

Acts 13:44–52

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[0 : 00] to 52. Please stand for the reading of God's word. As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.

And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing, and the leading men of the city stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

It's a brief prayer as we make our way. All Scripture is breathed out by God, and is profitable for teaching for reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. That the person of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. So Father, we turn to the Scripture now, desiring to be made complete, desiring to be equipped for every good work, and ultimately to be made wise for salvation.

Help us to this end. Amen. Well, it's been a week since the last synagogue service had completed.

[2 : 44] Though the service had concluded, those in attendance were not done. They desired more. So much so that they followed Paul and Barnabas, asking for more.

They begged them to continue the sermon series the following week. The week was not a quiet week by any means. The Jewish and God-fearing population of Antioch and Pisidia was astir.

They had heard a message, and if true, was astounding. The message is encapsulated by chapter 13, verse 38, where Luke writes, Let it be known, Paul saying, let it be known to you, therefore, that through this man, namely Jesus, there is two things.

Forgiveness of sins and freedom for everyone. Forgiveness of sins and freedom for everyone.

And we need to pause and think about the significance of this message. Two things promised. Forgiveness and freedom. Forgiveness of one's shortcomings and freedom from the crushing weight of one's moral failures.

[4 : 07] And here is the gospel, the good news of Jesus encapsulated in this verse for you and I. That God in Christ was reconciling humanity to himself.

Not counting their sins against them. Forgiving them. And securing a freedom from the corruption that sin and death would bring.

It's the longing of the world. Freedom. And forgiveness. And those in Antioch and Pisidia desired the same, which explains the phrase that Luke opens up with in verse 44.

Nearly the whole city is found at the synagogue meeting the following weekend. The word had gotten out and the city had assembled. The aim of our passage this morning is to depict two responses to the word of God.

Particularly the gospel that was just summarized in verse 38. The responses are vivid and I'll lay them out here. There is a defiant rejection. And there is a joyful reception.

[5 : 17] A defiant rejection and a joyful reception. And here is the reality of our day. The word of the Lord will be defiantly rejected by some.

And joyfully received by others. It's not a new thing or a strange thing. It was, it's been historic. There's a historical precedent to it. In the same way the word of the Lord has a polarizing effect in our day.

It is both loved and hated. It is both treasured and trampled upon. It is considered sacred by some and scandalous to others. And the question I pose to us, to you this morning is, how do you respond to the word of the Lord?

Because the word of the Lord is the central character in this passage. Yes, there's Paul. Yes, there's Barnabas. Yes, there's the Jews. Yes, there's the God-fearers. Yes, there's these high-ranking officials.

Yes, these women of, devout women. But it is actually the word of the Lord that is central. Crowds gather to hear it in verse 44.

[6 : 21] Apostles stand up to speak it in verse 46. It is glorified and celebrated in verse 48. And it is described as mobile, expanding, and active as spreading in verse 49.

The word is central. And so the question emerges, how do you respond to the word? Well, given that it's central, there are three things that will emerge from this passage.

There is a defiant rejection of the word. We'll see a joyous reception, reception of the word. And then lastly, I'll conclude with this.

There is a persistent resilience of the word. It never stops. The defiant rejection of the word, we can see in verse 45 and 46, reiterated again in verse 50 and 51.

Luke, the writer, makes clear that there are those who are opposed to the word of the Lord. We see in verse 45.

[7 : 29] But when the Jews saw the crowds. Again in verse 50. But the Jews incited the devout women. Luke records that the opposition arose from the Jews.

Now we should be clear that he's not implying all Jews. Rather some Jews. For we know that some Jews are actually experiencing the grace of God. And coming to believe in the proclaimed message.

From verse 43. And they're possibly provoked because Paul and Barnabas are able to assemble a larger crowd than those tethered to the synagogue.

And they began to openly contradict what was being spoken. The attacks were both lodged against the message and the messenger. The text likely suggests that there is a struggle for power and control over the people.

