

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Paul Preaches Jesus, Part 1**

Scripture: Acts 13:14-23

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You have your Bible, turn to Psalm 2, because I feel that Psalm 2 sets for us a backdrop for what we're gonna study in Acts chapter 13. We're gonna be studying this morning, Jesus, the culmination of history. Psalm 2 is an Old Testament prophecy delineating for us how history will culminate in Jesus Christ.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us.' He who sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His great displeasure: 'Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord said unto Me, 'Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they...all they who put their trust in Him."

That Psalm sets for us the fact that God controls history, and history finds its resolution in Jesus Christ. Now, turn to Acts chapter 13. As we look at this passage, within a few moments we will see how Jesus Christ is presented by Paul as the culmination, the goal, the climax of history. As we come to our text for today, it's verse 14 through 41, and we are only gonna consider just the first part of Paul's first sermon; and I say first sermon, only in the sense that it is his first recorded sermon. Paul has been preaching for many years by now. This is the first one that we have in print in the Word of God; and it sets in mind a thought that I just wanna mention. I pray to God that, from our midst here, He will raise up people to serve Him with their gifts. I pray that all the time.

One of the things that I pray that God will raise up is that He will raise up preachers, because I see in my own mind, and I think maybe you do, too, such a dearth of real Biblical preaching, and I...I hear about it, and I see it, and I'm aware of it, and I just pray God that if any of you young men...women are excluded at that point...but if any of you young men sense the Spirit of God leading in the area of...of the gifts of prophecy and teaching and you feel God calling you to preach, pursue that with all

you can, because that is such a glorious and high calling and so needed in the church today.

It's a humbling thing, and yet an exciting thing to be able to stand in the place of Christ before the church and to speak, as it were, for Him; and I pray God will raise up men from our midst who will be preachers; and I really believe in my heart, people, that the greatest need in the church today and, therefore, the greatest need in the world today, is Biblical, powerful preaching.

In recent years, I feel that preaching has, especially Biblical preaching, there's a lot of ranting and raving going on, but real Biblical preaching with content has been minimized. It's been given a backseat to counseling, administration, programming, entertainment, and so forth and so on. And some even feel that, with the flood of available books, and this is an interesting thought that some writers have come up with, but some feel that with the flood of books, preaching is no longer even necessary. That preaching was good for a day when people couldn't read or books couldn't be printed; and now that there are books in print, and now that people can read and literacy is at such a high percentage, preaching can be eliminated altogether.

Well, I strenuously react to that, needless to say. I feel that God has ordained that the...that the preaching of the cross is the energy in terms of sharing of the Gospel. It's not all, but I think it's at the very heart of all. Some other writers have even gone so far as to say, "Orators are people who talk and never do anything," but that can be resisted by history very easily. You go through history and find the greatest men who ever lived, the men who moved people to action, invariably, they were men who had great powers of oratory. Those are the kind of men who move people to do things; and so it is not just a do nothing, stand in your ivory tower existence. It's not to be minimized because there's a lot of books in print. I think there's an energy and a power of authority that is exerted in the church through the under-shepherd.

I think the preacher stands in the place of Christ, representing Him to the people. He, thus, reminds the people of the whole concept of the submission of the body to the head, which is Christ. If the church turns into a large discussion group, authority suffers; and authority is at the very heart of the unity of the body and of the existence of the church.

In the record of the Bible, for example, preaching was the very heartbeat in the life of men before God, whether you go into the Old Testament or the New, it was always preaching. Great prophets of the Old Testament, great preachers in the New Testament, Jesus Himself spent His time preaching; but, sadly, preaching has declined. Biblical oratory has given way to all kinds of things. Martyn Lloyd Jones, in this book *Preachers and Preaching*, which is a very, very helpful book, says he feels there are three reasons that preaching has declined. One, the loss of the belief in the authority of Scripture. If you don't believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, if you don't believe that it speaks authoritatively the mind and the will of God, then you can't preach, because you can't say, "Thus saith the Lord." And if you can't say that, you cease to preach. Now, if you're gonna give your opinion,

that's not preaching. So if you lose the authority of Scripture, you lose the right to preach, to stand in the place of Christ and say, "Thus saith the Lord."

The second thing Jones suggests is that preaching has declined because of a reaction against professional pulpitism; and I think that's very valid. I think there are some people who react to the fact that one man can use the pulpit to dominate people or that there has been so much emotionalism injected into the pulpit that it ceases to be a teaching tool at all, and it's usually a tool for just moving and manipulating people. And I think there is a sense in which, perhaps, browbeating emotionalism and preaching which is nothing but dramatics and entertainment, has resulted in a reaction against that, which has really been pushed too far; and now people are reacting against preaching in total. I've read articles, lengthy articles about the fact that what the church needs is to eliminate the preacher and get back to small group discussions. What happens is you'll have all kinds of fracturing, because there is no authority in the church. There's no representation of the mind of Christ through the elders.

Thirdly, Jones says...that preaching has suffered in the church, because the church has moved to a wrong emphasis. With the spread of the world's media and the invention of all kinds of entertainment ideas, the church has jumped on the bandwagon and substituted for preaching all kinds of things. "In a psychological bonanza," says Jones, "we have substituted counseling." We've substituted administration, programming, entertainment, etc., etc., etc., until preaching, as my dad used to say, becomes a 15-minute sermonette for Christianettes...

In many churches, a social kind of preoccupation has replaced the preaching of the Word; and, believe me, this is a very...if you've been at Grace Church a long time, you've perhaps lost touch with this fact, but it's very true. We had a...a friend who attended our church last week. I've never met him, and I don't know if anybody else has around here; but he wrote me a letter. It was the first time he'd ever been here, and he wrote me a letter; and in his letter, he made several suggestions, several of which I'll not repeat; but there was one that may be interesting. He said this, "Instead of listening to you (you're in it for the money, anyway) and the hypocrites in your church don't understand what you're saying, why don't you get each of your members who mob your auditorium to bring canned food and develop an organization to give it away?"

