



September 8, 2024

“Belief That Leads to Behavior”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Evenings at Alêtheia start in ten days.

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For the Kids: What

Acts 13:13–16 ~

Perga in Pamphylia and the Via Sebaste...

Pisidian Antioch...

Proconsul Sergius Paulus' family...

... and the issue with Mark...

Mark abandoned the guys because he was unhappy with the direction the ministry was headed...

There is a human trait that is appalling...

(Romans 1:28-31, Ephesians 4:29-32, Galatians 5:19-21).

Your reputation is what others make; your character is what you make.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

1) Gossip is a killer of church unity –

2) Gossip is a killer of another person’s reputation –

3) Do your best with a clear conscience, apologize when you fail, get up and move forward always trusting in God.

4) John Mark ran back to Jerusalem and began gossiping about Paul and his ministry plans (Matthew 12:33–37).

Judaism was a Temple-based religion...

Pisidian Antioch had a small synagogue without a permanent Rabbi.

Acts 13:17–39 ~

17 God chose them. He chose Abraham when he was still Abram...

Through 10 plagues God delivered His people yet they still refused to trust Him.

21 The people wanted something more certain than trusting God to raise up the right person at the right time.

Saul ruled for 40 years, and few people were happy with him.

26 A transition indicating that because of all the things that had transpired in the previous centuries, now was the time of God’s Salvation.

The Savior was sent to Save His people, not from physical oppressors, but from themselves.

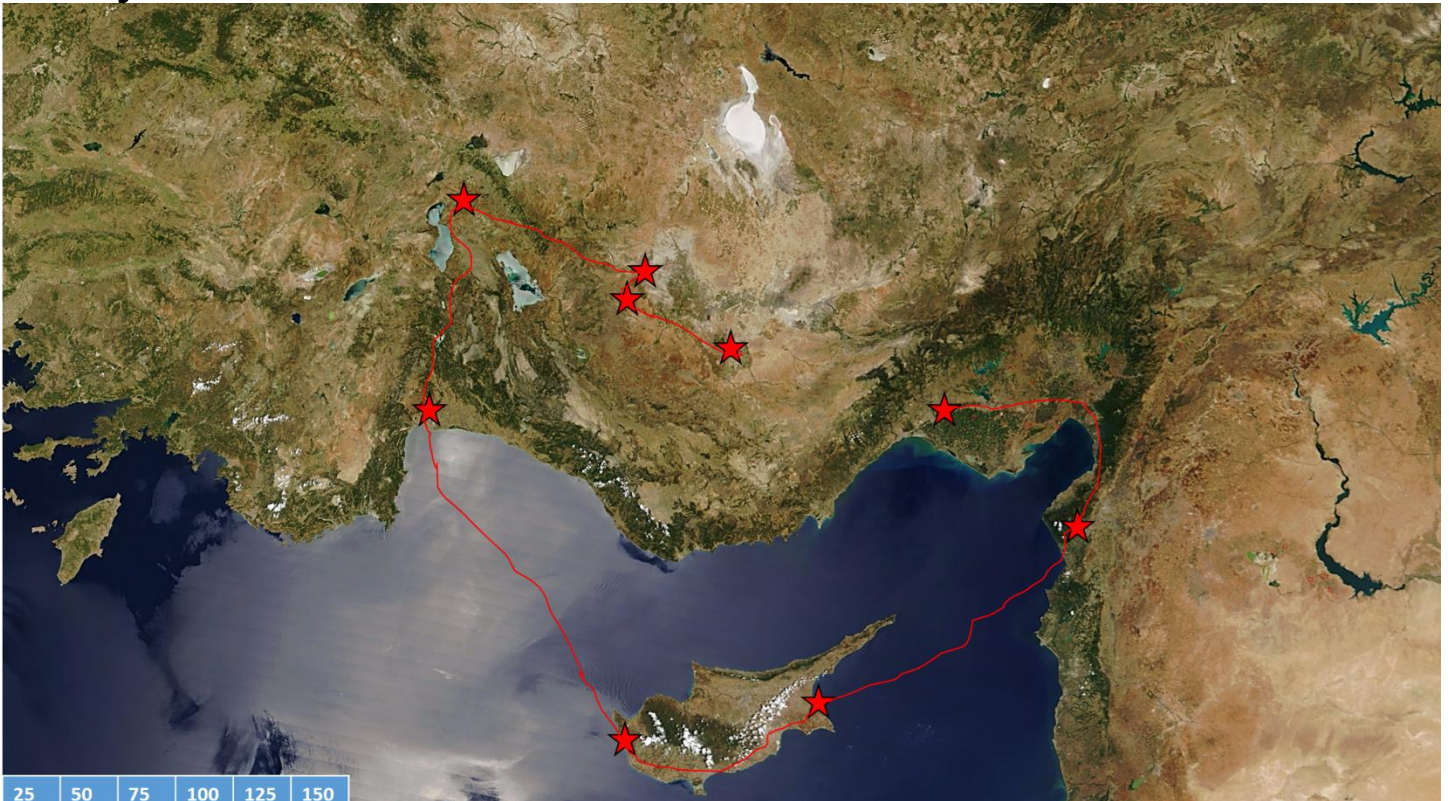
38&39 The Jews performed to gain God’s favor, and they continually fell short of the mark because only God can perfectly, please God... and that’s precisely what He did. Anyone who believes that and accepts the performance of Jesus Christ instead of their own, is considered perfectly righteous by God.