The jealousy may stem from the size of the audience. But more deeply, it's possibly rooted in the direct claim that every person who believes in the Lord will be justified.

[8 : 34] You see, for the Jew, the promise of justification, of standing right before God, was rooted in Judaism.

That's where salvation would be found. But all of a sudden, Paul comes on the scene. And he actually expands it. And opens it up. And it now has become free for all.

You see, the Jews didn't necessarily have a problem with the message per se. Their primary problem was one of access. It's not what you get that bothered them.

It was a matter of how one gets it. Or even more so, who gets it. And let me illustrate it in this way. Imagine there's this desirable zip code to move into.

Great schools. Great property value. Great access to recreation. Security. And here is this subdivision with large and gorgeous homes.

[9 : 38] And you expend your resources. You save up. And you give your whole life to buy in. To get into one of these homes. You've made it.

You're the envy of all. You're surrounded by those who value the same things. Who speak the same way. Who share common values.

Et cetera. So on and so forth. But soon neighbors begin to move in. They've paid less. Which agitates you. But you're okay with it.

Because they're assimilating. And they're going out of their way. To meet the bar of the exclusive subdivision. That you live in. Things are great. Until something odd happens.

New people begin moving in. They are strange and foreign. Because they eat different things. They dress differently. They speak differently.

[10 : 39] They look different. And you're curious. Because this is an exclusive subdivision you've moved into. Why are they here?

How do they afford it? And it turns out a wealthy philanthropist. Bought all the vacant homes. All the vacant lots in the subdivision.

And is even expanding it. And this generous wealthy philanthropist. Begins giving away homes.

At no cost. Well that agitates you to no end. Not only are you infuriated. Because you paid a hefty sum.

For your property. And they're paying nothing. But you're inflamed. Because what you bought into. This exclusive.

[11 : 37] Subdivision. Has now. Become. Inclusive. Of those. You used to snub. Your nose at. This was what was going on.

In our passage. The Jews were saying. Okay. We'll let some come in. You'll buy at a lower cost. We'll call you God fears. Right. Adhere to Judaism.

You don't necessarily have to get circumcised. But you can move in. But all of a sudden. Here comes a man. With a message. Hey. We're bringing all the people in.

The Jews are agitated. What they had to pay full price for. And the God fears got on sale.

The Gentiles received for free. When the Jews are expected to be joyously celebrating. They are found jealously condemning. The intensity of their rejection is highlighted.

[12 : 40] In Paul's bold response. They are actually thrusting aside the word of God. They are literally forcefully pushing it away. They find it repulsive.

And in so doing. They are pronouncing their own verdict. Namely. That they are unworthy. Of the eternal life. Promised. In the gospel. The rejection is doubly highlighted later on.

In the narrative. And the Jews assemble devout women. Men of high prestigious standing. To actually persecute. And drive Paul and Barnabas out of the city. What first starts as verbal abuse.

Escalates and turns. Into physical. Becomes physically violent. The Jews who opposed the message. Not only spoke out against the message. They stood up and drove out the message.

Along with her messengers. And Paul and Barnabas are left. Only shaking the dust off their feet. As Jesus had instructed to do. When they encountered.

[13 : 43] An inhospitable city. You see. Unbelievers are those. Who judge themselves. Unworthy of eternal life. By defiantly.

Rejecting. The word of the Lord. See the initial. Jewish rejection. In the city of Antioch. Did not deter Paul and Barnabas at all. Really. They didn't actually stop their mission.

Rather they switched audiences. Moving from the Jew. They now direct their attention to the Gentiles. And the disciples knew the versatility of the gospel. They also understand the universality of the gospel.

The message was not confined to a singular audience. And it would not be confined to a singular audience. Rather it was intended for a global audience. That's why the citation in verse 47.

Is so important. It reiterates this. Paul and Barnabas. Or Luke records this quotation that emerges. Out of Isaiah 49. It reads this. I have made you a light for the Gentiles.

[14 : 47] That you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. See this text conveyed. Something in Old Testament times. Namely this.

