

In Pisidian Antioch

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Preacher: Daniel Chapallaz

[0:00] The other week we had a preacher's evening which was really helpful thinking about preaching! the book of Acts. And it was just coming at a time where I was beginning to work out how do I preach! this sermon from Paul. And we were given this encouragement that preaching on a sermon is like being given a beautifully iced cake. So it's Christmas time. Imagine someone gives you a beautifully iced Christmas cake. But then I come and I smash it to pieces and then try and put it back together to be as beautiful as it was before. That's what it's like to preach on a sermon apparently in the book of Acts. Which was just the encouragement I needed. That being said, I'm grateful that Shammar prayed for us. We need the Lord's help as we look at this. And thank you so much Evelyn for reading the passage.

It's a good one but it is a long one. And it's a great sermon from the Apostle Paul. And in some ways just reading that would be enough this morning. But the Lord has called preachers to preach his word and to make it clear. So we pray that that will happen this morning by his grace. Now every morning during the week I sit and I eat my breakfast. There's usually some shreddies and some coffee.

And I sit and I listen to the local radio. And on the local radio you get lots of great local bits of information. Like the other week I got really excited to hear that Brighton and Hove Council have these new gritters that they're using in the cold weather which know the temperature. And so they can react accordingly. It's very clever. Or this week I had the latest trouble about the I-360.

And last weekend on the Friday as we were expecting a storm coming I heard the vital news that Drusilla's would remain open in the storm.

But at the weekend I will often do something different. I'll put on the national radio. And when you put on that you zoom out from the local and you hear what's going on on a bigger scale across our country and across our worlds. Why do I tell you that? Well this morning as we come to this passage as we hear Paul preaching he zooms out from the local situation and he gives people the the big picture of what is going on in the world. The big picture of how God has been acting through history bringing together his salvation plan for the world. The situation we've arrived at in this passage is that Paul and his companions have moved from Paphos in Cyprus up to Perga in Pamphona.

[3:10] Philia that was about 112 miles by Bates. And then they traveled another hundred miles north from Perga to Pisidian Antioch in the region of Galatia. And they find themselves in this town in a Jewish synagogue.

The service has been happening a bit like the service has been happening this morning here. And the law and the prophets have been read. And then there's this invitation. This invitation to speak. We read that in verse 15. After the reading from the law and the prophets the leaders of the synagogue sent words to them saying brothers if you have a word of exhortation for the people please speak.

And so Paul has this opportunity this marvelous opportunity to stand up and to speak. And there's someone I think expecting to come in. Do you let them in? Thank you Mark.

So there's this invitation from Paul to speak to the people. And as I said he wants to zoom out and he wants to tell them all about their history. All about what God has been doing through the Jewish people for the blessing and salvation of the world. It's a wonderful story that Paul proclaims to them.

[4:49] It's a story of God's incredible grace shown to sinners. And it's a story that continues today. Perhaps as you've been sitting here this

morning hearing this passage read you might just be thinking what is this going to do with me. This feels like a situation far removed from me in in hundreds of years ago and a place far removed from Brighton in 2024. And yet it's actually so relevant this morning for us because it's a story we're invited into as well. So let's get into the sermon. Let's hear what Paul has to say to the the synagogue here. And we see two two things from this sermon. Firstly God's patient provision. God's patient provision. As he stands up he reminds the people first of all of how God had chosen them. Verse 16. Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God listen to me. The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors. He chose our ancestors.

Stands up to say that it wasn't them that chose God but he graciously chose them. We know the story in Genesis 3 well don't we? Adam and Eve living in this perfectly beautiful garden rebelled against the Lord.

And their sin and rebellion had cut them off from God. They were barred from him. And so human beings were without hope and without God in the world. But in Genesis chapter 12 God graciously called Abraham.

Out of all the people of the world he called this man Abraham. Of whom he made wonderful promises to. wonderful promises that he would do for him. They would have numerous descendants.

He said to him at one point look into the stars. Look at the stars. Can you count them? That's how many your descendants will be. You'll all count the grains of sands. Can you count them?

[7:13] That's how numerous your descendants will be. And yet he and his wife didn't have a child. It wasn't for many many years before their promised son Isaac came about in their very old age.

But this was the beginnings of God choosing his people. The beginnings of his promises promises for them and for the world to be worked out.

And we need to fast forward to find ourselves in Egypt. That's where Paul goes to next in this sermon. After reminding them of his choosing of these people he says in verse 17 he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt.

In spite of harsh labour in spite of the heat and the Pharaoh and his men being harsh taskmasters God prospered his people Paul says.

God grew them in number God continued to fulfil his promises to Abraham. And God provided them with a way out of slavery.

[8:36] Look at where Paul goes to next in verse 17 with mighty power he led them out of that country. With mighty power a mighty rescue happens.

