

Scripture Reading: **Psalm 2:1-9**

Today we're looking at a passage in Acts 13 which Paul believed was a fulfillment of Ps 2. We'll dig into this shortly. Last week Paul, Barnabas and his companions ministered powerfully in Barnabas' home country—Cyprus. This missions team is fulfilling the heartbeat of the Christian faith—to win as many as possible to the Gospel.

Missionary to India and Persia, Henry Martyn, once said, "The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we must become."

Setting up the story

Paul and his company press on across the sea travelling 100 miles north and walking up 3600 feet above sea level-- into Pamphylia. They reached Antioch Pisidia (a different Antioch than "Syrian Antioch"). If Antioch Syria was the cultural center of Rome with its focus on sports, religion, the arts and theater, philosophy and commerce—then Antioch Pisidia was a strong administrative center. **Acts 13:13** Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, but John left them and went back to Jerusalem. ¹⁴They continued their journey from Perga and reached Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. **15** After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, you can speak." They attended the synagogue meeting on the Sabbath and were invited to share a word of encouragement. Visiting Pharisees and their traveling companions would be welcomed guest speakers—in fact many synagogues had a guest room where honored speakers could stay. Paul apparently looks like a Pharisee still—and so they invite him and his party to bring a word of encouragement from God's Word.

Christianity largely adopted the synagogue system of public gatherings to read the Scriptures, make prayers and sing hymns, psalms and spiritual songs.

God restarts the human project in Israel and David. What Paul does in this story is what every Torah teacher would do—they begin by reciting their national story. Because that story tells them who they are and where they've come from. It reminds them that God has been faithful despite their repeated rejection of Him. It reminds them that God hasn't forgotten his people.

Acts 13:16-25 “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 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.’”

Paul first appeals to their affinity for their national story. Paul is saying here “We are Jews or God-fearing Gentiles in this room. We all the know the story. How God chose Abraham to bring forth one nation—repeatedly rescued us from sin, faithlessness and injustice—provided leaders to guide us, Prophets to speak to us, and Kings to represent his Sovereign reign. He loved us in that he chose us, and graced us with the promise of salvation through David’s line. **And now—that salvation has come. What you’ve been waiting for. It has arrived.**”

Paul reminds them of their Scriptures which are replete with promises, prophecies and patterns—the victory through suffering pattern permeates their Sacred texts.

The Pattern of “Suffering Royalty” or “Victory through Suffering”

1. Joseph, who ascends to the throne of Egypt through a life of suffering which develops the pattern of royal suffering, or victory through grief from then on.

2. Exodus—the people are saved and immediately enter a wilderness of trials. The trials tested the genuineness of their faith. Paul says, “And they failed. They rebelled against God’s sovereign rule.”

3. The Sinai Covenant is a declaration that the Jews are “a kingdom of priests unto the LORD” (Ex. 15:18, 19). The promised Land must be entered through great adversity and trials. There will be no victory for the people until they pass through the waters of the Jordan and face war from all the surrounding nations. **They will come into their country through hardship.**

4. David’s Covenant is the watershed moment when God institutes a royal house, a permanent Messianic dynasty. Notice that David is depicted as victorious through great suffering. **His ascension to the throne is auspicious and full of difficulties.** His 15-year stint in the wilderness being pursued by his life’s mentor is heartbreaking. His consolidation of the throne is demoralizing—half the kingdom rejects him. **His victory is preceded by hardship and suffering. God doesn’t make kings in the opulence and comfort of a palace, he makes kings in the desert.**

5. The Temple and Sacrificial System is the place where heaven and earth intersect. It is the nexus where God’s heavenly Kingdom and holy presence can interact and mingle with humanity in a limited way. The Jewish temple was a glimpse of life in Eden with God. It was a shrine meant to remind humanity of a day when we used to (as sinless image-bearers) dwell in his presence without the barrier of sin. It is a symbol that points to a future where “the knowledge of God will cover the earth like the waters cover the seas.” **The temporary levitical rites, the atonement sacrifices of Yom Kippur, the daily sacrifices—all were a re-enactment of a pure people dwelling with a Holy God.** And they also presaged a time when God’s righteous Son would usher humanity back into the fullness of his presence—*without sin*.

These are the main types and patterns we see in the story of Israel pointing forward to suffering King.

The pattern of suffering, dying, and rising permeates the OT.

Specific Prophecies of a Suffering Servant

1. Isaiah the Prophet sees God as king (Is. 6) and immediately he is confronted with his own unrighteousness—and *immediately he must be cleansed by a coal from the altar*. To be under the saving rule of God one must be cleansed, their sins must be atoned for. Isaiah 52:7 “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” When the Lord returns to Zion” This is the Gospel that will cause them to burst into song and sing for Joy—it is the joy of God’s people and the nations because it is an invitation to come worship God as King.