Well, now, that's a typical social approach to the church. That the church is in the business of dispensing canned food. That we're nothing but a Smart & Final outlet, you know. And this...this is a pressure that the church undergoes, and it... that's another thing that tends to minimize the priority of the church; but, you know, that's nothing new. Do you know that the early church was pressured to give away canned food instead of preaching? You say, "Oh, you're kidding." No, Acts chapter 6, it's right there. Doesn't say canned food. That's a free translation...but they were pressured to get into the social issues. That's very obvious. In chapter 6 in verse 1, it says, "And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied...and that always creates problems when you get a lotta

people...there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews." Now, the Greek Jews, the Hellenist Jews, the non-Jerusalem Jews, were griping against the Jerusalem Jews, "because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."

The Greek-speaking Jews' widows weren't getting the canned food, see? In other words, the ivory tower was going along fine. Everybody was coming to hear the apostles and all that stuff, but..."but our widows are starving. We're not getting our food." Now, I believe Satan could've used this to divert the priorities of the church. All this griping, and what could've happened? Well, all of the apostles could've gotten sidetracked into making sure the food was passed out, etc., etc.; but in verse 2, they had the right reaction. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, 'Look, it is not fitting that we should leave the Word of God to pass out canned food.'" Right? Serve tables.

That is not the priority of the church. Then he goes on, "You look among you for seven men of the holy...men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom you may appoint over this business. But we will continue to give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." You see, Satan, at the very beginning, endeavored to make the church into a social agency. Now, we need to be socially concerned, obviously; but... and that's what they're saying. Choose people who can do that, but that's not the priority. The priority is to give yourselves to the teaching of the Word and to prayer. So Satan was thwarted at the very beginning, and, sad to say, there are many churches today that have deteriorated into simply social agencies; and, consequently, they've fallen into the very temptation that the early church resisted.

Now, lemme add another thing. Preaching is important, because every really great injunction in the New Testament toward the preacher...toward the...the...the teaching elder is to preach. Paul said to Timothy, "Preach." Told him to give himself to sound doctrine, to teach others, to give it out. Preaching is a very dominant thing in the instruction to the preacher, to the teachers in the church, to the elders. I think preaching is important also because it's been the catalyst at the heart of every great movement in the history of the church. The great movements that have happened in the church for the glory of God and the progress of the Gospel have been bathed in powerful preaching. You can go back to the great awakening in America. You can go back to the Wesleyan revivals. You can go back to the great days of Martin Luther and Huss and all those men who were preaching, and Calvin in the days of the Reformation; and when there has been a vacuum around the...the area of preaching, there has also been a dearth in the life of the church.

In the Book of Acts, for example, we have found that there have been three movements in the church. Jerusalem, Judea-Samaria, and the world, right? And in the beginning in Jerusalem, what was the catalyst that shot everything off in Jerusalem? It was the sermon of a Spirit-filled man by the name of Peter that the Spirit used. And then the Gospel was to move to Judea and Samaria, and what was the catalyst? It was the sermon of a Spirit-filled man named Stephen that God used; and now we come

into the uttermost part of the earth, and the Gospel going to the Gentiles; and we bang right into chapter 13; and as the church begins to explode, what is it? It's preaching. It's the preaching of Paul and Barnabas; and here we find a great sermon by another Spirit-filled preacher in chapter 13.

The first three movements of the church then were bathed in the catalyst of preaching; and I believe that it continues to be the energy that God uses in the right Spirit-filled man to accomplish His will.

Now, as we come to chapter 13, we then come to the third great sermon in the book. Actually, we've heard Peter preach several times, so it's not the third sermon; but it's the third kind of catalytic sermon. It's the third kind of monumental moment when a new thing was happening. Something brand new and something exciting was exploding and...and a sermon is at the heart of it; and Paul is the preacher. We've heard some good preachers already. Peter and Stephen, and they've given us a lot of help in knowing what preaching's all about; and now we're gonna hear maybe the master of all of 'em, Paul; and this isn't the first time he preached. Believe me, he's been preaching for years. He preached the three years he was in Arabia even before he ever got to Jerusalem. He preached after that when they shipped him outta town, 'cause he caused so much trouble for the Christians, stirring up everything. They shipped him back to Tarsus, and he went everywhere preaching and founding churches.

So he's been preaching. He went to Antioch and preached there for a year, so it's not new to preach for him. It's just new to be recorded in Scripture. This is the first one. Incidentally, it's the longest record of his sermon and, even at that, it's only excerpts from his sermon.

But Paul believed himself a preacher. In Ephesians 3:8, he states his calling. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He...he acknowledges that, "I don't understand how a man such as myself could ever be chosen by God other than grace, unworthy. God has called me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." So he knew what his calling was. He was to preach, and so we're gonna hear his sermon...

Now, lemme just bring you up-to-date as we look at verse 14. The church has expanded already from Jerusalem, those beginning days at the Day of Pentecost and following. It's reached to Judea, Samaria. People have come, Jews saved, to the city of Antioch in Syria; and they've established a church. Barnabas became the pastor. Barnabas couldn't handle it alone. He went and found Saul and brought him over, and Saul and Barnabas preached for one year, those two men; and that church is solid. Three other fine leaders have come from that church. They're listed in verse 1 of chapter 13: Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen; and so there are five leading elders, leading teaching men there; and the church is solid; and it's growing; and it's Spirit-filled. It's dynamic; and God says, "It's time to reach out. I want two men from your five, and I wanna send them to the world," and He says, "Separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I've called them," and so the church lays their

hands on them, and says, "We agree that God has called you. We stand behind you. Go," and they send out Paul and Barnabas, and off they go; and they're going from the beachhead of Antioch to reach the world.

God established Antioch in pagan lands as a beachhead; and, from there, to go out and reach the world. Well, the first place they went was to Barnabas' home Cyprus. They had a great time, didn't they? They preached the Gospel there, and they had a victory over Satan, which was important, right? At the very beginning, because they didn't go out in any fear. From there on, they knew they were conquerors. The edge of fear was removed in Cyprus. They immediately ran into conflict with Elymas the sorcerer over the soul of Sergius Paulus. They came out on top. Sergius Paulus was saved. Great things began to happen. They fired outta there knowing they had victory over Satan. The edge of fear in regard to that domain was removed, and they pursued their first missionary journey.