This Pharaoh who was so hard hearted he wouldn't let the people go eventually relented. The people escaped from Egypt escaped slavery.

But then Pharaoh thought no I must have them back. And so sent his army to chase them down those horses and chariots that he had. And then God's people came to the Red Sea.

Uh oh. Stumbling block. How do we get through this? But God had mighty power and rescued them. This whole body of water in the way was no barrier for God rescuing his people.

and so he provided them a way through to pass through on dry ground as the sea rose up. A miraculous mighty provision for his people whilst Pharaoh and his army were drowned as we read in that psalm at the beginning.

[9:54] God provided for his people but we've called this point patient provision and we see why as we look at verse 18.

For about 40 years he endured their conduct in the wilderness. Now if I told you I enjoy spending time with you you would no doubt take that as a real compliment.

But if I said to you I put up with you that's not such a compliment is it? But that's essentially what Paul is saying here of how God felt with his people.

He endured their conduct in the wilderness. If you were to read the pages of the Old Testament you'd see how in the wilderness the people of God they grumbled they complained they wanted to turn back to Egypt.

where apparently life was all wonderful whilst forgetting that they were actually slaves there. Forgetting that God had miraculously mightily provided a way out for them.

[11:15] And whilst Moses was absent for a little while they even built a golden calf to worship instead of their great mighty rescuer gods.

My parents had a rule for us on a Sunday that we couldn't watch TV. Sundays were to be special different days in the week.

But little did they know that if they were out of the lounge for a while we would put the TV on. we were rebellious children. So too were God's people.

They were rebellious children. They didn't want to follow the God that had been so good to them, the God that had provided mighty rescue for them from the hands of the Egyptians.

And so God endured their conduct in the wilderness. As a reminder, a sobering reminder to us of how we can be like that too.

[12:26] Praise God that this morning we've got this reminder of communion but how often we'll go away and forget all too quickly what the Lord Jesus has done for us and how we need to be praying using maybe those words of the hymn Lord I'm prone to wander!

Prone to leave you the God I love! Here's my heart Lord take and seal it seal it from your courts above! God is patient and provides for his people still even though we're told he endured their conduct look at verse 19 and 20 where we're told by Paul he overthrew seven nations in Canaan giving their land to his people as their inheritance all this took about 450 years God was still patient with his people patient for 450 years of patience and he provided for his people he fulfilled his promises to Abraham of providing land for his people and blessing for his people and the patient provision continues for instance if you were to read the book of

Judges you'd see this sort of constant cycle of how the people rebelled against God they turned to idol worship but then oppression came from enemies and so they cried out to God for help and then he would raise up leaders judges to lead his people there would be a time of peace after the deliverance but then this cycle goes round again look at what Paul says about this halfway through verse 20 after this God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophets until the time of Samuel where some of us may remember it's not been that long ago where we as a church lit through 1 Samuel where we remember that the people asked for a king asked for a king because they were sort of rejecting God's rule over them saying we want to be like the other nations and so God was still good to them God was patient with them and God provided for them he provided them with King Saul he was a handsome and tall chap he looked the part but his heart was not right before the Lord but God still patiently provided for his people even in that time look at verse 22 after removing Saul he made David their king God testified concerning him I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart he will do everything I want him to do he God continued to patiently provide for his people and then we see in this sermon that God's promises were fulfilled God's promises fulfilled have a look there in verse 23 from this man's descendants

God has brought to Israel the saviour Jesus as he promised promises fulfilled to David and indeed to Abraham a providing a descendant a king who would rule on David's throne whose kingdom would never end God was providing this for his people he was a descendant a human being like you and I and yet also so unlike you and I have a look at what John says of him in verse 25 this is John the Baptist he said who do you suppose I am I am not the one you're looking for but there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie for the one coming after him was Jesus fully human and fully God God providing a saviour for his rebellious people in the form of himself fulfilling the promises of the

[17:09] Old Testament and we know that Jesus he suffered he died he was executed on a cross but rose again in great might God doing that for his people continuing to fulfill his promises to them and Paul points them to words of the Old Testament which were fulfilled he particularly goes to the Psalms verse 32 he says this we tell you the good news what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us their children by raising up Jesus as it is written in the second Psalm you are my son today I have become your father Psalm 2 a wonderful Psalm about God installing his king on Zion and this king is his son the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 34 we've got more words from the

Old Testament from Isaiah 55 words about making a covenant with David and Paul quotes from them saying I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David showing again that his promises to David are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus and it's shown even more clearly in verse 35 through these words of David and a psalm you will not let your holy one see decay I wasn't talking about David David died David was buried it was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ he did die he was buried he did see a tomb but only briefly for he's the one who will not see decay this is the big picture story of what

