not teach what it seems to teach on the surface.

And it does look like an open and shut case. It looks like if you are considering the doctrine of unconditional election, then you look at Acts 13 and verse 48, and brother, that settles it.

That's it. End of argument. Nothing could be clearer. Nothing could be plainer. Well, look at the verse. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Well, how about that? That looks pretty straightforward, doesn't it? Well, who ordained them to eternal life?

The Calvinists would say, Well, God did. And they believed. And the reason they believed was because they were ordained to eternal life. They had to believe.

[9 : 51] In fact, their wills did not even come into play. They were set up to believe because they were ordained. They were chosen. However, as clear as this verse appears to be on the surface, it still flies in the face of the numerous other verses that we've already considered from John that make it very, very clear that man is in a position of unbelief and unregenerate state, and he hears the gospel, is able to understand and process the gospel and its implications, and as a result of hearing the gospel, he believes.

He comes to faith in Christ. And then he receives eternal life. This seems to be the formula and the order in which these events transpire from beginning to end.

And here I think we will get perhaps a fresh new perspective, and I hope so, on the idea and the concept of believing, because this is really, really important.

Very important. And it is so germane to what the gospel is all about. What's the big deal about believing? About believing anything. Why is so much emphasis placed upon believing?

And you realize that in the original language, in the Greek, believe and faith come from the same root word, pistis and pistuo.

[11 : 24] One is a verb and one is a noun. Faith is a noun. It is a thing. It is something to be believed.

Belief is the action of it. It is the putting it into action. It is the actual doing of it. We don't say faithing it. We say believing it.

But faithing it, theologically, is perfectly correct. It's just that grammatically it's kind of clumsy and we wouldn't use it. We don't talk about faithing it. We talk about believing. But they come from exactly the same word, and they cannot be separated insofar as their actual meaning is concerned.

How is it and why is it that an historical event that happened 2,000 years ago, outside the city of Jerusalem on a desolate hill called Calvary, and there on one of those crosses, there hangs an individual whose life is terminated on that cross.

And through the death of that individual on the cross, eternal life is made available to the entire human race because of what happened there outside Jerusalem, and that the way people align themselves to that event determines their eternal destiny.

[13 : 10] How does that work? Why does it work that way? And what is behind all of this? This is referred to as a transferable concept.

The gospel, the good news, is information that resides in the spirit, resides in the human spirit and mind of an individual who has believed that message.

He has this truth within his own person of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and he has put his confidence and trust in that truth, what he perceives as true about Jesus Christ, who he is, what he did, and why it matters.

And then he is able to articulate that information that he has inside of himself and give it to another person for that person's consideration and hopefully for that person's buying it, trusting it, claiming it, latching on to it, taking it for his own, so that what was inside of that one person who gave out the message now is inside this other person who received the message.

And they are then able to transfer it to another person. And the message just grows exponentially so that it isn't adding to, it is multiplying.

[14 : 49] Is that really what this dynamic, this believing this gospel is all about? Well, let's look at chapter 13.

Chapter 13 and the beginning. Well, let's look at the beginning of the chapter. Now, there were at Antioch in the church.

At this Antioch, I don't have a map, but those of you who are map inclined, this Antioch is Antioch in Syria. This is north of Israel.

This is outside the territory of the nation of Israel. This is up north. Antioch is in Syria. Damascus is in Syria. Damascus and the road thereto is where Saul of Tarsus was converted to Jesus Christ. It was in a foreign country in Syria. And Syria, by the way, is a very hot item in the news today. We all know what's going on in Syria with Assad and the Civil War.

[15 : 53] This is a very, very ancient place. Very ancient. I mean, the city of Damascus celebrated its 3,000th birthday not too long ago. So it's a very, in fact, Damascus, Syria is the oldest continually inhabited city in the entire world.

It's right there in Syria. So Antioch is in the same country. And there were in the church that was there prophets and teachers. Barnabas, Simeon, who's called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who had been brought up with Herod, the Tetrarch, and Saul.

This is Saul of Tarsus, of course. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate or set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

What is that work? That work is what I just told you about. They are going to take the information that they have within themselves and they are going to go abroad and spread that information everywhere they can.

