

# Study on Acts no.10

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 June 1985

Preacher: Rev Murdo Alex Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn now to the chapter we read, the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 13, reading at verse 38.

Acts 13, verse 38. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Amen. Resuming our studies in the book of Acts, we've reached a stage where the headquarters of the Christian Church had moved from Jerusalem to Antioch.

A fortnight ago we considered the well-known words that it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. It was from Antioch as well that the Church took a great and decisive step when it decided to extend its borders by way of missionary outreach.

And so we read in this chapter that the Church leaders separated Barnabas and Saul of Tarshish and they commissioned them to go on this missionary journey.

[ 1 : 55 ] The journey would just become known as the first missionary journey. They were relieved from their regular responsibilities with the Church in Antioch and directed by the Church and led, as we read in verses 2 and 3, by the Holy Spirit to go on this missionary outreach.

This took place roughly about 12, 13 years after the events of Pentecost and perhaps about 8 years after the conversion of Saul.

And the account that we have of the journey in chapters 13 and 14 of this book would span about two to maybe even three years. We are not to think that the disciples rushed through this kind of journey.

It took a matter of weeks and then reported back to the Church at Antioch. It took about three years for them to complete this journey. A journey that took them through the island of Cyprus and into the region of Galatia where the incident that day, the sermon that Paul preached took place and from which the words of our text are taken tonight.

It was in Pisidia Antioch that Paul preached this sermon that takes up most of the 13th chapter of the Acts.

[ 3 : 41 ] And it was probably while he was there that he contacted either the illness that he is supposed to have suffered from or at least that some of the effects of a weakness, a physical weakness that he carried about with him came to light.

It came to light in Galatia because we read in the letter that he subsequently wrote to the churches in Galatia that he was thankful and profoundly thankful for the way that they dealt with him during his infirmity.

When others may have turned against him because of this particular illness or physical weakness that he suffered from, when others may have turned against him, they, as he puts it to himself, they would have given him literally their very eyes.

It was during this first missionary journey then that that illness or that weakness came to light in a particular way. Now the usual method, as we read the rest of the book of Acts and follow their missionary journeys, the usual method that was adopted by the apostles once they entered into a town or city or region was that they had a good look around and they discussed things with the people and then presented the gospel to them.

And as you can see, if the opportunity presented itself for them to attend the synagogue services where the Jews usually congregated when matters of religious import were discussed, if it was possible for them to go to a place like that, they went.

[ 5 : 30 ] And they made use of the opportunity given to them to address the congregation that was there gathered. That was what happened this particular Sabbath in Galatia.

And it happened as well the following Sabbath. And the reaction to the sermon that they preached we will discuss in a moment. Paul and Barnabas were invited by the Jewish synagogue leader to address the people.

And the sermon that follows, it is claimed, was probably suggested to Paul by the prescribed passages that were read in the synagogue that Sabbath day.

You know that when the scriptures are read, there are prescribed passages of the scriptures read in the synagogue every Sabbath. And there are some who believe, looking at the sermon that he preached, that it was based upon readings probably from the first chapter of Deuteronomy and the first chapter of Isaiah.

Isaiah, be that as it may, the sermon that we have is full of references to Old Testament scripture. [ 6 : 45 ] And it falls into three parts. The first part, verses 16 to 25, speaks of the coming of Jesus into the world as the culmination of Jewish religious history or as the culmination of Old Testament prophecy.

And then the second part, verses 26 to 37, speaks of the fundamental facts of the gospel about Jesus, again supported by prophecy, and mainly Psalms 2 and Psalm 16.

Here he speaks about the life and the ministry and the sufferings and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And as he presents the facts, he presents them within the context of the Bible, within the context of Old Testament prophecy.

Notice how Paul always speaks like this. This is what the Bible says about Jesus in his sufferings, in his death and his resurrection and so on.

[ 7 : 59 ] And then the last part of the sermon, verses 38 to 41, which forms a piece of our text here tonight. He extends the offer of salvation through faith in Christ to all his hearers with the solemn warning against the neglect of this message.

So you see, in this sermon, Paul first gives a history of redemption. He tells the story of the cross, and he insists upon the resurrection of the Savior.

And then he comes to close and personal dealings with the souls of those who were gathered before him. And he applies his teaching to them, and he warns them not to neglect this truth.

In other words, he presents the gospel to his hearers, and he applies it to their consciences. Now, this is the hallmark of New Testament and apostolic preaching.

The presentation of the facts of the gospel, and an appeal to the hearer to believe what is being presented to them.

