

The Church of the Holy Apostles;
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)
Study Guide – September 9, 2015, Acts 13.16-41 Homily 29

Prayer before reading of the Holy Scriptures: Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things which are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good and life giving Spirit, always now and forever and to the ages of ages.

PRE-STUDY NOTE: This entire discourse spans the total story of God's plan for salvation from His promise to Israel until Christ. [Prophets, Kings, Judges, even the Passion of Christ] It is all part of the same story.

Chapter 13 v. 16-19 *Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. "Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.*

Even though Barnabas was more popular at this time, Paul spoke since they both "had an eye only to the common advantage."

"Men of Israel, and you who fear God..." Paul takes great care to prepare the Jews for listening to the Gospel, by showing genuine care for them.

"The God of this people Israel, chose our fathers" Reflects God's great benefit for the Jews from the very start. Just as God did THEN, so He does NOW.

Paul 'glosses over' the Jewish suffering, while focusing only on God's kindness since the Jews knew their history of suffering. The blessing will be great if they NOW live obedient lives.

Chapter 13 v. 20-25 *"After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior -- Jesus -- "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'*

Paul moves on to show the varied gifts of God, alternating between suffering and benefits. Even though there will be times of suffering, there are also times of mercy.

Paul invokes the witness of John the Baptist as supporting evidence of his [Paul's] Gospel, as if to say, "It isn't just me..."

Not only does John the Baptist NOT seek glory, he refuses any glory which is given to him. SJC "John too not merely bears witness (to the fact), but (does it in such sort that) when men were bringing glory to him, he declines it: for its one thing (not to affect) an honor which nobody thinks of offering; and another, to reject it when all men are ready to give it, and not to reject it, but to do so with such humility."

Chapter 13 v. 26-35 *"Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. "And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. "But God raised Him from the dead. "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. "And we declare to you glad tidings -- that promise which was made to the fathers."God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'*

“Because they did not know Him...” Paul removes the guilt of the Jews due to ignorance. SJC “See how he gently makes an apology even on behalf of those (crucifiers). And not only this: but he adds also, that thus it must needs be. And how so? ‘By condemning Him, they fulfilled the voice of the prophets.’”

Paul alternates between OT and NT to show that this is ALL consistent with God’s plan for salvation. This lends to his credibility. We can’t read JUST the OT or the NT. SJC “For neither the Old Testament proofs seem so cogent when taken by themselves as they are in this way, nor yet the latter testimonies apart from the former: wherefore he makes them mutually confirm each other.”

There is a great charge against the Jews for not heeding God, but Paul continually soothes this by reminding them of God’s plan for salvation. [The complete Passion story]

Chapter 13 v. 36-41 *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.’ ”*

AFTER believing in the Resurrection, then forgiveness means something

AFTER Paul scolds them, he soothes them with the promise of forgiveness

Jesus is the way out of suffering. SJC “For those ordinances are of no use, unless there be some benefit (accruing therefrom). This is why he brings forgiveness later: and shows it to be greater, when, the thing being (otherwise) impossible, yet this is effected.”

Teaching on “History Repeats Itself” – (see Homily 29, p 185-187)

1. The Church finds itself in the same state as the Jews
2. Coming to Church all the time might be fruitless if your life doesn’t change
3. Lazy Christianity is nothing new (whether in 400 CE or today)
4. Memorizing the Scriptures isn’t enough
5. Obligatory prayer isn’t enough
6. Since history reveals the struggle will continue, then allow the life of the Church to help fight the battle
7. All passions equally trap us. It doesn’t matter that you have one sin, while another has a different sin
8. The life of the Church is practice to CONQUER the passions

Life Application Challenge – (Homily 29, p 188)

We MUST learn how to defeat the passions before we will ever be victorious in the war. The life of the Church IS the training ground. We shouldn’t discount its value in our struggle.