These people who do this we call missionaries. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

[17 : 23] Go on, you guys. Take off. Get out of here. Go wherever you're going. Go where you're going. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia. That was on the coast.

And from there they embarked. They sailed to Cyprus, an island of Cyprus. And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues.

In the synagogues of the Jews. Now, I want you to notice the Jewishness of this. This is really very important. In the synagogues of the Jews, and they also had John as their helper.

Now, I don't want to get bogged down here, but I just want to tell you that this John is Mark. John Mark. There were lots of Johns in the Bible.

John the Baptist was just one, and John who wrote the Revelation, and the Gospel of John is just another. There are others. But this John is John Mark. And when they had gone throughout the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, and this guy gave them some problems and so on.

[18:30] But now, we're not going to get bogged down here. But for the context's sake, I want you to note that beginning with verse 13, chapter 13 and verse 13, Paul and his companions put out the sea from Paphos and came to Perga and Pamphylia.

I know these geographical names mean little to you, but they're important in the scheme of things. And John, that is John Mark, left them and returned to Jerusalem. But going on to Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch.

Now, I want you to notice, we've got another Antioch. Well, how can that be? We've already had an Antioch in verse 1 of chapter 13. Well, yes, but this is a different Antioch.

Have you never heard of cities having the same name? How many Springfields are there? Probably 10 Springfields in the 48 or 50 states. There are probably 10 or 15 Springfields.

Wow. How many? 37. Enough to drive a postmaster crazy, isn't it? Trying to deliver mail to Springfield. Well, here we've got at least two different Antiochs.

[19:44] Now, this is Pisidian Antioch. Pisidian Antioch is actually in Asia Minor, and it is west of the Syrian Antioch that we're talking about. And I want you to note, and on the Sabbath day, again, what does that tell you?

Jewish. On the Sabbath day, they went down into the synagogue and sat down. Synagogue.

Jewish. Well, who is Saul? A Jew.

Who is Barnabas? A Jew. They're right at home. These are all Jews. And after reading the law, and the prophets, the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.

Oh, wow. What an opening. This is great. And really, this is just a Jewish tradition for the synagogue. And the tradition was this. These people would go to the synagogue every Friday evening, just like a lot of Christians go to church every Sunday morning.

Only they did it on Friday evening. And they would gather, and they would light their candles, and then they would bring the scroll out from the ark, in which the cabinet in which it was kept, and they would unroll the scroll, and somebody would read from the scroll, just as Jesus did in Luke chapter 4.

[21:05] And then everybody would stand while they're reading from the scroll, and then they would roll up the scroll, and sit down, and somebody would offer an exhortation.

And in the case of Luke 4, it was our Lord who was returning to Nazareth, the town where he grew up. And it's a fascinating story in Luke 4. You have to read it sometime.

So now they are in Pisidian Antioch. I'm sorry. Yes, Pisidian Antioch, and in a synagogue. And they are strangers. Paul and Barnabas just arrived in town.

And the Jewish population in this city would be like it is in most cities. It's a minority. The Jews are generally a minority wherever they are. And it's no exception here.

So they gathered together in the synagogue, and that was their socializing. It was their business contacts. It was family connections and relations, and everything centered around the synagogue. If you were a Jew, you were just tied to the synagogue, no question about it.

[22:07] So much of importance happened there, education and everything. So when strangers came to town, they were always curious about where they were from, what they were about, what they had to say, what's new, what's going on where you're from.

And they always took advantage of people traveling through. And here are a couple of Jews come to town in Pisidian Antioch, and everybody recognizes it. These are new people. I wonder who they are. I wonder where they're from.

I wonder what they have to say. So it was a common courtesy for the leader of the synagogue to approach any strangers. He just assumed that they were Jews because they were there.

And he would say, do you have a word of exhortation or something? It was an open invitation to visitors to share whatever they wanted to share. And everybody would sit there and listen intently because they were probably accustomed to listening to the same boring preacher every week. And when they got a new voice and new face to look at and listen, everybody perked up and wanted to hear what this guy had to say. So that's the setting. And Paul stood up and motioned with his hand.

[23 : 15] I don't know exactly what that hand motion meant. Maybe the people were all, you know, like a bunch of magpies chattering among themselves and everything.

