

THE REST OF THE STORY

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

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Text

Acts 13:42-52

Topic

Paul tells the Jews who reject the Gospel that he and Barnabas will be a light sent instead to the Gentiles

Title

You Light Up Their Lives

Acts 13:42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13:44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I HAVE SET YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BE FOR SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.' "

Acts 13:48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 13:49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

Acts 13:51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

You know you're getting old when you can remember staying at Motel Six and it was called Motel Six because **rooms were \$6.95 a night!**

I was thinking of Motel Six because of the word **light** in the quote from Isaiah found in verse forty-seven of our text. Their slogan is, "We'll leave the light on." It describes weary travelers who see the light and are drawn to safety, comfort, and rest.

Paul said **the Lord has command us: I have set you as a light...** He humbly considered himself and Barnabas as a **light... set** in place by Jesus to draw the world-weary to salvation.

It wasn't because he was an apostle or a missionary that Paul considered himself a light. It was because he was a Christian. **Every Christian is a light in the world set in place to draw the world-weary to Jesus Christ.**

Jesus said to us,

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world..."

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

In our verses some people were drawn to the light while others were darkened by it. We can expect to experience similar results as lights that the Lord has set in the world.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Encourage People Who Are Drawn To Your Light To Continue In The Grace Of God, and #2 Warn People Who Are Darkened By Your Light To Consider The Grace Of God.

- #1 Encourage People Who Are Drawn To Your Light To Continue In The Grace Of God
(v42-43)

We are in the middle of Paul and Barnabas' visit to Antioch of Pisidia. They attended the Sabbath day synagogue service. Since Paul was a visiting rabbi he was asked to deliver the weekly sermon. He delivered a message proving that Jesus Christ was the Jewish Messiah and Savior promised in the Old Testament. It created quite a stir!

Acts 13:42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

The **Gentiles** were proselytes – non-Jewish converts to the religion of Judaism. They hung-back to talk with Paul and Barnabas after the services were ended. Hang-around after Church (if your schedule allows). Meet someone. Pray for someone.

The Gentiles begged Paul and Barnabas to come back in a week and continue where their teaching left off. I can remember, as a young Christian attending Calvary Chapel of Lake Arrowhead, looking forward with great anticipation to Sunday services.

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

At some point the synagogue had to close its doors. The **Jews** and Gentile **proselytes followed** Paul and Barnabas to where they were staying. It provided an opportunity for the missionaries to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ. **Speaking to them** about Jesus they **persuaded them to continue in the grace of God**. The Amplified Bible translates that same phrase, **[they] talked to them and urged them to continue [to trust themselves to and to stand fast] in the grace (the unmerited favor and blessing) of God**.

In the synagogue, week after week, they had been told they must achieve an almost impossible standard of righteousness by keeping God's Law as interpreted by Jewish tradition. Visiting rabbi after visiting rabbi would speak and only add to their burden of rules, rites, rituals, and regulations. *Until Paul and Barnabas!* Using just the Scripture and anointed by the Holy Spirit of God, these men proved salvation was the gift of God. It could never be achieved by any

works of righteousness. It must be received by faith as a gift, as the grace of God. Once saved they should **continue** in grace.

It's interesting to note that they did not continue very long in the grace of God! Antioch of Pisidia was in the region of Galatia. In the New Testament letter to the Galatians Paul has to rebuke them because they have fallen back into legalism. They were teaching that you are saved by grace plus keeping the Law of Moses, specifically being circumcised. Paul wrote,

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Galatians 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

We need this exhortation just as much! People are always adding some work of righteousness to the grace of God. They tell you, for example, that it is grace plus baptism that saves you; or grace plus speaking in tongues that saves you.

Having begun in the Spirit we are to continue in grace. We are to encourage others to do the same. Don't give people a bunch of rules and regulations to follow. It's grace all the way, from start to finish.

Not everyone in Antioch of Pisidia responded positively...

#2 Warn People Who Are Darkened By Your Light
To Consider The Grace Of God
(v44-52)

Paul and Barnabas were opposed by many of the Jews. Notice as we work through the verses that the opposition was not to their message but to their popularity. How sad that people can be so petty when so much is at stake!

Pettiness can be a problem in Churches – especially during times of relative ease when there is little or no outside persecution. Let's never become petty. Let's keep our eyes on the big picture.

Acts 13:44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

God can do great things. Do we believe this could happen here? Maybe this should become our prayer for Kings County!

