

06.07.17

Is Called Out to Rejoice Over the Word of the Lord Acts Chapter 13

I am giving you the opportunity to write notes because I think you have them all the way through to Chapter Thirteen. As the sheets are being handed out, if you would glance over them, please look through the different Chapters and some of the headings that we have for you. Once again, I want to throw this out: how would you describe what the church was about according to the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts. The foundation? Great. The foundation is being built. The foundation is being laid. What is the foundation? What does it look like? If you were to describe what the church should look like, what would you say? Christ is the foundation. Right. That is basically everything you need to know. Everything has to be about Christ. As Paul says:

(Ephesians 2:20) “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.”

God is laying this foundation. Sonny often has to sing “Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves.” We have no other answer than Jesus saves. Jesus is the one who rescues. Jesus is the One who will give you hope and peace. What is the life of the church? Yes, we are guardians of the word of truth. The church itself is that guardian. What gives us our power, our strength? Yes, the Holy Spirit. How can I know the difference between an organization that talks about religious things and a real church? Is it possible that an organization can talk about Jesus and yet not be a living breathing church? No. How would I know the difference? The Spirit of God begins to drive the church. You can see the presence of the Spirit in people's eyes. You can see it in their emotions when you begin to talk about Christ and what He has done for you. You begin to see eyes tear up. You begin to see people feel intensely about Him. It is

unmistakable. This person loves Christ, and the Spirit of God begins to enliven them. You can sense a love for the brethren and a heart for the things of the word. What we are looking at in Chapter Thirteen is that clear mark that defines the genuine believer. There will be an emphasis on those who are called for a particular purpose. In fact, as it starts we will see God calling Barnabas and Paul into service. It will actually use the word “called.” If you look with me in

(Acts 13:2) “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

What we begin to see is the unity of the Spirit within them. They are inspired to believe that this is what God wants them to do. Ultimately there is the affirmation by this group of men who love God. They know this to be true. There is a conviction in their hearts. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is unity. Right? Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. You see these things come

together. It is not a business meeting. Maybe you have been to one of these church business meetings where people vote according to the Queensbury rules. They have a set of rules that you have to go by; but this is not the Spirit of God. Where you have men who are praying before God, you sense what God wants. There is such a conviction that everybody in the room begins to say, “We believe this to be true.” The Spirit of God is moving amongst them and says, “Send them out.”

(Acts 13:3) “Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

You see within the passage the phrase “for the work to which I have called them.” The calling of God begins to function within the church, and we begin to see God calling people for particular purposes. What Chapter Thirteen is going to do is dovetail the calling of Paul and Barnabas into the work with those who have been called to be believers. In other words, what makes us unique? What ministry are we called to, and who are the called

ones? How do we know the ones who are called, the ones who are chosen of God? What is that definable thing about them that really solidifies the call? These are the called ones. If you go towards the end of Chapter Thirteen, we see Paul and Barnabas speaking out boldly on the Sabbath, proclaiming God. The Jews are getting jealous. His message is becoming divisive, and they want to drive him away. But there are some Gentiles who say, “The word of God is being fulfilled here. God has come to the Gentiles.” They begin to rejoice.

(Acts 13:48) “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

That is an interesting phrase: “As many has been had been appointed to eternal life believed.” How do I know that they have been appointed? How do I know others have not been appointed. One of the things that Acts 13 demonstrates for us is that truly God is appointing some to eternal life, but God has appointed and is orchestrating

all for His defined purpose. What is unique is that God has specifically appointed those who believe in Him for the purpose of rejoicing in His word. It is the one thing that makes us unique. It is the one thing that makes us different from the world. If you think about it, the world will rejoice over a job, rejoice over a career, rejoice over money, etc. Think of all the things that man can possibly rejoice over. But what do believers rejoice over? The word of God. More than anything else, they gravitate towards that. It is the telltale sign of a true believer. In John chapter 10, Jesus talks about the Good Shepherd and His sheep:

(John 10:4) “When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

My sheep hear My voice and they come. Why do they come? Because they hear His voice, the voice of their Shepherd. They are drawn to what He is saying, and they

are drawn to the way that He says it. They are drawn to the words of life.

