

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XXXII. Understanding The Contrasting Responses To Biblical Ministries

(Acts 13:44-52)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. When Paul and Barnabas evangelized Antioch of Pisidia, there was a sharp contrast in the responses the people gave to their ministry, what Acts 13:44-52 reports and what we need to understand in our ministries:

II. Understanding The Contrasting Responses To Biblical Ministries, Acts 13:44-52.

- A. The first time Paul and Barnabas explained the Gospel of Christ in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, the response was only positive: as Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue, the people there begged that their message might be given to them the next Sabbath (Acts 13:42 ESV) and after the meeting broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:43 ESV.
- B. However, the next Sabbath, when nearly the entire city came to hear God's Word, the Jews who led in the synagogue were filled with jealousy and began to contradict Paul's words and revile him, Acts 13:44-45 ESV.
- C. Obviously, those who opposed Paul's ministry exposed their unbelief in the Gospel, for on the first Sabbath, they had at least tolerated his message because it served the interests of these Jewish leaders in sustaining the attendance in their synagogue. However, when the crowds thronged the synagogue the next Sabbath, what exposed the superiority of Paul's message to the ministries of the synagogue officials, the unbelieving officials could not tolerate it since their viewpoint was carnal and not devoted to the truth, so they reacted defensively!
- D. To defend the truth of the Gospel that they gave, Paul and Barnabas boldly spoke out, condemning their opponents as having rejected the Word of God, judging themselves to be unworthy of everlasting life, that Paul and Barnabas were then going to turn to the Gentiles in fulfillment of Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:46-47.
- E. The Gentiles present heard this news and responded with joy, glorifying the word of the Lord, Acts 13:48a.
- F. The English translations then translate Acts 13:48b from the Greek to mean that as many as were ordained by God unto eternal life believed, but in other studies we have done, we show that "were ordained," from the Greek perfect participle, *tetagmenoi*, is better translated to be in the **middle** Greek voice and **not** the *passive* to mean, "as many as had marshalled themselves on the side of" eternal life believed. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 470; J. G. Machan, N. T. Grk. For Beginners, 1966, p. 186; R. B. Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles, 1901, p. 221) Where the unbelievers had judged themselves to be unworthy of eternal life, these Gentiles had marshalled themselves on the side of eternal life and believed in Christ to be saved! (Acts 13:46, 48b)
- G. Consequently, the word of the Lord spread throughout the entire region (Acts 13:49), but in stark contrast, the unbelieving Jews stirred up "the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city" to persecute Paul and Barnabas by expelling them from their district, Acts 13:50 ESV.
- H. In response to this opposition, Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust of their feet against their foes, signifying a "complete break of fellowship and renunciation of responsibility for the . . . community gestured at," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Acts 13:51; Acts 13:51a. The apostles then went to Iconium, Acts 13:51b.
- I. Then, in sharp contrast to the hatred expressed by the unbelievers, the believers at Antioch of Pisidia and the surrounding district were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, Acts 13:52.

Lesson: *The big contrast between the unbelievers who rejected the Gospel and those who accepted it was due to a big contrast in outlook: the unbelievers did not focus on God's truth, but on their external world of running their synagogue where those who believed focused on the truth of the Gospel and the value eternal life by faith in Christ. This big contrast in outlook produced a big contrast in behavior, with the unbelievers repudiating the messengers and their words where the believers loved the apostles and their words, and with the unbelievers expelling the apostles and the apostles in turn completely breaking fellowship with the apostates.*

Application: *(1) May we not be offended over the contrasting outlooks and responses to the ministry of God's Word, for a great spiritual war wages around the ministries of God's Word that involves believers and unbelievers, Satan and God, truth and error, cf. Matthew 13:18-50. (2) May we like the apostles draw clear lines of fellowship, associating with the godly but breaking fellowship with apostates who repudiate Christ and His Gospel. (3) May we like Paul and Barnabas continue to minister for the Lord, Acts 13:51b with Matthew 13:51-52.*