

**The Troubling Gospel**

Scripture: Acts 13:42-52

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Coming to the 13th chapter of Acts, we have been studying, beginning in verse 14, the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in the city of Antioch. Antioch was in a region called Pisidia which was in a larger area called Galatia. This is the first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas were two of the five pastors of the church in Antioch of Syria, a different Antioch, and they had been called of the Holy Spirit to go out and carry the gospel to the pagan world, to the Gentile world. Their first adventure was on the island of Cyprus, and that we saw in the first 13 verses of chapter 13. The gospel spreading to the Gentile territory began its conquest in Cyprus. They had a wonderful time there, ran into conflict with Satan face to face through a magician, a demon-possessed sorcerer. They saw victory in the life of Sergius Paulus who was converted. They went on from there to the second stop on the first great missionary journey and that is in the city of Antioch.

Arriving in the city of Antioch, Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue. We saw that he did this customarily because there was an open door there for him as a Jew and as a rabbi and as a leader. There was the fact also that they knew well the Old Testament so they were a ready audience to hear. The fact that they met regularly made them a ready audience just physically. Paul also knew that if some of the Jews were saved in the city, he would then have more people to reach the Gentiles with and so he endeavored first of all to go to the synagogues.

Well, when he arrived at the synagogue, he was invited to preach and Barnabas and he sitting in the congregation were noticed by the leaders. Paul was invited to preach and he did. His sermon blew the city wide open. It was the most devastating, shattering thing that perhaps had ever happened in the city of Antioch. The city had, like most cities, endeavored under its leadership to maintain some kind of a placid equilibrium and some kind of a balance and that was absolutely shattered by the preaching of Paul. But before we would be too surprised, we would call to mind the fact that the gospel, whenever it is purely proclaimed in the midst of sin and wherever there are unsaved people, is bound to have results that are going to be shattering.

The Book of Acts, for example, just charts those. You remember that the Book of Acts is a history of the church in its early years and it began in Jerusalem. The gospel was preached and Jerusalem exploded. There was havoc among the leaders. There was chaos among the people. There was persecution that came about, bitter opposition, hatred. The reaction went just like a grass fire through

Jerusalem. Then the gospel moved to Judea and Samaria as our Lord Jesus had said that it would and as it spread into those areas, the same devastating results came to pass, revolutionizing cities and towns and turning things upside down and people committed to Christ and others hating them and fighting them and resisting them and the forces of God and good were set against the forces of Satan and evil. That's how it was with the gospel. That's how it is with the gospel.

And now as the good news of Jesus Christ reaches into the city of Antioch, a Gentile community, it has the same devastating effect. Paul and Barnabas arrive and the whole place blows up in a matter of a week and all of the finely-tuned equilibrium that somebody worked so hard to preserve and keep the various racial factions off each other's necks and try to find out some kind of a way to bring about a sort of...at least a superficial peace were absolutely thrown apart and chaos resulted.

There's an interesting thing as you look at the early church to find that in most cases the chaos and the persecution came directly from Israel and it's a sad thing because, you see, Christ was the Messiah of Israel and Israel were the people of the promises and the covenants and to them was the adoption and so forth and so on, Romans 9:4 and 5. Everything that God had designed, He had designed initially for Israel and yet all throughout the early church and all throughout the life of Christ, Israel played the devil's advocate. Israel, to whom it all was given, rejected it all and fought against it all and really played the part of Satan's advocate. You go to Jerusalem, for example, and the early church in Jerusalem, chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 7, charts persecution and all of that persecution is directly from the Jews against Christ and Christians.

The gospel then moved to Samaria. In chapter 8, you come to Samaria and you find antagonism and the man who antagonizes is Simon. Simon is either a full Jew or a half Jew. You come a little further into the city of Damascus and the conversion of the Apostle Paul takes place and Paul is there in Damascus and immediately you find the Jews are filled with wrath and a persecution begins, again generated by Israel. You go a little further into chapter 12 and again in Jerusalem, Herod, the King of Israel, begins a persecution and Peter is thrown in prison. You come to chapter 13. At the very beginning...remember...we saw how that Paul and Barnabas arrived in the city of Paphos on the island of Cyprus and they met a conflict and the conflict was with a sorcerer and a magician by the name of Bar-Jesus and it says very simply in verse 6, "They met a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus." All the way along, sadly reversing the plan of God initially, Israel was playing the devil's part against God and against His Messiah for whom they had waited, incidentally, for hundreds of years.

And, you know, as you go further in the Book of Acts, you find it continues to be the Jews. In chapter 14 verse 2, unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles. In verse 5, there was an assault made both of the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers to use them spitefully and stone them and here again the Jews are in on the persecution. In chapter 14 verse 19, certain Jews chased them from Antioch all the way to Lystra, stoned Paul and threw him out of town expecting him to be dead. In chapter 17,

you have the same thing again in verse 5. "Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the baser sort...which is the King James way of saying hoods...and gathered a company and set the city in an uproar and assaulted the house of Jason," etc. etc. and persecuted and so it went. Verse 13 again, Jews of Thessalonica stirred up the people in persecution.