Now pick it up at verse 13. "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos," that's the city there that they were in in Cyprus, the main city, capital, "they came to Perga in Pamphylia," which meant they had to get a boat and go across the Mediterranean going north, and they landed right there at the coast. Now, the little place at the coast is Antalya, and seven miles inland was Perga. Now, Pamphylia is the name of a district. It's shaped like a...like an Oscar Meyer wiener, just like that. It's just a long, skinny piece, right along the coast. Just north of it is a large area called Pisidia. So you have Pamphylia and Pisidia, two...really two regions. Now, the whole area is called Galatia, and Paul wrote the Galatians. When he wrote the Galatians, he wrote all the people in all this...the regions and all the cities of that whole area. So it was like a circular letter.

Now, Pisidia and Pamphylia and some other states make up Galatia. Galatia and a few other big provinces make up Asia Minor. So they're now going to Asia Minor; and, incidentally, that's the place that Paul came from. So first they went to Cyprus where Barnabas was from, and then they went to Asia Minor; narrowing it down, the...the Galatian section; narrowing it down, landing in Pamphylia on the coast.

Now, at this point we have an interesting note. "And John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem." We talked about that last time. That's John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark. He left, and I suggested a couple of reasons to...just to review real quick. He left, perhaps because he didn't like Paul taking over. He may have been a Barnabas fan himself, and Paul just kind of, by the nature of the kind of a guy he was, became the head of the whole deal, and maybe he felt bad about that. Some writers think that is true, you know. It starts out, and Saul and Barnabas, and Saul and Barnabas, then all of a sudden you keep reading through Acts, and it's Paul and company, but that's just the way Paul was. I mean everything, sooner or later, became Paul and company. I'm sure that's the name of his tent making outfit, too. But, anyway, he was a leader by nature. You know, that's just the way he was; and, of course, that was by God's design. So it may have been John Mark was a

little upset about that. A little conflict there in personalities. It's possible.

It's also possible that he knew what lie...what was really lying ahead from Pamphylia, and that was the Taurus Mountains; and crossing the Taurus Mountains was a treacherous, fearful journey; and he just really wasn't that hardy a soul and wasn't too sure that he wanted to get in; so he just chickened out. The third possibility is that the romance of missionary work had worn off, and he wanted to go home, just pure and simple. Whatever, he left; but we'll see Mark again. The next time we're gonna see him, he's gonna create a conflict; 'cause he wants to go the second time on the trip. Paul won't take him, 'cause he chickened out the first time. So Paul and Barnabas split over it; so it was a serious thing; and we saw last week how Satan uses internal strife to destroy the body; and there's a classic illustration.

All right, so Paul and Barnabas are alone. No more helper. He had come along as their helper, verse 5 says, and now they haven't got any helper. They're going alone. Verse 14, "When they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia." Now, that's not Antioch of Syria. That's a different one. Antioch was a fairly common name. Remember the ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, and that name had popped up here and there all throughout that part of the world as the name of various cities. This was the Antioch in Pisidia, or it was called Pisidian Antioch. So they came there.

Now, it's interesting...now I want you to notice this. That the Bible passes over what may be one of the greatest points of heroism in the history of the early church with just a simple statement, "They departed from Perga and came to Antioch." What is behind those words, only God knows, and the people who have asked Paul since they got to heaven; but that was not an easy thing. To get from Perga to Antioch was a fantastic job. Antioch of Pisidia was 3600 feet high on a plateau up on the Taurus Mountains. It was a hundred miles from Perga, and it was a hundred miles up and through and over and around the Taurus Mountains. It wasn't easy, and just glibly passed by was that trek that they had to make to get to Antioch...

Now, Antioch was a pretty well-known city. It was a colony originally founded by Augustus. It was made the administrative center of south Galatia. It was the most important city in that part of the Asia Minor area. It had a large settlement of Jews, and there a lar...there were a lotta Jews in Asia Minor all over the place, but this city had a particularly large settlement.

Now, there's an interesting possibility here that entered the mind of many commentators, and mine, as well. Why didn't Paul preach in Perga? Why does it say he just departed from Perga and went to Antioch? Well, there's some suggested reasons for that. It is very likely that he was very sick while he was at Perga, and that is indicated in Galatians 4:13, just as an interesting note. He says, to the Galatians, and this whole territory is Galatia, "You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preach the Gospel unto you at the first." In other words, "When I first came to Galatia, I was very sick." Then in the next verse, he says, "And my trial or my trouble, which was in my flesh, it was physical, you didn't

despise. You didn't reject. You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Even though he was sick, they welcomed him. Now, maybe he had a contagious thing. William Ramsey suggests that he had malaria, and that he had contracted malaria and was very sick. His temperature would've risen up and down in the cold and the heat and so forth and so on of the varying temperature to perhaps 106. There were no drugs. The horrible anguish and the pain of the stress of malaria with no relief, and he was a very, very sick man in the lowlands of Perga; and perhaps he felt that... that going to a higher country, says Ramsey, may have been a...a redeeming thing in terms of his physical illness.

Whatever it was, he did not preach there. He was a very sick man, but he pursued an unbelievable journey. The man had fortitude and determination and courage like few other people, but he pressed that thing on to Antioch in all of his sickness. Barnabas along with him.

The journey itself would've been treacherous beyond our belief. The Taurus Mountains were jagged, ragged, cliff-like mountains. The...the trails clung to cliffs that ascended up dizzy heights. Two of the most treacherous rivers in the world had to be forded, the Cestrus and the Eurymedon, and both of those rivers cascaded, just kind of plunged through canyons and were very difficult to get across. Alexander the Great, for example, in one of his particular escapades, had desired to join Parminio in Phrygia. In order to do that, he had to cross the Taurus Mountains; and he said the toughest part of all of his campaign was to get through the Taurus Mountains, especially to shake off the brutal, lawless tribesmen who lived there. The Taurus Mountains were famous for being inhabited by robbers and these brutal tribesmen, who just confiscated and stole and slaughtered everything that came through there. They would hide in the caves in the cracks and so forth, and people were in such precarious positions anyway, that they had to just barely hold on to stay alive.

