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PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY
(Continued)

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 54
ACTS 13:42-52

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ACTS 13:42-52 "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

In this Scripture we are still in Antioch of Pisidia, and Paul has just completed his sermon in the Jewish synagogue. Both Jews and Gentiles were present to hear the sermon. Many of them had positive volition and were willing to believe.

ACTS 13:42 "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." Notice that both Jews and Gentiles were in the group who asked that they might hear this Gospel again the next Sabbath.

ACTS 13:43 "Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." Many Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. They were learning basic Bible doctrine and they were hungry to know more. Were persuaded (Imperfect tense and it means they must have met every day in further study) to continue in the grace of God.

ACTS 13:44 "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." Paul's sermon had stirred up the whole city. This is the impact of Bible doctrine. This is "The Word of God" and this is what they came to hear. This is the most important thing in any message. Paul would say later, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation". The emphasis is not on experience but on the Word of God. This is the need. Paul was Biblical from beginning to end. He didn't tell them much about himself, but he gave them the Word of God. Not Dale Carnegie courses, not experiences, but it is the Word of God that saves. These men turned the world upside down because they gave out the Word of God. This is what men needed.

HEBREWS 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." All week long Paul's message was discussed. His message made a division in the whole city.

ACTS 13:45 "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." The Jews saw the success of the gospel and when they realized that they no longer had a corner on the gospel, they were filled with envy. The Jews were nice and very responsive until the glorious grace of God hit them, and then out came their mental attitude sins. Envy and jealousy is just about the worst sin that can inflict any life. The word "filled" with jealousy is an aorist, passive, indicative and this means that this incident just brought out the envy and jealousy which was already in their minds. So this led to their criticism of Paul and they began to contradict and blaspheme him.

ACTS 13:46 "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Now we notice a change of policy from this point on. Waxed bold doesn't mean that they became courageous. They had already been courageous. It rather means to speak dogmatically with confidence. The greater the opposition, the more dogmatic we need to be. We need to do the same today. Don't let the unbeliever cut the ground from under you. You are to give the clear, plain gospel message. So their new policy was one of dogmatism. It was necessary that the Word of God would first be given to the Jews. But notice what those Jews did---"Ye put it from you". This, you see, was negative volition. We have a theology that says it is all the sovereignty of God and there is no such thing as free will. Then we have a theology that says it is all free will and the sovereignty of God doesn't have anything to do with it. Obviously, both these views are extremes. But you don't have to jump on the band wagon of either of these views. Just take the Bible and what the Bible says. Take your doctrine from the Word of God. Did God pick out one person to go to heaven and another person to go to hell? Is it a matter of "eenie, meenie, miney, mo"?

The word translated "Ye put it from you" comes from Apotheo. Apo is the preposition of ultimate source. Etheo means to thrust something from you. So this phrase means that you thrust something from you from your ultimate source. In other words, you reject something by your own free will. It means that you have emphatically rejected something.

This means negative volition all the way. "Judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life" is an idiom for negative volition which filled up the vacuum of their lives with legalistic religion. They took the Mosaic Law, turned it into a system of good works and then they went on negative volition. Now think on this for a moment. What is the purpose of the Ten Commandments? They are primarily given to teach us that man is a sinner, he is bankrupt, and he needs a Saviour. But these Jews turned the Ten Commandments into a system of salvation. These Jews were doing their own good works. "Unworthy" is a good word here, for human good can never inherit eternal life. They had negative volition concerning the cross, thus they condemned themselves. On the other hand when you turn to Christ, you depend wholly upon him and he does all the saving. So this passage explains free will. Paul's job was the same as ours is today. Just lay it on the line, give them the gospel, and leave the results to God. (Success in witnessing is sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.)

So we have come to the watershed in the career of Paul. He was going first to the Jews, but they cut him off, they turned a deaf ear, so he turned to the Gentiles. This is exactly the meaning of Pentecost. It was God's illustration of how when the Jews failed to listen, he would turn to the Gentiles and the Church.

These Jews thought that God would have to take them in because they kept the Law of Moses, and because they were in the line of Abraham. But God couldn't take them in because they rejected the plan of salvation and substituted human good in the place of faith in Christ. The very fuel for the lake of fire is human good. So they judged themselves unworthy for salvation and Paul turned to the Gentiles. (Please don't forget--we are sitting in this room tonight because Paul turned to the Gentiles and the gospel came to our shores.)

ACTS 13:47 "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." This is indeed a great verse. Paul here quoted Isaiah 49:6 to show that the Gentiles were included in the plan of salvation. "I have set thee a light to the Gentiles" constitutes a command from God. God commands us by his word. This command is in the perfect tense, with the force that this command stands forever. Please notice it says, "I have appointed thee". God first appointed the Jews to do this task, but they failed. Now the Lord turns to Paul and asks him to take up the task they had failed to perform.

ACTS 13:48-49 "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." This is the result. Indeed the Gentiles rejoiced when they heard that they were included in the plan. If they had had our song book, someone would have announced the hymn "He Included Me".

Religion and religious people cannot stand to see people enjoy happiness unless they are the source of that happiness.

Now don't let that phrase "as many as were ordained to eternal life" throw you off. "Were ordained" comes from two verbs, we call a periphrastic, a carry over from Hebrew. The word were is our old friend "eimi" and is the verb "to be". It is the absolute status quo.

The word "ordained" comes from the Greek word "Tosso" and means to be under orders, it is a military word, to be assigned to a certain station. So "Were ordained" simply means this. Millions of years ago God knew which way your free will was going to turn. God didn't reach in there and tamper with your free will. God never tampers with the free will of a man, but God wouldn't be God if he didn't know millions of years ago what you were going to do. God knew that many of those people in Antioch of Pisidia were going to turn positive volition toward God, and they were ordained to eternal life. God knew that many of them were going to turn negative volition toward God and they were not ordained to eternal life. "Were ordained" is a perfect tense and goes back to that moment millions of years ago when God saw these things and God knew they were going to happen. God made these assignments on the basis of what we would do in our free will. Just like we are given assignments in society today, so God in his perfect wisdom made assignments for us long before we were ever born, but those assignments never once violate our free will. He arranged your station in life and assigned you a place to serve on the basis of his wisdom and in keeping with your free will. Yes indeed, God has a responsibility to reach every individual who goes on positive volition. The assignment starts at that point. You believe and God assigns you to his plan for you. If you keep positive volition toward God then you will be filled with the Spirit and you will accomplish great things. But if you go on negative signals, you can fall out of fellowship, lose your power, and fail to accomplish the things God has planned for you. Here in Antioch thousands went on positive signals, were born again, and at that moment started on the plan God had for them. These three Scriptures teach this truth.

JOHN 7:17 "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

JEREMIAH 29:13 "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

ACTS 17:27 "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:"

ACTS 13:49 "And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." The results were fantastic. A revival of the right kind spread throughout all that region. Evidently thousands were converted and the foundation for the Christian church was established in that region.

ACTS 13:50 "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." This is the story of religion through history. The most terrible wars of history have been religious wars. Religious persecution can be the worst sort of persecution. Paul and Barnabas has a successful revival in Antioch of Pisidia, but blind religion drove them out.

ACTS 13:51 "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. This is a good thing for all of us to remember. Don't cry over spilt milk. Pick yourself up and move on. This is what Paul and Barnabas did.

ACTS 13:52 "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." God always takes care of his own. Paul and Barnabas had to leave, but the Spirit of God stayed on in the hearts of these new converts. Remember, it isn't the man that is so important, but the important thing is the message.