

WORSHIP SERVICE - 9.7.2025

PART 31 - WHO IS WORTHY OF ETERNAL LIFE

I. INTRODUCTION

- Who is worthy of eternal life?
- If you asked your co-workers, family members, or classmates that question, you would get a variety of typical responses:
 - The person who does good.
 - Those who try their best to help people.
 - The devoutly religious person.
 - Hopefully you've considered that question.
- In Acts 13, we come to Paul's first recorded sermon. And he addresses this idea of who is worthy of eternal life.
 - Eternal life does not belong to those who think they're good enough.
 - The reality is those who seemed the most religious, the synagogue leaders and the devout Jews, in rejecting Jesus Christ, judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.
 - But the Gentiles, those considered outsiders, unclean, who knew they had no claim to God, received the good news with joy and were saved, they were deemed worthy of eternal life.
 - Our passage is one that unveils the scandalous, glorious gospel and it's this—No one is worthy of eternal life in and of themselves. But through Christ, God freely and graciously gives forgiveness of sins and justifies all who believe.

Acts 13:13-25

Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, 14 but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it." 16 So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 And for about forty years he put up with [b](#) them in the wilderness. 19 And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' 23 Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he

promised. 24 Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

II. THE STORY: JESUS THE CULMINATION OF REDEPTIVE HISTORY

- The chapter begins with the Holy Spirit speaking and ends with the disciples being filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. It is all a work and endeavor of the Spirit of God.
- Paul and his companions leave the island of Cyprus and sail to Perga in Pamphylia to the north.
- We have a short anecdotal statement that John left them and returned to Jerusalem. We don't know why he left, but in chapter 15 we'll see there is more to this story.
- From there they travel further north to Antioch in Pisidia; this is not the same Antioch that is in the region of Syria from which they started their journey.
- This Antioch is in the region of Galatia.
- Pisidian Antioch was a Roman colony built on a major trade route.
- It had a significant Jewish population and there was a synagogue where Jews and God-fearing Gentiles gathered weekly.
- We see this pattern in Acts of the apostles going first to the Jews.
- On the Sabbath day, Paul and Barnabas go to the synagogue and sit down.
- It was customary for visiting teachers and rabbis to be invited to speak at the end of the service.
- Paul was recognized by the leaders and they invited him to speak.
- And Paul seizes the opportunity. He recognizes God has opened this door for him to proclaim Christ.
- We need to be ready when God opens doors to share his Word and proclaim Christ.
- He is not going to preach a random message, what he does is so masterful, he connects the dots between Israel's history, the law and the prophets, and the fulfillment of Israel's redemptive history which culminates in Christ.
- He summarizes Israel's history by hitting the highlights—from the patriarchs all the way to John the Baptist.
- Paul emphasizes God's faithfulness and actions.
- He chose the fathers.
- He made the people great when they were in Egypt.
- He delivered them out of Egypt by his mighty hand.
- He put up with them in the wilderness.
- He gave them the land he had promised to their fathers as an inheritance.
- He raised up judges to rescue them.
- When they asked for a king, God gave them Saul.
- Then God raised up David to be their king. From David's line would come the promised forever King.
- God sent them John to prepare the way of the Savior, Jesus, who is the fulfillment of it all.
- The whole story is about how God has been faithful even in the face of Israel's unfaithfulness.
- All of the emphasis is on God's mercy, his election of Israel, his prospering them, his rescuing them, his gift of the promised land as an inheritance, his gift of rulers and kings.

- The whole story is God's grace unfolding promise by promise.
- And the climax of the story isn't how awesome Israel is—it's Christ's coming.
- He is the promised Son of David and the Savior John announced.
- The whole point of the story is that the point of the story is Christ.
- Jesus is the climax of redemptive history.
- If you miss Jesus, you've missed the whole thing.

III. THE SAVIOR: JESUS THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Acts 13:26-37

"Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 27 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. 28 And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

"You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'

34 And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, 37 but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

- Paul details that the message of this salvation was sent to them.
- They missed him! They failed to recognize him!
- Not only did the prophets tell them he was coming, he was right in front of them.
- Those who were living in Jerusalem and their rulers, stand condemned.
- They didn't pay attention to the prophets and they didn't pay attention to Jesus.
- Ironically, Israel has fulfilled the words of the prophets by condemning Jesus.
- Israel's history is filled with rebellion, disgrace and shame.
- Paul is implicating the Jews who are listening to his message, they have to see their guilt also.
- But it was all part of God's plan.
- Israel's betrayal of her Messiah, her Savior, was foreordained by God.
- Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would suffer and be rejected by his own. (Is. 53)
- Acts 13:32-33 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus,

- The good news is the promise!
- The good news is that God raised Jesus. He fulfilled that promise.
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:3).
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to Moses (Deut. 18:15-18).
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to David (2 Sam. 7:16).
- Paul interprets three OT passages as finding their fulfillment in Christ.
- Psalm 2:7 which was originally spoken of David as Yahweh's king but ultimately it points to Jesus who was raised up and exalted to the right hand of the Father.
- Isaiah 55:3 Jesus is the recipient of the sure blessings of David through the fact that God raised him from the dead and he will not see corruption.
- Psalm 16:10 God's Holy One will not see corruption.
- The logic is that David was raised up by God, he served the purpose of God in his lifetime, but he died, so this cannot be ultimately about him.
- But Jesus has conquered death!
- His kingdom will have no end!
- His resurrection is God's declaration that Jesus is the promised King and Savior.
- Because God raised him up, every promise connected to him is fulfilled.