And so it was some kinda journey. It may have been that Paul and Barnabas joined a caravan going through just for safety's sake. But, anyway, it was a journey which Paul never forgot. He remembered all of his life. In 2 Corinthians 11, he said, "In...in my ministry, I've been in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, dangers in the wilderness, in toil and hardness through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food in cold and exposure," etc., etc., and it might have been that most of that or all, or nearly all of that occurred right there in the Taurus Mountains, but they arrived, and it's all just simply passed by in the passage. But it talks about a kind of heroism that I think many of us as Christians today, including myself, wouldn't have the faintest idea about...

Verse 14 at the end says this, "And when they came to Antioch, they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down." Now, this became the pattern. The sizable Jewish population that had scattered around the world had resulted in little synagogues being raised up in every city. Some of them were even large synagogues; and Paul would go into a town and invariably would go immediately to the synagogue for several reasons. Lemme offer them to you.

No. 1, I think Paul went to the synagogue because it was a ready-made audience. Where else would you find a crowd of people interested in religious things? Just from that standpoint alone, plus the fact that it was customary in a synagogue for visiting people to have the right to speak; so it was a set-up deal. The second reason I think he went to the synagogue was because they were receptive. Being qualified in the Old Testament, there was some fertile ground for what he wanted to say. In other words, he could assume certain things and use certain things as a departure point, and he knew that they would be receptive initially to what he said. He would get a hearing. If he stood up in front of a bunch of Gentiles and started to talk, they might have shut him off fast; but this way he would be heard, at least until he introduced Christ. The third reason that I think, and way deep, down in his heart, maybe the primary reason that he went to the synagogue was because he...he loved Israel, and he wanted Israel to be saved, didn't he?

In Romans 10:1, he says, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they may be saved," and that was his prayer; and I think that part of the reason he went, if not the deep underlying reason, was just that he loved the Jew. You say, "Well, I thought the Jews were set aside." Yes, as a nation, but not individually. Romans 11:1, Paul says, "Has God set aside Israel, whom He foreknew, God forbid." Then he goes on to talk about the election of grace, you know? In every age, there's always a remnant of believing Jews. Salvation is still offered to Israel; believe me, on an individual basis, just as it is to any man.

So there he goes with Barnabas, and they sit down. It's the Sabbath day. Then we find a little sequence of what went on, on the Sabbath day, verse 15. "After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying... they sent a messenger down the aisle there..." "You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Well, you talk about opportunity. I mean, you know, well, I don't know. We just sort of arrived from outta town, you know. What an opportunity.

Well, I wanna just give you a little background. It's interesting, I think for us. The synagogue today, if you were to attend an orthodox Jewish synagogue, you would find it would follow much the same pattern as this one did. It gives us the...one of few places in Scripture we have the order of what they do. The first thing that happened in the synagogue when...when they meet together, and this is true even today, is the recitation of the Shema, S H E M A. That is Deuteronomy 6:4 to 9, "The Lord our God is one Lord," you know, "Hear oh Israel," that's the Shema; and so that is the first thing that is done. Immediately following that, prayers are offered. Then immediately following prayer, Scripture is read; and the Scripture that is read is always a portion from the Pentateuch and it's set out over a seven-year period, so that they read through the Pentateuch every seven years, a little bit each Sabbath. Following that, the Prophets are read, and that's what it says. "After the reading of the Law...that's Pentateuch...and the Prophets." The reading of the Prophets is also called the haftorah, and it is also prescribed over a seven-year period, and the passages usually kind of coincide.

So in every synagogue, there's the reading of those passages following the prayers following the Shema. This is the orthodox synagogue. Then immediately following that, there would be instruction and teaching; and if there is a competent visiting guest, he is invited to do the speaking; and just so happened that Paul and Barnabas were there; and Paul was competent. They may have noticed his Jewish character. In fact, it may well have been that he wore the clothes of a rabbi, and they spotted that. Whatever it was, they were aware of the fact that this man was a valuable man, that he was a teacher, that he was respected. He was a former member of the Sanhedrin. Somehow they had the word on this. We don't know just exactly how.

So they said, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." It's exciting to me, just to see again how the Spirit of God rules in the moving out of the church at Antioch. There's no advance man. There's no PR team arriving in Antioch two weeks early. There's no...it's just there they go, and they wander in. Who knows they're even coming, and all of a sudden, they walk in, sit down, the Spirit of God says, "That's the man." The rulers get all organized and pick him out of the crowd.

The Spirit of God was superintending the life of the church in its early years, and I think that's what the Spirit of God wants to do today. Believe me, the best PR and the best advance work ever done is done by the Holy Spirit. A lotta times we use a lotta sophisticated means, and we get a whole lotta people there that the Holy Spirit isn't drawing. I don't think it's wrong to do...to try to get people to come. I don't think it's wrong to use certain techniques and so forth. I think it's wrong, however, to substitute the work of the Holy Spirit, put all your eggs in that basket rather than to spend your time waiting on the Spirit of God and seeing what He's doing. I think so many times we...we create monsters with publicity when, if we'd just let the Spirit do His quiet work, we would accomplish what He wants.

I read a book not...well, it's been a couple years ago, and it suggested that if you're gonna, you know, I was new here, and I wanted to know all of the ways, you know, to...to be the pastor and...and to see the church really be what it should be; and the book said that if you're going to have a growing church, and you're gonna get people to come, you've got to have a different gimmick every week. And so I thought, "Well, that's, you know, that's there in this book, and I'll have to think about that." Then I met another pastor who I went...happened to go there on a Sunday. It was just before I came here as pastor, about four years ago; and I noticed that all of the ushers were in straw hats; and I...I didn't quite understand what was going on; and they all had little flags or some little thing in their hand. Can't remember exactly what it was; and I said, "What is all this?"

"Well, I mean, you know, this is...this is this week's thing." And then this...I said, "Well, is this a...is this what you do all the time?" "Well, it's something, you know, next week is huh, you know, and all the way down the line, and that's the only way you'll get a crowd." And you know what happens when you

do that, usually, is you get a crowd...You know, if you wanna crowd, that's the way to get, you know. Somebody told me the other week about a...a church that had an elephant in the parking lot, but, you know...