(John 14:6) “Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Why do some people hear those words? People who are seeking the truth recognize the words of God when they hear them. That is what they are looking for. People come to church for all kinds of strange reasons. Unfortunately, I think often churches blur those reasons by acquiescing to people. People want to have their ears tickled, and they accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with those desires so that they can, in some way, feed whatever those desires are. We had Simon the magician in Chapter 8. In Chapter 13, there is a guy named Bar-Jesus. It is not a mistake that he has that name because he seems to be a “Jesus want-to-be.” And what he seems to be doing is somehow capitalizing on the fact that Jesus is now gaining in popularity. What is the best way to capitalize on that? Maybe calling yourself the son of

Jesus? That is what Bar-Jesus means. Son of Jesus. He will capitalize on this by performing magic tricks and sorceries. The word that is used there is actually where we get the term Magi and can mean anything from a physician to a scientist to a sorcerer. The Magi that came from the East had great abilities in these different fields. They were perceived to be, in some cases, healers. They were perceived to be people who could figure things out through science. They also played around with drugs. The word used is "*pharmakeus*"; it is translated sorceries in the Book of Revelation (See Revelation 9:21, 18:23). They would use these different wares in order to become powerful. They would get people to become dependent upon them; and people would begin to praise them, saying. "Oh, how wonderful you are. You helped me here. You did this." These men became very prominent. By the time that Philip comes to Simon, the magician, Scripture tells us that Simon had many followers and was very popular. God then breaks that with some miracles through Philip. After that, people begin to listen to the Gospel

message. Once people begin to fixate on the Gospel, the message transforms the people; and they begin to follow Philip. The magician goes, “I need this. It is good for business.” You remember what happened in that chapter. Something similar will happen in this passage. We will see that there is an allurements toward the things of the world. Like I said, sometimes churches cater to magic tricks. What is it that draws the crowds in? That is what they start to think. They begin to rely upon social events or magic tricks or entertainment or sports events in order to draw the crowds. We have already seen in the early stages of the church these attacks coming from the outside. Ultimately, they will begin to penetrate into the church and become a part of the church. What this does is it blurs what is genuine. The one thing that the church has going for it is the word of God. If people make that preeminent, if they make that the point, then those who come in will be genuine. Those who remain in the body will be real. The others will fall by the wayside. They will participate in Bible studies for a while but then decide that they need

something else. They then have a problem because the one thing that believers rejoice in is the word of God above everything else. If you were to ask us whether we would like to study the Bible or go to a sports thing, we would say a Bible study. If you were to ask me if I would like to go to a place in which there might be a possibility of a financial windfall or a Bible study, I would say a Bible study. The question is: what is it that you are drawn towards? We will see in Chapter 13 that those who are His are always drawn towards the word of God. They rejoice over God's word. In Chapter 13, we see those who have been called out for specific work. What do they begin to do right away?

(Acts 13:5) “When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.”

They begin to proclaim the word of God because that is what we love.

(Acts 13:6) “When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus,”

This is copycat. He claims to be a Jewish prophet named son of Jesus.

(Acts 13:7) “who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.”

What is he seeking? “I think I would like to hear the word of God.” You can almost feel it. There is a mark here. This is probably one of God's because he is searching for the truth. This word of God is what he seems to rejoice in. He hears the message of God's love through His Son, Jesus Christ; and he feels a tug at his heart. This has to be more important than any magic trick that anybody could perform, more important than any scientific experiment that anyone could ever see. This has to be better than anything a physician could produce. So he wants to hear what Saul and Barnabas have to say.

(Acts 13:8) “But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”

(Acts 13:9) “But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him,”

(Acts 13:10) “and said, ‘You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?’”

These are stinging words! He uses the word fraud here, which seems to indicate that Simon was in this for money. No surprise. Right? Paul is saying that he was trying to thwart that which is so wonderful--the word of God, the path of life. This is the one thing that we all rejoice in. Paul was not going to let him do that.

