

Dear Heavenly Father,

### *Praise*

Isaiah said of your Servant, Jesus: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47; Isa 49:6). When Paul quoted this passage to the Galatians, “they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord,” and many of them believed the gospel. I praise you today as the God who brings light to Gentiles like me! How wonderful to have eternal life through Christ!

### *Today in Your Word*

Today you told me how Paul resisted those who demanded that the Gentile believers be circumcised. The issue of salvation apart from circumcision should have been settled by the conversion of Cornelius and his household, but not all Jews were convinced. The first recorded effort to subvert the “truth of the gospel” took place during Paul’s visit to Jerusalem to bring famine relief to the brothers living in Judea. Paul wrote that “false brothers” were secretly brought in to “spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery” (Gal 2:4). Clearly, some Jews still refused to accept that Gentiles could be saved apart from circumcision. Paul stood his ground—“to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you” (Gal 2:5)—and Titus was not forced to be circumcised. This teaches me how important it is to resist those who preach a gospel which is not consistent with Scripture. If I yield to such heresy, even for a moment, I undermine the truth of the gospel and do great harm to your kingdom. After this confrontation, the apostles encouraged Paul to “go to the Gentiles,” and when he and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch, your Spirit set them apart to be missionaries. They preached the gospel in Cyprus and southern Turkey, and Paul’s message is a model for evangelism today. Paul said, “We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he had fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus...through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed” (Acts 13:32–33, 38–39). This teaches me that Jesus’ resurrection is the core tenet of the gospel. I need to be challenging the world to find forgiveness in him. Paul’s first missionary journey was the beginning of a long and fruitful ministry to the Gentiles, and it serves as an example to me of how to build your church. Paul preached the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike, endured persecution, took time to disciple his new converts, established a church in each city, appointed elders who would care for the flock, and exhorted the Galatians to continue “in the faith” (cf. Acts 14:22; Gal 3:3). So often we build a church and then try to make disciples, when we should be making disciples and then uniting them to form a church. Paul’s example shows me the proper way of carrying out Christ’s great commission.

### *Reflection*

I was fascinated by the diversity in the church at Syrian Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1), and it prompted me to ask myself: ‘Am I merely getting along with those in my church, or can I say from my heart that I love each and every person? Will love transcend our differences, or will our differences transcend our love?’

### *Request*

Father, I ask that you would help me to imitate the example of Paul and be bold in my defense of the faith. Enable me to testify of Jesus’ saving grace, and help me to stand strong for the truth of the gospel.

### *Thanksgiving*

Thank you for filling my heart with joy and with your Holy Spirit! (Acts 13:52). Praise the Lord!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Suggested Hymn: “Go Forth” – Samuel L. Speck.*

*Meditation Verse: Acts 13:2.*