But there are, I think, sometimes, and I'm not discounting all of these things. I'll never forget my dad telling me one time, reminding me that when I became a pastor, to never do this; because, he said, "I'll never forget in early years one time when certain celebrities were led to Christ in my ministry, and I decided to feature them; and all the people came; and they came like crazy and jammed in the place to hear the testimony of these certain people; and they gave their testimonies; and when they got done, they all left; and I got up to preach, they were leaving." See? He said...he always puts it this way. He said, "That's the last time I ever wanted to have a...I think he said...peanuts, popcorn approach."

I don't think that it's wrong to have people give their testimony. I don't think it's wrong to do what we can to get people to church; but I'll tell you one thing. The work that is really being done is being done by the Spirit of God, and I am never really so concerned about how many people come. I'm only concerned because some people aren't here who need to be here, you know what I mean? There's a difference. It's not that I care that everybody's here. It's that I care that you're here. That's different, I hope.

But, anyway, the Spirit set it all up. Before it's over, you wanna see some real work? Look at verse 44, "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God." Now, nothing I've ever seen can work that well. Get the whole city there. Well, I don't know where they held that thing, and it must've been interesting. But, you see, the Spirit of God had done all the preparation, all the details. The Spirit of God had prepared Paul, everything, Barnabas, the whole works, all in the planning of the Spirit of God for the right moment, all the pieces fit together, and here's Paul. What is he doing? Is he running around saying, "I've gotta speak today. I've gotta speak. Tell the leader. I've got to speak. I've got to be the guy." He just sits there, and he waits, and the Spirit of God says, "Leader, go speak to that man in the fourth row," and the guy goes, see. You know, he doesn't know why, probably, except some circumstances; and Paul just waits on the Spirit of God, and God gives him the opportunity.

Verse 16, "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand," like any preacher, he uses gestures, see...beckoning with his hands...I used to kid Dr. Feinberg all the time, you know, Jewish people use their hands more, about the time that he was gonna have a conversation in a snowstorm, but he didn't want to, 'cause he didn't wanna freeze his hands, you know. But he used his hands, "Men of Israel," the idea is...is kind of like this; and, again, it may be a parallel to chapter 12 where Peter did that when he was standing outside the door, remember, of John Mark's house telling 'em to be quiet when they were all shouting and yelling how good it was to see him outta jail, and the soldiers were hunting for him. So he says, you know, "Quiet."

So it may have been that when he got up there, he was kind of silencing the crowd, and he says, "Men of Israel and ye that fear God, listen." Now, you learn something there about preaching, and that is that the preacher stands up in the place of Christ, has the right to command the attention of the people; and I believe this. I...I don't believe that it's any right that oughta be misused, and I don't use it in a sense of egoism. I only believe that as...as the one whom God has placed as the teacher, that you have the right to say, "This is the Lord's time. I'm speaking to you. Hopefully, I'm not standing in the way," and so we can say, "Listen, for what I say comes from the Word of God."

And Paul did that. He said...but Peter did the same thing. He stood up on the Day of Pentecost and yelled to the whole city, "Be this known unto you and hearken to my words," see. Listen to me; and so the preacher stands up, authoritatively, in place of Christ to speak the Word of God. Now, men of Israel would be Jews, right? "And ye that fear God," who would that be? That would be God-fearers. God-fearers were Gentiles who had become proselytes, so he's including both in his...in his opening remarks. "You who are Jews, and you who are proselytes." God-fearers was the term used for Gentile proselytes. "Listen to what I say."

Now, as he begins his sermon, he begins it with God. "The God of this people of Israel." Now, God is the first of the two main characters in the sermon. Paul is not a character in his own sermon. There are two, God and Jesus. God is the background character, but God really dominates this thing. For example, in verse 17, God chose, God exalted, God brought out. In verse 18, God bore. Verse 19, God destroyed and God divided. Verse 20, God gave. Verse 21, God gave. Verse 22, God removed, God raised, and God gave testimony. Verse 23, God raised. Verse 30, God raised. Verse 37, God raised. Verse 33, God fulfilled. Etc., etc. God is a main character.

Second main character, Jesus, mentioned one time by name, verse 23, Jesus...You wanna know what the sermon is? If you could title this sermon and put it on a big marquee, it would say this, "God Presents Jesus." That's it. It is "God Presents Jesus." If you were gonna put it in the vernacular of today, you'd entitle this sermon, "Jesus, as presented by God." God presenting Jesus. Verse 23 is the key statement that ties the thing together, and we'll be looking at this several times in the weeks to come. "Of this man's seed...that's David he's talking about...hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus." It is God presenting Jesus. That's the scene. That's the sermon.

Now, you see, it wouldn't do any good for Paul to go into town and say, "I want to present Jesus." If Jesus is to be presented, He's going to have to be presented by somebody that they respect, right? And who do they respect above all? God, the God of Israel. So for the first part of the sermon, he just really lays the foundation of the God of Israel, and all that He's doing, and then he says in verse 23, "God now presents Jesus." So it's not Paul. Paul isn't even here in this sermon. He's just completely detached.

Now, the sermon falls into three parts...the culmination of history, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the justifier of sinners. Those are three things about Jesus, and Paul speaks to those three things. First of all, Jesus is the culmination of history, and that's what we'll look at just briefly as we close. Jesus is the culmination of history. You know, one of the greatest questions that face men, and...and I think faces all men, not only historians, but everybody, is the question, "Where is history going?" Now historians always hassle with it. What is...what are we here for? What are we all about, and where are we going? What does this life mean? And if you're a thinking person, you've thought about that. Is history going somewhere? Is it going nowhere? Do we just live to die? Do we just get up in the morning to brush our teeth and comb our hair and put our clothes on and go to work and come home and do the same thing every day, and then we die and put us in a pine box, drop us in the ground, put some flowers on us, and then the next guy takes off from there? I mean is that it? Is anybody going anywhere, and is everybody together going anywhere? Is history going anywhere?

