

Acts 13:38-39

An Original Translation from the UBS-5 by [Tyler Robbins](#)

Revised March 2017

1. FINISHED TRANSLATION:

This is why you *must* know, men and brothers, that through Jesus forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you! Even from all [the] sins you have not been able to be justified [from] by the law of Moses, through Jesus every man who believes *is* justified!

2. THOUGHT-FLOW DIAGRAM:¹

13:38	Summation	- οὖν
	Imperative Message for Audience	- γνωστὸν ἔστω ὑμῖν
	Vocative	ο ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί
	Appositional Clause Explaining Imperative	- ὅτι
	Agency (Jesus)	ο διὰ τούτου
	Content of Imperative Message	▪ ὑμῖν ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται,
	Ascensive Conjunction (Crescendo)	ο καὶ
	Further Content of Imperative Message	▪ ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι
13:39	Agency (Jesus); Contrast (Mosaic Law vs. Jesus)	ο ἐν τούτῳ
	Further Content of Imperative Message	▪ πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων δικαιοῦται

3. DETAILED TRANSLATION NOTES:

Acts 13:38	γνωστὸν	οὖν	ἔστω	ὑμῖν,	ἄνδρες	ἀδελφοί,	ὅτι	διὰ	τούτου
	nsn	conj	3 rd ,s,p,a,imp	dpm	vpm	vpm	conj	prep	d/gsm
	Make known	therefore	It must be	to you	men	brothers	that	through,by	this
	Therefore, let it be made known to you, men and brothers, that through this man								
This is why you <i>must</i> know, men and brothers, that through Jesus									

¹ This scheme is based off Young's discussion on thought-flow diagrams (*Intermediate Greek*, 268-271) and the format in the ZECNT commentary series. It blends both versions, and I'm not entirely sure it gets the point across well, but I'm using it for now.

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γνωστὸν . . . ἔστω. This is a unique phrase², and together it forms the message which the synagogue congregation in Pisidian Antioch needed to hear. The subject (“it”) is actually implied in the verb, and γνωστὸν is probably best pegged as a predicate.

Active voice, indicating either Paul or the congregation must perform the action of the verb. The former option would be translated, “I want you to know . . .” (e.g. NIV, Schnabel³). The latter option would be something like, “You must know . . .” Either way, you have to make a choice, or else it ends up as a passive (e.g. “let it be made known;” most English translations, also Bock⁴). I chose to render it “you must know,” because I think it fits the idea of a forceful, personal appeal better.

An imperative of command. A descriptive present; anything else is simply over-translating here.

οὖν. The conjunction is making a concluding statement. Indeed, this is the conclusion to Paul’s entire sermon. The formal gloss is “therefore.” I chose to be a bit more colloquial, and went with “this is why.” Either way, the reader understands Paul is making a grand conclusion.

ὑμῖν. A dative of direct object. The Israelites and the God-fearers alike must know the message; they’re the recipients.

ἄνδρες . . . ἀδελφοί. Both are vocatives of direct address. Paul begins generically (“to you”), but makes a more pointed address (“men and brothers”) for rhetorical effect. It is interesting he sees devout Jews as “brothers.” After all, if a believing Old Covenant Israelite hears the message that Messiah has come, He should believe it, and thus prove he really *is* a believer! Paul doesn’t appear to see a sharp disconnect between an Israelite and a Christian.

ὅτι. The conjunction is introducing an appositional clause which explains what, exactly, this message is which must be known by them.

διὰ τούτου. The preposition is expressing agency. The demonstrative pronoun refers back to Jesus from Acts 13:37 (“but he whom God raised up saw no corruption”). Jesus is clearly the antecedent most vividly in Paul and the audience’s mind. A strictly formal translation would be “through this.” The context makes it clear something rather

² See Mikeal C. Parsons and Martin M. Culy, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2003), 263.

³ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, in ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 583.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, in BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007; Kindle ed.), KL 11216-11219.

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more specific (e.g. “this through man”) is warranted. You could be wild and crazy and render it, “through Jesus!”

ὕμῖν	ἄφεσις	ἁμαρτιῶν	καταγγέλλεται,	καὶ	ἀπὸ	πάντων	ᾧν	οὐκ
dpm	nsf	gpm	3 rd ,s,p,pass,i	conj	prep	gpm	rel/gpm	
to you	forgiveness, pardon, release	of sins	it is being proclaimed, announced	and	from	of all, each, every	of which	not
forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and everything from which you were not able								
forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you! Even from all [the] sins								

ὕμῖν. A dative of indirect object.

ἄφεσις . . . ἁμαρτιῶν. This phrase is subject nominative of the verb *καταγγέλλεται*. The noun *ἁμαρτιῶν* is an objective genitive, acting as the implied object of this forgiveness which is being proclaimed by Paul.