That God had identified a servant. That would be a light and a blessing to the world. And if you're a student of the Bible. You know that promise was introduced in Genesis chapter 12.

To those of the family. To Abraham and his descendants. Those who would be the nation of Israel. Sadly. Israel failed. And in Isaiah 49.

God laments this. And he reflects on this. And he says. Well Israel failed as my servant. I'm going to pick another one. A better one. And so the history of Israel.

Is looking for this servant. Luke's gospel opens up in chapter 2. And it tells us. The servant is actually Jesus. That Jesus will be the light.

[15 : 44] And the blessing. To the world. The light. But here. In Acts. Luke kind of flips it. And adds this. Oh Paul and Barnabas. Are actually.

The light. To the Gentiles. As well. And the question you and I have to ask is. Well who is it then? Is it Jesus? Or is it Paul and Barnabas? Who does it actually apply to?

Well. It applies to both. Really. That Israel failed. So Jesus identified. A perfect servant. Namely Jesus.

So Luke is able to say. That Jesus fulfills. Isaiah's prophecy. And then all of a sudden. Here in the book of Acts. Luke writes again. Jesus fulfilled it.

Perfectly. But here the disciples. Continue. To fulfill. The prophecy. They are namely. A new Israel.

[16 : 41] A new people of God. New lights. To the world. Bringing salvation. To the ends of the earth. You see. Even today. I would argue. Verse 47.

Applies to you and I. That we are in a lineage of saints. Who are exhorted to be lights. In the world. We are not lit to be hidden. We are lit. To illumine.

And though Israel spurns the gospel. The remainder of the world. Still needed to hear. And Paul recognized this. The entire known world. Would be his playing field. It would have no boundaries.

And therefore. It's ours. As well. There will never be a lack. Of people. Who need to hear the gospel. There will never be. A lack of people.

Who need to hear the gospel. Don't be naive. To think that the task. Of bearing witness. To Christ. Is complete. It is not complete. It is not complete. Until you see.

[17 : 37] See the bottom. Of Jesus' feet. Descending from the sky. And in the meantime. The task is unfinished. That's why. Really the believer. Is left here. In 1929.

Frank Hooten. Penned. A worker. For the China. Inland Mission. Penned a hymn. And. His heart. Was to see.

200 new workers. Plunge themselves. Into the work. That God was doing. In China. And so he writes. This hymn. Titled. Facing a task. Unfinished. And it reads.

The first verse. Reached. Reads this. Facing a task. Unfinished. That drives us. To our knees. A need that. Undiminished. Rebukes.

Our slothful. Ease. We who rejoice. To know thee. Renew. Before. Thy throne. The solemn. Pledge. We owe thee.

[18 : 35] To go. And make. Be known. There is. A defiant. Rejection. Of the word. But it's contrasted.

With the joyous. Reception. Of the word. It's an intense. Contrast. Between the Jews. And the Gentiles. Upon hearing. That they are recipients. Of the good news. The Gentiles. Respond with joy.

And glorify. The word. Of the Lord. The same word. That was defiantly. Rejected. By the Jews. Is now. Joyously. Received. By the Gentiles.

And they are marked. By rejoicing. Their joy. Has led. To an action. And it's described. As this. In verse. 45. They are glorifying.

And praising. The word. Of the Lord. It's actually. A very strange. Phrase. They are praising. The message. Of the Lord. They're praising it.

[19 : 32] Because of their inclusion. Their salvation. And their appointment. To eternal life. Calvin says. Of verse 48. It is. Have the most. It was one of the most.

Unqualified. Statements. Of absolute. Predestination. In the New Testament. It is the doctrine. Of election. God's appointment. Of those. To share. In his glory.

There is much. To be said here. But I defer. To the Westminster. Confession. Because. This is a good place. To defer. The doctrine. Of this high mystery.

Namely. Predestination. Is to be handled. With special prudence. And care. And this doctrine. Will afford. A matter of praise. Reverence. And admiration. All that to say.

