

ACTS 13:44-52 PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

(WIND TO WAVE TAKE ONE)

If you recall from last week Paul and Barnabas and Barnabas' nephew John-Mark went to a city in modern day Turkey called Pisidian Antioch. John-Mark bailed and headed for home back to Jerusalem, which ticked off Paul. But we will hear more about that in Chapter 15. Paul spoke at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and delivered an amazing message proving that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

In his sermon Paul worked through the history of Israel showing his respect for Israel and its amazing journey with God. And as he did he included three proof that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

THREE PROOFS JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH

1. The bloodlines of Jesus (Jesus was related to David)
2. The words of John The Baptist (a prophet recognized by this crowd stated that Jesus was The Messiah)
3. The resurrection of Jesus (only the Messiah rose from the grave as prophesied)

Then we took a closer look at what it meant that Jesus Christ the Messiah offered salvation and justification from our sin. We explored the meaning of justification with a dramatic reading.

Many people came to faith in Jesus Christ following Paul and Barnabas outside after the service was dismissed. Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak one week later at the same synagogue to further explain salvation through faith in the Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ. That leads us to this week's text:

13:44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

Paul drew a massive crowd in his follow-up sermon. God granted favor, the word spread about Paul's amazing teaching and the whole city gathered.

This would be like having a guest speaker come to speak here for two consecutive Sundays. The first week he would address the usual 150 people. But the next week the word goes out and God grants favor and 4000 people come to hear the guest speaker.

Paul was the one drawing those huge crowds. The leaders of the synagogue could never draw that kind of interest. And they would not know what to do with that many people. They did not even know the basic facts about the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation by faith in His name.

So you might think they would be delighted that Paul brought in huge crowds of people to hear about the Messiah.

If they sat under Paul and Barnabas for about a year they would be ready to lead a mega church (or mega-synagogue) in their city. How cool would that be?! Let's see how they reacted to the huge crowds that came to hear Paul's message?

45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

It appears the prime motivator for the Synagogue leaders was envy. Their envy and jealousy were greater than their desire to seek the truth and learn and grow in the faith. Envy had grabbed a hold of them in such a powerful mental and spiritual stronghold that they did not even seem to care that they might be in danger of rejecting the promised Savior.

Envy is a tool of the devil. We are all susceptible to envy. The moment someone near you begins to have success beware. The devil will tempt you with envy. The moment things change and are not done the way you know how to do them, beware. Seek the Lord. Warfare is coming in the form of envy. Here is a comical definition of envy:

SLIDE=QUOTE: *Frederick Buechner said: Envy is that consuming desire to have everybody else as unsuccessful as you are.*

The synagogue leaders and Paul were suddenly on opposite sides of the fence. There is no record of a theological disagreement. There is no record of anyone violating a cultural norm. Yet the synagogue leaders heaped verbal abuse on Paul and Barnabas.

The Greek word *blasphemountes* is translated into English as abusive speech. This is the Greek word for blasphemy.

When envy takes over a person their patterns of speech normally get reduced by about 6 grade levels. Speaking out of envy normally involves no rational discussions and lots of name calling and mocking. If I can't win the argument based on scripture or the weight of my logical argument then I will keep everyone from communicating.

EXAMPLES OF MOCKING:

I'm sure we've all seen people suddenly turn into grade school kids and start to mock things when they are unable to win a logical argument. Here is an example of the kind of thing that would qualify as blaspheming speech or abusive

speech. These are the kind of thing that the Synagogue leaders were probably saying:

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus....that's all we hear. Blaa blaa blaa...so the prophets aren't good enough for you. "or perhaps they said something more straightforward like: "Take all this Jesus stuff and put it where the sun doesn't shine."I think you get the general idea.

IT EASY TO BE A SKEPTIC

The easiest thing to be is a mocker or an unsatisfied skeptic. Even a 6 year old can be a mocker or a fault finder or a skeptic. The synagogue leaders could not argue against the facts presented by Paul. It would be very difficult to take on the apostle Paul in a debate. Remember Paul was highly trained in the communication arts and in the word of God.

Being a skeptic and a mocker is one of the great temptations for believers within a church.

STORY: CELL GROUP SCOFFING

I recall working on the staff of a very large church. There were 40 staff members and 12 pastors. I remember at one point we decided to move the church to cell group format. And we brought on a cell group pastor. And I recall that the cell group pastor was very new to the ministry. But

she was wired as an amazing person that have the temperament and gifts to connect people to one another.

I had been there for six years of fruitful ministry in the areas of prayer, missions, counseling and spiritual warfare.

And with little effort suddenly she had all kinds of favor and blessings and many people helping her in her area of ministry.

And I remember fighting with a very strong desire to cut her down. It was a wrestling match within me on a mental, emotional and spiritual warfare level. Would I have the courage and the trust in God to allow Him to decide whom He was going to bless and cause to be successful? Or would I drop it down to a human level comparing myself against her? If I don't get my strokes from God, then I need everyone around me to give me strokes and notice how good I am and how valuable I am.

I can't say I always got it right. But in the end I obeyed what the Spirit of God was telling me. I humbled myself and learned a few things from her. And most of my cell group training packets have information that I learned from her.