καταγγέλλεται. A descriptive present, indicating Paul is preaching this message to them *right now*. A simple passive; the congregation is receiving this proclamation as they sit. A declarative indicative. You *could* make an argument for a durative present (“has been preached”), but I feel that would be over-translating.

[καὶ]. An ascensive conjunction, a focusing additive⁵ which highlights a previous thought (e.g. through Jesus forgiveness of sins is announced to you) and carries it forward. “The thing that is added is out of the ordinary and rises to a climax like a crescendo in music.”⁶

ἀπὸ πάντων. The preposition seems to be expressing the idea of disassociation or separation (“from”).

ᾧν. The relative pronoun refers back to the antecedent *ἁμαρτιῶν*, which it agrees with in gender and number. I rendered it as “the sins.” Parsons and Culy suggest this could be a genitive of reference or separation,⁷ but this seems unlikely.

The implication here (“from all the sins”) expresses the complete contrast between the Old Covenant of the law and the New Covenant in Christ. Paul is not saying the Mosaic Law justified you from *some* sins, and Christ takes care of the rest. That is missing the point. Paul is saying that, in Christ and the New Covenant, there is a total, complete, final, once for all forgiveness and justification for everyone who believes (cf.

⁵ See Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1994), 188.

⁶ A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934), 1181.

⁷ Parsons and Culy (*Acts*, 264).

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Heb 10:1-18). Bock observed, “Paul’s concern is not the intermediate way of picturing forgiveness in the law or sacrifices but the extension of full forgiveness in Christ. This is total forgiveness that the law of Moses could not give.”⁸

οὐκ . . . ἠδυνήθητε. A negation. The verb is in a divine passive; the law of Moses is the implied agent which is “not able” to justify them from “all the sins.” Context suggests a culminative aorist (“have not been able”), particularly because Paul is saying they have not been able to be justified from their sin so far. This has been an on-going struggle.

You could argue for a constative aorist (“were not able”), but I think this seems to put the Mosaic law as an event which has only historical implications for the congregation. This is not the case. These Israelites are still under the Old Covenant. The Gospel has not been proclaimed to them until Paul arrived in town. It is a present reality, and the Mosaic law “has not been able” to justify them from their sins.

ἠδυνήθητε	ἐν	νόμῳ	Μωϋσέως	δικαιωθῆναι	Acts 13:39	ἐν	τούτῳ	πᾶς
2 nd ,pl,aor,pass,i	prep	dsm	gsm	aor,pass,inf		prep	d/dsm	nsm
you were able	by	law	of Moses	to be justified		by	this	each, every, all
to be justified by the law of Moses, you have not been able to be justified [from] by the law of Moses,						by this man every man who through Jesus every man who		

ἐν. The preposition is expressing agency.

νόμῳ . . . Μωϋσέως. This is a partitive genitive.

δικαιωθῆναι. This is an anarthrous, simple infinitive which complements the verb ἠδυνήθητε and completes the unit of thought. I added the word “from” for stylistic reasons.

ἐν. The preposition is expressing agency, and it is a direct contrast to the Mosaic Law.

τούτῳ. The demonstrative pronoun is still referring to Jesus.

πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων. The subject nominative. This is a substantival participle, functioning as an independent noun.

This *is* a descriptive present, but I believe it is over-translating to insist on an iterative force (“every man who keeps believing”), because you’re then obligated to translate the verb with the same emphasis (“is continually justified”). Justification is not

⁸ Bock (*Acts*, KL 11460-11462). See especially R.J. Knowling, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, vol. 2 (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), 297-298.

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a continual process, and we must turn to Paul’s use of the term for a guide here (cf. Rom 5:1 – a completed act done to the believer in the past). Paul is simply calling these Israelites to believe in Jesus. To be sure, true faith will persevere and thus be continuous. But, that is not his point at the close of the sermon. His emphasis is on belief, plain and simple. This, for lack of a better term, is a flat present (“every man who believes”).⁹

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the continuous sense *is* a legitimate option, but we must be willing to deal with the implications for the verb – especially in light of the Roman Catholic understanding of justification.

Simple active voice, indicating the recipient must do the act of believing. He is responsible.

ὁ	πιστεύων	δικαιοῦται
nsm	papnsm	3 rd ,s,p,pass,i
the	he is believing	He is being justified
are believing <i>are</i> being justified		
believes <i>is</i> justified.		

δικαιοῦται. The verb refers to the “one who believes.” A descriptive present with a flat force, no continual process implied (see above). A divine passive, where God is the implied but omitted agent who justifies.

⁹ See Daniel Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 641, fn. 22) for an argument for the continuous sense here. Parsons and Culy disagree with Wallace (*Acts*, 264). Both Bock (*Acts*, KL 11218-11220) and Schnabel (*Acts*, 583) render the participle and the verb as flat presents.