Over in chapter 20, and just thinking here of another occasion, Jews laid wait for Paul and so again repeatedly it is the Jews antagonizing the gospel and the things that they had prayed and dreamed and hoped for and waited for for years and years, they now reject and playing the part of the adversary and that's sad. We think a lot today about anti-Semitism and what a despicable and terrible and ungodly thing it is but it's a ramification of sinfulness. In a real sense, in the early church, it wasn't anti-Semitism; it was the very opposite. The Jews were characterized by an anti-Gentile feeling which was equally as evil, as is anti-Semitism.

Well, Paul had arrived in this town and this town, incidentally, was a tender box to begin with. As a city on a road, a very prominent highway, it had a cross of population that was mixed from a lot of places. There were many Jews in the area. There were Greeks. There were Romans and there were the native Phrygians of whom the historians say they were unstable and irritable people and all of this cross-pollination of nations meeting here created a rather volatile situation that only demanded a spark. The Romans had made it a colony in 6 B.C. and had brought some semblance of order but all it needed was the right spark and it would explode and Paul was the spark. Believe me, he was the spark about everywhere he went, but here just one sermon and the place blew up.

Now Paul preached and he preached about Jesus, obviously. He announced that Jesus was the culmination of history, the fulfillment of prophesy and the justifier of sinners and he wrapped it up with a warning and an invitation and today we're going to see the response. What did they do? How did they react to his sermon? I gave you a little chart and you might look at it just because it'll help you to visualize what I'm saying. The initial response...you notice in that first little box...the initial response was positive. I mean everything at the very beginning really looked good. The subsequent response split...very negative and very positive. The results on the one hand were negative and the results on the other hand, positive.

Now anytime the gospel is preached, you're bound sooner or later to have a split in reactions. You may have an initial positive response. There may be a tickling of the fancy. There may be a basic interest, but eventually the issue is going to come down to a commitment to Christ and the thing is going to split and that's exactly what happened in the city of Antioch as it always does. Now just to give you an idea of why Antioch exploded, let me just pick it out from one point. The gospel always creates trouble. We know this. I have found that. I always think back at the time when I was invited to speak at Valley College and the results are still going on. Somebody yesterday was talking to me about the fact that I had been banned from the campus and so forth. That's true. I have been and that's okay because we have our people there infiltrating. But anyway, we just aren't quite as public

about it, I suppose, but nevertheless, I preached and it caused trouble. Believe me, it blew the thing wide open and it caused a lot of problems. This happens. We expect this to happen if the gospel is clear cut and defined. It has to fracture. Christ said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword," and what He meant was the preaching of Christ doesn't bring everybody together in a big, lovey-dovey toleration. It fractures things. It splits. It cuts things apart.

You know how it is in a family. A person gets saved and all of a sudden it severs something in that family. That's what the gospel does, particularly in a Jewish context. Now the gospel then is a shattering thing. It always creates trouble when it's clearly presented. Now all of the Ecumenists and the liberals who are getting everybody together are just proving for once and for all that they're not preaching the true gospel because the gospel splits. It doesn't get everybody together under the same umbrella, tolerant of everything. If you want to preach that kind of message, you get everybody together, it's not the gospel because the gospel never does that. The gospel automatically divides between the saved and the unsaved, the people who accept it, the people who reject it, and so it's a shattering thing.

Now part of the reason this happens is because of this. Men usually...and you and I have done this perhaps in our past before we knew Christ...we usually try to figure out a rather comfortable philosophy. Let's say we're not a Christian. We've got to figure out some kind of rational reason for living, right? We've got to come to a philosophy. Now if you don't wind up with one, you become a drug addict, an alcoholic or you kill yourself. That's the guy who never got comfortable, right? He never found a philosophy he could live with so he either drowns his sorrows or kills himself because he can't find something comfortable to live with, but most people, they get a rather comfortable philosophy. They block out certain things and they concentrate on other things and they sort of gather together, rather as an eclectic, pieces and bits of everything and I've got my thing and I'm okay and it's sort of placid and they're like a little pond that's rather still and they're sitting there resting in their little philosophy.

Well, have you ever seen a little tiny pond and seen some kid drop a boulder in it? That's what happens when the gospel hits somebody's placid philosophy. You see, you walk up to some nice, comfortable guy, who after 20 years of struggling, has found his philosophy and he's finally comfortable and you say, "Brother, you're on your way to hell." Whew, see. You're a sinner before God. You're unrighteous. You're doomed and unless something happens in your life, you're going to spend your eternity without God, without joy, without happiness, without peace. Now that is dropping a boulder in his placid pool, believe me, and that's exactly what the gospel does. Men struggle to find a comfortable philosophy and we invade their lives with the gospel and it disturbs them. We hope it does, don't we, because an undisturbed man is an uncommitted man.

