

Text: Acts 13:42-43

Title: Initial Response to the Sermon at Pisidian Antioch

Truth: Gospel preaching produces a wide range of responses. Some are good.

Date/Location: Wednesday 5/1/2013 and 5/8/2024 at FBC

Introduction

Review sermon – history, connection to Jesus, preaching of the resurrected Christ, call to repentant faith. Now, the aftermath of the preaching.

I. Immediately After the First Sermon, 42-43

A. The form of the text is debated. NIV translate this way:

“As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.”

The NKJV is definitely in the minority with its translation:

“When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.”

From the Greek text, it seems impossible to make “Jews” be the subject of the sentence; if anything it should be “they left the synagogue of the Jews” or “they left the Jews’ synagogue.” But even the presence of the word *synagogue* and *Jews* is debated.

It is my belief that the original text is as it is given in our Greek New Testament (UBS, NA), which reads literally:

“As they[1] departed, they[2] were requesting that these words be spoken to them the next Sabbath.”

This leaves us with a little problem: how do we figure out the first *they* and the second *they*? In the end it does not matter very much, because the point is that as the meeting was ending, a request was made that more of the same be taught the next week.

The text gives us some clues. I believe the first *they* is Paul and Barnabas because they have been the main speakers up to this point. Also, it makes sense if they walked out that people would follow them and want to talk to them. I believe the second *they* is the audience, inclusive of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. I see it this way because there were Jews and God-fearers who stuck around and received encouragement from Paul and Barnabas. It was not only Gentiles that wanted to hear more, but believing Jews as well. And it doesn’t seem quite right that the Jews would walk out of the synagogue, leave the

Gentiles to speak to Paul and Barnabas, while some Jews were among the number of new believers.

How did this problem arise in the transmission of the text? Scribes may well have tried to supply the referents in their copies of the Greek manuscript, as does the NIV in its English translation. They chose the first *they* to be Jews (and added the synagogue wording to make it even more clear), and the second *they* to be Gentiles. This could make sense, but the shorter text in this case seems to have the greatest claim to authenticity.

I didn't know I would get into that when I started studying the text.

B. What I think is more important to note is that there was a group of people, a subset of the audience, who were urging, inviting, begging, asking Paul and Barnabas to return in a week and explain more of what they had said. God was at work in this crowd. They wanted to hear more, not just "maybe hear about it again *sometime*" or "get out of our faces." Sure, there were some who hated the message of Christ, as evidenced in v. 45.

Notice the desire in their hearts. Something like Psalm 19:10, 119:127 and 1 Peter 2:2.

When do you have people coming to you and begging to hear more about Jesus? Oh that we would have more of that problem!

C. A group of audience members "followed Paul and Barnabas." They wanted to hear more right now. This crowd include Jews and devout proselytes (Gentiles).

D. Such interest was an encouragement to Paul and Barnabas, no doubt. But as most ministers, I wonder if they feared it would not "stick" under the pressure of persecution. So, they "persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." They were persuasive, not just convincing them in the first place but urging them to continue in God's grace. The continuance in God's grace is related to the word to "abide" or "remain." Paul and Barnabas desired them to persevere in faith and faithfulness to God.

How about you? Are you continuing in the grace of God?

Text: Acts 13:44-52

Title: Completion of the Ministry at Pisidian Antioch, Part 1

Truth: Gospel preaching produces a wide range of responses. Some are bad.

Date/Location: Wednesday 5/15/2013 and 5/15/2024 at FBC

II. The Next Saturday, 44-52

Something new was happening in town, and the whole city wanted to find out what it was. They came together “to hear the word of God.” *Oh Lord, send us people who desire “to hear the word of God”!*

A. Envious opposition from the Jews, 44-45. This was not *all* the Jews, for “many of the Jews” in v. 43 had a favorable response to the gospel. The thing that made the Jews envious was that their meetings did not garner as much attention as Paul’s. He had bigger crowds. They were feeling intensely negative about Paul and Barnabas’ achievement. (One commentator suggests that part of the problem was Gentiles overrunning the synagogue, taking everyone’s “assigned” seat!)

1. The crowd-size-envy syndrome can get to us too in this era of the modern church. While crowd-size is not completely unimportant, it is not **all important** either. It is important whether you are preaching the truth and obeying the truth. It is important whether you are reaching lost souls. But it is not important that you be the biggest ministry in town.