There's a lot to read. And study on it. But all that to say. The text. Is affirming this. That God. Salvation. To the Gentiles. Was not an afterthought.

[20 : 27] That it wasn't because. Oh the Jews rejected. Oh. I got to find someone else. To save. It is actually. A forethought. That your salvation.

And my salvation. Were not God's. Afterthoughts. We are not. The backup plan. Rather. We are God's. Plan. His forethought.

Before the foundations. Of the world. Were laid. And may it. According to the. Westminster Confession. Sir. A praise. Reverence. Admiration. And even joy.

Well. No small number. Are added. To the believing community. That day. The outcome. Is that the gospel. Begins to spread. Through the whole region. And in verse one. You have the whole city.

Gather at the synagogue. To hear the word of the Lord. And now in verse. Forty nine. The whole city. Is spreading. From the synagogue. Through the whole region. The outworking. Of the joyful reception.

[21 : 23] Of the word. Is the jubilant transmission. Of the same word. When you and I. Receive the word. Joyfully. And properly. And reverently.

The natural inclination. Of the heart. Is a jubilant. Transmission. Of that word. It is it. Because good news travels. Right.

Good news travels. Whatever. You. Experience. That is great news. To yourself.

In your personal life. It travels. The entry. In many people's journal. That night. Was the same. I received eternal life. Through him. Who forgives my sins.

And frees me. From the enslavement. Of the law. It was not only. Journal worthy. It had become. Newspaper worthy. It was the headline. Of every newspaper. In that city.

[22 : 18] It sat. On top. Of everyone's. Facebook news feed. According to Twitter. It was. What was trending. The gospel. Was viral. Why?

Why had the topic. Of conversation. Become this. Because. Reception. Of the gospel. A joyful reception. Of the gospel. Naturally. Expresses.

The gospel. The gospel. The gospel. The gospel. The gospel. The gospel. In a jubilant. Transmission. Of the gospel.

That is what is being propagated. Genuine believers. Destined for eternal life. Are those who manifest. A joyous reception. Of the word. And so you have these two responses.

To the word of the Lord. Demonstrated here. A defiant rejection. And a joyful reception. Thirdly. There is. The persistent.

[23 : 13] Resilience. Of the word. The persistent. Resilience. Of the word. The disciples are not promised. A seamless. Mission. Maybe when you became.

A Christian. You were misled. To think that somehow. The Christian life. Is one of flourishing. Ease. And prosperity. Maybe.

You had thought. That. Life is supposed to get easier. When the Holy Spirit. Comes upon you. And it's somehow. Supposed to be smooth sailing. Yet.

This is not what is depicted here. Because Paul and Barnabas. Are first. Set apart. By the Holy Spirit. Earlier in the chapter. Then they're sent out.

By the Holy Spirit. And then they're filled. With the Holy Spirit. So they have a whole ton. Of Holy Spirit. In them. But. The Spirit's. The Spirit's. Presence.

[24 : 08] In their life. And his accompaniment. Did not ensure. That the mission. Would be accomplished. Without any opposition. Simply because.

The Holy Spirit. Dwells in the believer. Does not guarantee. A life without challenges. Hardships. And opposition. We actually. As. We.

The servants of God. You and I. Will not experience. A life that is foreign. From the life. Experienced. By the Son of God. If Jesus was reviled.

We should expect. Paul to be reviled. As well. If Jesus was called. A blasphemer. Which he was. We understand. Why Paul. Was a blasphemer.

As accused. To be a blasphemer. As well. See the life. We pattern. Ourselves after. Is a life. Modeled by Jesus. He knew. The rejected life. And he foreknew.

[25 : 04] The disciples. Would be rejected. As well. And perhaps. That's why. He gives them. The instruction. When you go. To a city. There will be some. That don't. Want to hear. What you have to say.

So shake off. The dust. Of your feet. And keep on going. Because verse. Fifty. One. How it concludes.

Is striking. It's so brief. To the point. But they shook off. The dust. From their feet. Against them. The latter half. Reads. And they went.

