

(3) The appeal. 13:38-41.

a. Encouragement. 13:38-39.

Justification by faith is the very heart of this message. Salvation is brought to us through this Man, Who was God manifested in the flesh. This Man laid aside His heavenly regalia and clothed Himself in human form and took upon Himself the weaknesses of men and died as a man. He voluntarily took upon Himself the sins and guilt of men, and died in their stead. He stands alone between God and sinful man.

Salvation is the complete forgiveness of all sin. This forgiveness is consistent with God's law, His mercy and the needs of helpless men. This forgiveness is gracious. It is offered as a free gift to man on condition that he repent of his sins and accept the offer. This forgiveness is complete. There are no limits to its benefits. It is the greatest benefit that God could bestow upon sinful man.

Salvation includes justification from all things. When we are saved, we are absolved from all sin and all guilt. How can a guilty person be justified in the sight of God? It is brought about when the entire penalty assessed by the law has been met in full. Christ met and satisfied every demand of the law concerning us and thereby set us free. We are free by His sacrifice. We are justified in Him. This justification is from the sins of the past, the sins of the present and the sins of the future.

b. Warning. 13:40-41.

"Beware therefore." The function of the law of God is to warn men of the dangers of life and to serve as a schoolmaster. As Paul said, "wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24. There is no pardon nor deliverance in the law; there may be warning but no pardon. Life is constantly interrupted by the danger signals that God sends across our paths. Just as the modern highways are marked with danger signals "curve ahead," "side road," "soft shoulders," and "railroad crossing," so are our ways marked by signals of God to protect us from dangers and pitfalls in the way.

These warnings are reinforced by many examples. The highways are strewn with wrecks of those who did not heed the warnings. Every wreck proclaims the needs of warnings and the wisdom of heeding them. Just as the danger points along the highways have reaped a dreadful toll of life, so have the danger points along the moral highway reaped a dreadful toll of happiness and usefulness in life.

The tragedies of the past have been recorded and preserved for our benefit. We are warned by such examples as Cain, Saul, Ahab, Herod, Ananias and countless others who hardened their hearts against God; and by saintlier souls who flirted with sin and ventured to tread where angels dared not go, like Solomon, David, Peter and others, but who suffered much for their reckless ventures.

Verse 41 is quoted from the prophet Habakkuk, and they tell a tale of woe about people living in his day who refused to see and recognize the glorious works of God--works that were taking place before their eyes. They hated the prophet because he pointed out their weaknesses and their danger, neither of which they wanted to see.

Their danger was a danger of prejudice, which is always an unusual task master. It blinds the eyes until men cannot see properly. It dulls the heart until men cannot understand. It influences their thinking until men cannot reason well. It deflects their judgment until men cannot reach sane and reasonable conclusions. It steals the sensitiveness from men's souls.

Their danger was one of passive acquiescence. They became accustomed to danger as experienced sailors become accustomed to the terrors of the sea, as soldiers hardened by many battles become accustomed to the falling of brave men all around them. Familiarity with danger robs it of its fearfulness.

Their danger was that of losing sensitiveness of soul. That is a terrible calamity. It is the ultimate result and punishment when men fail to respond to caution and warning. Beware, lest dangers cease to be dangerous! Beware lest sin lose its sinfulness! Beware lest the works of God lose their meaning!

Men of old were filled with wonder and amazement at the marvelous works of God but did nothing about them. They perished just the same. In the days of Christ His enemies said, "We never saw it on this fashion," and, "Never man spake like this man." They were filled with wonder and amazement, but they did nothing about it and perished. The warning to us is that we do not do as they did.

Men today are warned to profit by the mistakes of others. Look upon the wrecks along the way and be more cautious unless you come to the same end.

4. The results of Paul's sermon. 13:42-52.

(1) There was a desire to hear. 13:42-43.

At the close of the service, many requested that Paul address them again the following Sabbath. There was great hungering for the Word of Life on the part of the believers. A number of those who decided to follow Christ were exhorted to be true to their vows and also to go forth and tell others what great things the Lord had done for them. One can imagine their activity for their blessed Lord during that ensuing week! In the brief compass of seven days, they succeeded in telling the story abroad, and arousing the entire city over the things of God.

(2) There was a general awakening. 13:44.

The whole city was stirred. The people were accustomed to hearing the word of man discussed in the local synagogue. Even though each person was given an opportunity to present a verse from the scripture, he was asked to give his own interpretation of its meaning. Paul presented the message of God, and it touched the deepest things of life--God, life, sin and salvation.

(3) There was bitter opposition. 13:45.

Imagine the utter confusion and consternation of the Jews when they saw the multitude waiting to hear Paul. They became angry because the Gentiles received the Apostles so readily. They became angry because they were envious. They were jealous. They were poisoned by race hatred. They decided on the tactics of breaking up the meeting if at all possible. They did this by contradicting what Paul had preached a week earlier and went so far in their opposition as to use disgraceful language. Being filled with jealousy, they cared nothing for the glory of God or the good of men.

(4) There was great joy among the Gentiles. 13:48.

There was something in the gospel message which met the needs of their

hungry souls. They were made joyful. They had seen a new light. They had found a new hope. In the gospel message they had found comfort for their sorrowing hearts, hope for their despairing souls, music for their mournful spirits, peace for their disturbed lives and liberty for their imprisoned consciences.

(5) There was apparent defeat. 13:50.

It seems that the higher people get in the world the easier they succumb to the snares of Satan. We have an example of this fact in this verse. Honorable women and prominent men swallowed "hook, line and sinker" everything these Jewish seelots told them against Christianity, without so much as giving the other side a single opportunity to present its case. Through their approval the apostles were cast out of the city.

(6) There was triumphant grace. 13:52.

Within two weeks after Paul and Barnabas reached Antioch the whole city was in a stir. Christianity was the talk of the town. Some favored and some opposed. Some were made glad by the message of the missionaries, and some were made mad. Some welcomed them and others wanted to kill them.

Satan had the preachers driven from town. He supposed this would end the affair, but he was sadly mistaken. Burning Bibles, destroying church buildings and persecuting preachers will not defeat the kingdom of God any more than destroying books on mathematics will defeat the science of numbers. If every arithmetic in the world were destroyed, two plus two would still make four. If every nation should vote the Ten Commandments out of existence or repeal them, it would still be wrong to lie, steal and to kill.

These preachers went to another place. Some preachers would have stayed and fought back until they died, thinking they were being loyal to Christ. Paul moved many times when persecution became unbearable. When he found one door closed, he looked for and entered another that was open. "They shook off the dust of their feet against them." This was not a test of hate against them, but it was a testimony of no further response. They had offered them life, but it had been rejected. They had offered them salvation, but they would not have it. Now there was nothing more they could do. Having discharged their full duty toward them, they were no longer responsible for their doom.

They went on their way rejoicing. They were filled with joy. They were happy in spite of their seeming defeat, persecution and suffering. They went on their way rejoicing in the triumphant grace of their blessed Lord.