

PISIDIAN ANTIOCH, THE MAIN CITY OF SOUTH GALATIA (II): RESPONSES TO THE GOSPEL ACTS 13:42–52

Introduction

This passage is an eye-opener, very informative in picturing how people respond to the gospel. It shows exactly what the witnessing believer can expect as he proclaims Jesus to a lost and needful world.

- I. The people's response to the gospel (vv. 42-45).
- II. The preacher's response to the people (vv. 46-52).

I. Acts 13:42–45 Response to the Gospel

The people responded to the gospel in four ways.

1. Some non-religionists (Gentiles) desired to hear more. The non-religionists were Gentiles. They were heathen men and women who had become sick of the immoralities and injustices of their society. Their *empty religions* had left them empty. In their hunger for something more they were attracted by the Jew's morality and worship of One Supreme Being. Therefore, they sometimes attended Jewish services. However, they understood little about the Scripture. This is the point of what happened now. They had understood little about what Paul had preached. Their childhood had not included the teaching of Scripture.

=> Their friends and neighbours knew little if anything about the Scripture.

=> Their religions had taught little of the truth about God.

=> Their environment and society were anything but godly.

But their hearts had been touched by the gospel. The Holy Spirit was working within them, stirring them to crave...

- forgiveness of sins (v. 38).
- justification from everything (v. 39).

Note the word *invited* (parekaloun). It is continuous action: the Gentiles continued to invite. The picture is that they begged and begged Paul to share more about the forgiveness of sins which is in Jesus.

Thought 1. Note two significant points.

- 1) There are many who are ignorant of the Scriptures, who know little about what we preach. They did not have Christian parents, nor have they ever been exposed to genuine Christian believers. They just have never had the opportunity and
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exposure to the gospel that some of us have had. Because of this, their hearts are fertile and soft to the gospel. When they hear the truth, the Holy Spirit is able to convict and convert them much more easily than he is a *gospel hardened* heart.

- 2) This is great encouragement to the witnessing believer. It should challenge every one of us to get to the task, for the world is full of such people. They may be steeped in religion, but they are ignorant of the truth about Christ. They are soft and ready to respond, to hear more and more of the glorious truth that Jesus saves, forgives and justifies (vv. 23, 38, 39).

Luke 6:21 “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

Psa 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psa 119:131 I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.

Psa 126:5-6 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

Psa 143:6 I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

Isa 26:9 My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.

Psa 63:1 When he was in the Desert of Judah. O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2. Some who were hungry for God desired to hear more immediately. These were mainly proselytes, heathen Gentiles who had become so impressed with Judaism they had actually become converts to the Jewish religion. Many of these and many of the Jews (genuine religionists) followed Paul and Barnabas from the preaching service. They could not wait until next week. They were too convicted, too drawn to Christ and the hope of forgiveness. They had to hear more right then.
 - a. Note the word *many*. The worship service was filled with many who were familiar with the Scripture. They had sought God by studying the Scripture. Therefore when Paul preached the truth of Christ, the Holy Spirit took their hearts and drew them to Christ. Their hearts which hungered to know the truth hungered to hear more, to hear that Jesus is the Saviour...
 - the One whom God raised from the dead (v. 30).
 - the One who fulfilled prophecy (vv. 33-37).
 - the One who forgives sins (v. 38).
 - the One who justifies from everything (v. 39).

Thought 1. The truth of Christ and the Scripture should always be the message preached and the lesson taught. God has naturally put within man a hunger to know the truth, a craving to know Him. Within every congregation there are those who have sought God and have read and studied the Scripture day and night. They have also sought Him in their churches and synagogues and temples. Their hearts are eagerly ready to receive the truth of Christ and the Scripture. But note what is needed: a believer who lives and preaches and teaches as Paul, a believer...

- who prays much
- who studies the Scripture much
- who diligently seeks to live righteously
- who preaches Jesus the Saviour

- b. Note that Paul persuaded them to “continue in the grace of God.” While Paul preached, they apparently made a decision to trust Christ for forgiveness and justification (vv. 38-39). They were seeing for the first time how Jesus was the fulfilment of God’s promises. They were hungering to know more and more. They could not wait until the next week. They followed the preacher then and there. They wanted to learn more immediately. The picture is that of urgency, hunger and thirst after the truth. Paul strongly exhorted them to continue in “the grace of God.”

Mat 5:6 “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*”

Mat 6:33 “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

Psa 63:1 *When he was in the Desert of Judah. O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Psa 119:20 *My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.*

Psa 119:131 *I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.*

3. Some who never attended came to hear the Word of God (v. 44). They came to the worship service on the next Sabbath. What brought them?

=> The natural hunger within the human heart for God and the truth.

=> The news being spread abroad about the preaching of the truth.

=> The faithful work and witnessing of Paul and Barnabas and the other Christian believers throughout the week.

Thought 1. How many churches would be filled with people desiring to hear the Word of God...

- if we preached the truth like we should?
- if we were witnessing and leading our people to witness as we should?