[ 9 : 22 ] And the great subject that he deals with here in the application of the sermon is the forgiveness of sins.

And I want very briefly to discuss with you here tonight, to consider with you two or three things. First of all, the channel through which forgiveness is communicated. Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified, and so on.

Forgiveness through Jesus Christ. And then consider the way in which this blessing of forgiveness is obtained by us.

It is through faith in Jesus Christ, because all that believe in him are justified.

And then thirdly, look at the blessing itself. The blessing of forgiveness and its connection with justification and with faith.

[ 10 : 36 ] And then finally, consider with you those to whom the offer of forgiveness is extended. Unto you is this forgiveness offered.

First of all then, the channel through which it is communicated. It is through this man.

Now what Paul is here saying is what the New Testament emphasizes over and over again, and what people are probably tired of hearing, that there is salvation in no other name but in Jesus Christ.

This is what we speak of when we speak of the exclusiveness of the Christian faith. There is no way in which a man, a woman, or a woman, boy or a girl, can have his sins forgiven, but through Jesus Christ.

The only person who can forgive our sins is God. And the only channel through which he can do it is through Christ Jesus.

[ 11 : 41 ] Now there are, the New Testament abounds with references to this teaching. Take Jesus himself. It was, it was this claim that he made, that he could forgive sins, that angered, beyond description, the Jews.

They were furious with him for claiming to forgive sins. Can anyone forgive sins? They said, but God. Therein Jesus was illustrating, teaching his own equality with God as the one who could forgive sins, and who alone could forgive sins.

It was Jesus again who said, no man can come unto the Father but by me. It was Jesus who said, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

In him, says Paul, again and again to the churches, we have redemption through his blood. And here, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

Now, this is what is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. It was for this reason that Jesus came into the world. His coming into the world is rooted in the sin of man.

[ 12 : 59 ] There is no way in which you can adequately explain the birth of Jesus into the world apart from the sin of man.

Why did he come? He came, says the Bible, to die for sinners. As Rabbi Duncan put it, he was born to die.

And he was born so that he might go on to die for the sins of his people.

And the whole Old Testament economy, says Paul, in this sermon in Antioch and Pisidia, the whole New Testament history pointed forward to this great event, to the coming of this man into the world, Jesus Christ, to die for sinners.

And as I said, this is what you have at the heart of the Christian gospel. Jesus Christ, our substitute. Jesus Christ, our sin-bearer. Jesus Christ, this man of whom I say I said of old, his chastisement of our peace was upon him.

[ 14 : 14 ] He was dealt with by God because he was the sin-bearer in this world. And there is no possible way in which our sins can be forgiven by God or by anybody else but through Jesus Christ.

And Paul goes on to say this in verse 39. By whom, he says, all that believe are justified from things which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Now, what exactly is Paul saying here? I tend to think that there are people, particularly young people, when they come across a word like this in the New Testament, they tend to almost to forget that the word is there at all.

They don't bother to try to understand the meaning of this word, a meaning of a word like justified.

And there are some people who tend to think that even in preaching, we should avoid the use of words like justified or justification, redemption, sanctification, and so on.

Well, I, for one, don't subscribe to that view, but I do subscribe to the view that when the words are used, they ought to be explained. And there is a very real and inseparable connection between forgiveness and justification.

[ 15 : 51 ] And the connection is this. It is the person who is justified by God whose sins are forgiven by God.

That is the connection. It is the person who is justified by God whose sins are forgiven by God. So far, so good.

But that doesn't explain the meaning of the word justified. What do you mean when you say the person who is justified by God? Well, what I mean by this is this.

The person whose relation to God is put right. That's the person whose sins are forgiven. A justified person, in other words, is a person whose standing before God is put right.

Now, of course, that teaches us something else. That before a person is justified, his standing is all wrong. And it is all wrong because of sin. And this is what sin has done for us.

[ 16 : 58 ] You see, he's talking here about forgiveness of sins. And Paul is explaining to people how sin and unforgiven sin leaves them in the presence of God.

And how it leaves them is this. It leaves them exposed to his wrath. It leaves them lost in their sin. Or it leaves them with their relation to God all wrong.

They are all wrong in their relation to God. They don't speak to one another. There's no communication between them, between the unforgiven or the unjustified sinner and God.

There is no peace in the unjustified sinner's heart. There is no contact, living, saving contact with God. There is no desire after God.

There is no love for God. There is no thirst for God. There is no knowledge of God. There is just, as the New Testament tells us, there is just this person, there is just this spiritual death.

