

## Acts 13:42-52

### “Receive It Or Reject It; Judge For Yourself”

“Believe or be judged!” That was the bottom line; the application & appeal of Paul’s marvelous message here in Acts 13. Paul & his missionary team had made their way into the region of Galatia & found themselves *on* the sabbath *at* the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. & As was the custom in the ancient Jewish world, when there was a distinguished guest in your midst (a man learned in the scriptures such as Paul), after the opening prayer & reading of the scripture, the one officiating the service would turn to that man or group of men & say something to the effect of, “Men & brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.”

So Paul stood up, & motioning w/his hand he began speaking to the people. Rehearsing for them the history of the nation of Israel beginning w/the Exodus. He spoke to them of the wilderness wanderings, how God led them into the Promised Land, established judges over them, eventually he placed Samuel the prophet over them who anointed 2 kings over them; Saul (who did his own will) & David (who was after *God’s* heart & did *God’s* will). & God had made a promise to David; a promise that the Messiah would come forth from his lineage.

He was demonstrating how that history didn’t happen randomly, that things don’t just take place erratically, but that God had a plan that was leading up to someone *specifically*. Namely; Jesus.

& \*He spoke to them of the death, burial & resurrection of J.C. & told them that through *this Man* (Jesus) was preached to them the forgiveness of sins. He was saying effectively that Jesus was the Way, the Truth & the Life & that no one comes to the Father except through Him. That there is no salvation in any other, nor is there any other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved... & That through *Him everyone* who believes is justified from all things from which we cannot be justified by the law of Moses.

The essence of his message was that it’s by grace that we are saved, through faith, & that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. *Not of works* lest any man should boast. The law insists on condemnation; in Christ we find salvation, justification, righteousness in the sight of God through faith... Finally, he brought a word of warning regarding the penalty of unbelief, “Behold, you despisers, marvel & perish! For I work a work in your days. A work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.” “The message has been declared; now the choice is yours, believe or be judged.” Ladies & Gentlemen; it doesn’t get much more straight forward than that... 😊

& Truth be told; that's exactly how we should want it; would you agree? "Listen; preacher, if we're just gathering over a political matter, or personal preference concerning this or that; if this is just some kind of social club then I guess some weak, watered down, namby pamby message will do just fine. **But if heaven & hell are truly on the line; if this concerns my eternal well-being & what it means to be right in the sight of God, then I need to hear it straight! Don't beat around the bush, don't speak in ambiguous/uncertain terms, give me the clear-cut unapologetic truth!"\***

That's what Paul did & that's where we left off. The question is, "How did the people respond?" Let's look together.

### Vs 42-43

I read that & I think, "Man, that's awesome." No one was hostile toward the message, there was no riotous response, to the contrary, both Jews & Gentiles were saved. & Did you see what it said there in Vs 42? "The Gentiles *begged* that these words might be preached to them *the next* Sabbath." Wait, what!?

**It was a message so nice, they wanted to hear it twice! How incredible must that have been! Family; I've been teaching/preaching the word (formally/vocationally) for 22-23 yrs or so at this point. & I don't know the exact # of messages that adds up to, but it's well over 1,000 not counting any guest speaking or discipleship meetings etc., & I've never 1 time been asked (much less *begged*) to share a message more than once. 😊**

These Gentiles were so stoked w/the message of J.C. & Him crucified; that God's saving grace & the very righteousness of Christ could be gifted to them (through faith) apart from any works of the law, that they begged Paul to give that very same message the next week...

**Not only were the *Gentiles* excited, but there were no small # of Jews that responded to the message as well. Did you see that there in Vs 43? When service dismissed, "*many of the Jews & devout proselytes, followed Paul & Barnabas, who, speaking to them persuaded them to - continue - in the grace of God.*"**

Listen, you don't *continue* in the grace of God unless you 1<sup>st</sup> *begin* in the grace of God. & If there's one thing we know (I quoted it to you just a few minutes ago), salvation is only by... grace. **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Eph 2:8-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Paul & Barnabas were “persuading” them; that is, encouraging them to remain confident *in*, to trust & stand firm *on* the grace of God. “You’ve been zealous toward the Law; now we’re exhorting you to *stand firm* on grace.”

So to w/you & so to w/me. Family; w/all that is w/in me I urge you to *continue* in the grace of God. I know you *began* in God’s grace. There you were, at the end of yourself, nothing to offer, no merit of your own, casting yourself wholly/fully at the mercy of God’s grace. You heard the gospel; you believed & you were saved... Unfortunately, many (over time) come to see grace as their *entrance* into the kingdom, but law becomes their *continuance*. But *continuing* in grace is as important as *beginning* in grace. We can *never* leave it as the fundamental foundation of our life/relationship w/God.