To Iconium. Violently driven. Out of Antioch. They leave. And they go. To the next city.

It's astounding. Even though. Paul's kinsmen. Namely. The Jews. Reject the gospel. Here. In chapter 13. He will not. Abandon them. In fact.

[25 : 58] He will. Prioritize them. We find that. In nearly. Every city. He enters into. He goes to the synagogue. First. Only to receive. The same rejection. That's why chapter 14.

When it opens up. You have this. They go into Iconium. And Paul and Barnabas. Go into the synagogue. And in verse 3. They remain there. For a long time. Speaking boldly. For the Lord. Who bore witness.

To the word. Of his grace. This is the persistent. Resilience. Of the word. It is carried on.

By messengers. But what is depicted here. Is that it will not be held down. It will not be held back. It will not be hidden.

Again. The work of the word. Would continue. Regardless of the conditions. God does not care. If the seed is scattered. On rocky soil.

[26 : 51] On shallow soil. On dry soil. On no soil. Or good soil. The gospel goes. We sow.

And we sow. And we scatter. And we scatter. Because. The work. Would persist. For the word of the Lord. It is a resilient word.

It is a persistent word. It is an enduring word. The ink. Will not fade. The weightiness. Of its judgments. Do not diminish. The glories. Of its promises. Never lessen.

The psalmist records. That God has held. Two things high. Over all things. His name. And his. Word. It is. Exalted above all things.

The word is tender enough. To lift up the broken. It is mighty enough. To crush the proud. It is gentle enough. To nourish the hurting. It is heavy enough. To crush the arrogant.

[27 : 47] The word is mighty enough. To dethrone the king. It is comforting enough. To lift the downcast. The word is sharp enough. To slay the mighty.

It is a balm for the wounded. And a confidence for the uncertain. This book is the most valuable thing this world affords to you and I.

Here is wisdom. The royal law. The living oracles of God. In the end, this book will prove itself certain. The grass withers.

The flowers fall. For the word of the Lord stands forever. It is. The spectacles you put on. To interpret the world.

It is. The key to make meaning of life. It is. The promises of God. To the people of God. It is.

[28 : 45] According to Paul. The power of God. For salvation. For all who believe. First for the Jew. Then for the Gentile. And despite rejection.

Persecution. The gospel would not stop. And it would progress. And continue. Because the word. Is an unstoppable force.

And don't miss this as I close. Though the bearer of the word. The apostle Paul. And Barnabas. And others. You and I.

We face great pressure. Great discouragement. Great hostility. Let us not be downtrodden.

For the master of the word. Fills us. With joy. Unspeakable joy. And he accompanies us.

[29 : 43] With his spirit. So onward. Marched the word. And onward. Marched Paul.
 And onward. Marched Barnabas. Because when it was all said and done. They understood. That the word would stand triumphant. Regardless of the foe.
 So how do you receive this word? Do you defy.
 Do you reject it. And you're defiantly rejected. Do you joyfully receive it? And do you. As a servant of the Lord. Take confidence.
 That it is a persistent. And resilient word. Lord. Wow. The word of the Lord.

[30 : 42] Father we. Close our time. And we. Thank you for this word. We thank you for.
 Times that we have. Joyfully received. Its instruction. And we repent. Of times. That we have. Defiantly rejected it. Out of disobedience.
 And father. I think. For all of us. We. Teeter and totter. Between both. And we have. Experienced. Its resilience. Its persistence. In our lives.
 That it speaks. To us. And it beckons. Us. And so father. Would you take. This word. Not only the word.
 Spoken this morning. But the word. Of the gospel. And the bible. And continue to use it. To make complete. Men and women of God.

[31 : 42] Able. To fulfill. Every good work. And so father. As we. Close our time. In song. May you. Delight. In the work. Of our hands. May you. Delight. In our speech. As we speak. Peace. All. That is.
 Stem. All that stems. From your word. We thank you. We ask these things. For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.