2. The Righteous Sufferer in the Psalms.

David is depicted as the righteous sufferer in Ps. 2; 7; 22; 69; 109. The Psalms are exclusively associated with **David as King—he is the royal martyr**, the righteous king who suffers and cries out constantly to God for deliverance. Some of these Psalms can’t possibly apply only to David. But he sings them anyway (prophetically). The failed monarchy of David gave rise to a Jewish reinterpretation of these Psalms—looking forward to a new and future David; a righteous king who would not fail and whose Kingdom would be everlasting.

Psalm 2:7 You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

Paul quotes this psalm—Psalm 2 takes the land promise (2 Sam 7:10) and the Line promise (2 Sam 7:11) and he narrows the line promise to a specific Son—a future David. And he expands the land promise to the whole earth. The Land promise to David (for Abraham’s inheritance) is now blown out to encompass all the nations of the earth. This Son who is declared God’s King has received the promises and the nations as his own inheritance.

Acts 13:32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “You are my son; today I have become your father.’ ³⁴ God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ ³⁵ So it is also stated elsewhere: “You will not let your holy one see decay.”

3. Isaiah Prophecies a New Royal Martyr.

The nation of Israel falls into exile and enslavement to Babylon, because of their repeated idolatry, injustice, corruption, rampant sin. The kings who follow David are a real mixed bag. But mostly bad kings or “shepherds” of the nation. Evil kings. They’re not

kings who alleviate or take away the suffering of the people, but *the cause it through their infidelity to David's covenant* and to the *Sinai Covenant of royal priesthood* and to the *Abrahamic Covenant* of blessing to the nations.

Isaiah sees the suffering king in the Psalms—inspired by the Holy Spirit he knows this is a future Son must transcend his earthly lineage. He must do something for the people that 1 million slaughtered bulls on the altar could never ever do. Atone for sins once and for all. Through his body, to suffer in a way that had only been illustrated in the past.

Isaiah's entire prophecy is about a suffering servant who will bring about a New Exodus, establish God's eternal kingdom by means of sacrificial suffering.

- This King is entitled, "My Servant" which is a Davidic title (Is. 37:35; 52, 53).
- This King is anointed (commissioned) for specific task of restoring justice to the corrupt leadership of Israel (Is. 9:7; 42:1-4); bringing light to all nations (9:2; 42:6-7); opening the eyes of those spiritually blind (32:3; 42:7).
- This King is a "root" or a branch of Jesse's family line (11:10; 53:2).
- This future King is connected to God's past promise to David for an eternal ruler (9:7; 55:3).
- The Servant's royal exaltation (52:13-15) is ***through suffering***, "He shall be high and lifted up...As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of man's children, so shall he sprinkle many nations." **The term for "sprinkle" is the same word used in the Levitical act of sprinkling the sacrificial blood** upon the altar and all the holy of holies, and in this case the sacrifice looks like the suffering royal servant is marred and disfigured. Moreover (and more importantly), the phrase "high and lifted up" is only ever used of YHWH. This is especially true in Isaiah where Yahweh *is* the divine king (Isa 6: 1; 33: 10; 57: 15).
- Is. 53 continues the royal sufferer theme asking: "**Who has believed our message?**" stressing the unbelievability of this shocking truth. This king, this royal servant is utterly unremarkable in his physical appearance.

Paul cites this difficulty in believing this message: Acts 13:38 "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

⁴¹ "Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish,
for I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you.'" (Hab 1:5)

Every system they have is now embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. Their ancestral office of prophet—comes full circle in the Son. Their ancestral system of sacrifice and atonement, their role as priests to the nations—all converges into the Son of David—God's Son Jesus.

Who could possible believe that?

53:2 “He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief
and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.”

53:5 “But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.”

- Isaiah continues--He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;

and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors

13:42ff. There is this mic drop moment—after Paul warns them not to respond to this message with rebellious hearts—the way their ancestors did to God in the wilderness and they died. Paul and Barnabas don't give an altar call, they just walk off the stage. And devout Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism urge them to come back because they want to hear more. So many people come back the next sabbath to hear Paul it sparks the Jewish leaders' jealousy—they drive the apostles out of that region.

13:46ff. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

The response God expects is that the riches offered to and rejected by the Jews—this Messiah king who fulfills the pattern of exaltation through suffering. This King who fulfills the prophecies regarding a Son of David who would atone for our sins—now offered to the Gentiles.

Don't harden your hearts today. Receive the message. Don't despise the riches of the Gospel—embrace it as yours.

Let's worship

Closing: Jeff return read the rest of the story.

Now **to the King** eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus has fulfilled this—now forgiveness of sins and justification (right standing) in God's court is possible. But be forewarned.