

## Introduction

Paul and Barnabas were in what is today south-western Turkey, in a town called Antioch. They visited a synagogue on the Sabbath day. After the reading from the Scriptures, Paul is invited to speak. His sermon is comprised of 3 parts:

1. a sketch of OT history (16–25), which we covered two weeks ago, then,
2. God’s ultimate provision in Jesus Christ (26–38), and finally,
3. an invitation (38–41).<sup>1</sup>

Two weeks ago, from the sketch of OT history, we learned about the importance of an objective, historic basis for the faith.

There are a series of jokes that begin like this: “there are  $x$  kinds of people in the world ...”

- There are two kinds of people in the world: those who can extrapolate from incomplete data.
- There are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people and those who don’t.

In this text, Paul is dividing his hearers into two kinds of people: Old Testament people and New Testament people. As we look at the remainder of this sermon, from vs. 26–41, I’ll use those two themes:

1. Old Testament People
2. New Testament People

## Old Testament People

In Paul’s overview of Old Testament history, he covered roughly 2000 years. In reviewing that history, he mentions a number of key people: Abraham, Samuel, King Saul, King David.

### John the Baptist’s era

Among these key players in biblical history, one of the most important was

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<sup>1</sup> Lane T. Dennis and Wayne Grudem, eds., *The ESV Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), paragraph 20298. [https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESV\\_Study\\_Bible#20298](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESV_Study_Bible#20298).

the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. John “proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel” (24). That message was proclaimed before the Savior of Israel came (23). The message, the repentance, and the promises were all preparation.

### **For whom the promises were incomplete**

But they were not the thing itself. Old Testament people had before them the faint sounds of a future hope promised, but not yet the fulfillment of those promises, the reality of those promises.

### **Marked by repentance, death, corruption**

They had the law, but they could not keep it. They had a sense of God’s holiness, but only a regular confirmation of their wickedness. All they could do was repent — be sorry and hope not to sin again — and offer sacrifices of repentance as prescribed by Old Testament law.

## **New Testament People**

### **Jesus’ era**

In contrast to the person of John’s sort, the Old Testament people, Paul also speaks about New Testament people. We have Jesus.

What does Paul say about him?

- He’s called a Savior. Interestingly he’s not called the Savior at this point. After all, wasn’t David kind of Savior? Didn’t Samuel point people to God? Wasn’t John the Baptist the voice loudly proclaiming the promises of God? Indeed, Joshua — though not mentioned in this text — is the namesake of Jesus since their names mean the same thing, “Savior” and was the one who actually took God’s people into the promised land.
- Jesus fulfills the words of the prophets in his death. (27)
- And yet, this Jesus is still something more than just another voice in the long list of voices. John the Baptist firmly and clearly makes it known that whoever John is, he is not “that one”. “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.” (25)

### **For whom the promises are complete**

What makes Jesus so different from all the other voices of another era and time? He is THE promised one (23). There have been many promised people:

- Moses was promised to the people of Israel.
- Isaac is the promised son of Abraham.
- John the Baptist was promised to his mother and father.

What makes Jesus distinct is the resurrection. Verse 30 makes this point, “but God raised him from the dead” (30). That point, more than any other point in Paul’s sermon, makes it clear that Jesus stands out as something entirely different from anything that Old Testament people have known.

“And we bring you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers this, he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” (32–33)

Then the next verses (33–37) are given to hammering home that Jesus is the son of God by virtue of the resurrection. Quotes from Psalms 2 and 16 and Isaiah 55, Paul makes a strong distinction between any of the other greats of God’s plan.

The New Testament era is no longer the era of John the Baptist. It is the era of Jesus. It is no longer the era of promise is not yet completed. It is the era of completed promises.

### **Marked by forgiveness, resurrection life**

And we know this, because:

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, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. (36–39)

It is no longer the era of repentance alone, followed by repeated sacrifices, followed by the certain knowledge that the law could never be kept perfectly,

followed by repentance again.

No, the era of Jesus, the New Testament era and the New Testament people is an era in which our repentance is answered by God's "I forgive you". This is the era in which the curse of the law is taken away; we are free from that curse.

## Application

Paul is not setting aside the older covenant as irrelevant. He is bridging the gap between the Old and New covenant: the Old with its promises made and the New with the promises kept. Paul is bridging the gap between the Father and his children.

We need the law to show us our need for Jesus. We need the law to show us what love looks like. What we don't need is the curse of the law for the failure to be holy in the sight of God. And that's what Jesus takes care of for us.

We need salvation. That's what the older covenant shows us. God is willing and able to provide it. It shows us that too. But the newer covenant shows us that God has provided it.

Jesus does not HAVE the message of salvation to which John the Baptist pointed. Jesus IS the message of salvation and salvation itself, sent from the Father.

Paul was prepared for the hardness of the hearts of his hearers.

Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:  
"Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you. (40–41)

What about your hearts

Are you an Old Testament kind of person, still trying to work your way into heaven? Or are you a New Testament person, resting on God's grace? Are you an Old Testament person, who hopes to do better next time? Or are you a New Testament person, who hears God's forgiveness in Christ?

The great danger among us today is the same danger that existed among Paul's hearers in his day. We can take all the symbols, rules, laws, and history

and think that they are the substance of our faith. But they are not.

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.<sup>2</sup>

What differentiates the Old Testament person and the New Testament person is that the Old Testament person is still waiting to have the promises fulfilled; the New Testament person believes in the promised fulfiller of those promises.

What does this mean practically? And that means that instead of worrying about our sin, all we have to do is follow Jesus where he leads us: straight home to the Father.

“A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’” (Luke 14:16–24)

## Misc Notes

- Xnty not a religion, but a relationship.

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 10:1.

- In Eden, walked with God!
- Now we are by nature of the enemies of God: Rom 5:10, James 4:4
- None righteous, not even one: Rom 3

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

Refrain:

Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,  
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;  
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,  
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide;  
What can we do to wash it away?  
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,  
Brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
Freely bestowed on all who believe!  
You that are longing to see His face,  
Will you this moment His grace receive?