**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Thirty-Fourth Week Since the Resurrection

***Free-Will to Preach and Believe - Acts 13:1-49***

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

December 6th In the Year of Our Lord 2020

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS quoted.)

**Acts** **12:24** But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem

when they had fulfilled their mission,

taking along with them John,

who was also called Mark.

**Antioch becomes a Strategic Christian Base**

13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there,

prophets and teachers:

Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger,

and Lucius of Cyrene,

and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch,

and Saul.

**Barnabus and Saul Set Apart by Holy Spirit**

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting,

the Holy Spirit said,

"Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul

for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them,

they sent them away.

**Saul Speaks Filled with Holy Spirit in the Face of Opposition**

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit,

they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

5 When they reached Salamis,

they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.

6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos,

they found a magician,

a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus,

7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence.

This man summoned Barnabas and Saul

and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

9 But **Saul**, who was also known as **Paul**,

filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10 and said,

"You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time."

And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

**Paul at** **Pisidian Antioch Synagogue**

13 Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

14 But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

15 After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying,

"Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

16 Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said,

"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 an uplifted arm He led them out from it.

18 "For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.

19 "When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance-- all of which took about four hundred and fifty years.

20 "After these things 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 "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said,

'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, (1 Samuel 1:14)

A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'

23 "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,

24 after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 "And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.

27 "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.

28 "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed.

29 "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

30 "But God raised Him from the dead;

31 and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.

32 "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers,

33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm,

'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' (Psalm 2:7)

34 "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: (Isaiah 55:3)

'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.'

35 "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, (Psalm 16:10)

'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.'

36 "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;

37 but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

40 "Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:

41 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'" (Habakkuk 1:5)

**[End of Paul’s Sermon]**

42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

44 The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds,

they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said,

"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

47 "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6)

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; **and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.**

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.

**[ The word appointed is in the *nominative*. This means “to be” arranged / assigned to a place. So, the Gentiles were placed to hear the Word of God]**

**(Appoint in Greek τεταγμένοι) (tetagmenoi)**

**From the Greek root word τάσσω - meaning assign a place or task. It is a military term.**

**τεταγμένοι** verb participle perfect passive nominative masculine plural

from the root word τάσσω tasso

**Three Greek Dictionaries**

Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon

[Fri] τάσσω: perfect pass. τέταγμαι; (1) assign to a place or task, appoint, decide (AC 15.2); passive, in relation to properly constituted authority be instituted, be appointed, be established (RO 13.1); (2) passive, with an abstract noun ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον as many as had become disposed toward eternal life (possibly AC 13.48) or all those who were appointed to eternal life (probably AC 13.48); (3) as determining a fixed time or course of events, middle for active arrange, order, appoint (MT 28.16; AC 28.23); (4) as doing something regularly and devotedly give oneself to (1C 16.15)

Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon

τάσσω—1. place or station—a. appoint to or establish in an office Ro 13:1.—b. used with a preposition put someone in charge of Mt 8:9 v.l.; Lk 7:8. Assign, pass. belong to Ac 13:48. Devote 1 Cor 16:15.—2. order, fix, determine, appoint—a. act. and pass. Ac 15:2; 18:2 v.l.; 22:10.—b. mid. = act. Mt 28:16; Ac 28:23.\* [Cf. tactics.] [pg 197]

Danker, Greek NT Lexicon

τάσσω [cp. τάξις] (basic idea relates to arrangement so as to be in order) ‘put in arranged order’ – a. put in official rank or position Mt 8:9 v.l.; Lk 7:8; Ro 13:1; set a time for official event Ac 28:23; enroll in line as beneficiary 13:48; devote oneself for service 1 Cor 16:15. – b. make arrangement for someth. Mt 28:16; Ac 15:2; 18:2; 22:10.