(Acts 13:11) “‘Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time’. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him and

he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.”

(Acts 13:12) “Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.”

We saw in verse 7 that the proconsul was seeking the word of God. That is the one thing that makes us different. I cannot explain it. I do not know what made me seek. I had some friends that I grew up with who still to this day from time to time will call me. These are guys whom I knew when I was in the 3rd or 4th grade. As I talk to them, I can hear the blank when I start talking about the Lord. It is as if they do not know what I am talking about. Yet, they were in the same church. They went to the same meetings, but there is no love for God's word. At the end of the conversation they say, “Okay. I have to go. Talk to you later.” It does not take long. All I have to do is start talking about the Lord and bringing in the word of God, and the conversation is basically over. However, there are

some who believe. What is Sergius Paulus amazed about? Magic tricks? No, he is amazed at the word of God. That is what amazes him. That is what amazes me. I never grow tired of the word of God. It is amazing. I like watching certain television shows, but soon I start yawning.

Nowadays, most shows that I like put me to sleep. I will forget most of them shortly after watching, but I will tell you that the word of God will stir my heart. It moves my heart, and I cannot stop thinking about it.

(Acts 13:13) “Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.”

This passage is not going into the argument that Paul and Barnabas have over John although it does interject this in the passage. Remember in verse 5, it interjects that they took John along with them. This is John Mark who writes the Gospel of Mark. If you back up, it reads this way,

(Acts 13:2) “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Do you see John mentioned in the verse? John is not named there. But it says in verse 5 that they also had John as their helper. John is not called by the Holy Spirit. John will not last. Why will John not last on this trip? Because John was not called to go on this trip. What Scripture is going to reveal to us is that the calling of God and the moving of God upon a life guarantees an endurance. But if you do not have the call upon you, do not even try. You will not make it. Note that John will ultimately get right with God, and God will use him greatly. But the text wants us to see the power of God's calling. The same is true with salvation. When God calls you to salvation, if it is truly God who calls you, the evidence is that you remain firm until the end. Scripture says this. John was called for a different purpose, not for a mission trip. He was not called for this trip. If the Holy Spirit had called him for the trip,

then the Holy Spirit would have said, “Set John apart for me.” When John matured, then he was called but for something else. I think this is a good reminder that often, though somebody else is called, it does not necessarily mean that we are. It is important that we do not hop into realms where we were never meant to be. Scripture will reveal the necessity of God doing the orchestrating rather than our jumping in where we do not need to be.

(Acts 13:14) “But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.”

Of course, Paul will go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Jews are meeting at the synagogue. This is the place where the Old Testament is opened up, and he is invited to explain to them the texts they read. His goal is always to preach the word of God and more specifically to preach the Gospel of Christ. That will be his focus. He will take them from what they know to the place of Christ as the answer. He tells them that Christ is the fulfillment of all

the prophecy, of all the things that they have been reading in the synagogue every Sabbath. It is about Jesus. He begins this way as he talks about how God chose our fathers. Here is the word chosen again. His point is that God chose them for a purpose. What is the purpose that God has chosen the people of Israel, the fathers of Israel for? He chose them to display His faithfulness to His promise. The best way to put it is found in Romans 15 verse 8.

(Romans 15:8) “For I say that Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,”

God chose the Jews to confirm the promises given to His people. The way he starts off is

(Acts 13:17) “The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.”

Why did he make them great? Because they were a great people? No. Deuteronomy says in Chapter 7 verses 7-11 that they were not the greatest. They were smallest. They were the most insignificant. But God chose them that He might be revealed in His glory. He was the one who rescued them. Paul later says that God is faithful even to an obstinate people. If you wanted to prove that you are a faithful person, more faithful than anybody else, who would you choose to demonstrate that? Show me somebody who is really unfaithful and then be faithful to that person. You would then be considered a very faithful person. That is what God does. In fact, He turns to Israel and says, "The Gentiles are better than you are." (Acts 13:46, 18:6, 28:28; Romans 10:19-20) So God chooses Paul for this purpose that he might demonstrate His fidelity, that He might demonstrate His promises. He will keep His promises no matter what the people do. He has called them for this purpose. This will be emphasized in the text. Look at Verse Eighteen:

(Acts 13:18) “For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.”