It’s so easy to drift into that place where we set up our own little standards. “Why is she wearing *that?*” Or “I don’t watch television anymore...” “That guitar is too loud”, or “I pray 30 minutes a day...” We have our little list of things we do, &/or don’t do, what’s acceptable & what’s not & we begin to frown on *others* based upon *our* rules... We think we’re a little more spiritual than those carnal Christians who watch T.V. or eat unhealthy, don’t exercise, or pray as much. They don’t study their bibles diligently... or whatever.

Here they are just excited about salvation, enjoying freely God’s justification & we become experts at “sniffing out sin”, seeing everything wrong w/everyone else. (Even though it’s not sin, nor is it wrong!) Listen; that’s not grace, that’s law, that’s legalism.

Now I’m not talking about honoring *God’s* word, obeying *God’s* word. That’s not legalism, that’s wisdom. I’m saying, avoid the pitfall of imposing your own set of “do’s & don’ts” thinking that it brings you closer to God. We began in grace, we’re to *continue* in grace.

Paul was *still* encouraging them when he wrote to them not too long after this. Apparently, it was a real struggle & many of them had reverted to law thinking, rather than continuing in the grace of God. He said, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ga 3:1–4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, “Were you saved by something you did (works of the law) or by believing in what J.C. *had done* on your behalf?” So having begun in grace (in the Spirit), are you now going to improve upon that, perfect that through the law (by the flesh)?

Listen, when Jesus said, “It is finished.” That’s what He meant. He paid the price, He did the work, we’re to walk *in* & rest *on* God’s grace. (Look at Vs 44)

### Vs 44-45

We’ll get to Vs 45, but I want to consider for just a minute Vs 44. Isn’t it incredible? The very next “church service” (so to speak), it was standing room only! People were lined up against the walls, sitting in the aisles, they were standing around outside, the police were directing traffic... nearly the *whole city* showed up for church! It was time to go to 2 services to say the least!

Now listen, I get that today we’re on an information overload. We have radio, we have T.V., we have the internet, on & on it goes. You’re on your phone & I’m only hoping it’s not snap chat, or Instagram, or FB or some game but that you’re actually tuned in & have your bible app open rather than texting a friend...

None of those things were available in Paul’s day. So when someone came through from another city, it was a precious source of information & people would want to know what was going on. But this goes beyond novelty (they weren’t there *last Sabbath service*). It was a thirst *for*, a fascination *with*, a desire to know the word of God & the gospel of J.C. that drew them.

Now; let me hit you with this. How do you suppose the whole city found out what was going on, what was being shared & that they *needed* to be there because it was going to transform their lives forever!? This is where it gets real, right? **The people who were there the week before, were so genuinely excited about what was going on, how God was moving, the way they were being taught & that the message of the gospel was guaranteed to go forth that they told everyone they came across about it. They made it a point to invite others to service w/them...**

Listen, if *you’re* not excited about God’s word; if you don’t think *you* have message worth sharing, than you’ll stay silent. But the truth is that you have the most exciting, uplifting, life transforming message on the planet! Don’t let the enemy, or your own feeling of insecurity disable you from making a difference eternally! Wouldn’t it be great to see this city turned on for J.C.?

Purpose in your heart to even 1 person a week... Or a couple of people a month. & If 1 out of 10 or 20 take you up on it, & then they get saved or find something here that they haven't had before. Not only will the church body grow, but you'll grow! You'll be stoked, God is using your life & there's nothing like it! You were just used by God to change someone's eternal destiny... Nothing compares & God is glorified!

But when the Jews saw the multitudes; they were filled w/envy... How sad is that? Rather than rejoice in the dramatic/radical response, they were envious of the fact that people weren't showing up like this when *they* were leading services. But this is what happens when a man wants to make a name for *himself* rather than glorify the name of Jesus... Look, God is going to use different people's lives to different degrees; but we're all pulling in the same direction. We just want to put points on the board for the kingdom of God & glorify/magnify the name of Jesus.

However, the Jews here began pulling the opposite direction. Suddenly rather than sharing at the service it was as if Paul was conducting a debate w/his opponents contradicting him & ultimately blaspheming God! Probably they were speaking in some derogatory way toward Jesus; degrading the work of the cross & downplaying it to the death of a criminal rather than the necessary self-sacrifice of the Christ.

#### Vs 46-48

I love the opening statement in Vs 46. "Then Paul & Barnabas grew bold". As if boldness had been a problem before! Now they *grew bold!* ☺

He says, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you 1<sup>st</sup>." This was always Paul's policy, since the word of God & the Son of God came *through* the Jews, he would always take the message 1<sup>st</sup> to the Jews. But notice, "since you *reject* it & *judge yourselves* unworthy of everlasting life..." Wait, what!?

