THE MAIN THING

Acts 13:13–52 | Diving Deeper Bible Study

START HERE

Have you ever been so convinced that something was true that you had a hard time seeing another perspective? Maybe you had an expectation of how something should happen, only to discover that reality was different.

What helped you recognize the truth, even when it challenged what you expected?

LOOK AT THE WORD

Read Acts 13:13–52 together.

In this passage, Paul shares the story of God's faithfulness to Israel and explains how Jesus fulfills God's promise of a Savior. He proclaims Jesus' death and resurrection, offers the good news of forgiveness, and calls people to respond to the Gospel.

The responses are mixed. Some people want to hear more, others believe, and still others respond with jealousy and opposition. Yet Paul and Barnabas continue their mission, and the Word of the Lord spreads throughout the region.

This passage reminds us that it is possible to know about God without fully recognizing what He is doing. We can become so focused on our expectations, traditions, or circumstances that we miss the main thing: Jesus.

The sermon highlights three movements:

1. **Remember the Promise** — God is faithful to fulfill His Word.
2. **Recognize the Savior** — Jesus is the promised Savior who brings forgiveness and freedom.
3. **Respond to the Gospel** — The good news calls us to faith, obedience, and action.

As you study, consider this question: **Is Jesus truly the main thing in my life, or have other things taken His place?**

DISCUSS

1. Remember the Promise

Read Acts 13:16–23.

Paul begins by reminding his listeners of Israel's history. He describes how God led His people, raised up leaders, and eventually brought David to the throne. From David's family line, God brought Jesus, the promised Savior.

Paul wants his listeners to see that Jesus did not appear unexpectedly. God had been working out His plan for generations. Remembering God's faithfulness helps us understand that He can be trusted even when we cannot see the whole picture.

- Why do you think Paul begins with Israel's history instead of immediately telling the story of Jesus?
- How does remembering God's faithfulness in the past help us trust Him in the present?
- Can you think of a time when you only understood what God was doing after looking back?
- Where might you need to remember God's faithfulness instead of allowing your present circumstances to determine your expectations?

2. Recognize the Savior

Read Acts 13:26–37.

Paul explains that the people of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize Jesus, even though the Scriptures they read pointed toward Him. They condemned Him, and He was crucified. But God raised Him from the dead, fulfilling His promises.

The sermon highlights a sobering truth: people can be familiar with Scripture, religious practices, and spiritual conversations and still miss the Savior at the center of it all.

Sometimes our expectations of God can keep us from recognizing His work. We may want Him to act in a particular way, answer a prayer on our timeline, or fit into the plans we have already made.

- How is it possible to know a lot about God but still miss what He is doing?
- What expectations or assumptions can keep us from seeing Jesus clearly?
- How can we guard against allowing religious habits or Bible knowledge to replace a genuine relationship with Jesus?
- What difference does Jesus' resurrection make in the way you face uncertainty, suffering, and death?

3. Forgiven, Justified, and Made New

Read Acts 13:38–39.

Paul arrives at the heart of his message: forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through Jesus, and everyone who believes is set free from what the law of Moses could not accomplish.

We cannot earn our way into right standing with God by trying harder, doing more, or proving that we are good enough. The Gospel announces what Jesus has already done for us.

The sermon summarizes the impact of the Gospel this way:

Your past — Forgiven.
Your present — Justified.
Your future — Changed.

God's grace changes our relationship with Him. We no longer have to live as though our acceptance depends on our ability to earn it. Instead, we can trust in Jesus and live out of the freedom He provides.

- What is the difference between trying to earn God's acceptance and receiving His grace?
- Why can it be difficult to believe that God has truly forgiven us?
- How does knowing that we are made right with God through Jesus change the way we approach Him?
- Is there an area of your past or a present struggle where you need to live more fully in the freedom Jesus offers?

4. Listen to the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 13:38–43.

After Paul shares the Gospel, people respond by asking to hear more. His message invites them to consider the truth and decide how they will respond.

The sermon also challenges us to pay attention to the Holy Spirit's leading. We can become so absorbed in our own thoughts, plans, and preferences that we fail to listen to God.

Listening requires more than simply knowing what Scripture says. It means being willing to let God's Word shape our decisions and to follow His direction, even when it differs from what we would naturally choose.