I was thinking as I watched television and all those people in Argentina were waiting for Peron to come back and they were all...bands were playing and everybody was happy and flags and banners

and all of a sudden somebody somewhere started firing a machine gun. Did you see that on the news? The people starting dropping all over the place and all of a sudden the placid, happy-go-lucky, hooray, play the music thing was over and everybody was on the ground for their life and I thought, "Boy, if that isn't a good illustration of what the gospel ought to do to a crowd. Just wake everybody up from their happy-go-lucky attitude to life and make them hit the deck for survival." Well, that's what happened. The guns were blazing in Antioch and Paul was firing it all and the people were hitting the deck fast. The gospel shatters. It blasts people out of that placid pool that they've finally wound themselves into and that's a really rough thing for a guy to take. I mean 20 years I've been figuring this thing out and you come in, in one message wipe me out. Not too happy about that. It's understandable, but you'll always have varied reactions and it'll always be volatile.

But I want you to notice something. In this case initially it didn't appear to be and let's look at the initial response, first of all, in verses 42 to 44 and it was very positive. In fact, through verse 44, it could have been a revival. I mean it could have been a fantastic thing going on there because not until verse 45 do you really see the thing fall apart. Now in verse 42 to 44, we find the beginning and it looks so good. You know, I really think as I looked at this that if I were the evangelist, I would at this time have been thinking, "Man, this is fantastic. Have we ever knocked this town for a loop. They're all going to get saved. We're going to have the first saved city going." That would have been a very easy response for somebody who really didn't think it through because of the good features.

No. 1...and I'm going to give you four things that were tremendously positive. One, they were pleased. The people were really pleased. Look at verse 42. Paul has just finished his sermon. "And when"...now you notice, I'm going to make a couple of corrections in the verse. The term "the Jews and the Gentiles" is not in the manuscripts. That was just put in to clarify but it really is not accurate and what it should read is this. "And when they were gone out of the synagogue...and the "they" refers most likely to Paul and Barnabas...when Paul and Barnabas were gone out of the synagogue, they...the Greek word is just "they," referring most likely to the Jews who were in the synagogue...besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." When Paul finished, Paul and Barnabas went out and as they went out, the Jews said, "Would you come back next week? We want to hear this again."

Now I'll tell you, friends, as a preacher, the greatest compliment that any audience can pay the preacher is to tell him to come back next time and tell them the same stuff over again, they liked it so well. "Can you tell us more about this?" That's why whenever you preach somewhere on a subject, you always want to make sure you quit before you've said everything you know because if you get invited back, you want to be sure you can pick it up from there. You always...you know that when a preacher says, "I could go on and on," that means he's at the end of his material. But anyway, they were pleased. They were very pleased. They said, "We want to hear more about this. Would you please come back next week?" Now I'll tell you any teacher desires above everything to create interest, doesn't he? I want you to be interested in what I'm telling you. I want you to be excited about

what I'm telling you. I want you to say, "I like that but I want to know more." I want you to come to verse 52 this morning and say, "That's great but what happens in verse 1 of 14? What happened when they left town?" I want you to have interest in what I'm saying and want to hear more.

That's the desire of any teacher, of anybody who wants to move people to make a commitment or a decision in a certain way and these Jews had responded. Everything that Paul said was very Jewish. Why, he'd given the history of Israel in a nutshell. He had talked about the God of Israel. He had talked about David. He had talked about the Old Testament prophets. He even quoted the prophets. He'd exalted the Messiah. The only questionable issue was that all of it resolved in Jesus and whether or not Jesus was the Messiah was a question. Now they weren't so plugged into Jerusalem that they had the same hatred for Jesus and maybe it was worth hearing some more and so they said, "Come back."

You know, I really think that Paul is a great example of a great preacher because a great preacher can make people want more and a good teacher can do the same thing. You remember those classes in school that you wanted to go to and those ones that you couldn't stand. The difference was somebody made you interested; somebody didn't. Well, Paul had that ability to make people interested. In Act 17:10, verse 10, "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night until Berea: who coming there went to the synagogue of the Jews...they always went there first...and those were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with readiness of mind." He preached to the Jews there and they really received it well. They were really open and then listen to this. "...and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." You know something? That's the thing you want to do. You want to present something that drives people into the Scripture themselves to make sure that what you're telling them is true. The absolute compliment to the teacher is to go home and pursue what he told you on your own, right? Sure.

Paul had ability to make them do that. Those people went out of that place there and they fired right back and started digging in the Old Testament to figure out whether what he was saying was for real and verse 32 had similar effect, the same chapter there. "When they had heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: but others said, 'We will hear thee again on this subject.'" We want more of that. Now that's a great compliment and that's what every teacher wants. From a teacher's standpoint, it's good when people want more but from the people's standpoint, putting off the decision may not been good.