Ladies and gentlemen; let this soak in for a minute. *Paul wasn't judging them, he was the one making the way of salvation known to them. He was availing this privilege to them, a privilege that they were rejecting. & In rejecting this offer of everlasting life through faith in J.C. they were judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life; think about that.*

It's *your choice*, you stand as the "judge" of your own eternal destiny, the choice is yours completely! God simply honors your decision. He loves you enough to avail to you the opportunity to believe upon J.C. & be saved. He *respects* you enough to honor your decision should you decide to reject His offer.

The responsibility is yours alone to receive the message or reject the message. But should I choose to reject it, I have no one to blame but myself. I've judged *myself* unworthy of everlasting life...

Therefore, Paul would take the message to a people eager to receive it; the Gentiles. & He backed his decision up w/scripture (Isa 49:6). "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth." 2 things. #1 Paul didn't waste a lot of time trying to convince people who really weren't interested in the message. Yes, he would pray for them & plead for them before God. But there were too many people w/open hearts to waste time trying to convince hardened hearts.

Sometimes the enemy likes to distract our evangelistic efforts w/difficult people. They're really not interested but we keep on keeping on. Meanwhile people are passing us by who would be eager to hear! Listen, pray for them, speak w/them when the door opens up, but focus your efforts on open hearts...

Now check this out. The scripture he quotes was (in its context) a reference to Christ (again it wasn't only the Jews God wanted to save, salvation in Christ is for *whoever* calls upon the name of the Lord). But Paul takes it & applies it to himself. Here's the point. Scripture only has 1 interpretation, (it only says what it says), but it has *manifold application*.

I want you to take this personally. Jesus said, "*You are the light of the world.*"<sup>3</sup> Listen; God has called *you*, the Lord has set *you* as a light to the Gentiles, (those who've not heard, not known, aren't familiar w/the truth of the gospel). Many people are familiar w/religion & what they believe church is, but they don't really know the truth of the gospel. God has set you to be a light bearer, to bring light into their dark world, that *you* should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

Paul was ready to go to the ends of the earth to win souls to Christ! Too often we're not willing to cross the street! Or speak to someone at the gym, or in the breakroom, or at the park or whatever... Yet we are the light of the world... don't be afraid to shine. Get the message out...

Check it out; when the Gentiles heard it, they were stoked! They glorified the word of God! That God had ordained in His word that salvation by grace through faith in J.C. would be gifted to them.

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<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 5:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. Do you see the balance & the tension between freewill & the sovereignty of God? Jesus said, “You didn’t choose Me, I chose you.” We were dead in sin & we were made alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So the question is; is it up to us, or is it up to God? & The answer is... Yes. There’s nothing to stop you from believing upon the Lord. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved, you’ll discover that you were appointed to eternal life!

Perhaps you’re thinking, “Well, I don’t want to believe!” Then you’ve judged *yourself* unworthy everlasting life. Don’t blame God for the fact that you choose to reject Him. You can turn from your sin; you can believe on the Lord. It’s not on *Him*, if you choose not to.

Vs 49

This is what happens when you have a bunch of people fired up for J.C. Born again & excited to spread the news. Healthy sheep will multiply. Again, if you’re excited about something, you’ll make it known.

Vs-50

They got the women stirred up, & it was a wrap... 😊 I’m not positive what this means, but it seems to lend itself to the fact that they were married to the chief men of the city as well. So, they stirred up anyone w/authority & the got Paul & Barnabas kicked out of the city. Any time the Lord is moving, the devil will oppose, you can just count on it.

Vs 51-52

The shaking of the dust from their feet was a way of saying, “You guys have rejected Jesus & we want nothing to do w/it. You’re on your own.” They were done, & on to the next one, “Iconium”.

They didn’t give up because of difficulty or rejection, they responded w/further determination. They were taking the message of salvation anywhere they could. Listen; in ministry & in life, we will either, “shake it off” or we’ll be “shaken up”. If you shake it off, you’ll move on, if you get shaken up, you’ll quit. Learn to shake it off, keep moving forward. & You’ll leave behind a legacy, those believers around you (like the disciples they left) will be filled w/joy & w/the Holy Spirit... They wouldn’t let it bring them *down*, & that built those around them *up*. - Some will accept, others will reject. Let’s just be faithful to get the message out...

**Prayer points:**

God we thank You for Your salvation! That You have so loved us that You've given Yourself for us in the Person of J.C. I pray that you would help us to continue in Your grace. To walk in obedience, being the light of the world. Grant us boldness, renew our zeal, give us this city! We're asking that we would have Your heart, share the message, spread Your word & glorify Your name.

It's time for you to make a decision. Judge for yourself. You've heard the gospel, salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ who has loved you; been crucified & raised from the dead on behalf of you, that you might find forgiveness in Him. Choose life; believe on the Lord & you will be saved.