“God put up with them.” Do you see that phrase? He put up with them because they were so wonderful? No. He put up with them because He is faithful and He fulfills His promises to them. He destroyed seven nations so that they might go into the promised land. Was it because they were godly people? No. He had to give them judges because every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)

(Acts 13:20) “After these things, He gave them judges until Samuel, the prophet.”

(Acts 13:21) “Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.”

In First Samuel 8:10-18, Samuel tells them why they should not want a king. He will take your money. He will take your family. You do not want a king. But they insisted that they did want a king. They wanted to be like

everybody else. So God gave them a king. They were a capricious people. What did God give them? A capricious king. They were also very superficial. But then God, because of His grace, raised up another king to prove His faithfulness once again. God raised up David for this purpose. Paul emphasizes that the nation of Israel was raised up for a purpose. David was raised up for a purpose. Paul goes on to say that John the Baptist was raised up for a purpose. Paul will stress that it was all to point to Christ. It was all for the message. In other words, no matter how great these individuals may have been, they were secondary to the message. This is a key point in Chapter Thirteen. Everything is secondary to the message. Everything. You, me, everything. The message is superior. What is the message? Jesus Christ saves. He is our hope. Everything is inferior to this.

(Acts 13:22) “After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified

and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'"

(Acts 13:23) "From the descendants of this man, according to the promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,"

Why did He raise up the people of Israel? So that He might demonstrate His faithfulness to His promise. He made a promise to Abraham. He will fulfill it. It does not matter what they do. God will fulfill it in spite of their waywardness.

(Acts 13:24) "after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."

(Acts 13:25) "And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you supposed that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'"

John was called for a purpose, too. Right? He had to complete his course. Do you see the text there? He said,

“Do you suppose I am the guy? I am not the guy. He is the guy. I am not worthy.” John was indicating that, as great as they perceived him to be, he was secondary. “I am not the point. He is the point.” The Gospel is the point. John said, I am not even worthy to untie His sandals, the sandals on His feet.

(Acts 13:26) “Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.”

What is primary? The word. All of this has been about the word from calling out a nation through calling Abraham, then David and John the Baptist. What has this all been about? The word of God. He begins to talk about the fact that they did not recognize this. Here, the message is clear. It was all for the message, and yet there were certain people who did not recognize it. How could they be so immersed in the events and yet be so clueless? This is an interesting question. They are part of the lineage that has all these truths. They celebrate it every Sabbath.

Their feasts are all about it. But they have still missed it. They did not recognize the purpose of all this.

(Acts 13:27) “For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.”

Paul said, “God used you to condemn Him to death which was part of the fulfillment of His prophecy. God used you for this purpose. God raised you up for this purpose.” I am reminded of Romans chapter 9 where it tells us that God raised up not only His people for the sake of rescuing them from Egypt, but He raised up pharaoh that he might demonstrate His power. Pharaoh stood against God and all that He stands for. Every time he goes against God, God is more glorified because pharaoh reveals his weakness. God reveals that this pharaoh cannot win. God is demonstrating His power through pharaoh’s actions. The point is that we are chosen for a particular work. Paul continues by talking about Pilate. Pilate found no ground

for putting Christ to death; yet he still executed Him. He was obviously chosen for that particular purpose.

(Acts 13:29) “When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.”

None of this was a mistake.

(Acts 13:30) “But God raised Him from the dead;”

Everything is right on schedule.

(Acts 13:31) “and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.”

(Acts 13:32) “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers,”

We preach good news. We preach the Gospel. We focus on this promise that was made to our fathers. It was all about the promise. It was all about the good news. It has always, always been about that. That has always been the focus.

(Acts 13:33) “that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten you.’”