And Paul stands up and goes, you know, and everybody looks up there and they start quieting down. The murmurs start settling down. And then finally it gets quiet and Paul begins to speak. Men of Israel and you who fear God. Well, now, who are these? Two different classes of people. It's important to note this.

Men of Israel means you who are the seed of Abraham. You who have derived your being from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They are the men of Israel. And then you who fear God. Who are they? They are not Jews. They are not Jews. They are God-fearers.

[24 : 21] A God-fearer is a Gentile. What's he doing in a Jewish synagogue? A God-fearer is a Gentile who has embraced Israel's God as the only true God.

And he has turned his back on polytheism. Whether you were a Greek or a Roman, you worshipped multiple deities. You had statuary and gods and idols all over the place.

God-fearers were Gentiles who no longer bought the idea of many gods. They believed these Jews are on to something.

There is one God and one God only. And they believed that concept. That's why they were called God-fearers. And when you go to Acts chapter 10 and read about Cornelius, He was an unusual guy because he was a Roman army officer.

He had as a centurion in the Roman army, If you were a centurion, from which we get the word century, It means you had 100 men under your command.

[25 : 39] You were like a captain with sergeants and privates and corporals beneath you. A centurion had 100 men under him. And it was a very unusual thing for a Roman army officer to be a God-fearer because most of them were polytheists just like all of the others, just like their own emperor was.

So these God-fearers here are very significant people. A God-fearer was not a Jew. He was a Gentile who embraced the concept of Judaism, but he had not been circumcised.

If he wanted to take the next step in Judaism, he had to submit himself for ritual, physical circumcision. And a lot of the God-fearers were reluctant to do that.

Any man can understand that. He would then remain a God-fearer. If he was more serious about this faith and wanted to be regarded as a Jew by Jews, he could submit to ritual circumcision and then offer a sacrifice and he would be embraced and accepted into the Jewish community as a full-fledged Jew with all of the privileges and opportunities thereto.

That would make him a bona fide Jew and every Jew would consider him a Jew because he was a proselyte to Judaism. So you've got those two different classifications for people who can become semi-Jewish or full-Jewish through a process.

[27 : 20] And they are those whom he is addressing here. Men of Israel and you who fear God. In other words, all of you Jews and those of you who embrace the God of Jews, the God-fearers, the God of this people Israel chose our fathers.

And who are they? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the fathers. They are the patriarchs.

Patriarchs. Jesus Christ, we're told in Romans 15.8 that Jesus Christ was a minister to the circumcision, to the circumcision to confirm the promises God made to the fathers.

And that's all Jewish. That's all Israel. He made this people, made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt.

And here he is talking about the nation when it was in bondage. And with an uplifted arm, he led them out of it. And for a period of about 40 years, he put up with them in the wilderness.

And when he had destroyed seven nations... Do you know this sounds a little bit reminiscent of Stephen, doesn't it? When Stephen was asked to give a defense for his actions in chapter 7, and what did he do?

[28 : 40] He recounted the whole history of Israel, starting way back from the beginning. And if you want to get a short version of the history of the nation of Israel, just read Acts chapter 7.

And then, when Stephen got to the crisis point, he delivered that final blow about Jesus Christ being the culmination of what Israel was all about.

And that's when they gnashed their teeth, rose up, and took him out of the city and stoned him to death. When Stephen said, you crucified and slew the Lord of glory.

And God raised him from the dead. And they wouldn't tolerate that at all. Now, we've got a very similar kind of thing here. And you know this is beautiful. I'll tell you why it's so beautiful. Because, do you know who was one of the witnesses at the testimony of Stephen when he gave an account for himself?

Saul of Tarsus. Saul was there, and he heard Stephen recount the whole thing about what God had done with the beginning of Israel and how he had brought them along, the wilderness, Canaan, all the nine yards, and then came right down to the crisis and laid on them the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 56] And that's when everything broke open. And that's when Stephen was stoned to death. And Saul of Tarsus was there holding the garments of those who were going to stone him. He listened to the whole thing.

He didn't buy it. He didn't buy it. He bought the story about the history of Israel because he knew that was true. But he didn't buy Stephen's conclusion about all of this was focusing on and culminating in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's what they didn't buy. And that's what cost him his life. And now, Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion, now he is Paul the apostle, and now he is being asked, Do you have any words to say to the people?