Once we are considered perfectly righteous how should we act?

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Acts 13:13–16, 13Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. 14But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue officials sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.” 16Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:



Tarsus over to Antioch across to Salamis along the coast to Paphos then sailing to near Perga then overland to Pisidian Antioch then to Iconium over to Lystra and out to Derbe.

The guys would have sailed past the coastal port of Attalia up the river a few miles and then overland a couple more miles to reach Perga in the Roman province of Pamphylia.

The primary reason they would have done that was to join the major Roman road called the Via Sebaste, meaning the Way or Route of Augustus. That road was built to accommodate wagons and while it added some miles to the journey it would have been a much easier and much safer route over the mountains to Antioch near Pisidia on the interior Konya plain.

Why did they decide to travel 156 miles from Perga to Pisidian Antioch? You might remember that the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus, governor of Cyprus, had extensive family in that city. It is very likely that after he positively received the Gospel, he encouraged our intrepid missionaries to visit them.

So, 156 miles and several thousand vertical feet later the guys arrived in the inland city of Antioch near the area called Pisidia, part of the Konya Plain, but at the time part of the Roman province of Galatia. Paul's Letter to the Galatians was originally written to the

people of Antioch and the surrounding cities of the Konya Plain, like Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

There were many cities named Antioch after the nearly 15 different dudes with that name who ruled the Seleucid Empire. Just like there were several cities named Alexandria for Alexander that Great, and numerous others named Caesarea for various Caesars.

Seleucus, one of Alexander the Great's Greek generals established the empire bearing his name in 312 B.C. shortly after his boss' death. The Seleucid Empire stretched from a bit west of this Antioch all the way to modern-day India.

Pisidian Antioch was chalk-full of retired Roman military veterans who had been give allotments for their service. It was common for Rome to plant former soldiers in outlying places to help maintain loyalty to the Empire.

John Mark, known to us simply as Mark, the author of the eponymous Gospel, deserted the group when they decided to move north. There has been a lot of speculation as to why he abandoned the mission and

it's all speculative. What we know for certain is that Paul was extremely disillusioned with Mark's choice and did not trust him to participate in his next missionary journey.

Mark's cousin Barnabas was much more tolerant, and he and Paul later had such a heated disagreement over Mark rejoining them for the Second Missionary Journey that they split from each other as a result. Paul launching with Silas and Barnabas going back to Cyprus with Mark.

It is thought that Mark was a disciple of Jesus who was personally present at His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mark was likely an original member of the church in Jerusalem, part of which met in his mother's home there. Like Paul, Barnabas, and the martyred Stephen, he had probably been one of the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem studying under the great Rabbis in the Temple.

Most everyone agrees that at least part of the reason Mark abandoned the guys was that he was upset that Paul had clearly taken over the leadership of the missionary group from Barnabas. I think that's true, but

even more than that Mark was unhappy with the direction of the mission.