**Literal translation**

**Greek New Testament (BGT) NA 28 NT Acts 13:48**

**Ἀκούοντα δὲ τὰ ἔθνη ἔχαιρον**

**Hearing and the Gentiles rejoiced**

**καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου**

**and glorified the Word the Lord**

**καὶ ἐπίστευσαν**

**and believed (Luther and Tyndale)**

verb indicative aorist active 3rd person plural from **πιστεύω**

**ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι**

**as many as they were assigned to a place**

**εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον·**

**into life eternal**

**The Difference a Translation Can Make**

To clear-up any confusion in the translation from Greek to English, we must examine the Greek text. The order of the words is important. Regardless of the Greek N.T. manuscript you read, the order of the words is the same. The first Greek N.T. to be printed in Europe was accomplished by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. You can read this Greek text online. The word order is the same as I have noted on page 8. Note, in this example provided, we see that the Greek text order is that the Gentiles heard the Word of God. Second, they rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord, evidenced by they “believed.” Then the appointment/assignment to eternal life is announced. This order is in contrast to most English translations. Normally, it would not make a difference. But since Calvinists push for predestination using this passage, we need to read the Greek text in its original order. Both the Tyndale translation into English Bible (1534) and Luther’s German Bible (1545) place *episteusan* (believed) in the original Greek text order in their translations.The same order as I have here, in blue, on page 8.

The getyls hearde and were glad and glorified the worde of the Lorde and beleved: even as many as were ordeyned vnto eternall lyfe. (TNT)

Da es aber die Heiden hörten, wurden sie froh und priesen das Wort des HERRN und wurden gläubig, wie viele ihrer zum ewigen Leben verordnet waren. (Luther)

Tyndale and Luther were the first in their language group to translate from Greek into their native language. The original meaning comes through accurately. Again, they used Desiderius Erasmus’ 1516 Greek New Testament. Here is a translation I produced. We did this exercise in Seminary many times to translate the Greek text on our own.

The Gentiles, hearing (referring to verse 47) rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord and believed. As many as were assigned into a place of life eternal.

Believed = *Episteusan* is from the Greek root word πιστεύω = *pisteuo*. The parsing of *episteusan* (Acts 13:48) from the root *pisteuo*/believe is: verb indicative aorist active 3rd person plural

In Acts 13:48, *episteusan* means that the Gentiles hearing the Word of the Lord rejoiced and believed. They responded to hearing the Word of the Lord that Paul witnessed.

**Note about translations:** Bible publishers and editors are noted for keeping the same phrase or phrases of words that is suitable to the original language just as a matter of tradition. There are also traditions in publishing small sections of text that are hard to move away from. One glaring publishing error, in my opinion, is the continued publication of the Mark 16:9-20. Publishers will tell you, “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20.” There will also be the same publishing note for John 7:53-8:11. If these were not printed with the Bible, neither of these citations change any teaching of the Bible or essential Christian doctrine. Concerning our focus text (Acts 13:48), we see a change with the 1611 publication of the King James Bible. After the KJV went the direction of placing the word “believed” at the end of the sentence, everyone else followed suit.

So, what happened between Erasmus in 1514 Geek N.T. and Tyndale 1534 English N.T. and Luther 1545 German N.T. to the time of the printing of the King James Bible in 1611? Calvinists influenced the 39 Articles of Faith of the Church of England in 1571 producing an Article 17.

1571 XVII — OF PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

By the time of the 1611 printing of the KJV, the Calvinists had impeded themselves in the committee of the KJV translators. Their names are well-documented. It is obvious that they changed the order of many verses to suite their theological system of predestination. It took a few centuries for other English translations to be produced, but they followed the traditions impeded in the Calvinistic KJV. Calvin’s work made its impact on the Reformation, after Tyndale and Luther translated their work from Erasmus’ Greek New Testament. Calvin’s books (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1st edition 1536) took a few years to gather a following. But, by the time of the 39 Articles were published by the Church of England in 1571, the Calvinists were on their way to influencing the 1611 KJV. John Calvin was a real “Christ-loving” man [NOT] who had people executed for theologically disagreeing with him.