Oh, boy! He's thinking, Do I ever? And he's going to recount the same message he heard from Stephen.

It's a beautiful thing. He recounts the whole history of Israel. And he comes down. Well, let's just read it quickly, and I'll elaborate as little as possible.

[31 : 05] In verse 19, and by the way, all of these Jews that he is talking to here in Pisidian Antioch, they're sitting there in the synagogue listening to Saul recount all of this.

They know this stuff. They know this. They know it backwards and forwards. He's not telling them anything they don't know. But he is building a case, and they are sitting there agreeing with everything he's saying.

And he talks about Egypt, and he talks about the pharaohs, and he talks about the wilderness wanderings, and he talks about the judges, and he talks, and they are sitting there listening to this. Uh-huh. Yeah, right.

Yeah, we hear it. That's right. That's the way it was. Oh, I know. My father told me. Yes, yeah. And they're just agreeing with everything, and Paul is just laying it out there, building a case.

They asked for a king in verse 21. God said, Yes, all right, right. And he raised up David. Yep, David. And I found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart who would do all my will.

[32 : 05] Right? And the offspring of this man, according to the promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus. Now, some brows are starting to furrow.

What? What is this? What did he say? God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus. After John, and this is John the Baptist, after John had proclaimed before his coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel, not just the Levites, not just the priests, but all the people of Israel.

And while John, John the Baptist, this is Saul of Tarsus, Paul the Apostle, formerly Saul of Tarsus, he's talking, and he says, And while John the Baptist was completing his course, John kept saying, What do you suppose that I am?

I am not he, I am not he, but behold, one is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie. Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us, the word of this salvation is sent out for those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers.

And where is Jerusalem when he's talking about this? Jerusalem is miles and miles away. Miles and miles away. Recognizing neither him, that is, those rulers in Jerusalem did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, nor the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled these by condemning him.

[33 : 51] Isn't that amazing? Here he's saying, you know, these guys gather in the synagogue and they read the prophets every week. Every Sabbath, they read the prophets and they go over and over and they missed it.

They missed it all. Never did pick up on it. Though they found no ground for putting him to death, that is, Jesus, they asked Pilate that he be crucified.

And when they had carried out all that was written concerning him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead.

Now, all of this stuff is new to these people. They never heard this before. This resurrection stuff, this is brand new stuff. And for many days, he, Jesus, appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now his witnesses to the people.

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that he raised up Jesus as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee.

[35 : 13] This begotten business is talking about the resurrection. And this is the psalmist talking about this prophetically. As for the fact that he raised him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.

Therefore, he also says in another psalm, Thou wilt not allow thy holy one to undergo decay. For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay.

But he whom God raised up did not undergo decay. These guys are stroking their beards and saying, I don't know, what does he say here? You know, I always wondered what that verse meant back there in the psalms where David said, Thou wilt not allow thine holy one to undergo corruption. You know, I always wondered what that meant because we know David died. And we know where he's buried and his body and his bones decayed like everybody else's.

And that never made sense. And Paul says, No. Because it wasn't talking about David. It was talking about David's greater son.

[36 : 29] The Messiah will not undergo decay or corruption because God will raise him from the dead. And that's what happened.

And all at once you can see lights coming on all over the place. Oh! What? That was Jesus of Nazareth resurrected from the dead?

He didn't undergo decay? The psalmist was speaking prophetically of the Messiah when he came? Hey, you know what? that does fit, doesn't it?

And the pieces start falling into place. Listen, this is what happens every time the gospel is proclaimed. People are able to start connecting the dots.

And when you connect the dots and see how all of this comes together, then you are able to make an intelligent decision. until then, it's just off your back like water off a duck's back.

[37 : 38] But once you start getting the connection, seeing what's really involved here, and this is exactly what's happening to these people. And verse 37, he whom God raised did not undergo decay.

And then here is the coup de gras. therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through him, this one who did not see decay, through him, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

And that's why we're here, is to tell you that. Wow! What a wake-up call! They'd never heard this in their entire life.

Forgiveness of sins? You mean to be made right with God so we can sleep at night and not worry about eternal perdition?

and through him, verse 39, everyone who believes, who believes, who believes, who aligns themselves with this truth, is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.