- What distractions or desires make it difficult for you to listen to God?
- How can we distinguish between following our own preferences and responding faithfully to God's Word?
- What habits help you create space for prayer, reflection, and obedience?
- Is there an area of your life where you sense God may be asking you to trust Him or take a step of obedience?

5. Respond to the Gospel

Read Acts 13:42–48.

Paul's message produces different responses. Some people want to hear more and follow Paul and Barnabas. Others become jealous and oppose them. Many Gentiles rejoice when they hear that the good news is also for them.

The Gospel is not simply information to understand; it is good news that calls for a response. We can listen to the message, agree with its ideas, and still resist allowing Jesus to shape our lives.

Responding to the Gospel means placing our trust in Jesus and allowing that trust to influence how we live.

- Why do you think people can hear the same Gospel message and respond so differently?
- What can keep someone from trusting Jesus, even when they have heard the good news?
- What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and personally trusting and following Him?
- If you have already placed your faith in Jesus, where might He be inviting you to grow in trust or obedience?

6. Share the Gospel Boldly

Read Acts 13:46–49.

When some of the Jewish leaders reject their message, Paul and Barnabas continue sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles. Opposition does not cause them to abandon their mission. The good news continues spreading throughout the region.

The sermon reminds us that sharing our faith does not require having every answer or delivering a perfect presentation. It requires a willingness to speak about Jesus and the hope He has given us.

The message emphasizes that the power of the Holy Spirit shows up when we speak up. Our responsibility is to be faithful in sharing the good news and showing the love of Jesus.

- What makes it difficult for you to speak openly about your faith?
- How can we share the Gospel through both our words and our actions?
- How would you describe what Jesus has done in your life to someone who does not know Him?
- Who is one person in your family, workplace, neighborhood, or circle of friends who needs to hear about the hope you have in Jesus?

7. Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

Read Acts 13:48–52.

Paul and Barnabas remain focused on their mission even when they face opposition and persecution. They continue to proclaim Jesus, and the disciples are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

The sermon returns to a simple principle: **“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”**

Jesus is not meant to be one part of our lives among many competing priorities. He is to be at the center, shaping our decisions, relationships, attitudes, and purpose.

It is easy for good things, busy schedules, personal ambitions, or the approval of others to gradually take priority over our relationship with Jesus. Keeping Him at the center requires intentional choices.

- What things can gradually push Jesus out of the center of our lives?
- If someone observed how you treated people, handled conflict, or responded to stress, what might they learn about Jesus?
- Where is it easiest for you to reflect Jesus, and where is it most difficult?
- What is one practical change you could make this week to keep Jesus at the center of your life?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few minutes to reflect silently:

1. Where do I need to remember God's faithfulness and trust His promises?
2. Am I allowing Jesus to shape my expectations, or am I trying to fit Him into my own plans?
3. What area of my life needs the forgiveness, freedom, or transformation Jesus offers?
4. Is there a place where I need to listen more carefully to the Holy Spirit and respond in obedience?
5. Who needs to hear about the hope of Jesus through my words or actions?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

This week, take one step:

- **Remember:** Write down one way God has been faithful to you, and return to it when you need encouragement.
- **Recognize:** Spend time in Scripture, asking God to shape your understanding of Him.
- **Respond:** Identify one area where you need to trust Jesus more fully and take a practical step of obedience.
- **Listen:** Set aside time to pray without distractions and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

- **Share:** Pray for one person who needs the hope of Jesus, and look for an opportunity to share your faith.

Challenge: Choose one person this week and take an intentional step toward sharing the love and truth of Jesus with them. You do not need to have every answer. Start with a genuine conversation and a willingness to share what Jesus has done in your life.

Remember: God promised a Savior. Jesus is that Savior. The question is, *What is your response to Jesus?*

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray that God would help your group:

- Remember His faithfulness and trust His promises.
- Recognize Jesus as the center of Scripture and the source of their hope.
- Live in the freedom of forgiveness and grace.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit and respond with obedience.
- Share the Gospel with courage, humility, and love.
- Remain faithful when they encounter opposition or discouragement.
- Keep Jesus at the center of their priorities, relationships, and decisions.

Close by praying for specific people who need to hear the Gospel. Ask God to open doors for meaningful conversations and give your group the courage to speak when those opportunities come.