[ 18 : 00 ] He's dead in sins. He is, or to use another image, he is lying on his back, living in his own sin, or living in that kind of spiritual death.

And what happens in justification is this. God comes near to that sinner, and he takes him, and he puts his standing right. He puts him right in his relationship with God himself.

Remember the way the psalmist put in Psalm 40, maybe we should have sung that psalm here tonight. He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

There is the picture of a justified sinner in the presence of God. God takes that man, woman, boy or girl, puts his standing right, and puts his relationship to God right.

And in that act, two things take place. His sins are forgiven, and he is restored to the favor, and to the fellowship of God.

[ 19 : 20 ] His sins are forgiven, and he is restored to the favor, and to the fellowship of God. And it is with the first of these privileges that Paul is here dealing.

This is what the gospel offers to all who hear this blessing of the forgiveness of sins. But before I leave there, before I come to discuss more fully with you the meaning of forgiveness, let me just mention this.

That our standing tonight before God is best, as he says here, not on what we can do in accordance with the law of Moses.

Now, a way of putting that simply is this. It isn't your good works that are going to justify you before God. It isn't your obedience to the law of God that is going to put your standing right before God. Even if you accept here tonight, as I'm sure you will, that you, like everybody else, is a sinner. Even if you accept that unforgiven as you are, that you are cut off from the life, and the fellowship, and the favor of God, even accepting that and admitting it, perhaps you're here and you still think that you can do your best someday to win the favor and the fellowship and the forgiveness of God.

[ 20 : 51 ] No, my friend, that is where you're thinking it's all wrong. Nothing that you will ever do will restore you to the favor of God. Nothing that you will ever do will win for you the forgiveness of sins.

By him, he says, all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

And what he's saying is this. It is only by believing in Jesus Christ, it is only by accepting God's way of forgiveness and God's method of justification and God's provision of righteousness, it is only by accepting Christ that your sins can be forgiven and you're standing to right before God.

Now, as you know, this is the clear teaching of the New Testament. This is what the doctrine of justification by faith alone is all about.

That God sent his Son into the world to die for sinners. Christ and what he did becomes, as the New Testament says, our righteousness.

[ 22 : 15 ] We come into the presence of God by faith pleading the marriage of Jesus Christ, making mention of his righteousness and claiming that as the ground of our acceptance and then God justifies the ungodly who believes in God.

That's the connection. Christ was sent as our righteousness. He obeyed the law and therefore it isn't as Paul says over and over again by any works of righteousness that we have done but by the righteousness of Christ or by the finished work of Christ.

That's how we come. That's the basis on which we come. That's our warrant for coming. What Christ has done. And therefore we plead before Jesus Christ tonight not the labors of my hands but the labors of Christ.

Not what we do but what he has done. What he has done and the reason why so many of you may be in an unconverted state tonight it's because you have failed to come in that way to God.

You come in your own way and with your own works and with your own righteousness and you don't submit yourselves to the righteousness of God which is Christ and Christ alone.

[ 23 : 45 ] That's the ground on which we come. These are the men that we plead and that's the name that we come with.

And God accepts justifies the person who believes in Jesus Christ. And there is no other way in which forgiveness or blessing or favor can be communicated to anybody through this man.

Now I hope that that is clear to each one of us. And that leads us secondly to consider the blessing itself. Forgiveness of sins.

As a sinful soul aware of our sins recognizing the awfulness and the evil of our sin realizing the danger to which sin exposes us hating hating ourselves because of our sin and crying for help we look away by faith to Jesus Christ.

We look to him alone for salvation. And what does he offer to us? Forgiveness. Now all you who are here tonight having made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as those whose sins have been forgiven by God through faith in Christ I wonder how you would define this term forgiveness.

[ 25 : 32 ] What is forgiveness? And then how do you know that you are forgiven? Can you know that you are forgiven?

If a person like C.H. Spurgeon and a great Baptist minister could say I know he said as sure as the sun is in the sky that my sins were forgiven by God one day how could he know that?