[39 : 05] Law of Moses could not forgive anybody anything. The law of Moses could not impart life. The law of Moses had all of these, well, there was nothing wrong with the law, but there was everything wrong with the people to whom the law was given.

Paul said the law is just and holy and good, but man isn't, and that's the problem. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did in the person of his son.

Wow! Now, listen, Paul said, listen, you've just heard this message, and I want to give you a warning.

Lest you turn your back on this information, whatever you do, embrace this message. This is vital to you.

This is not only soul-saving, it is for all eternity. You've got to get with this. Because if you don't, you take heed, verse 40, so that the things spoken of in the prophets may not come upon you.

[40 : 24] The prophets warn about people who reject this message. Don't you be one of them. And here's what the prophets said, behold, you scoffers, and marvel and perish.

Scoffers are people who hear the gospel and say, ah, bunch of religious rubbish, I don't believe that crap. Get out of here with that stuff, I don't buy that. That's scoffing, that's rejecting, ridiculing.

Paul is saying, there's a history for that, there are people who have done that, don't you be one of them. The prophet says, God's saying through the prophet, I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.

What's happening? This is really dramatic. These people are at a crossroads. They have just heard new vital information. I'm sure there were some who were wondering, what's it all about?

Is there any way a man can be right with God? Is there any way you can know that you're right with God? And here is the message. this is God's panacea for the human race. And Paul is delivering it.

[41 : 39] And the end result is, as Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

People came up to them and confronted them and said, hey, you guys, you don't have to leave now, do you? Can't you come back next week?

Can't you guys stay around? Man, we never heard this before. We've got to get some more of this information. Can you tell us more? Is there someplace where we can go and talk? We need to hear more.

These are inquisitive, questioning, wondering, searching people, open people, ready people, eager people. They just need the truth.

That's all they need. and they've never heard this before. When the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God fearing proselytes, so we've got God fearers and proselytes, followed Paul and Barnabas, wouldn't let go of these guys.

[42 : 49] They're milking them, questioning them, bombarding them, beseeching them, who speaking to them were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

And the next Sabbath, nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. Word spread like wildfire. These guys just came into town, they were in the synagogue last Friday night, never heard anything like that.

You've got to come and hear these guys. They told us about the whole history of Israel and what God was doing and Jesus of Nazareth and raised from... What? What are you talking about? It's the buzz everywhere.

The town is electrified. Everybody's talking about this. And the whole next Sabbath, nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy.

Now, what's their problem? They are locked into their unbelief. They are locked into the same mentality that a Sanhedrin had when they stoned Stephen.

[43 : 51] These are the unconvinced. These are those that Paul was warning against. Don't you be like those who rejected the message in the past. And they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul and were blaspheming.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly. I love it. They didn't speak out timidly. They were not intimidated by this crowd. They held their ground.

They knew what they were talking about. And they knew what they were talking about. And they were not going to be intimidated into silence. And they stayed right there and confronted them face to face, eyeball to eyeball.

They're not backing down. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first.

What's he talking about? Jews. to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. And that's what they're doing. Jews to Jews. But since you repudiate it, you reject the message, and you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

[45 : 08] Well, now, what does that mean? Aren't we all unworthy of eternal life? Yes, of course we are. And the scriptures make that very clear. And Paul is not saying, some people are worthy of

eternal life and others are not.

He's not saying that at all. What he's saying is, you people have such a contrary position to what is in your own best interests, it is as if you don't even consider yourselves worth saving.

Is that where you're coming from? Do you consider yourself as something less than human, made in the image and likeness of God, that this message is not for you?

You judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. Wow!

But isn't he raised up to be the apostle to the Gentiles? Indeed he is. God has said, for thus the Lord has commanded us, I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles.

[46 : 25] Who is the you? The you is the Jew. God is saying, I have placed you, the Jew, to be a light to the Gentiles, because you have information the Gentiles don't have.

You have the law, you have Moses, you have the commandments, you have the ordinances, you have everything that they don't have, and you're supposed to be a light to them. That you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing.

Hallelujah can this be salvation, a right relationship to the God who created us, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

The only time in the New Testament that this word is used in the Greek, tasso, is here. And, well, tasso is the root form from which it comes.

[47 : 31] There are seven places where it is used, but only one, and it is right here where it is translated this way, and it is ordained.