The synagogue leaders defaulted to mocking when they could not find theological or even rational reasons to oppose Paul. They wanted to control the message. And Paul

and Barnabas were now a threat to their control because of how popular they had become.

So how do Paul and Barnabas respond to the verbal abuse?

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.

HAD TO SPEAK TO YOU FIRST

So why did Paul say they had to speak to the Jewish people first? Paul took God's word seriously. As recorded in Genesis 12 God made a promise to Abraham. Abraham would be greatly blessed by God. And then Abraham would turn around and become a blessing to all other nations. The pattern begun with Abraham is that God speaks first to Israel, and then Israel takes the message to the world to share God's blessings.

In this case Israel would be the first to receive the message of Salvation through faith in Lord Jesus Christ. Israel would first receive her Messiah. And then Israel would share the message of salvation with the world.

This is the basis of Paul going to the Jews first and then using the influence of the synagogue to bring God's truth to

the whole region including the Gentiles. But this synagogue was not acting like a blessing to the world. How could they be a blessing to the world if they rejected their own Messiah? Here is the pattern they were supposed to follow. This quote is taken from Genesis 12.

47 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.”**

**48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and
honored the word of the Lord; and all who were
appointed for eternal life believed.**

GLAD AND HONORED THE WORD OF THE LORD

There were many Gentiles who did not agree with their synagogue leaders who were mocking Paul and Barnabas. They wanted salvation through Jesus Christ the Jewish Messiah. But if their own synagogue leaders would not tell them about the Savior who would? Well, Paul said that he would go directly to the Gentiles. He would go around the synagogue.

The Gentiles honored the word of the Lord. This is a reference to the way they handled the message of salvation.

Paul and Barnabas later planted a church among the Gentiles in that area. They gathered in a meeting hall or in a large house and planted a church directly to the Gentiles. Those people who were taught by Paul and Barnabas grew in their faith. And when they had a handle on the message of salvation they invited their friends and neighbors. Their lives were dramatically changed and they could not wait to share with others what they had found. The result is seen in next verse.

49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

I almost missed this sentence when I read the chapter. There was a large and growing group of Christians. Whoever heard the message became a student of the word. And they also became a teller of the gospel. Paul and Barnabas must have stayed there for several weeks or months in order to see the gospel message spread into the whole region. Paul and Barnabas were training an army of Christ followers who were bold with their faith and generous with their love and possessions. And they were eager to serve others.

50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO VERIFY JESUS AS MESSIAH

If the synagogue leaders could see the lives of people transforming. Drunkards become sober. Violent tempers were muted. Love and serving poured from the Spirit of God into the lives of these new believers. Sometimes authentic kingdom fruit and changed lives will convince those who are filled with envy to repent and turn to God.

NOT INTERESTED IN RESOLUTION

One of the things that has been missing in the anger of the Synagogue leaders is a legitimate disagreement with Paul's teaching.

If they were interested in finding the truth and being intellectually and spiritually honest they would have searched the scriptures. Or if they wanted to make sure Paul was really from God they could have demanded a miracle. New teaching and fulfillments of prophecy are normally accompanied by miracles.

If there were interested in the truth they could have traced the bloodlines of Jesus to double check what they heard from Paul. After all, according to the prophets, Jesus had to be related to King David because God promised the Savior would come from David's family tree.

There were many options available for the Synagogue leaders to determine whether Paul and Barnabas were

speaking the truth. They did not take ANY of the options available to determine the truth. Therefore we must conclude that they were not interested in the truth. They were interested in controlling the message and remaining the king of the Synagogue mountain.

A WORD AND APPLICATION FOR US

I want to give a very important application for us. If you hear someone has a problem or difference of opinion with the church leaders or their cell group leader or anyone for that matter; I want you to make an observation;

1. Is that person taking steps to find the truth? Are they searching the scriptures and speaking directly to the person with whom they have a problem? People who seek truth look stuff up and they speak directly with the person with whom they have a disagreement. They keep an open mind and they pursue truth.
2. Is that person drawing people to be on his or her side so that a larger group can put pressure on the person with whom they have a disagreement?
3. Is that person with a problem using mocking language or personally cutting down the person with whom they have a disagreement.
4. Do you hear exaggerations such as "never" and "always."

5. Does the person who has a problem major on minor and debatable issues?

If you hear these thing either correct that person or stay away. You are going to be drawn into something that is ungodly and you will get played by Satan. You will be against people that God is blessing. And God will not be glorified. These are the signs of people who want power and want to control the agenda. Have nothing to do with this darkness.

Instead, focus on winning people to Christ. Focus on prayer and reading the word and serving others. Focus on what is going right. And if you see something is lacking, don't be a critic. If you notice a need, this church belong to God and to all of us. If you notice something lacking that is your opportunity to offer assistance and help be a part of the solution.

One of the biggest parts of this spiritual war is a propaganda war in which Satan will get the facts twisted. Always assume the best. Always assume that God can correct and change people better than you can. Always offer to be part of the solution. Always look with eyes of faith and what God could do in a person's life after you join in praying for them instead of butchering them with your words.

