

Sermon Summary | Sunday 26th July 2026 | Acts 13.38–52

Some moments in life ask more from us than interest. A serious diagnosis, an important letter, or a warning sign on the road may be interesting, but interest is not enough. We have to respond. In Acts 13.38–52, Paul shows that the gospel is like that. Not because God is reluctant to save, but because his offer is so real, generous, and serious.

Paul has been preaching in Pisidian Antioch. He has told the story of God's promises and proclaimed Jesus as the promised Son of David: rejected, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. Now he presses home what this means.

First, Paul announces the gift: "through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" (13.38). Christianity does not begin with advice, self-improvement, or vague spirituality. It begins with forgiveness, because our deepest problem is sin: turning from God, resisting his rule, and putting other things in his place. We need more than encouragement or a fresh start. We need forgiveness.

And that forgiveness is proclaimed through Jesus. It is not hidden away for the spiritually impressive. God holds it out clearly and graciously. Through Jesus, "everyone who believes is freed" (13.39). That includes the religious person trying to prove themselves, the ashamed person who feels beyond hope, the weary person tired of pretending, and the uncertain person wondering whether they know enough or feel enough. Faith is not bringing God a spiritual achievement. Faith is receiving Christ, trusting him, and resting our weight on him.

Second, Paul gives a warning: "Beware" (13.40). The gospel is generous, but it must not be treated lightly. Paul quotes Habakkuk to warn his hearers not to despise what God is doing. God has acted in a surprising way: through a rejected Messiah, a crucified Saviour, resurrection from the dead, and grace offered to all who believe. The danger is not only aggressive unbelief. It can be polite, respectable, religious resistance: hovering near Christian things, appreciating Jesus, but keeping him at arm's length.

Third, the passage shows a divide: one word, two responses. Some beg to hear more. Others become jealous and oppose Paul and Barnabas. Some rejoice that grace has come to them. Others thrust the word aside. Yet even when opposition comes and the messengers are driven out, "the word of the Lord was spreading" (13.49), and the disciples are "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (13.52).

That joy does not depend on everything being easy. It comes from knowing that Christ is true, forgiveness is real, eternal life is given, and the word of the Lord cannot be stopped.

So the question is not only how people responded then, but how we respond now. If we are exploring faith, we should not stand at a distance forever. If we are new Christians, we are called to continue in the grace of God. If we are weary Christians, we need to hear again that Jesus gives what our effort cannot: forgiveness, freedom, and life with God.

Through Jesus, forgiveness is proclaimed. Through Jesus, everyone who believes is freed. So do not push away forgiveness. Come to Christ. Believe. Be forgiven. Be freed. And discover that his way is not the loss of joy, but the beginning of it.

Questions for personal reflection

1. Where am I tempted to treat Jesus as interesting, helpful, or admirable, while still keeping him at arm's length?
2. What would it look like this week for me to continue in the grace of God, rather than trying to prove myself, hide myself, or carry burdens Christ came to lift?