IV. THE SALVATION: JESUS OUR JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIM

- Acts 13:38-39 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.
- Remember his audience. He is speaking to those who were given the law of God.
- They were given the good news but they did not recognize their Savior when he came.
- But now—a second chance has been given.
- Through Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to them.
- The promises of the new covenant are available to them.
- Ezek. 36:25-27 God will cleanse his people of their uncleanness, he will give them a new heart, and he will put his Spirit within them.
- Jer. 31:34 He will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.
- The translation we read from, the ESV, uses the word “freed” instead of the word “justified” as other translations use.
- Justification is courtroom language, it is a judicial declaration.
- In theology, justification is God's act of declaring a sinner righteous before him by imputing or crediting Christ's perfect righteousness to the believer.
- Both words are appropriate translations.
- Paul is proclaiming freedom from death and corruption because God raised up Jesus, who conquered death.
- In Christ, we are also delivered from death.
- The law of Moses could not deliver from death.
- Only those who believe in the promised One are freed from the bondage of sin and death.
- The law brings death. Whoever transgresses the law of God and sins will die.
- The law convicts us of our sin, we cannot measure up to God's righteous requirements.
- The law reveals sin but could never remove it. It could command righteousness but not grant it.

- The law exposed our inability to obey God and only increased condemnation for sin.
- What Paul is proclaiming is good news for those who were striving to earn salvation by keeping God's law.
- The law could not free one from sin. There was no hope in that because we are incapable of the perfect obedience required by a just and holy God.
- "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (Rom. 3:28)
- Romans 3:21-24 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
- Paul is saying, *"If you believe, you will be made free and brought into right standing before God."*
- Believing is what is required.
- What is belief? Belief is trust. Belief is faith.
- To believe upon Christ is to put your trust in who he is and what he has accomplished for us.
- It is a reliance that proclaims that we are unable of attaining righteousness and unworthy of eternal life based on our pitiful record of obedience.
- Belief brings us to make the confession that we are sinners who have no hope of attaining salvation on our own merits, that we are not worthy of eternal life.
- Our only hope is to be made righteous in Christ.
- Christ does what the law could not.
- Who is worthy of eternal life?
- Not the law-keeper, not the rule-follower, not the morally "good" person.
- Only those who believe in Jesus!
- We receive eternal life as a gift of God's grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, who makes us righteous and qualifies us as worthy of eternal life.

A WARNING

- Paul concludes his message with a warning. V40-41.
- He warns them against rejecting the gracious offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Beware unless what the prophets said comes about. The prophets warned against rejecting the Messiah.
- Don't be a scoffer. Don't reject God's promise and gracious offer. You will incur judgment.
- Paul called them to repentance. The choice is before them.
- It is the choice that is before all of us.
- Accept the salvation offered in Jesus Christ which brings forgiveness of sins, freedom, and life.
- Or reject Jesus Christ and bring upon yourself judgment and eternal damnation.
- God's grace, mercy, and love do not cancel out his justice and holy hatred of sin.
- Do not neglect so great a salvation.

V. THE SELECTION: JESUS ALONE DETERMINES WORTHINESS OF ETERNAL LIFE

- The sermon was over and the people begged them to come back the next Sabbath and tell them more.
- V42 says that many Jews and devout converts followed Paul and Barnabas who urged them to continue in the grace of God.
- The next Sabbath, Luke writes, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.
- The good news being proclaimed stirred the hearts of the people of Antioch! It stirred up a craving for the Word of God!

NEGATIVE RESPONSE

- But the Jews, upon seeing the crowds, were filled with jealousy.
- They didn't like that salvation was being made available to Gentiles.
- They contradicted what Paul was saying, reviling him and mocking him, scoffing.
- They fulfill the prophecy of judgement which Paul previously spoke about.
- Acts 13:46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.
- They have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life!
- That is precisely the state of the person who hears the gospel of grace and determines it's not for them.
- Because they reject the gospel, after hearing the good news, they have decided they are unworthy of eternal life.
- They bring this verdict on themselves by their own choice.
- Their choice to reject Jesus shuts them out of eternal life.
- What makes someone unworthy of eternal life?
- Not God. People do when they thrust aside the gospel.

POSITIVE RESPONSE

- The Jews incite the elites of the city to turn against Paul and Barnabas.
- Paul says they are turning to the Gentiles.
- The Gentiles hear this and rejoice and glorify the word of the Lord.
- The good news is for them also and many of them believe.
- V36, "and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed."
- That is a clear statement of the sovereignty of God in salvation.
- The two tandem truths affirmed in Scripture of divine election and human responsibility.
- Scripture teaches that in salvation it is not man that chooses God, it is God who chooses man.
- Scripture teaches that those who are in Christ are chosen from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).
- The word translated as "appointed" means to 'inscribe or enroll'.
- Rev. 13:8 The saints who belonged to the Lamb had their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world.
- Those who go to eternal damnation do so because they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.
- Conversely, the elect of God are saved because God appointed them for eternal life.
- The divine will of God concerning this is a mystery that we cannot comprehend.
- Just because we cannot comprehend how these truths fit together in the mind of God doesn't make them any less true.
- God is sovereign in saving and man is responsible for rejecting.

CONCLUSION

- Where are you today? Have you decided that you are worthy or unworthy of eternal life based solely on whether or not you have trusted in Jesus Christ.
- Who is worthy of eternal life?
- Not the religious rule-keeper.
- Not the moral person who trusts in themselves.
- Not the scoffer who rejects Christ.
- Only those who believe in Jesus are counted worthy—not by virtue of any inherent goodness, but because of His grace.
- Eternal life is not earned. It is given.
- Forgiveness of sins and freedom are found in Christ alone.
- Do not thrust it aside. Don't turn away from God's gracious offer.
- Believe today!
- Turn to Christ and trust in him alone and you will be saved!
- That is what makes you worthy of eternal life!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?