

Salvation in God's Son.

Acts 13:26-37.

Sunday morning, November 14, 2010.

The danger of blind religious devotion or zeal. Vs. 26-31.

I. Having enumerated the grace of God in the history of the covenant people, Israel, Paul now brings God's grace to the Jews that are living far and wide, scattered throughout the world, away from the land of Israel. "To you the word of this salvation has been sent." Vs. 26. The Diaspora, (or dispersion) as it is called, was part of the judgment of God on unbelieving Israel, as the Lord had driven them away from their own land and His presence in their midst in Jerusalem.

To them, and to all those who with them had learned to fear God, that is to listen for, and to listen to, His voice, the word of this salvation was sent. Vs 26.

Applications:

1. What comfort there is in these words, for they show us that no matter how far we have strayed, or have fled, from His face. The Lord comes after us, and He finds us, and He says to us: "To you the word of this salvation has been sent."

2. These words show us also that it does not matter who we are, for the message was not only sent to the scattered sons of the family of Abraham, but to all those who fear God, that is to those who would listen to, and for, the voice of God.

Is that you this morning? Does the Lord have your attention? Or have your heart and mind been captured by what you will do this afternoon, or tonight, or tomorrow? As such you can not, and you will not hear from the Lord in the remaining minutes we are together before Him.

II. There is a reason that the "word of this salvation" has come to the family of Abraham, scattered far and wide, and indeed to all who had learned to fear God.

It was because Israel's leaders back home in Jerusalem did not know the Christ, their long awaited Messiah, when He came to them. Nor did they understand the voices the prophets, who spoke of His coming, although they read from them every Sabbath. And so they rejected Him, and unjustly had Him put to death by forcing the hand of Pilate, and having Him crucified. But God reversed and overruled their verdict and raised Him from the dead and showed Him alive to many witnesses for many days. Not merely alive, but God gave him to us as a Prince and a Savior, that in Him we might have the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with our most holy God, and every blessing of everlasting life.

What went wrong with Israel's leaders that they could not recognize the Messiah when God sent Him to them, and that they could not understand the prophets who had spoken of His coming?

A. They lacked the one essential ingredient Paul alludes to in his audience when he says "those among you who fear God." Vs. 26. It is a looking to God; a seeking after and asking for Him; it is a listening to, and for, His voice speaking in the Scriptures; a doing so out of a sense of our own need for Him.

- B. This is what the Lord means when He says “Let him who has ears hear.” This is what it means to have eyes and not to be blind. John 9:39-41 and Rev. 2:7, 11, 17
- C. The lack of this one essential quality, notwithstanding your great learning and accomplishments in religious matters, also means that you can not be taught by the Lord, nor can you hear His voice. It puts you in the same category as Israel’s leaders when the Lord walked upon the earth. It also means that, short of repentance, you will share a common end with them, and be eternally lost.
- D. The lack of this one essential quality means that you are cast back on yourself; on your own ability to “hear” and to “see;” your own ability to discern and to learn. In short it means that you have faith in yourself. And that is the reason you get nothing from the Lord.
- E. To enter into God’s Kingdom and to live in it you have to become little and lowly and needy, and learn to expect all good to come from God alone. “Blest are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven; blest are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:3,6.
 “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant”. Psalm 25:14.
- F. Why do we get nothing out of worship?
 We do not get anything because we do not come with a sense of our own wretchedness, blindness deafness poverty and need. We fail to come as humble and hungry beggars, and loathsome and undeserving ones besides.
 The fact that we walk away empty handed is not because of the Lord’s stinginess, for He gives freely and liberally; it is our own hard-heartedness.
- G. What do we do about it?
 The Laodicean Christians were counseled to buy eye salve from the Lord so that they might see their own wretchedness and need. Revelation 3:18.
 Our generation of Christians, broadly considered, has turned worship into a production and a performance; we have turned the altar into the stage; all in an attempt to get something from God. And for many it creates an illusion that they are getting something from God, but it is not what they ultimately need.

Application:

When you get nothing out of worship there may be two reasons:

1. It may be because of the lousy preacher, who’s got no talent, and who did not prepare, and perhaps he doesn’t even know the Lord. There is no excuse for that, but this is never the only reason, for God’s word is still God’s word.
2. You have lost sight of the reality of what you are in yourself; your own wretchedness, nakedness, poverty, and loathsomeness in the eyes of God because of the pride and high mindedness with which you carry yourself in spite of what you are.
 So the Lord sends you away empty handed to increase your misery, so that you may come with a right spirit and attitude the next time.
3. The deadness; the dullness, and the boredom we experience in worship flow directly from the ignorance of our true condition before God. Worship is always “the same” because God’s covenant; His provisions, and our need are always the same. Pray that the Lord may show you your need and His grace, and in that order!