

Can I Really Be Forgiven by God? **Acts 13:14-41**

Introduction:

1. I remember my first sermon I ever preached. What a tremendous blessing that it was **not** recorded. It must have been good, though, because my knees were applauding the entire time!
2. In our text, we have the apostle Paul's first recorded sermon. It was in Antioch of Pisidia.
3. His message is 26 verses long, and he preached it right in the Jewish synagogue (vs. 14-15). This was common in that culture, and what an open door! Imagine asking Paul, "Do you have anything you want to say?" The leader of the synagogue may have been sorry.
4. What would Paul say? What would he preach about? Take a guess. Paul's message boiled down to one thing: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" vs. 37-39
5. Everything in Paul's message pointed to Jesus. When the message was over, every person there was confronted with the question, "What will you do with Jesus Christ?"
6. Today, things haven't changed. That is still the question that will determine your eternal destiny. The call is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why?

First, because Jesus is God's provision for our salvation

1. Paul was addressing two groups of people (vs. 16). He was addressing the "*men of Israel,*" and "*ye that fear God.*" They would be Gentiles who were also at the synagogue searching for the truth of God.
2. Because Paul was at a Jewish synagogue, he began his sermon by giving a quick synopsis of Israel's history, showing how kind and gracious God had been to them.
 - God provided deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. vs. 17-18
 - God provided deliverers for Israel when they entered the land of Canaan. vs. 19-20
 - God provided kings to fight and war for them. vs. 21-22
3. But the real problem and pressing issue for Israel was their sin. Despite God's goodness in Israel's past, they still sinned.
 - They complained when God brought them out of Egypt, they continually forgot God despite the righteous judges and prophets (like Samuel) that God provided, they desired a king to rule over them (Saul) rather than God, etc.
4. Israel's history demonstrates two timeless truths:
 - God is a patient and gracious God.
 - Man is a sinner whose greatest need is salvation from his own sin.
5. Though they did not deserve it, God graciously kept His promise and sent them a **Savior**, Jesus Christ. vs. 23; cf. Matthew 1:21

6. We are no better than Israel, are we (Romans 3:9-10)? Our greatest need is salvation from our sin. God graciously provided that, not just for Israel, but for us also. Galatians 1:4

Second, because Jesus is risen from the dead

1. In vs. 23 Paul brought Jesus front and center stage and kept Him there the rest of the message. God responded to Israel's sin by providing a Savior, Jesus. What did Israel do?
 - They defiantly refused to obey John's call to repentance in preparation for their Messiah. vs. 24-25
 - They were totally ignorant of God's Word, or they would have recognized Jesus as their promised Messiah. vs. 27
 - They condemned and crucified their Messiah. vs. 28-29
2. Then came the bombshell – verse 30! Can you imagine if you were in the audience that day? Paul was preaching right along and, all of a sudden, he exclaimed that - back in Jerusalem - a man named Jesus rose from the dead, and is alive, and was seen! vs. 31
3. Paul then masterfully used the Jew's own Old Testament to demonstrate that the idea of a bodily resurrection is biblical and was prophesied. vs. 32-37
 - God would have a Son begotten from the dead. vs. 33; cf. Psalm 2:7
 - This Son would have the sure mercies of David. vs. 34; cf. Isaiah 55:3
 - This Son would be called "The Holy One" and would never see corruption. vs. 35; cf. Psalm 16:10
4. Paul told them, "The guy (David) who wrote that died and **did** see corruption. So this can't be a prophesy about David." vs. 36
5. Then Paul wrapped it up and put a bow on it and said, "*But he, whom God raised again [Jesus], saw **no** corruption.*" vs. 37
6. Without Jesus, our bodies would be doomed for physical corruption and our souls doomed for eternal corruption in hell. Matthew 25:41; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10
 - But praise God, He is risen! We now have hope. 1 Corinthians 15:52

Third, because Jesus can bring forgiveness of sins

1. After preaching about Jesus for 15 verses, Paul drew the net and said, "*Be it known unto you therefore... that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*" (vs. 38). I believe this is mankind's greatest need – to know we are forgiven.
2. Where else (other than Jesus) could you go and find divine forgiveness? A person who is dead can't help you, because the fact that he is dead proves that he is a sinner like you. Praying to a dead "saint" or any other dead person is futile.
3. God is holy and righteous and can't just forgive sins without a just basis with which to do so. So God is holy, we are sinners, and there is a huge gap. Jesus Christ was the God-Man, and He bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful man. He died for us! 1 Timothy 2:5-6

4. This makes it possible for us to go from a state of “guilty” to “forgiven.”
Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5
5. How does this happen - going from guilty to forgiven? There is a word for that: “justified.” How can I be justified before a holy God, rather than guilty? vs. 39
6. This verse makes it very clear, doesn’t it? Jesus has done it all. We simply must believe on Him if we desire salvation and forgiveness. The moment we believe on Christ, we are justified from all things (every evil word, or deed, or thought).
Acts 16:30-31
7. Paul says, “...*from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*”
 - In other words, nobody is justified before God because they performed well enough and kept all 600 commands in God’s law.
 - If we just apply the Ten Commandments to our personal lives, do you know how we all come out? Guilty! Go ahead and try it. Our only hope is for God to make a way for us to be forgiven, outside of ourselves.
8. God did that by providing His Son. Jesus willingly gave His life for us on the cross. He rose from the dead so that He could give us divine, eternal, never-ending life.
9. Do you want forgiveness? Do you desire to be justified in God’s eyes? Do you desire eternal life? There is only one way – Jesus. Believe on Him.
Galatians 3:22, 26
10. What if a person refuses to believe on Jesus Christ and trust Him as his Savior? Paul ended his sermon with a warning in verses 40-41. He quoted Habakkuk 1:5. If a person despises and rejects God’s wonderful work, he will perish in his sins.
11. There is no need for any person to perish in his sins. God has made a way for you to be forgiven and justified. What is that way? One word: “Jesus.”