Acts 4:20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

Jer 20:9 But if I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

4. Some rejected and opposed. There were three primary reasons for their rejection and opposition (v. 45).
 - a. They were filled with jealousy toward the people who were coming. The place was filling up with people...
 - who were different
 - who were thought unclean and dirty
 - who were sinful and unjust and derelict
 - who were *outsiders* to the regular congregation
 - who usually did not attend or show interest in attending and therefore did not support the permanent priests and their ministry
 - b. They were filled with jealousy toward the preachers, Paul and Barnabas. The preachers were preaching a message that was meeting the needs of the people and the people were flocking to them. The regular priests and teachers (rabbis) were jealous of their success, for the people did not support their ministries like they were supporting Paul and Barnabas.
 - c. They opposed both what Paul was doing and teaching. They opposed both his ministry and the doctrine and teachings of Paul. They actually spoke against the truth, contradicting what Scripture proclaimed. They even blasphemed the name of Christ.

Thought 1. Note the seriousness of opposition against the message of Scripture and the ministry of the Lord's servants.

Thought 2. The servant of the Lord can expect rejection and opposition, just as he can expect openness and reception to the gospel.

John 15:20 *"Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."*

2 Tim 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Psa 7:1 *O Lord my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me.*

Psa 119:86 *All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause.*

II. Acts 13:46–52 Ministers' Response to Persecutors

The preachers' response to the people was fourfold.

1. The preachers rejected the rejecters of the gospel. It is important to note why the rejecters were rejected.
 - a. The Word of God had been clearly proclaimed to them. They had received every opportunity.
 - b. They had pushed the Word away. They vigorously and strongly reacted; they rejected the Word.
 - c. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. It was not God who counted them unworthy. God actually counted them worthy. He had the gospel taken to them. It was they who condemned themselves; they who brought judgment upon themselves.

John 3:18 *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

Thought 1. The disciples of the Lord were instructed to turn away from rejecters (Lk. 10:10-16). The fields are white unto harvest. There are too many who will open their hearts and homes to the Lord to waste precious time on those who are so evil that they contradict and blaspheme Christ.

Mat 22:8 *"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.'"*

Luke 10:10-16 *"But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you."*

Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.” “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.” “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

John 3:19-21 *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

Acts 13:46 *Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”*

2. The preachers turned to willing hearers. Note several significant points.

a. Christ is the One whom God has *set, fixed, and purposed* to be...

- “a light for the Gentiles.”
- “the salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6; see Lk. 2:32).

Christ is to be proclaimed to the Gentiles, to the whole world. Therefore Paul declared loudly that he and Barnabas were obeying God’s will; they were turning to those who would readily receive the glorious gospel of salvation.

- b. The Gentiles (the heathen) were glad and honoured the Word of the Lord. Note the reason: salvation — they were to be saved. They experienced the thrill of being saved, of coming to know Jesus personally and receiving the assurance of life eternal.
- c. Some were appointed for eternal life and believed (see *Predestination*, Acts 13:48).
- d. Both the preachers and the new believers were faithful to God’s calling. They *spread (diephereto)*, that is, spread abroad and proclaimed the Word throughout all the region. The new believers became faithful witnesses immediately.
3. The preachers were persecuted and forcibly expelled from the city and surrounding areas. Religious leaders enticed some prominent women (honourable) who were also very devout or God-fearing. Apparently the women were either wives of city officials or prominent in society and business. In either case, they had enough influence to turn the city officials against Paul and Barnabas. The preachers were persecuted rather severely. Paul referred to this later when writing Timothy.

2 Tim 3:10-11 *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings — what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*

4. The preachers dramatically turned away from the rejecters. This was exactly what Christ had said to do when people rejected the gospel. It was a symbol that people were unworthy of the gospel because of their obstinacy, their continued rejection and hostility to the gospel.

Mat 10:14 *“If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.”*

Mark 6:11 *And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”*

Luke 9:5 *“If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.”*

5. The preachers were sustained by God, filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit — despite terrible rejection and persecution.

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Deu 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ■*

ACTS 13:46–47 PAUL’S METHOD

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Acts 13:46–47

This is a very significant passage. Paul emphatically stated that he was turning from the Jews to the Gentiles *in this particular city*. The significance is this: Paul’s *method of evangelism* was to do exactly what Christ said, to go the Jews first, then to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:46 *Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”*

Acts 18:4-6 *Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”*

Rom 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Rom 2:9-10 *There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Note Peter’s words:

Acts 3:25-26 *“And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”*

This is the reason Paul adopted the method of going into the synagogues first. (See note, Acts 13:14-16.) Christ had commanded that the Jews be the first to hear the gospel. If they rejected, Paul then turned away and preached to the public or world at large, that is, to the Gentiles.

Note. Paul said the Lord commanded the preachers to adopt this method (v. 47). □

ACTS 13: 48 PREDESTINATION

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. Acts 13: 48

This verse shows both God’s part and man’s part in salvation. Jesus Himself had said:

John 6:44 *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

The man who comes to Christ is a person who has been drawn by God, a person who has experienced the *divine initiative*. A man does not act alone and come to Christ by

his own effort and energy, not by his own works, whether mental (thought or will, Jn. 1:13) or labour (good deeds, Eph. 2:8-9). A man is a dead spirit; therefore, he can do nothing spiritually just as a dead body can do nothing physically. The natural man prefers self and sin; therefore, if a man with a dead spirit is to come to Christ, he has to be acted upon and drawn by God. Both God and man have a part in salvation.

=> God's part is to draw men.

=> Man's part is to believe.

(See *Draw*, Jn. 6:44-46.) □