The Stoics believe that history was a series of cycles that went about a thousand years, and the whole earth was burned up and the cycle started all over again. Nothing ever went anywhere and just kept repeating going nowhere; and that's a very common view. Sartre said this, "Nothing happens." That's an interesting statement in itself. "The scenery changes. Yes, people go in and out. That's all. Days are tacked onto days without rhyme or reason, an interminable, monotonous edition." Nothing's going anywhere. History and life to him was a series of disconnected, meaningless events. He also said this in one of his books, "'I was just thinking,' I told him laughingly, 'that here we sit, all of us eating and drinking to preserve our precious existence, and, really, there is nothing, absolutely no reason for existing.'"

Is it true that there is no reason? Is it true that history goes nowhere? That there's no point. There's no purpose. There's no rhyme...If that's true, Dostoyevsky is right. "If there is no God, there is no purpose. If there is no purpose, then everything is permitted. If everything is permitted, we're a disaster."

Now other people don't look at it like that. Other people see it in a cynical view. You know, and, incidentally, Sartre through all of that maintains sort of a very far away optimism, that there had to be some kind of reality, but he didn't know what it was. But there are some people who are just cynical, and they see history as this: a monotonous record of evil just piling up evil. That's the cynical view.

Interesting fellow has that view. In McCall's magazine, there was an article entitled, "An Anniversary Talk with Huntley and Brinkley." Brinkley is a cynic of the first order. Listen to what he says. Quoting, "That's the history of the human race, isn't it? Repeating the mistakes that have already been made." Now, that's his...that's Brinkley's view of history. A constant repetition of mistakes, evil. "If anybody ever made a new mistake," he said, "we ought to put a monument up in his honor. Hang a flag on it, a spotlight at night, and all that. That'd be a great achievement, a brand new blunder." Now that's a

pretty cynical view of history, isn't it? That's an easy...it's easy to understand how a news commentator would get that cynical, isn't it?

Well, that's the view that history is not only not going anywhere, it's just an endless repetition of evil, and it never, ever is really any new evil. Oh, for somebody to do a new sin, just to break the chain. Boy, that's cynicism. But you know something, people? History is going somewhere. We don't need to be atheistic, and we don't need to be cynical. History is going somewhere, and every Jew in that synagogue, that day that Paul spoke, knew where history was going. It was right toward the culmination in the coming of Messiah, and they knew it.

Every Jew knew the...the plan of history. "What is it?" you say. God is a God who desires fellowship, right? And He desires glory. Those two things. For the sake of His fellowship and the sake of His glory, He created creatures who could do two things: have fellowship with Him and give Him glory. He created men, and He desired for men fellowship and that they would recognize His glory, right? In the Garden, men fell, okay? They went their own way. They refused to have fellowship, and they refused to give Him glory; but God said, "I'm not gonna settle for that. I'm going to redeem man back to Me; and I'm gonna make it possible for a man who has rejected Me and sinned to still be able to enter fellowship with Me and still be able to give Me glory." And, people, He said that that would only be possible when a Deliverer came who could take men out of the bondage of sin, right?

Where is history going? To every Jew, history was just going toward the time when Messiah would come, and when Messiah would reintroduce to man the full fellowship with God, He would re—re-capacitate man to give glory to God. That was the Messianic Kingdom for which every Jew waited. You know what history ultimately resolves in? It resolves in creatures having fellowship with God and giving glory to God, and all the history on this world is simply God endeavoring to bring men back into fellowship, and to bring them back to giving Him glory. That's only possible through the perfect work of His Messiah, and every Jew knew it. Every Jew knew that there were injustices, but Messiah would make them just. Every Jew knew there were evils, but Messiah would make them good. Every Jew knew that there were wrongs, but Messiah would make it right. God's Kingdom would come to earth, and man would be restored, and history would resolve in a glorious Kingdom where men would no longer sin, would no longer disobey, but would come to God in fellowship and give Him glory. That's where history is going, and every Jew knew it.

But if you don't believe in God, and if you...if you don't believe in Jesus as Messiah, then history isn't going anywhere for you; but those Jews knew where it was going. Jesus is the culmination of history. When He came and died on the cross, He provided that which enables a man to enter fellowship with God, right? He provided all that which enables a man to give glory to God, and the Jew in the Old Testament looked forward to Him; and God redeemed that Jew on the basis of his faith in what was yet undone; and God redeems men today on the basis of faith in what has already been done. On both sides of the cross, but the cross and the coming of Messiah was the climax of history.

Lemme add this. It was a climax only in half. The second half of the climax of history is the Second Coming of Jesus, when He returns again; and He waited. He went back, because men rejected Him; and He's waiting in an age of grace for men to acknowledge Him as Savior, giving them time to repent. He'll come again, and when He comes again, history will culminate in His glorious Kingdom, and men will enter fellowship with God, and they'll give Him glory forever and ever.

That's where history's going, and the Jew knew it was resolving in Messiah. There had to be a Deliverer, just like there had to be a Moses to pull 'em out of Egypt. There had to be a Deliverer greater than Moses, a universal Deliverer to pull men in bondage out of the grip of the system and sin; and so they knew where it was going.

Now, Paul wants to lead up to this. Now watch, just quickly, as he goes through their history. Paul's smart. You ever read his epistles? He always starts out, not always, but usually like this. "Dear folks, you're wonderful. I always pray for you, and I thank God for your faith and hope and labor of love; and you're terrific; and I never cease to give thanks. Now lemme say a few things that you need to hear." Right? He always kind of unloads his love, and then whammo, see. Well, here's the same thing. He knows he can't go into a...to a synagogue and stand up and say, "The topic of my message is Jesus is Messiah." You know, that wouldn't have been the subtle approach. That was not well designed had that been the approach.

What he does, is he does the thing that every Jew wanted most to hear, and that was the sweet music of the history of God's special care for His \_\_\_\_\_, and so He just starts. Doesn't even get to Jesus' name till verse 23. I don't know what happened in verse 23. Doesn't say anything, but I imagine there were some ripples, to put it mildly, but before that he just goes through Israel's history, leading it up; and he culminates the history in the mention of the name Jesus. Let's go.