Remember in 24th chapter of Acts...you don't need to look it up; I'll just read it to you...Paul had just shared the gospel with a man named Felix. "And he reasoned of righteousness, self control and judgment to come and Felix trembled." Just...he was so scared that he just shook about judgment to come. And he said, "Go thy way for this time. I can't take anymore. Out of here." But he says, "When I have a convenient season, I'll call for you." Sounds good, doesn't it? I want to hear more. Did he ever call for him? Yes, he did. Verse 26, "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul,

that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him." Sure, he called for him. You know why he called for him? He hoped Paul would pay him money to let him go. He called for him but not for the right reason. He called Paul all the time out of prison to try to get Paul to buy his freedom...money-grubby. See, it's not always right to wait. Second Corinthians 6:2 says, "Now is the day of salvation." Hebrews 3:7 and 8 says the Spirit says this: "Today while you're still hearing, harden not your heart." And so from the preacher's standpoint, it's great when the people want more. From the people's standpoint, it's better to receive Christ now. But anyway, they were pleased. They wanted more.

Second point. They were persistent. They were not only pleased, they were persistent and I like this. Again, this is a supreme compliment to Paul. What a teacher he was because it says in verse 43, "When the congregation was broken up...they were dismissed...many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas." Now that's persistent. They said, "Come back next week." That's good, but it's even better that they just formed a little trail and followed them right out of the place. Here comes Paul and Barnabas like the Pied Piper with a whole trail of Jews, proselytes and God-fearers on their heels. They wanted to know more. They were so interested in this. What a terrific sign! I mean to complete your message, to walk out cold turkey. You've walked into a town you've never been in in your life. You've fired out the gospel. You walk out and a gob of people are following you saying, "Hey, hey, wait. We want more. We want more." And Paul and Barnabas were speaking to them. They were persistent. The term "religious proselytes" embodies both the full proselyte who had been circumcised and the one who was just a God-fearer who had attached himself to the synagogue but never gone fully for circumcision and Judaism.

So there were Jews and Gentiles and they followed them, but they were all those who had adapted themselves to Judaism, who had been there that day in the synagogue, and so they taught them. They spoke to them. That looks so good, but there's something even better. They were pleased. They were persistent. Are you ready for this? They were even professing. Apparently, they had even professed to believe the message they had heard, that Jesus was the Messiah. You say, "Where did he get that?" Look at verse 43 at the end, "Paul and Barnabas speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." To continue assumes that they got there, right? You can't continue to be where you aren't. In some way, they had professed to believe this and so Paul and Barnabas were saying, "Now you people, you continue in the grace of God." Boy, that looks terrific.

Now you say, "Does that mean they were saved?" Well, that's the question. That is the question. Let me say this. I don't know whether they were truly saved. From verse 43, I don't know. Later on, I'll tell you what I think. From verse 43, I don't know that they were saved. It doesn't say they were saved. Want to know something else? I don't think Paul and Barnabas knew whether they were saved or not either and I think that the reason that they didn't know was because nobody can know. I can lead somebody to Jesus Christ and I really don't know whether it's real, right? They know perhaps. God knows for sure but I can't really know. There's only one way overall that I can really tell when

somebody is born again and that is if they continue in the grace of God, right?

First John 2:19, "They went out from us that it might be made manifest...what?...that they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us." Jesus said in John 8:30, "Many believed on His name," but He said to them, "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples... alethos...for real." How do you tell a real disciple from a false one? The real one does what? He continues. He continues. A true branch does what? Abides in the vine. And so what they're saying here is this: Be real. Continue in the grace of God. They didn't know whether they were really saved or not. They had no way to know that.

That's a danger, I think. Sometimes when we lead somebody to Jesus Christ, we're so in a hurry to make sure that they know that they're secure, that we secure them psychologically when the fact is they might not even be saved. Then we say, "Oh, yes, you're saved if you do this and this and this. You're saved. God promised it. Here, you can know it." We give them that 1John 5 thing and we tell them, "You can know you're saved," and the guy might not even be saved. What we need to say is, "If this is real and if you really mean it, then it is secure." Don't secure somebody psychologically who's not really saved. Then later on in life, somebody will witness to them long after they've tubed out and they'll say, "Oh, I did that." And the guy will say, "Well, maybe you didn't mean it." "Oh, yeah, I meant it. The guy told me I did. He told me I was in and I was secure" and it didn't work. That's bad and so you need to be careful. We don't know. The only way we can really tell is to continue, so Paul and Barnabas apparently acknowledged that they had made a profession of believing and he says, in effect, "Validate the genuineness of your confession by continuing in the grace of God." Persuaded them to continue.

Now for a Jew, there was a special problem. The Jew was used to living not in the grace of God but under...what?...law. What were Paul and Barnabas saying? They were saying this: "Hey, I said in verse 39...look at it there...that by Him all that believe are justified from all things...it's just a matter of believing...from which you could never be justified by...what?...the law of Moses. I'm offering you a new way. It's grace not law. Now if you believe that, remain in the grace that you have heard about and don't go back to...what?...the law." That's what he's saying and the great temptation for a Jew was to make an intellectual ascent to Christianity and then under the pressure of his Judaism, under the pressure of his tradition, under the pressure of his friends, be pulled back into Judaism thus invalidating his faith. You see? And so he's saying, "I want to see that it's real by you continuing in grace."