If it had been David who fulfilled the promise, then David would not have undergone decay. But they buried David. He had written this prophecy in the Psalm saying that the Holy One would not undergo decay. So obviously David was not the fulfillment of the prophecy, but Jesus is. Paul reveals this within the passage.

(Acts 13:38) “Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,”

There is the message once again.

(Acts 13:39) “and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.”

We are all freed from the indictment of the law of Moses.

(Acts 13:40) “Therefore, take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:”

What is the thing that was spoken of in the Prophets? The fact that some will never believe. It does not matter how much proof, how much evidence, they are given.

(Acts 13:41) “Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; for I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.”

He said, “Beware that you do not become one of those.” There are those who are chosen for that purpose in order to reveal the obstinance of men who will never believe. Those who are not believers are scoffers. They perceive this Gospel as insignificant. They perceive this Gospel as not anything to really gravitate towards and ultimately is something to be repulsed. They cannot perceive it as being valuable. But to all who believe, it is the most valuable thing we have ever heard. It is the grandest thing we have ever heard. The world seems so taken back by

the fact that we get so excited about it. “We are going to church.” “What is wrong with you?” There is something wrong with you.

(Acts 13:42) “As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.”

They wanted to hear more about this. What is interesting is that within the same group, there are some who want them to leave and others who want them to stay. How strange that is. Who are these people? Scripture would say that these are the chosen. These are the ones appointed to eternal life. Watch them. Watch how their eyes sparkle when Paul starts talking about everlasting life through Jesus Christ. Watch them. God says, “Those are mine. Watch how their ears perk up. Watch how the sheep come to their shepherd. Let me reemphasize that these are people who have many things drawing them away very much like we do. Yet it is wonderful when you find people who respond, “These are the greatest words

of life. As the chorus goes, *‘Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life.’* I cannot get enough of them.” These people ask Paul and Barnabus to come back next week.

(Acts 13:43) “Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and the God-fearing proselytes follow Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.”

They kept following them. We need to hear more of this. Paul and Barnabus urged them to continue in the grace of God.

(Acts 13:44) “The next Sabbath, nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.”

Nearly the whole city assembled for what purpose? How bizarre is that? Why are you assembling? It might seem normal if we are assembling because someone is giving away free hot dogs. That would be normal. Or assembling because they are showing a movie. That would be normal. But they were assembling to hear the word of God. What?

Are you nuts? Yeah. A little bit. Because they wanted to hear it again.

(Acts 13:45) “But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.”

“I do not like this. I do not like this word of God.” Then you have not been appointed.

(Acts 13:46) “Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’”

That is an interesting phrase, isn't it? They judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. How did they do that? They did not love it. It was not meaningful to them. They would rather do something else. There are other things that would draw you away. But I can tell you that those who sought the truth could not be dragged away. They will be studying the Scripture. They will be drawn to

the Scripture, and you can see they want to know more. They have to know. They simply cannot get enough.

(Acts 13:47) “For so the Lord has commanded us. ‘I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.’”

(Acts 13:48) “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

What did they hear? Once again, let's think about the things we rejoice and glorify. Do we rejoice and glorify over the fact that we led someone to the Lord? I think that is a wonderful thing, but it is strange that you will never see in Scripture where the church is celebrating how many people were led to the Lord. You will never see that. You will see them rejoicing over the word of the Lord, but you will never see them rejoicing over someone being saved. We know that Jesus said,

(Luke 15:7) “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than

over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

But the word does not emphasize that the church will rejoice over someone’s salvation. Why? Because the church rejoices over the fact that the word of God is being proclaimed to them. That is the point. We know that there will be those who are appointed and those who are not appointed. It is the church’s responsibility to proclaim the word of God. This is why we are called; this is what draws our hearts. This is what causes us to celebrate. We are so thankful that this is a place where the word of God is proclaimed. The word of the Lord will spread throughout the entire region. It is the word of God that is powerful. Let me try to explain the phrase “appointed to eternal life”, which is a truly big topic. One of the best explanations for this is that they are those who are the called of God, the “whosoever wills”. What identifies the true believer is he is the one who desires to come to God. Scripture says,