And it certainly gives the impression to support the idea of election. God ordained them to eternal life. That's why they believe.

That's not the meaning at all. And I trust that the context that we just went through will demonstrate to you that the audience was placed in a position of decision.

everybody is on one side of this issue or the other. Many of the Jews believed and were saved.

Many of the Jews did not. The Gentiles were elated to hear this message.

Just as everyone ought to be elated, and I'll tell you who especially ought to be elated. Anybody who has ever spent any time in their life in the quiet moment saying to themselves, is this all there is?

[48 : 40] Is this all there is to life? Is there anything more? Is there any way that anybody can know? How do you connect with God?

Is there a connection? Can there be a connection? Who can tell me? Do you know what you call that? I call that an attitude, or a disposition, or an interest, or a searching mind and heart.

And that's exactly what these people had. And the word is better translated. In fact, some ways it can be rendered is addicted. Can you imagine being addicted to the idea of eternal life?

What does that mean? If you are addicted to the idea of eternal life, it means that's all you can think about. It consumes your thinking. You wonder about it.

You worry about it. You pray about it. You dream about it, and you think about it. What's going to happen to me after I die? I know I'm going to die. What's going to happen then?

[49 : 52] Is there a God? Can you know him? How can you know him? These are people who are searchers. They're honest, open, available. They want information.

They are addicted to the idea. They have a predisposition for the idea of eternal life. And I'll tell you, as a pastor, I've talked to a lot of people over the years, and I've asked them questions about, are you going to heaven when you die, or do you know, do you have assurance?

I don't know. I never thought very much about it. how can you live without thinking about dying?

You're going to die. You are going to die.

Face it. I don't care how young or how healthy you are, you're going to die. What then? Do you ever wonder about that? If you are a normal human being, you do.

If you are so frivolous and so shallow as to never give any thought to it, I don't know where to start with you. You're beyond hope. Just go on texting your messages and that's as deep as you're going to go.

[51 : 03] But for these, those who were addicted, those who are open, those who are determined, those who are appointed, and the Greek, this is a middle voice and it means that the subject is benefited by the action of the verb.

This doesn't mean that an outside power ordained them to eternal life. It means that they themselves, within themselves, had the predisposition, the interest, the searching, the inquiry, the questions, and when they heard this message, that's it!

They were on board right now. They were elated. They were overjoyed. saved. They were saved. That's this power of belief and the message that is inherent in it.

Were they preselected, prechosen, ordained by God to eternal life and that's why they believed? No. They were just ordinary human beings who had enough depth and moxie to them to wonder whether there was any way anybody could know and they always wondered about that and there's another fellow in the book of Acts by the same method.

His name was Cornelius. He was a God-fearer and he was praying. What do you think he was praying about? When God answered his prayer and says, you send men to Joppa and you find a man by the name of Peter and have him come here and he will tell you what you need to know. [52 : 45] And Cornelius was the same kind of a man as these Gentiles. They were searchers. And if you're searching, if you're wondering, if you're asking the question, where is eternal life and how is it realized?

This is it. This is it. This was it 2,000 years ago and this is still it. And what you do is you simply align yourself with the truth that Jesus Christ died for your sin.

And you are to put as an act of your volition, as an act of your will, you put your trust and your confidence and your faith and your hope and your dreams and your future and everything in Jesus Christ.

And he will save you. Pray with me, please. Father, this wonderful glorious truth never wears out. Never become weary of telling it. Blessed old story. Those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.

[53 : 56] What an incredible thing took place on that cross. When he who knew no sin was made sin for us and all you ask us to do is identify with that truth and embrace it as our own.

And everyone who does receives this wonderful gift of eternal life that none of us deserve, but Jesus paid for it with his own body.

And we want to be recipients of it. And we trust that everyone here has that personal relationship. And dear friend, if you are searching and seeking and wondering, just like these Jews were, just like these Gentiles were of old, the heart has a vacuum, and nothing can fill the vacuum but the God who created it.

Try to fill it with money and prestige and power and influence and none of those things avail. Only Christ satisfies.

And our prayer is that everyone here may know the blessed joy of embracing such a wonderful, life-giving Savior as our Lord Jesus. We pray in his name.

[55 : 13] Amen.