

## **PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE JEWS.**

– *MAY 9. – ACTS 13:26-39. –*

"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."  
– Acts 13:38.

PAUL and his company did not stop at Perga, where they landed, but proceeded about one hundred miles inland to Antioch, probably because the inhabitants of the latter place were of a more intelligent class. The Apostle was not looking for the most degraded people, but for the most intelligent, and particularly those who were Jews or who had come in contact with the Jewish religion. This was a different Antioch from the place in Syria of the same name, whence they commenced their journey. As was their custom, they immediately sought prepared soil in which to sow the gospel seed: they went, therefore, to the Jewish synagogue. According to the Jewish custom a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures was read in the hearing of the audience, and the chief men of the congregation, discerning the intelligence of their visitors, asked them to make some remarks. It has been presumed by some that, as Paul's discourse seems to make reference to Deut. 1:31 and Isa. 55:3, these Scriptures had probably been portions of the reading lesson in the synagogue, and that the Apostle took the daily lesson as the text for his discourse.

The Apostle Paul was the spokesman, and without going forward to the rostrum, he spoke from his place in the synagogue, addressing first those who were Israelites by birth, and secondly, such Gentiles as had become proselytes to the Jewish religion, and who, therefore, met with them in worship, – "Men of Israel and ye that fear God." Beginning with the history of God's dealing with Israel, the Apostle reviewed that history down to the time of Christ; thus, wisely, giving his auditors assurance of his full sympathy with the Jewish hopes and the divine promises, quickening in their hearts the desire for the long

promised Messiah and reviving their hopes in the great promises to be fulfilled through him.

Having thus gained the attention and interest of his hearers, he was ready to preach unto them the crucified Messiah, and (verse 26) he now intimated that the message which he bore to them was one of special favor. They were aware that the most pious Jews resided in Jerusalem and Palestine, and that they themselves were reckoned as being to some extent alienated from God and from the promises, because they had preferred a residence among the Gentiles, rather than in the land of promise. It was appropriate, therefore, for two reasons, that the Apostles should explain why his message came to them rather than to the more zealous Jews of Palestine. He explained (1) that their fellow Jews, including the leaders of the nation, at Jerusalem had proved themselves unworthy of the gospel by rejecting and crucifying Messiah; and (2) that this very crucifixion, so far from overthrowing the divine arrangement, had merely been another step in the program foretold by the Lord by the mouth of his holy prophets. He pointed out that the crucifiers of Messiah had merely "fulfilled all that was written of him." Supposing a question in their minds – How could it be that the chief priests and chief religionists of our race could make so great a mistake, and so fail to rightly interpret the prophets? – the Apostle answers the objection, telling them that it was "because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day [and which] they have fulfilled in condemning him."

But this is not all – "God raised him from the **[R2149 : page 138]** dead," and of this we also have witness; and this message of the death and resurrection of Messiah constitutes the "glad tidings" of the fulfilment of God's promises made to father Abraham. This Jesus is the "seed" of Abraham, through the merit of whose death and by virtue of whose resurrection the promise to Abraham shall be fulfilled, – that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" with a full opportunity of eternal life.

With his usual logic the Apostle anticipated objections in the minds of his hearers, – Could Messiah die? etc., and he proceeds to prove to them from the words of the prophets that thus it was written beforehand. Although Messiah had long existed as the archangel, nevertheless the prophet David, speaking for God, said concerning him, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten [literally *borne* or *delivered*] thee." The Apostle would have his hearers note that this birth mentioned referred to our Lord's resurrection, as it is written, he was the "first born from the dead," "the first born among many brethren." If Messiah was to be thus *born from the dead*, it implied that he must first die, and hence the Apostle gives this as a prophetic prediction fulfilled in our Lord's experiences.

He quotes again the words of Jehovah through the prophet, addressed to Messiah, – "I will give you the sure mercies of David," – *i.e.*, I will make sure to thee forever the mercies of David. The Apostle quotes this to prove that, altho Messiah as Michael the archangel had been great even before David's time, yet it would be at a later date, and as a result of some work which he would perform, that the mercies promised to David and his seed would be *made sure* to Messiah. This transaction was the giving of "his life a ransom for all," and the making sure to him of the Davidic promises by the Almighty was evidenced "in that he raised him from the dead."

In harmony with this is another statement by the prophet David, which evidently referred to Messiah and not to David himself, since it was not true of David. It reads, "Thou shalt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption." By this reference the Apostle would prove to them further, that God has specially promised the **[R2150 : page 138]** resurrection of Messiah, and that thus was indicated his death and temporary subjection almost to corruption. This could not apply to David who did see corruption to the full; but it was true of Christ who "saw no corruption," tho brought down almost within its grasp.

Then comes our Golden Text, which is the center and pith of the Apostle's discourse. He was not merely talking to tickle their ears respecting their being the seed of Abraham, nor was he talking for the purpose of showing his comprehensive grasp of Israel's history; nor was he merely telling them the story of our Lord's crucifixion. More than all this, it was an individual message to every heart before him in condition to receive it, – namely, "Through *this man* is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The Apostle does not refer to something that was done by our Lord as the archangel before "he was made flesh" (John 1:14), nor does he refer to any work to be done by him in his new, highly exalted condition, "set down with his Father in his throne" and partaker of his divine nature; but he here refers to the work done by "*the man*, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5,6) at Calvary. Thus the Apostle again emphasizes the fact that "as by *a man* came death, by *a man* also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15:21.) Yes, this is the center of the gospel proclamation that the failure of the first perfect man was fully offset by the sacrifice of "the man Christ Jesus," and that it was to this end that it was needful for our Lord to leave the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, to become poor (in the sense of taking our lower nature – but not its blemishes, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners"); and yielding up this human nature a *ransom-price* or corresponding price for the life forfeited by father Adam for himself and his race. This is the basis upon which every offer of grace is presented by the Scriptures. And now, he who was the Father's agent in the redemptive work is to be the Father's agent also in the work of "blessing" all the redeemed with ample opportunities for return to divine favor – the first step of which is the forgiveness of sins.

Whoever realizes the divine perfection and himself a sinner, imperfect and under condemnation of Justice, and desires reconciliation with God – and the result thereof, eternal life – such, and such only, are prepared to receive the gospel of redemption and forgiveness and help. "By him all that believe [after the manner described] are justified from all things [reckoned right, just, pure and

perfect, notwithstanding all their inherent blemishes and uncontrollable weaknesses]." From none of these things could the law of Moses justify any. The law of Moses condemned every failure, but was powerless to forgive, and had no means of making permanent atonement or covering for those who were under that covenant, because its mediator, Moses, did not and (being himself a member of the fallen race) could not fulfil that covenant and satisfy its demands in his own person, for himself and the people. Hence, Moses and his covenant had not power to grant mercy or justification, as can be done under the New Covenant by its mediator, Christ Jesus, who sealed it with his own precious blood, "a ransom for all."

Paul preached the only genuine gospel – the only one authorized – the everlasting gospel which ultimately must be preached to every creature.

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