Now that is precisely the problem of the group to whom the writer of Hebrews speaks in the Book of Hebrews. Remember how many warnings in the Book of Hebrews to those intellectually-convinced Jews who believed and who knew it was true but who came all the way and associated with a church and believed in their heads and said, "Yeah, it's for real" and they'd hang around with Christians. They did the whole thing but they were then beginning to go back to Judaism and he says, "Don't go



back. Don't go back or you're proven once and for all that you never were saved." And you remember that at the 10th chapter of Hebrews and 38th verse, this whole concept is summed up in simple words, "Now the just shall live by...what?...faith...not works, not law...faith; but if anybody draws back, God says, 'My soul has no pleasure in him.'" You come up and you say you believe and you're on the edge and you draw back "...My soul has no pleasure but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." So what he's saying is that you who have come this far continue in grace. Don't get put back under law. Don't go backwards into Judaism because the pressure is going to come and it did.

Believe me, the toughest thing for a Jewish person to do is make a clean break. Someone was sharing with me this week about a young Jewish person who had received Jesus Christ last week and been just devastated by the family, just shattered by the family, and the pressure is on to come back and to kick it off and to go back into Judaism but if the salvation is real, they'll continue in grace. Praise God, this one did and has continued for just the brief week under great pressure. And so Paul and Barnabas are simply saying, "Come on. You've accepted this concept of grace that you can be saved by Jesus Christ by only believing in Him. Stay with it. Don't go back." That wouldn't be easy because the pressure would come.

Let me give you an illustration of this in Galatians 5 that is just very powerful. Now Galatians 5, I believe, is written primarily to Christians but it just may be also that the principle is certainly applicable to unbelievers or to people who make a profession of faith because we're only talking here about a general principle. But in Galatians 5:7, let's start there. Paul is having a lot of problems with these Galatians. Now remember the church at Antioch was in Galatia...right?...and Paul had warned these people "Don't go back to law. Stick with grace." And here in his letter to the Galatians which apparently any believers in Antioch certainly were familiar with, he says this, "You did run well...see that in verse 7?...you did run well." You had a fantastic beginning. Then he says this, "Who did hinder you that you shouldn't obey the truth?" You did so well at the beginning. Who messed you up? Who messed you up? And then in verse 8, he says this, "This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you." Who is "the Him that calleth you?" God. "You didn't get this from God," he says. Who messed you up? Do you know what the Galatians' problem was? They were living not under grace but...what?...under law.

And in chapter 5 in the first verse, he says, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and don't go back and get tangled up in the yoke of the law. You're free. What are you doing with legalism? You started out so good. Who messed you up?" Now look at verse 4, powerful statement, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." If you think you're saved or secured by keeping the law, you have invalidated Christ, right? You've just wiped it out. And then the end of verse 4, that most shocking statement, "You are fallen from grace." You cannot accept Jesus Christ admitting that you cannot save yourself and that you have nothing to offer and purely by faith take Him as Savior and then turn right around and try to maintain your salvation by

your works. If it's free, it's free and if you add anything to Christ, you'll lose Christ and if you add anything to grace, it isn't grace and if you haven't got Christ totally and you haven't got grace totally, you haven't got salvation period.

You have to choose and he says fallen, the word "ekipto" and the word is used in terms of sailors' language to refer to a ship that's off course and it's used in Acts 27:17 just that way about the ship that got off course and he says if you're thinking that you can start with grace and go back to law and start living under the law, you're off course. You go...you descend to the lower level of self-righteousness by law and you forfeit Christ and you forfeit grace. In fact, Paul was so afraid of those Galatians that in verse 11 of chapter 4, he makes a very interesting statement. He says, "I'm afraid of you...what do you mean Paul?...lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. I might be dealing with non-Christians. Maybe I'm trying to disciple people who aren't even saved. I'm afraid. Or if you were saved, I'm afraid that all my energy has been wasted because you're under the law."

And so we're back in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas say, "Indicate the true character of your faith by continuing in the grace of God." That's what Colossians 1 says. That's what James said. Continue, continue, continue, thus validating your faith. Well, they were pleased. They were persistent. They were professing and Paul and Barnabas were persuading them to continue. You know something? There's one other good feature, one other terrific feature, positive. They were present. They were present. Look at verse 44. "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God." You know, one thing that I think we all face in sharing Christ with people is the fact that sometimes you can share Christ with an individual and they'll be pleased to hear it and they'll be persistent and say, "Well, I want to know more. Well, I want to know more." And they'll be professing and they'll make a profession of faith and then you'll say, "I'm so excited that you've made your commitment to Christ," at least as far as you can see. You say, "You know, next Friday, we've got a Bible study and, boy, we'd like to have you there," and Friday comes and, whew, they don't show. You ever had that one? Oh, I have that.

