

Digging Deeper – Acts 13:14–41

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Sermon Series: *Relentless*

Sermon Subject: *Paul's First Sermon*

Day 1

Read Acts 11:19–30; 12:25; and 13:1–12 for a broader understanding of the setting behind this week's scripture lesson, and pray for Spiritual Knowledge. Following are important facts. The Church in Antioch was one of five episcopal jurisdictions of the Roman Empire, and multiple non-Jewish cities during these times were called Antioch. However, biblical writers were apparently only interested in two of them, Pisidian Antioch and Syrian Antioch, as both played a key role in early Christianity. After Stephen's martyrdom, many Jewish Diasporas settled in Syrian Antioch and started preaching to God-fearing Gentiles who associated themselves with the Jewish faith and practices. Church elders in Jerusalem got word of it and sent Barnabas to Antioch to be an eyewitness to this religious expansion. Barnabas then went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him back to Antioch, and for a whole year, the two met with the church and taught great numbers of people (Acts 11:26a and b). In Acts 11:26c, original "followers of the Way" first became known as "Christians" in Syrian Antioch. Barnabas and Saul (who was also called Paul) were sent by the Holy Spirit to travel from Syrian Antioch to Cyprus. Part of Paul's first missionary journey took him and his companions from Paphos in Cyprus to Pisidian Antioch through Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13, 14a). It was in Pisidian Antioch where Paul's first sermon was preached (Acts 13:16–41). Pisidian Antioch is also believed to be the first city to have had a fully Gentile Christian community. One final side note, John was a companion of Barnabas and Saul as they traveled from Jerusalem to Cyprus by way of Syrian Antioch (Acts 12:25). John, who is also called Mark was Barnabas' cousin and is the author of the second Gospel in the New Testament.

Day 2

Read Acts 13:14–16 and pray for Spiritual Relentlessness. In these verses, we find that Barnabas and Paul entered the synagogue to sit and read from the Law (Torah) and the Prophets. During their respectful observance of the Sabbath, the synagogue leaders sent an urgent request to Barnabas and Paul to speak words of encouragement to the people as an intimate call to their fellow believers. Paul stood up in confidence and asked his fellow Israelites and Gentiles who worship Yahweh (God) to listen to what he had to say.

Day 3

Read Acts 13:17–22 and pray for Spiritual Obedience. Paul began preaching his first sermon in Pisidian Antioch by summarizing the covenant Yahweh made with the Israelites, his chosen ones. Paul's message to the people began with a chronological record of Yahweh's unwavering love demonstrated by delivering their Israelite ancestors from bondage, tolerating their underappreciation, disrespect and disobedience, conquering seven nations in Canaan, and gifting them with this coveted land as an inheritance. Paul proclaimed that Yahweh gave them several judges, then a seer, priest, judge, military leader and prophet in Samuel whom He loved. Against his wishes, Yahweh gave Israel their first king who was Saul, son of Kish.

After removing Saul from leadership, Yahweh made David, son of Jesse their king, who was a man of His own heart.

Day 4

Read Acts 13:23–31 and pray for Spiritual Fulfillment. Paul then focused his sermon on Yahweh's greatest gift of all. He declared that Yahweh brought Israel a Savior in Yeshua (Jesus), His only begotten Son, who was delivered to the world through the bloodline of David the king. Prior to Yeshua being recognized, John the Baptizer preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. John also attempted to turn Israel's attention away from himself while preparing them for the One they were looking for who was coming after him. In verse 26, Paul emphasized to all within the sound of his voice that "it was to them that this message of salvation was sent." Paul explained that even after John forewarned the people of Jerusalem and their rulers, they did not recognize Yeshua as their Lord and Savior. What they failed to realize was that by condemning him, they were actually fulfilling the same prophecy that they read repetitively every Sabbath. Paul proclaimed that their denial of him, to include his brutal death and burial, carried out all that was written about him. Yahweh raised Yeshua from the dead as fulfillment of the promise that he made to the serpent back in Genesis 3:15. Yeshua rose from the grave having paid the blood atonement for the sin of the world and conquered death forever. Thus, the Seed of the woman crushed the head of the serpent.

Day 5

Read Acts 13:32–37 and pray for Spiritual Acceptance. Paul proclaimed in verse 32 that he and Barnabas were giving the people in the synagogue the good news because what Yahweh promised to their ancestors, he had fulfilled for them by raising up Yeshua. Since Yeshua was resurrected three days following his death, his body never experienced decay (verse 35). However, when David died, as great as he was in the eyes of Yahweh and Israel, he was buried with his ancestors and his body eventually decayed. Paul also quoted scripture from Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16 that makes reference to the divine relationship between Yahweh and Yeshua, the blessing Yahweh promised to David, and the resurrecting power, respectively, which I encourage you to read.

Day 6

Read Acts 13:38–41 and pray for Spiritual Freedom. Paul concludes his first sermon by assuring the people in the synagogue that through Yeshua, the forgiveness of sins is available to everyone who believes. This freedom from sin is a justification that was not obtainable under the Law of Moses that many Israelites read faithfully every Sabbath. Paul closed his sermon out with a reminder to his audience to be wise and know that evil in this world is allowed to exist but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness. Read Habakkuk 1:5 as reference to Acts 13:41.