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

The Jews were **contradicting** and **opposing** the meeting any way they could. Luke, the author of Acts, said they were **blaspheming**. In order for them to be guilty of blaspheming, Paul's message must have been all about Jesus. There are a lot of important things we need to share when witnessing but the focus should always be on the Person and work of our Lord.

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

Necessary is an important word. It puts us on notice that God was not through with His chosen people. He was still reaching-out to the Jews.

God is still not through with them! Currently we are in what could be called the Church Age. The Gospel is being preached to everyone equally and all who respond, whether Jew or Gentile, are saved. The Church Age ends with Jesus returning in the clouds to resurrect the dead and Rapture the living believers. Then God will turn His attention back to the Jews and fulfill all of His unconditional promises to them. In the mean time He has brought them back to their Promised Land and you see them as the cup of trembling that troubles the whole world in fulfillment of many Bible prophecies.

The Jews Paul addressed rejected Jesus Christ. They made a willful decision. Since no one is really worthy of salvation, what did Paul mean when he said that they **judge[d] [themselves] unworthy of everlasting life?**

It seems to be spiritual sarcasm. They believed they were worthy of salvation because they were Jews keeping God's Law. Thus they

judged themselves unworthy of salvation by grace. It was the method of salvation they were judging unworthy.

Paul was not blowing-off steam. He wasn't personally frustrated. He was acting upon the Word of God. He said,

Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I HAVE SET YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BE FOR SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.' "

This quote from Isaiah 49:6 was originally intended to describe the mission of the nation of Israel. As a nation of God's chosen people they were to be a light to all the other nations of the world.

They failed. This verse was then applied to the coming Messiah. Jesus was and is described as the light of the world.

Now that He is ascended into Heaven, believers like you and I are the lights set in this dark world.

Acts 13:48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

You betcha they were glad! They were saved by grace through faith. Their sins were forgiven. They were justified and assured of Heaven.

Glorified the word of the Lord means that they began to order their lives by the power of the indwelling Spirit to bring glory to Jesus Christ. It means they, too, were set as lights to others.

And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. Hmm. Interesting. It's one of those phrases men argue over. It's read by some as a proof that God, in His foreknowledge, predestines certain people to be saved while passing over others. It's read by them to mean that only those who were chosen by God in eternity past can be saved and that the vast majority of human beings were passed over and will remain lost with no hope of salvation.

I can see how you might come to that conclusion. *But you don't need to!* First, look at the context in which we find this verse. Paul had just established that salvation was **not** to be limited to a certain group, the

Jews, but was available to Jews and Gentiles alike. If anything the context of these verses is God extending His invitation to the entire human race.

Second, even if the words can be shown to mean that God chose these particular Gentiles from before the foundation of the world, it does not cancel-out their free will and ability to choose God. In the Bible God's ability to ordain people to salvation never operates apart from their ability to respond to the Gospel by faith as an act of free will. God's choosing you and your free will to choose are **simultaneous** truths. We may not be able to reconcile them; but our limitations should never translate into any teaching or doctrine that limits God's offer of salvation.

Paul didn't say to the Jews, "Well, guys, you must not have been appointed by God; you must not be among the elect. Tough luck!" The Jews actively, personally, rejected Jesus Christ as an act of their free will. They were held accountable for it. The Gentiles believed and were saved.

Acts 13:49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

Light after light was being set as life after life was being changed.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

Influential Jews probably went to the Roman officials and convinced them that Paul and Barnabas were interfering with the *Pax Romana* by stirring-up religious dissent. They were **expelled!**

Acts 13:51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

If you were treated inhospitably you would symbolically shake the **dust off** your **feet** when leaving. Again I don't think Paul and Barnabas acted out of personal anger. The Lord had instructed His followers to do this in regions where they were unwelcome. It was a serious gesture that indicated you were responsible for rejecting God's offer of eternal life.

I think we can apply this on a personal spiritual level. If you are badly treated for your witness then learn to shake it off! Don't get all upset about it.

[Acts 13:52](#) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Neither were the believers who were left shook up by the persecution. It brought out the best in them. To put it in the context of our imagery, the darker things got around them the more they shone as lights set in place to draw men to Jesus.

The people in Antioch of Pisidia had tried Greek reasoning; they had tried Roman rule; they had tried Hebrew religion. None of it satisfied the soul. When they saw Paul and Barnabas they were drawn to the light.

It doesn't matter what people are trying in our day and age. None of it can satisfy. God has placed eternity in their hearts.

Those who are in the dark can be drawn to light that is powered by grace. They will be drawn to the real thing; to the genuine article.

We are the lights set in this dark world. Having begun in the Spirit, let's continue in the Spirit.

- being changed to bring change -