Some people come to get married here. Now this is a community church by definition and so, you know, when a Buddhist wants to marry a Methodist or something, they choose the community church. It's neutral ground and that happens, believe me, and so we have the opportunity to share Christ with these individuals who come. We don't just say, "No." We say, "Well, come and we'll counsel you," and it's an opportunity to share Christ but it's very difficult sometimes. If a guy really loves a girl, he'd do anything if this is where she wants to get married. So you have to be very discerning to know whether a person is making a commitment to Christ or whether a person is going through the motions of whatever it takes to get married and it's amazing how many young couples I've counseled, and I'm sure Jerry Mitchell who does a lot of this in his ministry can vouch for this, you counsel them and they're, "Oh, yes, and we want to come and get involved." You marry them, wish. They're like Casper the Friendly Ghost, you know. Gone, gone! Never see them. I'd hate to think of how many couples I've married under a verbal commitment to Christ and to being followed up and nourished in

the Word of God and coming and learning the Word of God and I've never seen them and that's a sad thing and it breaks my heart and yet I can't stand in judgment when they make a confession of Christ. I can't play God, see.

But this gang was there. Verse 44, they showed up. They said, "Come back, Paul," and they were there. Well, there's a lot of pluses in that, folks. Everything looked good at the beginning and, as I said, a lesser person than Paul might have thought there was a revival about to happen but Paul wasn't holding his breath for that because the subsequent response begins in verse 45 and if the initial one was positive, the subsequent one was split and you can see on your chart, they went opposite ways. The Jew negative, the Gentile positive, and each had its own results. Just quickly, let's look at the subsequent response. It'll just flow right out of the setup as you'll see. Well, in the intervening week...they've got a week until they meet, right?...the Holy Spirit does a little publicity work and the Holy Spirit's moving around and Paul and Barnabas loose in any town for a week could stir up enough interest but there also were Gentiles who were there that day who invited all their Gentile friends, so in verse 44, the whole city is there. Can you imagine? The whole city of Antioch...Gentiles. And the split came just that fast.

Let's look at the negative split, the Jews who went against the gospel. Verse 45, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with compassion." That's what Jesus did, not them. They were filled with...what?...jealousy, envy. If there was anything a Jew couldn't tolerate, it was Gentiles horning in on salvation and that's true. They couldn't take it in the Old Testament. That's why they never did the job back there either. They couldn't take it here. They were envious "and they spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." It's an amazing reversal, isn't it? This is the same group that were pleased, persistent, professing and present and now all of a sudden, they're fighting the whole thing. You say, "Well, maybe they had some intellectual problems." Intellect had nothing to do with it. You want to know the one word? Prejudice. That's the only word you could ever use, prejudice. They did not like Gentiles belonging and receiving the same salvation and blessing of God and Messiah that they had. They couldn't handle that. It was prejudice. It was selfishness. It was personal privilege, Jewish superiority. That was the issue and so they got furious. The word "jealous" or "envious" expresses exactly the attitude.

The same word is used in Acts 5:17 of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. It translates it in the King James "indignation." It's the very same word. They were jealous, so jealous for the purity and the selfishness and the self-centeredness and the isolation and the nationalism of their religion that they couldn't stand anybody else getting blessed. That's a sad state and when they saw the whole city full of Gentiles come to hear the gospel, they just flipped. Nothing infuriated them more than the privileges of God extended to uncircumcised Gentiles. How tragic. How prejudice blinds and prejudice of any kind today is equally as blinded, and so they closed their minds and the doors that seemed to be open a week before were slammed shut and they were finished...prejudice. And the sad thing is that verse 43, Paul and Barnabas had been persuading them to continue in the grace of God. Instead

of doing that, they forfeited grace. They went right back to Judaism. They picked up the Jewish prejudice, the Jewish legalism, the whole Jewish bag. They picked it right up again that following Sabbath and all that Paul and Barnabas had tried to persuade them to do was lost.

Well, they didn't just inside burn. They spoke. It says, "They spoke against the things which were spoken by Paul." They started arguing and a big crowd is there and they were apparently just really contradicting. The term is the next word in the verse. They were contradicting. It's in the imperfect tense and in the Greek, the use of the imperfect is a continuous action and past-time. They were continually loud and long opposing Paul; riotous opposition. They really were firing away at Paul. It would have been enough to damn themselves to hell for just contradicting Paul but they went a step further. At the end of verse 45, it says they were blaspheming and blasphemy is the worst sin. It's the most horrible sin. It's the sin of speaking evil of God and of His Christ and they did it. They blasted God and Christ. This is the same that they had heard of and thought maybe this is our Messiah and do you realize they rejected their Messiah, forfeited everything for now and eternity, purely on the basis of prejudice?

If you were to study why people reject the gospel, you would never find, I don't think, anybody who would say, "I rejected the gospel because I pursued the facts fully, came to the intellectual conclusion that it's not true." I've never met anybody like that. People reject the gospel for many reasons but they're always the same. They love their sin. That's the umbrella that covers it all. Now that sin may have different things. It may be everything from sex to prejudice but it's always the same thing. They're not willing to sacrifice the ego and the established patterns that satisfy self and here, a whole group of people lost out on eternal heaven. They lost their Messiah. They lost their kingdom for something as stupid as prejudice against Gentiles...blind to the truth and blaspheming God, those who were God's own people. What a reaction. And Paul hadn't even said anything on this Sabbath. What a reversal. Sure proves to me that in verse 43, their salvation wasn't real, right? You can't be saved Saturday and be blaspheming God and His Messiah the Saturday following. If they were really saved, they would have...what?...continued.