Verse 17, "The God of this people of Israel...oh, they loved that title, and rightly it was theirs...the God of this people, Israel chose our fathers." Here he starts when history started for the Jew. History started for the Jew with the selection of the fathers. Who were they? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. God chose our fathers. Hey, did you know God's writing history? God's not a victim. God is not sitting in Heaven, "Oh, I hope they do it that way, or I'll have to change all My plans."...

God is not a victim. God is not a victim of man's whim and will and design. God is running history, and that's where he begins, isn't it? "The God of our fathers, the God who chose," and the simple term is sovereign election, "And the God who exalted the people when they dwelt as sojourners in the land of Egypt." You know what exalted there means? He took them out. He lifted 'em. You know what He caused them to do when they were captives? Something slaves don't usually do. They multiplied rapidly. Something else slaves don't usually do, they escaped in total. Exalted means He brought them out. He brought them out by miraculous things. Remember the plagues and all, and depart...the

parting of the Red Sea? Then it says in verse 17, "With an high arm, brought He them out of it." That's the expression of power. The lifted arm.

Exodus chapter 6, and he knows...Paul knows his Old Testament. He's just rambling. He started in Genesis with the...with the fathers, and he slides right into Exodus here, 6, and what he's talking about is verse 1. "The Lord said unto Moses, 'Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand shall he let them go.'" Then in verse 6, it says at the end, "I'll redeem you with outstretched arms." So he uses good Old Testament terminology. God's high arm is gonna bring men out. So he says, "God's been controlling your destiny all along. He chose your fathers. He lifted you out of the land. He expressed His power as He led you out."...

God is running history. Then he goes a step further. In verse 18, "And about the time of forty years, bore He their manners in the wilderness." The term bore is kind of interesting. The idea of the verse is simply this - that God was...God was not only powerful, but God was caring. For forty years of griping and bellyaching, God continued to care for them. Provided manna, provided all they needed to drink, provided their needs through all those years in the wilderness. God cared for them. Why? Because they...they were key to His history, and He was going somewhere with His history, and they were part of it; and God cared for them.

There's an interesting note here, just not a lotta consequence to it, but it may be just getting at the heart of the verse, and we oughta do that since God wrote it. The word bore here can be a possibility of two words. It's a 13-letter word that is in some manuscripts. There's another 13-letter word in another manuscript, and they both are identical except for one-letter difference. The difference between a...a phi, P H I, and a Pi, P I. But the difference makes a big difference. If the... if the letter is a Pi, then the word is correct as translated in the authorized. "He bore their manners." What that means is He put up with their conduct. He tolerated 'em. "For forty years, God tolerated your lousy conduct." That would be if the letter is Pi. In other manuscripts, it's a Phi; and the Phi would give it a different meaning. It would mean as a...as a father nourishes and nurses his son; and so it would read, rather than He put up with you, "About the time of forty years, He nourished you as a Father in the wilderness." And God was their Father.

You say, "Well, when you get two manuscripts that differ, what do you do?" Well, you gotta come to the fact of which one is right, right? That's called the science of hermeneutics. Don't worry about that.

In Deuteronomy 1:31, get a little idea. "And in the wilderness where thou has seen how the Lord thy God bore thee, as a man doth bear his son in all the way that you went until you came into this place." Now, there, the emphasis is laid on the fact that God didn't just tolerate 'em, but that God cared for them as a man does his son. So it may be that we would accept the rendering closest to Deuteronomy 1:31. Why? Because we know what Paul is doing here. He's reciting the Old Testament history. He has paralleled other Scripture, so let's assume he's got another one in mind, and it would

be best to take it that way, that God cared for Israel in the wilderness as a father would care for his son, making sure he had enough to eat, enough to drink and his needs were provided.

And so you see God's power expressed in the moving of history, and God's care expressed in the moving of history in verse 18. All right, then look at verse 19. "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot." You know, after forty years in the wilderness, from Kadesh-Barnea to Kadesh-Barnea in forty years, they finally got into the land; and when they got into the land, it belonged to a whole lot of other nations. Canaan was the general name, but there were many different tribes within that. Jebusites, the Hivites, Canaanites, well, you can read 'em in Deuteronomy 7:1. They're all seven listed there, and God had to destroy all seven of 'em. Took a long time. Wasn't till the seventh year of David's reign that the Jebusites, the last of the seven, finally got it. And so God set them in the land. Verse 19, "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot." After the seven nations were set aside, God gave each of the tribes their own areas.

Now, notice in verse 20 a phrase in the middle of the verse, "About the space of four hundred and fifty years." You see that? Just as a note, the best manuscripts include that at the end of verse 19, so that verse 19 would read, "He divided their land to them by lot." Then you would say, "All this covered about the space of four hundred and fifty years." In other words, this whole idea of the captivity, four hundred years, the wandering the in the wilderness. How many years? Forty years. The landing in the land, approximately seven years. Four hundred and forty seven years about four hundred and fifty years. So the four hundred and fifty years covers that, and it should fit up there. Most manuscripts do include it up there.

So for four hundred and fifty years, God has shown His faithfulness. So what do we see as God moves in history? Power...care...faithfulness. Boy, you know, for a God to put up with Israel for four hundred and fifty years, for God to...to work all that out, that shows that He's faithful in bringing out what He wants in history. God was moving in history.

Then you go to the next verse, verse 20, and it says, "And after that, He gave unto them judges...skipping down...until Samuel the prophet." Once they got in the land, God gave them judges, didn't He? Judges were deliverers. That's exactly what they were. They weren't kings. They didn't reign over the land. They weren't like presidents. They were just deliverers who rose up at different times in different places for special purposes, to preserve Israel. God preserved Israel by His power, by His care, by His faithfulness, and by these men who were special deliverers. The last of the bunch was Samuel, who was also the prophet. He was a judge and a prophet.

Well, after the judges were done, they decided they wanted a king. Verse 21, "Afterward they desired a king." They said, "Everybody's got a king. We wanna king." And they went to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:5 and said, "Samuel, your sons are all departed. They're all shot. They're no good. We don't want

them." And they were right, believe me. Samuel had really blown it with his kids. But they say, "We wanna king. Everybody has a king." And so God even responded to their desires in the plan of His history. Isn't it interesting that the desires of people don't alter the plan of God's history. God plans that into His history; and they wanted a king; and they had a great way to choose one. Whoever's tallest and most handsome, that's our king.