How could he know it? And how can you know tonight that your sins are forgiven? What is forgiveness then? Well remember the order that we saw God provided righteousness for us Jesus Christ the sin bearer and we come in the name of Jesus Christ to seek forgiveness you've heard the story no doubt of the Roman soldier who was condemned to death and his brother who was who had been who was battle scarred fighting at the front for the for the republic came and stood and pleaded for his brother and said my brother he said deserves to die he has done nothing that merits that he should live but I present my scars for his sake and I ask that for my sake he be pardoned now forgiveness comes to us in that way it comes to us through faith in

Jesus Christ he is our security he is the one who merits forgiveness for us now the forgiveness that he that he offers to us presupposes two things the reality of our own sin and the unworthiness and the demerit that is connected with us you see you and he you and I here tonight we carry around with us two things the reality of our own sin and the guilt that that sin has accumulated in our lives because of it the unforgiven sinner is under a sentence of condemnation but when God forgives a sinner he forgives all his sins past past present and future and in

Jesus Christ he obtains from God all that Christ entitles him to and that's everything that God is able to communicate to him he is entitled to all that Christ died to win and to gain foreign he is entitled in Christ to the peace of God that passeth all understanding and when his sins are forgiven God as the Bible tells us blots out all his transgressions blots them out blots out everything that he ever did everything that he does and everything that he will ever do all his sins come under the forgiveness of God himself and that may present a problem to some of you why is it then if a person's sins past present and future are forgiven by God why is it that I have to seek forgiveness for my sins every day that I live because that is involved that is involved in the life of faith that the

[ 29 : 28 ] Christian lives what is a Christian in one sense a Christian is this he is a sinner who comes to God continually that his sins may be forgiven and he comes with the assurance that his sins will be forgiven he comes in faith to a God whom he knows will forgive his sins and that's his only hope tonight in the presence of God that's his confidence before God that God forgives that with God there is plenteous redemption found no matter the nature of the sin of the degree no matter the kind of sin he comes knowing that God will forgive his sins in Christ now if God forgives all these sins forgives them immediately forgives them fully and forgives them freely if I accept that how can I know that my sins tonight are forgiven well in the first place the person whose sins are forgiven as I've said is restored or that is restored to him the peace of God but then some person may say but I don't have any feeling of peace in my heart tonight who said that this word speaks about feeling feeling good who said that that is what the peace of God in the human heart means

I believe there are many people tonight whose souls are burdened whose life is severely tried and yet who have wonderful peace with God they may not feel good about it what then is it to have peace with God it is this it is to be perfectly reconciled to God's way of forgiveness that's the peace of God to be at peace in the way in which he forgives through this man and there may be people in this church tonight as I said whose lives may be in turmoil and yet who rejoice in their heart who rejoice in the inner man that they are at peace with God in the way of redemption in the way of forgiveness they wouldn't accept forgiveness in any other way but through faith in Jesus

Christ that's how you may know one way in which you may know that your sins are forgiven another way in which you may know it is this that the sins that are forgiven you are sins that you hate it doesn't mean that it doesn't mean that your life is rid of the experience of sin to have your sins forgiven doesn't mean that you live forever more without any knowledge of sin that's not it at all but

you live thereafter without conflict with sin in your life this is the way this is the new testament picture of the forgiven believer he's a person who is forever wrestling with his sin forever engaged in his conflict locked in his battle to his dying day with a sin that tries to overcome as he by the grace of God seeks to overcome his sin that's another way in which you can know that your sins are forgiven not just because there is a conflict in your heart with a sinful nature but because there is a conflict in your heart with a sinful nature that you hate you remember that there are people tonight locked in conflict with sin in their lives they know they know what sin is doing to them but they can't extricate themselves from the conflict because they love the sin that causes so much turmoil in their life but the

Christian doesn't love a sin he hates it the person whose sins are forgiven is a person who hates his sin and then there is this sure way in which you can know forgiveness of sin the person whose sins are forgiven loves the Lord who forgave him remember that wonderful incident recorded in Luke's Gospel chapter 7 of the Pharisee's house to which Jesus was invited and he met there a woman whose sins had been forgiven you remember that she anointed his feet and the Pharisee found fault with her and Jesus said I came into this house you invited me but you didn't wash my feet as this woman has done she has done this he said because her sins are forgiven and she they who have been forgiven much love much you see forgiveness shows itself in love love is the fruit of forgiveness love prompts you to action for those who have done so much for you and love prompts a forgiven sinner to act

Godward in the way of gratitude thanksgiving saying with the psalmist what shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts to me are you forgiven now do you know now that your sins have been forgiven by the Lord do you know that he has cancelled the debt removed the guilt that he has washed you and is washing you and purging you from your sin have you been restored to the favour of God do you know what it is to rejoice in the peace of God that passeth all understanding do you know where to come to the sin that oppresses you and distresses you and you and you and the sins that bind the conscience the sins that fill people with dread regarding the future the sins of youth and the sins of old age do you know what it is to come to one who can forgive completely and fully and irreversibly and who can do it right now through faith in Christ which leads me to say just a word in conclusion about those to whom this offer is extended unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins unto you well I suppose we could say like this that anyone anyone who comes to