Well, verse 46 says, "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold." As the fury got great, so did their courage. Paul and Barnabas weren't afraid of anyone and the thing gets stirred up and they just grew bold. As the fury got higher, they got bolder and finally they said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you. We spoke it to you first because that was the plan." And he was right. Salvation is of the Jews, right? John 4. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first." You see, that was God's people, God's beloved, and God wanted them to be His priest nation and His witness nation and so God said, "I'll send the gospel to you first and then you'll believe it, if you'll believe it, and spread it."

And so Paul says, "It was necessary to go to you first." In Jerusalem and even when they arrived in town, he went to the Jew first, didn't he? He had a priority of Jewish evangelism. It was necessary but he says this: "Seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." God is going to reach the world and if you aren't the vehicle then the Gentiles will reach the Gentiles, see? You put it from you. What a sad thing at the idea of pushing it off, Messiah's people pushing the Messiah away after hundreds of years of waiting for Him.

There is a fearful statement that I want to point out. It's verse 46. It says, "And you judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." Boy, that is something. That's a reflection. You judge yourself. Do you know that a man who rejects Jesus Christ judges himself? I believe in human responsibility. I believe if a man dies and goes to hell, he goes there just because he himself chose to go there. God is not willing that any should...what?...perish. If a man dies without Christ, that's because he wanted to do that. "You judge yourselves," he says. "You have pronounced your own sentence." In John 3:18, he says, "You're condemned already because you...what?...you believe not." You judge yourself. You know, I mean whatever you do with Jesus Christ, you pronounce your own sentence.

I illustrate this simply with this illustration. If I take you to the Louvre in France and show you the Mona Lisa and you look at the Mona Lisa and say, "Oh, that's lousy art." I say, "My friend, the Mona Lisa is not on trial; you are. That's already been judged to be a masterpiece. You're a crummy art critic." The point is you pronounced your own sentence. You're not fit to judge art. If I take you to hear one of the great masterpiece symphonies and we hear one of the great orchestras of the world play one of the greatest symphonies ever written and the music is just sweeping and moving and powerful and it's all over with and you say, "It's all right but I'll take James Brown," I'll say to you, "Listen, friend. That music's not on trial; you are. If you can't read that as glorious music, you don't know what music is. If you make a criticism of music that has been adjudged by time and men to be a masterpiece then the music's not on trial; you are." And let me say this: Jesus isn't on trial anymore either. We know who He is. But you are on trial and by what you do to and with Jesus Christ, you declare judgment on yourself. You pronounce your own sentence. That's what he says.

So he says to them, "You have pronounced yourselves unfit for everlasting life." You will never find any place in the Bible that God sends people to hell. You will never find any place in the Bible that God damns people. You will find in the Bible that God has prepared hell but He prepared it for the devil and his angels and if men choose to go there, they go there because they pronounced their own sentence in rejecting Jesus Christ and they did and he says, "When you did that, we turned to the Gentiles. God's going to have His vehicle." And then to justify what he said, he quoted their own prophet. Verse 47, he quoted right out of Isaiah. "For so hath the Lord commanded us...Isaiah 49:6, he quotes an Old Testament prophesy...I have sent Thee to be a light of the nations." And that's messianic. Jesus was the light of the nations, wasn't He? Remember Simeon in the temple when the Baby Jesus was there? "I have seen the salvation of the Lord. I have seen the light of the nations," Simeon said. Sure, that's Messiah. "I have sent Thee to be a light of the nations." Listen, Messiah

wasn't sent just to Israel. He was sent to...whom?...the nations. "I have sent Thee to be a light to the nations, that Thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth." Messiah wasn't just sent for Israel. He was sent for the earth, for the nations. Your own prophet said that. What are you uptight about? So Paul just really shoots them down. You have no business being prejudiced and being so negative in responding to this because you see Gentiles coming to Messiah. Messiah was sent to be a light to the nations for salvation to the ends of the earth. You don't even know your own prophets. What a sad negative attitude.

Let me show you quickly the positive response. Go the other way on the split to the Gentiles. While the Jews were negative, they were positive. Verse 48, "And when the Gentiles heard this...that salvation was for them and Messiah was for them...they were glad and they glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." You know what happened among the Gentiles? People got saved. The Jews were having fits and the Gentiles were getting saved. You see, it says there "...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." That sounds like God chose them. Right, exactly. You say, "You mean they were ordained to be saved?" That's right. You say, "Do you believe that God chose those that would be saved?" Absolutely. I mean what else could I believe? The word "ordained"...*tatogmonoi*, which is a form of the Greek verb *taso*, and then there's papyrus evidence to indicate that the verb "*taso*" means to inscribe or enroll and that it is used to make out a list and what it's saying is that as many as were put on the list for eternal life believed.