**John Calvin**

https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Calvin

John Calvin, French Jean Calvin or Jean Cauvin, (born July 10, 1509, Noyon, Picardy, France—died May 27, 1564, Geneva, Switzerland), theologian and ecclesiastical statesman. He was the leading French Protestant reformer and the most important figure in the second generation of the Protestant Reformation.

**Back to Review of Acts 13:48**

Here are additional uses of *episteusan (believed)* in the New Testament. Why point to this? Because the Gentiles in Acts 13:48 “believed” first. God then appointed them to eternal life. Here are other examples in the N.T. with the same word use.

**Greek ἐπίστευσαν - English Believed**

**Matthew 21:32; Mark 16:13, 14; John 2:11,22,23; 4:39,41; 7:31; 8:30;**

**9:18; 10:42; 11:45; 12:42; 17:8; Acts 4:4; 8:12; 9:42; 13:48; 17:12,34**

**Romans 10:14**

**Why is a Greek word study in order here?**

It is important to take the time to present the truth in God’s Word. Many Calvinists use this verse to make their case for “*predestination*.” However, like in all the other verses to which they point, they have to take the verse out of its biblical context to accomplish their goal.

**God’s Word Calls for us to Believe**

**God Makes the First Move**

**God Reveals to All**

First, there are numerous Scriptures that directly call for a person to believe and surrender to the Lord’s Holy Spirit conviction, confess their sins, repent leading to water-baptism and receive the Holy Spirit somewhere in the process. Here are a few Scriptural citations.

In Acts 16:30-31, the jailer who thought Paul and Silas had escaped, Paul called to him saying, “W*e are all here*.” The Guard realizing the power of God before him said, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* Notice the response sought from the guard? Belief! The Guard was not made to believe by God. He had a choice. Or John 3:16 “*for whoever Believes*.” In John 6:40, *"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*

Here God reveals Himself but leaves it up to people to believe. Once a person is made aware of “The Son” then they have a choice to make. God seeks a response. We are not programed to respond automatically. We have a choice like Adam. Adam was not programed to follow God’s instruction and not eat from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17). So, in Acts 13:48, the Greek word **tetagmenoi correctly parsed (**verb participle perfect passive nominative masculine plural - from τάσσω/tasso) directly points to the fact that God made the arrangements. God had directed and appointed Paul to the Pisidian Antioch so these Gentiles could hear His Word and have a chance to receive eternal life**. God appointed, placed the Gentiles in a place for them to hear Paul.** After hearing the Word of God (in His appointed time), those who were present made a decision to believe.

Luke employs the same word in other sentences in Acts 15:2; 22:10; 28:23. All of these uses of the same word (tasso) translate to: placed, determined, and arranged, assigned to a task.

The reality is that these Gentiles had been freely coming to the Jewish Synagogue for worship. They were not forced to be there or listen to God’s Word through Paul. The Greek word “*tetagmenoi*” is the form of a *participle perfect passive*. This means that their status of “appointment” to hear the Word of God had already taken place. This is evident in the fact that they had been freely attending the synagogue services. Like the Ethiopian, who Philip came upon, was already reading the Word of God (Acts 8). Philip, by God’s appointment, enhanced God’s witness to the Ethiopian, and he made a decision to receive salvation.

The Jews had also been freely coming to the synagogue and were historically arranged/placed and appointed by God to hear the Good News, as the Old Testament testifies, but they freely rejected/repudiated the Word of God. The Gentiles had already freely chosen to participate in hearing God’s Word. This was not a cold-call when Paul preached to them. Paul was called and sent (directed/positioned) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-4). We can say the Gentiles arranged/appointed and placed themselves in a position to hear God’s called witness (Paul). It was up to them to Believe - in the context of salvation. In verse 46, Paul declares:

"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; “since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6)

God takes the first step and reaches-out. He sets-up or aligns for people to be witnessed to. **We all are appointed, placed and arranged to hear and see God’s Word. However, we do not all surrender to His   
Word and gain eternal life.** We also see that God works through the Creation itself to witness His attributes, eternal power and divine nature. Therefore, people are without excuse. No one can say that God did not reveal Himself to them (Romans 1:18ff, 10:18). God does not require people to become Biblical scholars, but He does require all people to surrender their hearts to Him so He can change their hearts (Deut. 30:6).

