

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 44

I. Exposition of Chapter Thirteen (Continued).

A. Verses 42-52 – A Mixed Response to the Gospel.

1. Verse 42 – “So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” – The word translated “begged” here can be translated as “to call to one’s side” and “invite” as well as the word “beg”. It seems to imply a strong urging on the part of the Gentiles. Dr. Robert Utley states:

“This shows the power of the Spirit (1) using Paul’s sermon and (2) the hunger for forgiveness and restoration with God within the hearts of humans made in God’s image.”¹

2. Verse 43 – “Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.”

- a. “...Jews and devout proselytes...” – As far as who the “devout proselytes” were, again Dr. Utley gives us insight:

“This phrase is literally ‘worshiping proselytes.’ This is a different group from the ‘ones fearing God’ of vv. 16, 26 (cf. 10:2, 22, 35). Verse 43 refers to those Gentiles who had officially become Jews. This required (1) self baptism in the presence of witnesses; (2) circumcision for males; (3) offering a sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem when possible. There are a few references to Jewish proselytes in the NT (cf. Matt. 23; 15; Acts 2:11; 6:5; 13:43).”²

- b. “...persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” – This is an interesting phrase that suggests that they had already received the grace of God, which would be salvation. Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“Afterward, many of both Jews and “devout” (worshiping, God-fearing) converts to Judaism ‘followed Paul and Barnabas.’ Not wanting to wait until the next Sabbath, they spent some time talking to them and were ‘urged ... to continue in the grace of God.’ This means they believed the gospel and accepted the grace of God that brings salvation; they were saved. Then they must have been baptized, even though Luke does not mention it here. He makes it clear elsewhere that believers were always baptized in water and also in the Holy Spirit.”³

3. Verse 44 – “The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord.” – The persuasive power of the Holy Spirit working through Paul and Barnabas had an amazing result. Paul and Barnabas must have spent the week there speaking to individuals and small groups of people which caused word to spread.

4. Verse 45 – “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.” The word “envy” means; “a particularly strong feeling of resentment and jealousy against someone”⁴ Obviously, when Luke speaks of “Jews” here, he’s not referring to all the Jews because we know from verse 43 that some of them believed. This is referring unbelieving Jews and especially to the Jewish religious leaders. Dr. Horton writes:

“The sight of the crowd filled the unconverted Jews with jealousy (quite a contrast to the believers who were filled with the Spirit and joy), and they ‘talked abusively [blasphemously] against what Paul was saying.’ This implies they were afraid of losing their influence over those Gentiles who had been looking to them for teaching. It may also imply that they had a zeal for a Judaism that had no room for blessing Gentiles who did not first become Jews.”⁵

5. Verses 46-47 – “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves

¹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 169.

²Ibid.

³Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 247.

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 759.

⁵Horton, 247.

unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I HAVE SET YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BE FOR SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.'"

a. **"...Paul and Barnabas grew bold..."** – We've seen boldness mentioned before and know that it's a prominent theme in the book of Acts (cf. **Part 16**). The meaning of **"bold"** is; **"to speak openly about something and with complete confidence"**⁶ So, in spite of the religious leaders verbal abuse and slander, they did not cower in fear but even became stronger in courage and confidence.

b. **"...It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first..."** - It was necessary for the Gospel to go to the Jews before the Gentiles because God had promised the patriarchs that He would send the Messiah to, and through, Israel.

"Paul almost always preached the gospel to the Jews first in the towns he visited (cf. 13:50-51; 14:2-6; 17:5, 13-15; 18:6; 19:8-9; 28:23-28; Rom. 1:16). The Jews' rejection of the gospel led him to offer it next to the Gentiles."⁷

c. **"...but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life...we turn to the Gentiles."** – Inadvertently, the Jews who rejected the message Paul was preaching were unconsciously judging themselves unworthy of eternal life through salvation.

d. The end of **verse 47** is a quote from **Isaiah 49:6**. The idea of the Gospel going to the Gentiles was not Paul's idea but was always God's idea.

6. **Verse 48** – **"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."** This verse of Scripture is one of the "proof-texts" used by Calvinists to teach that God has chosen some people for salvation and chosen others to perish in their sins. This concept, however, is contrary to many other Scriptures (e.g. **I Timothy 2:1-4; II Peter 3:9**) so we must conclude that that is NOT what this verse means. Well-known and respected Greek Scholar, Dr. Brian Abasciano gives us insight about this:

"The best understanding of 'tasso' [appointed] in Acts 13:48 is that it refers to Gentiles who were 'in position for eternal life' — 'ready for eternal life' — or even 'intent on obtaining eternal life' (particularly in contrast to the Jews of the same episode who opposed Paul and rejected the gospel, and so who judged themselves unworthy of eternal life [Acts 13:46]), and that the most accurate translation of the phrase in question would be something like: 'as many as were disposed to eternal life believed' or 'as many as were aligned for eternal life believed' or 'as many as were positioned for eternal life believed.'"⁸

7. **Verse 49** – **"And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region."** – People who have had their lives changed by accepting Christ will spread that Good News. The spreading and increase of the Gospel is mentioned many times in this book.

8. **Verse 50** – **"But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region."** – Again we see the envy and jealousy of the Jewish religious leaders stirring up problems.

9. **Verse 51** – **"But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium."** This shaking the dust off their feet was something Jesus actually commanded His disciples to do when the city did not receive the Gospel (**Luke 9:5; 10:11**). It was a symbolic gesture of disassociation and sign of God's rejection of them due to them rejecting God. Iconium was a city about 80 miles away.

10. **Verse 52** – **"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."** – In spite of all the persecution, they were still filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. There's joy in the Holy Spirit (**Romans 14:17**).

⁶Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 398.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 285.

⁸From Leighton Flowers website, <https://soteriology101.com/2018/09/13/does-acts-1348-support-calvinism/>.