(Acts 2:21) “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Whosoever will. Who are those appointed to eternal life? Those who are gravitating towards the word of God. Scripture tells us in

(Ephesians 1:4) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

Can I fully comprehend that? No. I think one of the problems comes when man tries to comprehend the incomprehensible. Once you start trying to do that, the danger is that you start forming false doctrine. For instance, this could be my train of thought. The people who call upon the Lord are the ones whom He has chosen. I got that. The reason they choose God is because God has already called them. That is the reason they choose God. Scripture says that is bad doctrine. What does Scripture say? “Whosoever will.” Scripture says that this is one hundred per cent your choice; you have a

freewill. You said that God is the One who chooses and calls me. Therefore, I cannot take the blame for not choosing God. No. God holds you responsible. But man tries to figure all of this out. He rationalizes, "Okay. I received because I was called." God says, "No. You had freewill and made your own choice. That is why you received." You begin to worry about that because you do not understand. Then you go back on the other end of it and say, well, "Okay. The reason why I am appointed is God looked down the road and God saw that the pastor will choose me. He is the reason that I got appointed." That takes away God's sovereignty. If you say that God chooses based on what I will do, then who really is in control? What you must do is to say, "Okay, a 100% free-will, a 100% appointment and choosing, and I simply do not comprehend that. One person put it in the category of looking farther down a railroad track. As you look, those two tracks appear to come together. That is the way fundamental doctrine and eternity compare. It all comes together. When you look at it here in this world, they are a

wide distance apart. They seemingly will never come together. We know that if God is doing the work, it is an impossible work. I have often said, “If you can understand how God operates, He would not be God. Our faith is in Him. Scripture will have this dissonance. It will have this juxtaposition of seemingly opposites; paradoxes we call them. Every major doctrine is a paradox. Right? Is God three, or is He one? Yes to both. Every major doctrine is a paradox. As we come to having a free will or being chosen by God, the answer is yes. What is wonderful about it is that God never tries to excuse either side. John says, (John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”

Scripture is not concerned whether or not you comprehend this. The reason why I say that is that

(Romans 10:17) “So faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.”

According to Hebrews chapter 11 verse 1, we believe in things that we do not see. Paul will emphasize that as well. The emphasis, of course, is that our whole belief system is based on faith. If you are saying to yourself, “I cannot see that,” if this is disconcerting to you, then you are not walking by faith. That is one of the reasons why Paul throws in this monkey wrench. Romans chapter 9 talks about Jacob whom God loved, but he hated Esau. He throws that monkey wrench in because his emphasis in the book of Romans is that the just will live by faith. God will test your faith. If you think that this is not fair, that you cannot understand it, Paul says that you are not walking by faith. Faith is fully convinced that whatever God is doing is best. God does a lot of stuff that I do not understand, and I am good with that. I liken it to the kid going on a trip with his parents. As they travel, the kid does not ask if Dad has looked at a map. He does not question his parents. He is in the back seat with a video game or toy. Why is he not worried, you might ask. “Are you not worried that your dad does not know where he is

going? Do you know what road he will take? Do you even know what I-95 is?” No. He does not know any of these things. He does not need to know. I think that really is the key.

(Acts 13:50) “But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.”

Up to this point, there are multiple things that the church is having to deal with. However, there are two things that keep poking up their ugly heads in the church. One is magicians, and the other is money. These two things will keep trying to infiltrate the church. Remember Ananias and Sapphira’s money. You will have that problem. In Chapter 13, money is again a problem. Who are the problems? Where is the problem? What is the source of the problem? The Jews were aroused, and they aroused who? The devout women of prominence and the leading

men of the city. What do these people represent? Money and power. Look at chapter 17,

(Acts 17:5) “But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar...”

Where do the wicked men come from? The marketplace. Money and power. Paul will be persecuted in Acts chapter 19.

(Acts 19:23) “About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.”

(Acts 19:24) “For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen;”

(Acts 19:25) “these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, ‘Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.’”