They had focused on ministering to Sergius Paulus, a pure Roman aristocrat and were now setting out for Pisidian Antioch where he had family. Even though Paul and Barnabas would start out in the synagogue there, it was clearly a mission evangelizing Gentiles as well.

I believe that Mark ran back to Jerusalem and stirred up trouble against Paul. We will see the effects of that soon enough. Now, it all ends well with Mark and Paul. Paul mentions Mark as a highly valued co-worker in three of his Letters we have as Bible Books.

There is a human trait that is appalling. God calls it a heinous sin. In fact, Almighty God, Creator of the Heavens and the earth, the One Who literally speaks fiery galaxies into existence and holds the entire universe together, declares that people participating in this vile activity have been “given over to a depraved mind,” and “deserve eternal death” (Romans 1:28-31). That such people “grieve the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 4:29-32), and “that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

What is this revolting, vilely evil, and despicable sin-activity that is condemned by the One Holy and Perfect God? In a word, it is “gossip.”

Gossip is at its very core the assassination of another person’s reputation. Really – it is that serious? Yes, because gossip is talking about a person who is not present to defend themselves. As the saying goes, “A conversation is three women sitting on a bench, gossip is when one of them gets up and leaves.”

Gossip is always a one-sided affair. No matter what, gossip never provides a full picture and so it is always a distortion of the truth. Distorted truth is just another way of saying, lie.

Even the most seemingly benign and good-hearted comments about another person behind their back can do irreparable damage to their reputation. That is why it is a vile sin and why it can only ever lead to disunity, and then to dysfunction, and finally to division, in a group, like the church.

We often say things like “you never get a second chance to make a first impression.” With that mindset

we assume that a person's reputation is what they have produced, what they have earned, good or bad, but that's patently false.

A person's reputation is what others make it out to be – what others manufacture because people talk about that person behind his or her back – in short, they gossip about that person thus creating an impression of that person's character that may have very little to do with reality.

If there was no such thing as gossip then the person's reputation would largely reflect reality, but there is such a thing as gossip. What is monstrous is everyone says that they detest gossip, and yet we obviously love it, or it wouldn't exist. Psychologically, there are many reasons why we gossip and even more reasons why we go along with and support the one initiating the gossip.

All of that is bad enough, but what's worse, is that people believe the gossip and allow it to form, or reform their opinion of the person being gossiped about. It is a very rare thing indeed for a person to hear a salacious bit of information spoken behind a person's

back and then go to that person for their side of the story with a completely open mind.

In the very rare cases where someone actually does go to the talked about person, they usually do so already believing much, or all, of what was said. They come with a degree of judgment. Their query has an accusatory tone. It's like the victim of the gossip is guilty and they are generously being given a chance to prove their innocence.

Again, the fact that most people love to participate in gossip is grim, but the fact that they simply accept the gossip as factual information without checking it in any way, is really disturbing. And then, like I said, on the rare occasion that someone does go to get the other side of the story from the horse's mouth, it's nearly always with a predetermined guilty verdict. They essentially demand that the victim of the character assassination explain and justify themselves.

I bring it up for four reasons. 1) Gossip is a killer of church unity – we actually saw quite a bit of that here several months ago. As such it is a sin. Do not participate in gossip – simply take the gossiper's hand and say, "let's pray about that right now." After the

prayer walk away. Or you can say, “let’s go to that person right now and discuss it with them directly.”

2) Gossip is also a killer of another person’s reputation. As such it is a sin. Stop gossiping about people. One of my favorite quotes was by Elenor Roosevelt. She said, “Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.” Have a great mind.

3) People will assassinate your character and trash your reputation as they gossip about you because they are petty, and they have small minds. Do your best with a clear conscience, apologize when you fail, get up and move forward. There is nothing more, that you can do, beyond doing your best, so ignore the noise, and trust God. You and I can work on that one together.

4) Finally, I believe that John Mark beat feet back to Jerusalem and began gossiping about Paul and his ministry plans. Knowing people, and also knowing what happens in this Bible Book, I believe that vast majority of the Christian community there fully bought Mark’s perception and formed their own distorted impression without ever checking with Paul.

Paul's ministry and his reputation were sullied in the church in Jerusalem because one man – one very good and no doubt well-intentioned Christian man – gossiped.