PROTECTING MY TURF

The Synagogue leaders were not interested in seeking truth and being a part of the solution. They played politics in order to protect their position. They were going to get the people with money and influence to be on their side in order to create an alliance against Paul and Barnabas.

God fearing women of high standing refers to Jewish women who had money and a deep social circles. They would generally want to listen to the Synagogue leaders.

Leading men in the city refer to people of high political or social rank. These leading citizens had all kinds of people sucking up to them and would do anything they wanted.

50 continued...They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

I'm not sure what it looked like to expel Paul and Barnabas from their region. But it certainly involved physical force. But I guess that is what it comes down to when the weight of your point of view is not strong enough to convince others. Here is the response of Paul and Barnabas.

51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium.

SHAKING THE DUST

What is the shaking dust all about? Jews for the most part hated the Gentiles. A Gentile is anyone that is not Jewish. Most Jews thought of themselves as God's people. And they thought of Gentiles as people whom were facing God's judgment. In fact they thought of all Gentiles as unclean and they would not even go into the house of someone who was not spiritually and ceremonially clean.

Gentiles whom became Jewish were accepted into certain parts of the temple but they were still thought of as second class. They were beneath the Jewish people.

So when a Jew would walk through a Gentile territory and reach the end of town; he would shake the dust off of his feet. He did not even want to take the dust of the Gentiles back with him into his own territory or his house. Shaking the dust off of your clothing was a sign that the people you just left were going to see judgment. You did not even want their dust to contaminate you. This was only done by Jews toward Gentiles.

But as Paul and Barnabas left they shook the dust off of their feet as a warning to the Jewish synagogue leaders. The synagogue leaders were acting just like pagans who wanted nothing to do with God. Paul and Barnabas were treating the

Jewish leaders like they were unclean pagans. Even their dust contaminated others.

In English this would be like telling someone; *"well if you insist on going to hell then I'm not going to stand in your way. But don't let me get close to you when the lightning strikes."*

So the disciples moved on. The door closed in Pisidian Antioch. They reached those who were willing. And they were run out of town by the unwilling and those whom were jealous. This seems like a good time to be down in the dumps and feeling pretty sour. Is that how Paul and Barnabas were feeling? Let's take a look;

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

HAPPINESS VS JOY

A whole bunch of ugly things happened to the followers of Jesus Christ. And this verse does not say; "they were dealing with it and sorting things out and healing." No. They were FILLED with joy and the Holy Spirit.

This does not make sense on a human level. When things go wrong and people are mistreated they usually go around with a scowl. This scowl may even be accompanied

by nasty words of anger and revenge. But something was different. Paul and Barnabas were FILLED with joy.

In order to understand how they could be filled with joy we need to draw a distinction between happiness and joy.

Happiness

Happiness is normally a resulting emotion when things in our lives turn out well. Happiness is circumstantial. If things go well you can be happy. But if circumstances do not go well you react with upset and your happiness is stolen. In fact most people place their well being in the hands of others. If others chose to treat them well they will be happy and if others do not treat them well then they are miserable.

That kind of existence places our well being in the hands of other. If we depend on others to treat us well in order to be happy then other people get to decide whether we will be happy. Other people control our mood and countenance. They decide how our day is going to go. Do we really want to let others decide whether you will have a good or a bad day?

The disciples were mistreated, mocked, slandered, shouted down and physically run out of town. However, they were filled with joy. They did not have circumstantial

happiness. They had lasting joy. So how is joy different than happiness?

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. That means when you are filled with the Holy Spirit one of the things that will automatically come along with being filled with God's presence is joy. It is not something that you come up with based on your circumstances. Joy is a gift from God.

Joy is the result of God's love and approval spoken into your soul and spirit. Here are some things that can result in God filling you with the Holy Spirit.

1. Spend time praying and worshipping God
2. Share the gospel or serve others
3. Obey Jesus Christ and do what He tells you to do, even if it is difficult or dangerous

One of the signs that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit is joy. It is an overflow of the Holy Spirit's activity in you.

"But Pastor Mike, aren't we supposed to have a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit when we are filled?"

"Yes, that is true, and one of the evidences of being filled with the Spirit is joy." Not joy that you can come up with on your own. But joy that comes from focusing on and obeying and loving and worshipping God and God alone.

God was pleased with Paul and Barnabas and with all those whom were willing to share Jesus Christ with a mostly hostile crowd.

Supernatural joy is a small part of the blessing that was promised by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:10,11

¹⁰ ***"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

¹¹ ***"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

Do you know the best way to translate the concept of "blessed" to English? Blessed in English is best understood as joy. Joy that allows us to rejoice and be glad. Joy that allows us to know that God approves of us even if others do not. Joy to know that we are in good company, Jesus and the prophets and the apostles and the early church Fathers and the martyrs. Take joy! We have the honor of sharing the sufferings of Jesus Christ. We have the miracle of joy to endure all that life can throw at us.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit brothers and sisters and you will have joy. Even if you suffer, not for being stupid but if you suffer for your obedience to Jesus Christ.