[ 36 : 37 ] Jesus Christ by faith can avail himself of this great blessing no matter who you are unto you whether you are old or young whether you are distressed or concerned about your sin you whose life has been given to the service of sin in whatever way you people who are disobedient to the will to the will of God you who are here tonight it was to those who stood before him that Paul preached this message of forgiveness those who were present in that synagogue had the privilege of having the offer of forgiveness extended to them same way as those who are present in this church tonight have the privilege extended to them you there are hundreds in this town of Stornoway who aren't here tonight who aren't in any place of worship they by their actions have put themselves outwith the pale of this offer tonight but you haven't you who are here present in this building this offer is extended to you maybe there are some members of your family absent from this congregation but you are not and therefore to you is the offer of this forgiveness extended some people that you know whom you have known through the years aren't with you here tonight they used to be but they're not here they're in eternity now but you're not you are here and to you is the offer of forgiveness extended some people refuse to come with you maybe tonight but you haven't refused to come you're here and to you is therefore the offer of this salvation extended you to whom God has been so good and you haven't responded to his goodness to you is the offer of salvation and forgiveness extended perhaps you're here tonight recovered from some serious illness you've prayed for forgiveness you made all sorts of promises to God which you didn't fulfill once you got better and here you are tonight to you is the offer of forgiveness extended perhaps you're tonight having been delivered from a disaster that overtook other people delivered from the very jaws of death unforgiven but you're here and therefore to you is this offer extended to you maybe who are here tonight you've never heard of the offer of forgiveness before there were some in

Antioch Pisidia who hadn't heard it Paul preached the same message the following Sabbath some people who had never heard this believed there may be people in this church night I don't know you've never heard this before well the offer is extended to you tonight of course there are many of

you the majority of you who have heard of this before the majority of people before Paul and the synagogue had heard of the forgiveness of God but they hadn't heard of the channel through which God communicated that forgiveness but they had heard in a general vague kind of way about the forgiveness of God from others you have been privileged to have heard this over the years you haven't availed yourself of it to you the offer is extended yet again there were some people to whom Paul preached who reacted violently to this extent to this offer when the

Jews saw the multitude they were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul contradicting and blaspheming there are some people don't like this kind of emphasis and you may be here tonight and you don't like this kind of emphasis either perhaps the very moment that you hear the application of the gospel to yourself as an individual your head goes down and you're desperate to get away from the church this is a part of the service you don't like you begin to react rather unkindly to this kind of application to the direct personal kind of approach someone once found fault with the man I mentioned earlier C.H.

Spurgeon said to have said of him I don't like that man he said he's far too personal he reached his ears and he replied to the charge my friend he said I will never be personal enough in the presentation and the application of the gospel and it's high time that you realize this that this comes not to your wife but to you not to your husband but to you not to your child but to you not to your mother or father but to you not to your friend but to you not to your brother or your sister it comes forgiveness to you however you may react God is gracious to you my friend in that once again he extends the offer of forgiveness to you you may dislike it you may turn against it you may feel uncomfortable under this kind of approach and under this kind of appeal you may not like the message or you may not like the messenger but the wonder of wonders is that unto you is this forgiveness offered and then of course there were those who did love the message and there were those who were glad and glorified the word of the

Lord and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed and you may say ah but there's the problem for me I don't know if I'm ordained to eternal life well neither do I but I know this there's one way in which you can prove it that is by believing what is offered to you accepting the Christ through whom forgiveness comes because remember there's this warning that he addressed to his hearers behold and this ye despise and wonder and perish for I work I work in your days I work which you shall in no wise believe though a man declared unto you and that's exactly the point let me say this to you in conclusion the only thing that stands between you tonight and the forgiveness of all your sins is your own unwillingness to come that your sins may be forgiven by God through faith in Christ the offer comes to you it is extended to you once again commended to your faith commended to the exercise of faith and the question for you my friend as you sit under it yet again is this am I going to receive by faith what God so fully and so freely offers me in Christ let us pray

[ 44 : 46 ] O Lord we pray for thy blessing to accompany the word of thy grace we thank thee that the work of blessing is in thy hand thou art able to do it and thou alone thou art the God of our salvation bless us we pray thee under the gospel apply it with power to our hearts and go before us now and forgive all our sins for Jesus sake Amen