God was doing through his people Israel in the Old Testament this Jewish nation in spite of their faithfulness and their wanderings away God chose them they have this rich history of God working out his salvation purposes through them for them and for the world we've got three points of application from this firstly Jesus is for them Jesus is for them for these people verse 23! or verse 26 fellow children of Abraham and you God fearing Gentiles it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent and Paul talks about the message of salvation to them look at verse 27 look at the lengths Jesus went for his people the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath his own people didn't recognize him yet Jesus was going through this rejection of himself for them and then we read further though they found no proper ground for a death sentence they asked Pilate to have him executed when they had carried out all that was written about him they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb this was what Jesus was willing to go through for his people execution death burial not doing it for fun not doing it to make some sort of point but doing it to rescue them doing it because as we see through their history

God is a God of grace and then Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to many he was showing himself to be the risen saviour king this is a history maker this is an amazing thing that happens through them and so Jesus is for them that's what Paul wants to tell them verse 38 therefore my friends I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you he is for them and he is for you he's for you this morning verse 47 for this is what the Lord commanded us I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth God's promises to Abraham and his descendants were always intended for them and for the nations for [22:13] Jewish and Gentile people and so this morning we can say Jesus is for you Jesus is one who can save you for all of humankind needs a savior Jesus is for you secondly Jesus is salvation Paul declares this to these people in verse 39 through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses he's saying in Jesus you can be justified and when we see that word in the Bible we're to think sort of law court somebody standing before a judge they going to be pronounced guilty or innocent and in Israel's history as you look at all their wanderings in the wilderness their disobedience before

God their faithlessness how disobedient they were they would stand before God as guilty yet through them he works his grace through them his promises come about through them salvation is made known to the world and so Paul is saying in Jesus you can be justified in Jesus you can be declared righteous in my sight because your history shows us that you're sinful that you can't keep the law you can't do what God requires for you to be saved Paul wrote elsewhere in Galatians and this sermon is made in a region of Galatia he wrote this we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in

Jesus Christ perhaps this morning you're thinking but hang on it's okay Daniel I'm a good person I'm gonna be okay I'm gonna go to heaven and yet God's word shows us if you if you've ever even said a lie you have broken God's law so the law says no no you cannot be good enough for a holy God so God has come down in Jesus to live for us God has sent the savior for us it's been said of Christianity that sort of the difference between Christians and other Christianity and other religions is that all other religions say make your own way to God climb up this mountain get to God by yourself but Christianity says no you cannot get up that mountain if you try you will slip down and you will keep falling down because you can't make your own way to

God and so what's happened Jesus has come down the mountain to rescue you to bring you up for your trust in him and so Paul is saying don't try and justify yourself don't try and save yourself that's freeing for these Jewish people to hear after they've been reminded of their history that should be

freeing for us to hear too all of us have a history of one kind or another perhaps we look back on our lives and we think I'm just too bad for God the good news is this morning that in Jesus we find someone who has paid for every sin of yours in full if you look to him to save you it means that Christians this morning maybe you're feeling like you're not being a very Christian feeling a bit rubbish and defeated it's okay you can look in the mirror this morning and say God delights in me for in me he sees his son we trust in Jesus his work alone to save us in him alone we're justified and the third and final implication is this will you accept the free offer of forgiveness of sins will you accept it Paul warns them with these words from taken from Habakkuk verse 40 take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you look you scoffers wonder and perish for I'm going to do something in your days that you would never believe even if someone has told you don't be the scoffers he's saying

[27:29] God has been doing something wonderful in your history and yet we discover in verse 45 that the people Paul speaks to do you reject when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy they began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him which means as Paul says in verse 46 we had to speak the word of God to you first since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life we now turn to the Gentiles as they hear the gospel is proclaimed!

as they hear Jesus is for them they sadly choose to reject how sobering they've got a rich history of God's work through them how sobering to see their rejection of him and we need to pray for Jewish people to come and find the Lord Jesus as their saviour this marks this chapter sort of is marking a new stage really in the book of Acts we've been gearing up for in recent chapters as the word of God is now fully spreading into Gentile territory Paul will keep preaching to the Jewish people his pattern often is go to the synagogue first preach the Jew first and then to the Gentile because theologically Paul says the gospel is for Jew first then for Gentile but the pattern is so sadly often Jewish rejection and

Gentiles accepting the word to the point this morning as we look at this as we read this the question that we have for ourselves this morning from this passage is how will we respond will we accept or continue to accept the free offer of salvation in the Lord Jesus or will we reject will we say no to God I'm going my own way to sing well we're going to respond by singing our next hymn which is a hymn which celebrates and looks up to God's grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ and we say at the end of each verse yeah not I but through Christ in me we'll stand and sing as the musicians lead us to