Like I said, that will all become clearer as we get further along in the Book. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 that a “tree is known by its fruit,” metaphorically meaning that people tell us who they are by what they say and do. Jesus went on to say that what we say comes from who we are – that “the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.”

In verse 36 of that chapter Jesus said, “I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment.” He then finished by saying that you will be eternally justified, or condemned, by your own words. (Matthew 12:33–37).

The remaining guys arrived in Sergius Paulus' homebase of Pisidian Antioch and on the first Saturday there they attended the synagogue service.

You might remember that Judaism was a Temple-based religion. God was properly worshipped at the Temple. God ordered a portable Temple called the

Tabernacle which was used from the time of the Jewish Exodus from Egyptian captivity in roughly 1446 B.C. until a permanent Temple was constructed nearly 500 years later on Mount Moria in roughly 957 B.C. by King Solomon.

That Temple was destroyed less than 400 years later by the Neo-Babylonians in 586 B.C. As a conquered and scattered people without a Temple, the Jews began moving towards what would eventually become the Rabbinical Judaism of the first century complete with synagogues as places of religious activity in every city, town and village.

Synagogues of that time, much like churches today, ran the gamut from large ornate complexes to small standalone buildings. In some cases, personal homes, or other community structures were opened up for weekly services all depending on the local size of the Jewish population. The largest synagogues had a number of Rabbis while smaller ones had a single Rabbi, and still smaller ones were served on occasion by travelling Rabbis.

Based on the evidence it seems as though Pisidian Antioch had a small synagogue without a permanent

Rabbi. It was the lay people who were in charge of the synagogue who read to the people from the Old Testament and then, probably excitedly asked if these highly educated visiting Rabbis would teach them.

Paul stood up and gestured with his hand. It was a common practice indicated that he was about to make a speech. Back then, like today, it grabbed everyone's attention.

Paul's speech is a very well-formatted formal bit of Greco-Roman rhetoric. He started with a ceremonial address, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

So, now, because we have had the ability to record human speech in writing for over 4,000 years, we get to hear Paul's sermon that he delivered on that Sabbath 2,000 years ago. We get to listen to the content of Paul's teaching to some folks in a little synagogue on the Konya Plain of modern-day central Turkey while we comfortably sit here in Kalispell, Montana today. Because the sermon is fairly lengthy and covers a lot of ground, I decided that I would interrupt the great Apostle with clarification comments as we go, instead of trying to go back over it after reading the whole thing. I hope that it works for you...

Acts 13:17–39, 17The 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.

The One True God is the God of the Jews – the people collectively called Israel. God chose them, they didn't choose God. God chose Abraham when he was Abram and had a long, long, long, way to go in his personal walk with the Lord.

God chose Isaac and not Ishmael, God chose Jacob and not Esau. God led them into Egypt, God allowed the Hyksos invaders to enslave the Jews and then allowed the new Pharoah after that to continue to enslave the Israelites.

God did that to define a particular people. Over the approximately 430 years in Egypt the Jews went from 140 family members to a unique race of about 2 million people. God “made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt.”

Then through 10 plagues and a crossing through the midst of the Red Sea on dry ground God

delivered His people demonstrating beyond doubt that He was truly God and what happened? Because of their unbelief – their lack of faith – their refusal to trust God...

18For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. 19When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about 450 years. 20After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

God thought it best that He would lead the people through a series of leaders called judges. Each judge would come and go as needed. The people wanted something more concrete because trusting God to raise up the right person at the right time required too much faith. See a pattern here?

They wanted a permanent king with a clear line of hereditary succession to take all the uncertainty and so, the perceived insecurity, out of pure dependence upon God to reveal the next judge when needed.

To that point, they were a semi-autonomous collection of 12 tribes. They demanded a King to unite them as a single nation under him even knowing that he and his family would dominate them as dictatorial autocrats.

Saul was made king because he was strong and handsome and seemed like a king. He ruled for 40 years during which he did what kings do and few people were happy with His rule.

22After God 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, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' 23From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, 24after John had proclaimed, before His coming, a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25And 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"Brothers, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.

That last verse marks a transition in the speech. Once again, Paul was identifying himself with his audience and announcing that because of all that had transpired in the previous centuries, now was the time of God's Salvation.