What are they saying about Paul in Ephesus? He is destroying their business. He is messing up their business.

This is the one place where people draw the line. Do not mess with my money. They were making idols. It was bad for business. For a while, I think the churches were hated by those who were making booze because they were bad for business. There are multiple things even today where I think the church is bad for business. We will tell you to do certain things that could be bad for business. However, causing trouble for business is not where our heart is. Our heart is that the word of God is being proclaimed, and in this we rejoice. The world is rejoicing over other things. It is that destructive mindset towards the word of God that identifies them as being unworthy. There is this need to seek the truth that has been implanted in my soul. I gravitate toward it. I cannot explain it, but I want to know more about this truth. Greg and I were talking this morning. I said, "In school, it was a contest to me to not read a book. That was one of my main goals. Can I make it through high school and never read a book? I was pretty successful at it. But something took hold of my heart that said there is a Book worth reading." I think much of my

frustration in school was that so many of the books were not worth reading. Some of it was I plain lazy, and I wanted to be somewhere else. I will give you that. But God can change your heart and cause you to want to do something that you never thought you would ever want to do. I never thought I would be a bookworm. I never thought I would want to investigate the things of Scripture. The last thing on my mind was reading a book. I cannot overemphasize that. Skipping school. Yes. Going surfing. Yes. Reading a book. No, it was not one of them. But God appoints you to hear this message. When it grabs your heart, you come. It is almost like you are hypnotized by it. You are drawn to it. You declare, "This is the most important thing in my life." You start dropping everything else. I remember when I went to Biola University and told Connie, "I cannot take my surfboard. If I take my surfboard, I will go surfing. I will not take it." I was there for five years at Biola. I realized that some things are worth giving up, and I also realized that some things could draw me away. I realized that I could not take my

surfboard because the temptation would be too great. The draw to read and study the Scriptures was so great that it did not matter anymore. The one thing that was all consuming to me at one time no longer matters anymore. How can that happen? How powerful is the word of God? In this passage, you see Sergius Paulus who decides that he is tired of entertainment. He was looking for something more. Next you see these people in the city who want Paul and Barnabus to tell them more while others were saying, “No, you are messing up our whole way of life. They care only about what they want. God begins to call those who are His. Why is the word of God so divisive? In the sense that it is sharper than any two-edged sword, it comes in and not only separates things in our own hearts, but it separates the true from the false. One thing about the truth is that when you start preaching the Gospel, before long those who are not interested will go away. Those who are interested will not let go of you. They keep hanging on. You cannot shake them off. That is how powerful the word of God is. As a young pastor, one of the

commitments that I made was that I would talk about the word of God. If people do not want to hear the word of God, then they will not last long. Frankly, we have had a lot of people who did not last very long. That is okay. I do not know what they believe. It does not seem that they believe that the word is valuable. When you and I come together and embrace this, we are saying that this is more valuable than anything else. The passage ends this way:

(Acts 13:51) “But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.”

(Acts 13:52) “And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Why do you think they were filled with joy? Because they have yet another place to preach. I will study as hard if there are two of you here as I would if there were 2,000 because I do not preach for you. The Spirit of God compels me. I have to say something. I do not like speaking. But when I get into the word of God, I have to tell somebody. Do you know what I was reading? If there

is a little bug out there, I will tell the bug. They look a little funny at me, but I do not want to guess. The key point to this passage is that we are discerned to be open to God by our interest in His word. This chapter emphasizes more than anything else that Christians are discerned by their joy in the word. You see that peppered throughout the chapter. You have to ask yourself, “Where is my joy?”

Prayer

Father, we thank You for the Book of Acts and the foundation that has been established with the church. We clearly see in this chapter how the foundation of identifying believers is seen. For we are those who rejoice over the word of God more than anything else. It is that which we gravitate towards. It is that which we long for. It is that which we want to hear. Everything else pales to it. Father, we thank You for Your Spirit whom You have implanted within our hearts. We cannot take credit for it, but clearly it is an act of divine efficacious work. We give You thanks in Jesus’ name. Amen.