Another element to this envy could have been that Paul was stealing their sheep. He would continue to do so in many synagogues throughout the Roman empire. Unless those synagogues were to convert to churches!

Besides envy, the unbelieving Jews probably thought it was impossible for Gentiles to be saved “so easily” as Paul’s message of grace indicated.

2. The Jews’ tactic was to oppose Pauls’ teaching. They contradicted (spoke against) and blasphemed (slandered, reviled, defamed). Perhaps they directly contradicted what he was saying from their own twisted doctrine, and indirectly tried to assassinate his character by using *ad hominem* arguments. Both are effective on people in the crowd who are easily intimidated by authority figures and impressive-sounding arguments.

[Here again we have a textual variant. The MT has the verb ἀντιλεγῶ two times. I'm not going to go into it, but it seems like a real redundancy in the MT.]

What the Jews were doing is saying, “We believe this is not good, and we say it is not good for you either.” From F. F. Bruce I re-learned a phrase: they were following a “dog-in-the-manger policy.” They were refusing to allow someone else to benefit from the gospel even though they did not want it for themselves. They were “shutting up the kingdom of heaven” to others (Matthew 23:13). They were trying to take away the gospel like Jesus said in Matt. 11:12.

B. Paul and Barnabas's strong response, 46-47

1. They grew bold – sometimes opposition is necessary to push us to become strong. They spoke openly, courageously, freely. They dealt head on with the rejection by the Jews—not tiptoeing around it—and they said they are going to go elsewhere. That's direct!
2. God's design was to have his missionaries share with the Jewish people (and also to the Gentiles). Paul used the synagogue as a starting point not because it was the only right way, but because it was practical. This pattern was what Paul did normally, but “the Jew first” does not prevail today as a priority that we must follow. The Jews were the most fitting first targets of evangelism because of their background. It is not a matter of priority but of expediency, practicality, suitability, even convenience, to go to the Jews in an area first and share Christ with them.
3. For two reasons, Paul and Barnabas knew they were going to have to go to the Gentiles:
 - (1) Because the Jews rejected their message: they *repudiate* it or *push it aside*. This is a strong word. There is no point in continuing to talk to them.
 - (2) Because the Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. In their repudiation, they were showing themselves unworthy of the gift. Their character did not rise to the level of worth that a noble person would have. This is not a verse that teaches “everyone is worthy” or that “anyone is worthy in themselves.” No one is worthy. But they were not considering themselves in a humble fashion, as in “we are too sinful to be worthy.” They were considering themselves as superior to the way that God prepared through Jesus for them, as in, “we are better than that message.”

Paul said that they are turning to the Gentiles. NET's note says, "This...would be a shocking rebuke to first century Jews who thought they alone were the recipients of the promise."

How they could think that is somewhat of a mystery, since their own Scriptures clearly taught about a "light to the Gentiles."

A very important application arises at this point. The Jews did not know their own Scriptures, and this caused them to sin badly against the Lord (1 Cor. 2:8) and against Paul and the apostles. So too for us: if we do not know our Bibles, then we can fall into egregious sin, even to the point of fulfilling the very sinful things that are pointed out clearly there that could have been avoided. This should make you a student!

4. Another reason that Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles was that they considered themselves as extensions of Jesus's light-bearing ministry to the Gentiles from Isaiah 49:6.

This fulfilled OT prophecy, quoted from Isaiah 49:6, 42:6; see also Luke 2:32. As early as Saul's calling in Acts 9:15, it was known that he would be the minister to the Gentiles...and that was about 15 years earlier. God had commanded him that way, and that very command was the beginning of the fulfillment of the OT promises regarding the light being sent to Gentiles. Immediately thereafter, Peter was sent to the Gentile Cornelius. The gospel is "the message that was heard 'round the world!"

Jesus was the light while He was here; now He is light to the world through His disciples.

Text: Acts 13:44-52

Title: Completion of the Ministry at Pisidian Antioch, Part 2

Truth: Gospel preaching produces a wide range of responses. Some are bad.