It was like you'd a, you know, the king on the...on the local high school campus. No more qualification than he happens to have a good personality. He's tall and good-looking. And that's what they got. A tall, good-looking nothing. "And Saul was his name, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin." Incidentally, Paul's real Jewish name was Saul. He also was of the tribe of Benjamin, undoubtedly named after Saul the king. "A man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years." That's the only statement in Scripture that tells how long Saul reigned, forty years.

So God responded to their desires and they got a king, but he was not the kind of a king that God wanted. God wanted a king that would obey His will. Saul wouldn't. Saul was self-willed, self-directed, self-designed. So what happens in verse 22, "When He had removed him." What happened? God removed Saul. The word removed could mean his death. That's 1 Samuel 31, and you remember how he died? He was killed, you know, in the battle with the Philistines and all that. It could...could refer to his death; but, better, it refers to his removal in terms of his kingship. He was removed. You remember why? God had said, "Now, you're gonna have a battle with the Amalekites." Remember the king of Amalekites? He's named Agag, and He said, "When you wipe him out, don't spare anything, right? The sheep, the oxen, the valuables, the king, get rid of every bit of it. Cut that cancer out." It'd be like operating on a man with...with cancer and then cutting out three-quarters of it, leaving the fourth in there, to leave anything of the Amalekites, 'cause they were such a cancer in the world.

Incidentally, that's why God has removed nations in the past. People all the time ask questions about, "Why did God let Israel destroy?" That was surgery, people. That was cutting cancer out of society, just like you would take criminals and put 'em away; and so He said, "Don't keep anything." Well, you know what Saul did? Kept all the oxen, all the sheep, all the valuables, and let King Agag stay alive; and God said, "That's not what I asked, Saul, you're through," and God removed him from being king. Immediately after he did that, God had Samuel anoint whom? David, even before Saul was dead, David was anointed. That's why Saul spent all his time chasing David around, 'cause he knew what had happened. He knew he was finished, and so he had to be removed. God removed him in no uncertain terms.

In 1 Samuel chapter 13, just a couple of statements. Verse 13, "And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. Thou has not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which He commanded thee, for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. You blew it, Saul. But now thy kingdom shall not continue.'" You see, God is running history; but even in the running of history by God Himself, there is room for the mind of a man which is free to disobey, and yet it doesn't alter

God's history. Somehow His sovereignty accommodates itself to that. "The Lord has sought Him a man after His own heart." What does that mean? A man who obeys. A man after God's heart is a man whose desire is to fulfill the desire of God. "And the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded you. You've blown it."

Now, He found a man, verse 22, "He raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfill all My will.'" God chose the right man. God runs history, people; and God can go around the wrong man and through the right man; but God runs history. Don't forget it.

The wrath of men is made to praise Him. The sins of men, God goes around. He either goes through you or around you, but He gets where He's going. He's running history; and He chose this man David; and, oh, the people must've been sitting there thinking, "Oh, man, can this guy preach. This is great stuff." And they loved David. "And He raised up David, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfill all My will." You say, "You don't know David very well. He wasn't so hot." You wanna know what a man after God's own heart is? He's not a perfect man. A man after God's own heart is a man who, it says right there, "Who fulfills His will."

You say, "But David didn't fulfill His will." Yes, he did. You say, "But David sinned." Yes, he did sin, and what's God's will if a man sins? What's he supposed to do? Repent and turn from it; and when David sinned, what did He do? He repented and turned from it. He was a man after God's own heart. A man after God's own heart isn't a perfect man. It's a man who sees his sin for what it is and repents of it, right? Saul didn't do that. Saul didn't even acknowledge his sin, let alone repent; and, as a king, mark this, people, as a king, David did all the will of God. As a king in terms of ruling. When he went into a battle, when God told him what to do, he did it. Not Saul. So, from a standpoint of a...of a king, he was a man after God's own heart, and I believe from a personal standpoint, he was, too. And later on, you know, he has a beautiful obituary. The Bible records the words of injunction, I think they were given to Jeroboam; and it was stated, "Well, you kings, you're not like David. David was a man after My own heart," see.

In other words, David was a man who wanted more than anything to do the will of God. So what do we see here? God's running history. God's power, God's care, God's faithfulness, God's ability to let a man do what he wants to do and still get by, God's choosing of a certain man, God is running history; and all of a sudden, it all grinds down to verse 23, "Of this man's seed...David's seed...hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Savior." Oh, they knew that, 2 Samuel 7, that said God's gonna send a Messiah. He'd be the seed of David. They all knew that. Why, he'd even be born, said, Micah, in Bethlehem Ephrathah, right? That's the town of David. Oh, they knew he was gonna come through David's seed. There wasn't a question in their minds about that.

They must have been thinking, "Oh, wonderful," Psalm 32:11 coming into their minds, you know. The King is coming in the line of David and all this terrific stuff. Now, all of a sudden comes the thunderbolt. Whammo! Jesus, and He uses His human name. That's where He wanted to get. All history goes along, and it culminates in one name. What's that name? Jesus. Jesus...

Believe me, there could be no point to history if Jesus hadn't come, right? He's the one that makes fellowship with God possible, makes it possible for us to give glory to God. He's the culmination of history. All of it came to finally climax in Jesus. He's the one...Jesus, the culmination of history. History is truly His story...Let's pray.

Father, we are grateful this morning that we've been able to look at the book again...We thank You for what we've seen again. God, we know that history's going somewhere, that in Him...all things resolve...Father, He is even yet to return again and claim the earth, which is His own. Set up His glorious Kingdom, and that we shall spend forever giving praise to God and having fellowship with Him, and that's the reason for which we were made. Father, we wait for the day when history goes full circle; but already, Lord, because we know Jesus, we experience what it is to enter into the fullness of meaning and life, to know that we have been created for fellowship with You and to give You glory. Oh, Father, what a high calling, what a joyous existence it is...We pray, Lord, that there would be no one who would leave today who does not recognize Jesus...as the answer to the history of the world and the meaning to the individual life. Pray in His name. Amen.

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