**God Seeks a New Heart for Us**

Many people see the Law handed to Moses, from God, as a legal system that does not start with the heart. Just mindlessly obey. However, I encourage everyone to read Deuteronomy 30. There we see that adhering to God’s commands start in loving Him. This is what happened to the Gentiles in Acts 13. They responded to God’s love with joy and glorifying Him. God included them in His salvation plan. God loved us first (1 John 4:19). This is consistent with Ezekiel 36, that I also encourage everyone to read. God speaks through Ezekiel to tell the Hebrew people that He will give them a new heart if they will ask Him (Ezekiel 36:37). This is all predicated on loving God which is the first of the two Great Commandments (Matthew 22:37, Deuteronomy 6:5).

As in the words of Deuteronomy 30:6, “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

This happens when we surrender to the Lord. I often point to Acts 2:37 as a witness to verify that the Jewish audience to whom Peter was preaching surrendered to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and their hearts were cut (quickened, pierced). This is exactly what Deuteronomy 30:6 said God would do.

The experience of Paul at the Pisidian Antioch Synagogue highlights one of the ways God works. This is consistent with God arranging Peter to go to Caesarea (Cornelius’ house) to preach to Gentiles.

**The Difference Between Free Will and Election**

So, why do I go to this much work to point-out the more literal translation from the original Greek language? Because if the wrong and ill-advised teaching of John Calvin and his followers are accepted then the understanding of God’s gift of “free will choice” is replaced. “Free will choice” is replaced with the heretical “predestination” or “election.”   
This teaching says that God chooses those He wants to save; people do not have any choice to choose God. So, why are the evangelists or missionaries?

I have preached sermons on this previously. The key is in the *foreknowledge* of God. Romans 8 speaks directly to this.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, (Romans 8:29)

So, let’s go to the end of the Book: The book of Revelation. What does the book of Revelation tell us about God’s foreknowledge? We see here that there is a Book of Life of the Lamb mentioned in the Old Testament and here in the New Testament.

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. (Revelation 13:8)

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. (Revelation 17:8)

**So, what do we get from this detailed sermon?**

God created us with “free will choice” to choose Him. God does not *elect* some for salvation leaving others assigned to hell. God does not purposely create people in His image who never have a chance to surrender their heart to Him.

We see that from the foundation of the world the names of saved people are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. God knows the names, but God did not make the people surrender to Him. In God’s perfect knowledge, He knows who will surrender to Him. Praise God, He did not make us robots. Remember that love is a choice, and God wants us to freely choose Him. God seeks for us to call upon Him.

**God’s Foreknowledge in John’s Gospel**

In John 6, we see a revealing fact about God in the incarnation as Jesus. Many had been following Jesus, but when He spoke spiritually about His body and blood, some people walked away. Look for God’s *foreknowledge* to be on display here.

**John 6:64** "But there are some of you who do not believe." **For Jesus knew from the beginning** who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me **unless it has been granted him from the Father**."

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

See also **John 10:26-30**

26 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

29 "**My Father, who has given them to Me**, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30 **"I and the Father are one."**

**John 14:6** no one comes to the Father but through Me.

From these verses, we see that God and Jesus are the same and interchangeable in roles. Which is it. . . *unless it has been granted him from the Father*. . . Or . . . *no one comes to the Father but through Me*.

So, who or what comes first? The answer is - that they are One. The difference is in the person of the Trinity that is being performed.

Where is Jesus the One who people go through to get to the Father? We can surely point to the Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelations 20:11 where Jesus is the judge. Everyone has to go through the judgement of Jesus to get into heaven to be with God the Father.

The final verdict is that we have the freedom to surrender to God and be judged by our faith. Thus, our names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

3 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:13) AMEN