Now the question is, "When did God write the list?" The answer is in 13:8 of Revelation and 17:8 of Revelation and it says, "Your names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world." That's election. You say, "You mean that everybody who's saved is saved because God ordained them and wrote their name?" Yes. You say, "But you just said in verse 46 that if a man goes to hell, it's his own fault." Right. You say, "Those two don't go together." Exactly. The Bible teaches both. I believe both. It's God's problem, not mine, but I know this thing. If a man dies without Christ, it's his own fault. If a man comes to Jesus Christ, it's all God's fault. When you are saved, God gets all the credit. When you are lost, you get all the blame. Now you don't understand that. I don't understand that. I just believe it...both of them in the same passage. As many as were written on the roll believed but everybody who disbelieved was pronouncing sentence on himself. You have two doctrines in the Bible, beloved. Human responsibility, a man dies without Christ, it's his own fault; divine sovereignty, a man comes to Christ, it's only and simply because the Father drew him. And so there was salvation in Antioch. What a blessed day it was.

You know what always follows legitimate salvation? It's verse 49. "And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region"...evangelism. When people get saved, they share. What a tremendous positive response. I want to show you the key. You want to see what the key was to the positive response? You ready for this? Verse 44. See if you can pick out something. I'll emphasize it. "They all came together to hear the Word of God." Verse 46, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken." Verse 48, "And they glorified the Word of the Lord." Verse 49, "And

the Word of the Lord was published." What's the key? The Word. The Word...the Word...the Word...the Word. It's the key to everything; speaking God's message. You know what...you know why Antioch was turned upside down? Not because Paul spoke on human relations, poverty programs, social problems, culture. It was because he spoke the Word of the Lord. That was the key to everything.

Well, the natural result was evangelism. What a blessed, positive response. Their hearts must have been thrilled as these people were saved while Paul's heart was grieved and broken and shattered at Israel's unbelief and, you know, he never got over it. He lived his whole life in tears, Paul did. Continual sorrow and heaviness of heart for Israel. He cried all day for Israel all his life, from the time of his ministry until his death. Israel broke his heart, even as it's broken God's heart.

Well, lastly, the results. Just quickly, what happened? What were the results of a negative response on the Jews' part? Verse 50, they were so mad when the Gentiles got saved, this infuriated them all the more, right? And it says, "The Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women." You know how to get to men? You got it. Apparently, Judaism had a very good effect on pagan women. Women tend to desire, at least in that society, to desire the unity of the family and the family was beginning to fall apart and there was a soiled morality and so many good women...not Christian women, just good women...were attaching themselves to Judaism because of the high ethics and many honorable and devout women and many of the wives of the chief people in the city had become God-fearers or proselytes and so the Jews went to these Gentile women who were the wives of the leaders and they got them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and to go get their husband and it says, "The Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city." Apparently, they got to these chief men through these women. "And they raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas."

Now we don't know the exact nature of it but in 2 Timothy 3:11, Paul talks about his persecution in Antioch and in 2Corinthians 11, he says he was beaten with rods and with whips and that's probably what happened there. They really let them have it and then they "expelled them from their borders." Threw them out. So the Jews persuaded the women to incite their husbands. Turned the town against them; expelled them out. But the sad, fearful results of the Jews is 51, "They shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium." You know what they did? They left them and when they shook off the dust of their feet, that was a fantastically important symbolic statement.

Jesus had said in Luke 10, when you go to evangelize, sent out His disciples, when they don't hear your message and they don't believe the Messiah, you shake the dust off your feet and leave that town. What He meant was this: No Jew would ever bring Gentile dirt into Israel because the Jews believed that Gentile soil was defiled and so when a Jew arrived at the border of Israel, he would shake the dust off his feet because they didn't want even Gentile dirt in Israel. They thought it was soiled and Jesus accommodated Himself to that particular view and when He said, "Shake the dust off your feet," He meant treat those Jews like they were Gentiles. You don't want a thing to do with

them. They're just as if they were pagan and when Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet in the face of the Jews of Antioch, they were saying in effect, "We consider you heathen." That in itself was the greatest disclaimer, the most volatile rebuke that anyone could ever give to a Jew was to assign him a place with pagans and they did it to them. From now on, God looks at you like heathen. That was the result. They were lost, doomed, because they rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Positive result, 52, we close, "And the disciples were filled with joy, with the Holy Spirit." See the contrast? Paul and Barnabas left town, took off for Iconium. They left two different groups. God saw some as pagans. God filled the others with His Holy Spirit. Let me say this in closing. Listen. You either live life separated from God, a heathen without God, without the knowledge of God, or you live your life with God's Holy Spirit inside. There's no middle ground. You either take Jesus or reject Him. He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." Let's pray.

Thank You, our Father, for presenting Christ to us through Paul today and for helping us to look again at the responses. Father, we know that everybody sitting in this place is on one pole or the other, either standing with those who reject, who blaspheme, who disbelieve, or with those who believe, and, our Father, we pray that no one would leave without acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Christ and that they would continue in the grace of God. Father, bring to our minds those that we may know who need Christ, that we might pray for them and share with them, that they might not have a negative response but a positive one, that they, too, might be filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy. Father, we would pray that everyone who left this morning would be described by that last verse. In Jesus' Name, amen.

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