Date/Location: Wednesday 5/15/2013 and 5/23/2024 at FBC

C. Ministry to the Gentiles, 48

1. Many who were Gentiles in the audience were **happy** that God's program extended to them too. They learned they are included in eternal life! Focus your thought on this emotion of joy for a minute. Here is emotion driven by truth.
2. They also *glorified the word of the Lord*. They exalted the message of Christ, the gospel (not the Bible); they "clothed in splendor" the word.
3. Some of the Gentiles were *appointed to* eternal life. Whoever was so appointed believed and was saved. This is a perfect tense verb, indicating something arranged or ordered previously and with ongoing results in the future. The effect of this became evident just after Paul's preaching. It is passive in that it was not effected by the person so appointed, but by an external agent. We know that agent to be God. In effect, whoever's name was written in the Lamb's book of life in Heaven. (We cannot say for sure that *everyone* who is in the book responds the first time they hear the gospel.)
4. The idea of appointment is that God ordained or determined in advance who would be saved. It is not a fatalistic idea, but has to do with **personal election to salvation** by God. He arranges all the means and circumstances of one's life to bring that person to salvation. This is distinct from determinism or fatalism. See 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; Eph. 1:4, 5, 11; Rom. 8:28-29; 9:23. Despite the difficulty of this topic for some readers, what we can say for sure is that if you truly believe, you too were previously appointed to eternal life—by God, in eternity past. No one except God knows in advance who those people are. Further, Scripture does not give us any warrant to worry about this matter, but rather to thank God for it like Paul did. And for those who still have doubts or are grumpy about this, one more thing: we must submit ourselves to the plain teaching of the text of Scripture.

D. The Spread of God's Word, 49-52

"Was being spread" is a passive, meaning it was being carried throughout the region. Although it is passive, God saw to it by the use of means. People carried the gospel with them in word and deed.

1. Positively, v. 49. I believe this was through personal testimony of new believers. The region around Pisidian Antioch was being infiltrated by the news of Jesus the Messiah. The many new saved people could not be kept down. The message spread naturally through individual testimony.

By the way, you've heard the saying, "Preach the gospel; use words if necessary". D A Carson calls that "smug nonsense." Ray Ortlund adds: "News demands words!" The word of the Lord is spread by words, not just actions.

2. Negatively, through persecution, v. 50. The Jews stirred up people who could make life difficult for the missionaries, undoubtedly with more slander and blasphemy. These included devout (religious?) people, leading women and men of the city. The women may have been in the synagogue, and influenced their civic-leader husbands to make life difficult for the missionaries.

Why would such a large crowd of "devout" and "prominent" people join in persecuting the Christian messengers? Some of these people were probably genuinely angry at Paul and the gospel because they were zealous for their religion. Others may have been "used" by the Jews through deception or other means to get them on their side. Things got so bad that Paul and Barnabas had to leave.

3. The Apostolic response, verse 51, included shaking the dust from their feet. This was a testimony against them, following the instruction of Christ in Matthew 10:14-15 (note the judgment!), Mark 6:11 (note the message of repentance in v. 12—not received = shake the dust off), Luke 9:5 (note the idea of a testimony against them). They went to the next city. There is no time to waste with people who do not want the gospel message, particularly when you have already reached an initial group in the city who can carry out future evangelism there.

It occurs to me that initial evangelism may have quick results due to "pent up demand" of those appointed to life. After a manner of speaking, they have been waiting a long time for the Word to arrive. Subsequent work is slower and harder because it is now one at a time.

4. Verse 52: Despite persecution, the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. Despite persecution, you *can* be full of joy. We have so much to be joyful over that not even persecutions should be able to take away our joy. But very often we are filled with despair instead of joy. Instead of despair, reflect on what God has done!

Why such joy? Remember, they were told that believers would be justified from everything that they could not be in the law. Salvation!

Conclusion

Thoughts evoked by this message on the gospel of Jesus Christ:

An inclusive message – for all, Jews or Gentiles.

A rejoicing message - joy out of hopelessness.

An attractive message – many people want to hear it.

An off-putting message – many do not like the new, different aspect of it.

A polarizing message – some receive and many reject.

A growing message – through positive testimony and negative persecution.

A saving message – as opposed to going before God unjustified.

A transforming message – forgiveness and life out of sin and death.

A condemning message – shaking the dust off.

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