The prophets of old kept announcing a Savior or Anointed One which in Hebrew is Messiah and in Greek is Christ Whom God would send to rescue His people from the line of King David. David himself saw decay. I've seen his tomb, and so did Mariah.

The Savior was sent to Save His people, not from physical oppressors, but from themselves. The Savior came to Save His people from their lack of faith and their inability to trust God. That's what they never seemed to get, what they continually missed, what they just could not understand, that they needed to rest in the Lord rather than take matters into their own hands. Have we today learned that lesson? Just to prove the point once again, Paul will now run through recent events in Jerusalem.

27For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the declarations of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. 28And though they found no grounds for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. 29When they had carried out everything that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. 30But God raised Him from the dead; 31and 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. 32And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, 33that God has fulfilled this promise to those of us who are the descendants by raising Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are my son; today I have fathered You.' 34As for the fact that He raised Him from the dead, never again to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and faithful mercies of David.' 35Therefore, He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not Allow Your Holy one to Undergo decay.' 36For David, after he had served God's purpose in his own generation, fell asleep, and was buried among his fathers and underwent decay; 37but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. 38Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that

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

Clearly, Paul was indicating that Jesus was publicly humiliated and executed as part of God's plan showing that, in no uncertain terms, the Jews were still as unbelieving as ever. That they still had such little faith that they simply could not trust God.

As a result, this Anointed One Whom they despised and rejected was indeed the Savior Whom God promised and through Whom He would Save the world. It is belief in Him and in His completed work, alone, that they could finally be rid of their unbelief, their lack of faith, and their failure to trust God. They could be Saved by Him, rather than by their own efforts that always fell short.

That is the key. The reason that the Jews always failed was because it was always about them trying to please God through their efforts on their own behalf. That is the definition of legalism.

I, a mere human person, will propitiate, placate, appease, and mollify God myself, for myself. I will justify myself before Him. I will please God with my performance, and He will grant me something that He would not grant me otherwise. Because I will have proved my worth to Him or at least my potential worth. That, my friends, is legalism.

We see it all around us every day of our lives – it's what we know and so it is ingrained deeply within us. Our acceptance by others is dependent upon our performance. And please get this... Please get this, it is not your actual performance, it is the perception that others have of how your performance benefits them. You can be the greatest performer around and still be rejected if people perceive that your performance is detrimental to them. Take Larry Bird, or Michael Jordan, or Tom Brady, or most recently, Caitlyn Clark. All world-class performers and all vilified by jealous people.

If you think someone, anyone, really loves you for who you are, just quit performing for them. Get a little crusty, stop bathing, stop brushing your teeth, stop using restrooms entirely, and you will find out just how much you're loved. Now, as Christians it is absolutely

not supposed to be that way. We are to love with God's perfect Agapê, not with our own fickle human neurotic emotion.

The Jews of old performed to gain God's favor and they continually fell short of the mark because the performance required to gain God's blessing is perfection – His standard of execution, not ours – only performance relative to His own would get His attention. That seems obvious but it doesn't stop us from competing with each other based upon our insubstantial standards – comparing ourselves relative to, or compared with, other flawed human beings.

Only God can perfectly please God and that's precisely what He did. Anyone who believes that and accepts the performance of Jesus Christ the Word of Almighty God made flesh is considered perfectly righteous by God.

We Christians get that and then most of us turn right around and start acting like Salvation is ours to accomplish and maintain, just like the Jews of old did. Like I said, it makes perfect sense. It is human nature, because it is the human experience with other humans.

Anytime you think that you are pleasing God enough to earn even the tiniest fraction of a percent of your Salvation through your efforts you are acting exactly like one of the legalistic Jewish Pharisees who shouted, "Crucify Him!"

What God wants is for His people to get their priorities straight. Put Him first. Know that you will never measure up to His Holy standard through your own efforts and so rest in His effort on your behalf and then... And then, behave like the child of God that He has made you to be.

As one example of that stop gossiping. Allow His love to fill you enough that you don't need to talk about others behind their back and allow His love to be enough to you that you don't need friends who gossip about others, because I promise you that they gossip about you when you're not around. How friendly is that?