

“REJOICE IN THE LORD”

Acts 13:42-52

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INTRODUCTION

Rejoice in the Lord! Get excited about what you have in the Lord! (v. 52)

If you had never heard the gospel, and you just heard it for the first time, how thrilled and excited would you be with the message of forgiveness and new life in Christ?

Yes, we face problems and sometimes even opposition to our faith in Christ, but **no one or nothing can ever take away the glorious salvation we have in the Lord!**

Twice in this passage we are told about the joy of the new believers.

REJOICE AND GLORIFY THE WORD OF THE LORD.

Today, please remember your “PJ’s”:

- I. Pleading and Persuading (42-43)
- II. Jealousy (44-45)
- III. Judgment (46-47)
- IV. Joy (48-49)
- V. Persecution (50-51)

I. PLEADING AND PERSUADING (42-43)

When God is at work, we don’t have to beg for them to listen; they will beg for us to give them more!

A. Pleading with the Preachers (42)

- How was it when you first came to Christ—could you get enough?
- If you don’t have such a hunger—check your relationship with God!
- We need to give the message of Christ with passion and power—through the Spirit.
- Prayer from God’s people is a key factor!

B. Persuading Christ’s new Followers (43)

1. New “converts” (Jews and Gentiles) following the preachers

2. The preachers were “persuading” them to “continue in the grace of God”.

He saw evidence of God’s work in their lives—and urged them to continue responding to the work of that grace-in baptism, discipleship, continued fellowship with other believers, adherence to Bible teaching and preaching.

Don’t be like the rocky soil hearers of the Word!

But, the enemy is not happy about this! He stirs up his “helpers”—religious fanatics.

II. JEALOUSY (44-45)

A. Amazing success of the Gospel

Note why people came: **Not for a rock concert; not for a spectacular promotional scheme—THEY CAME TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.**

B. Awful jealousy of the rejecters of the gospel

- The influence of the visiting preachers had more success than they had had.
 - They did not want to lose their control over and financial benefits from these people. [*Compare crowds gathered to hear Wesley and Whitefield.*]
 - Compare this with the joy of believers in v. 52, and with the reaction of Jewish authorities earlier against Peter’s preaching (5:17)
 - The leaders at Jerusalem had rejected these preachers—why should they tolerate them?
 - Paul’s comments about the “Law” v. 39 would have been somewhat offensive.
 - Paul’s direct approach to “God-fearers” without requiring circumcision for forgiveness was abhorrent to Jews.
 - Paul was a “soul poacher”!
1. They “contradicted” the preachers –cf. 28:19, 22—same situation and similar result.
 2. They “blasphemed”—speak of God and divine things in irreverent way; blaspheme—likely of Jesus’ name.

But, these men of God would do whatever they could to prevent a hindrance to the influence of the Gospel message: therefore, they spoke out boldly against the opposition of the Jewish leaders.

III. JUDGMENT (46-47)

- A. Boldness of Speech—through the Holy Spirit. The Gospel was at stake—they won’t back down.
- B. “To the Jew first”—by divine ordinance (1:8; and Peter in 3:26; Rom. 1:16)
 - “It was necessary”
 - To speak the Word of God.
- C. Repudiation of God’s Word—pushing it away from themselves [cf. Rom. 11:1-2: God had not pushed them away! (same verb)]
- D. Judges of themselves—**they rejected justification (v. 39)**; thus they are “unworthy of eternal life” [same as salvation in v. 47].
 - Eternal life is only found in Christ.
 - They rejected Christ in rejecting the Word of God.
 - Life is God’s free gift.
 - One become “worthy” of this by **accepting it!** (Mt. 22:8; Lk. 20:35)
- E. Turning to the Gentiles
 - Not that Jews would not be preached to again
 - This becomes the pattern in Acts.
 - This is a **very dramatic moment** (cf. 28:25-28).
- F. Fulfilling Prophecy (Is. 49:6)
 - The prophecy became a commandment to those fulfilling it! [Lord commanded us.]
 - The prophecy originally applied to the Messiah—and then to His representatives—the apostles.
 - They would bring spiritual light to the Gentiles.
 - This resulted in “salvation to the end of the earth.”
 - Paul’s commission on the Damascus road confirmed this prophecy.
 - Israel should have fulfilled this prophecy—but having rejected Christ, He does so now in His messengers.
 - **We don’t have it there yet.**

*This prophetic pronouncement of Judgment upon the disobedient Jews resulted in a great opportunity to Gentiles—who are **overjoyed** at the prospect.*

- IV. JOY (48-49)
- A. Rejoicing
 1. In the Gospel of Grace
 2. In liberty from legalism in perverted Judaism.
 - B. Glorifying God—in His **word**—this message of salvation. [Such only brought greater anger to the Jewish leaders.]
 - C. Believing: Ordained to eternal life.
 - Let's not try to soften the teaching here.
 - The human side is not emphasized—rather God's divine arrangement; the General marshals His troops.
 - God appointed the Galatians to obtain eternal life, and to that end had guided history—including this preaching of the apostle.
 - It was God's will for them to be saved. Yet man, as the Jews here, had the power to reject. Compare these same Galatians a few years later (Gal. 1:6).
 - The expression can't mean: "Those who believe were appointed."
 - Only those who were appointed unto eternal life, who were ranged on the side of eternal life, who were thus revealed as the subjects of God's grace by the stand that they took on this day for the Lord, who exercised saving faith.
 - The passage does not solve the dilemma of divine sovereignty vs. human responsibility.
 - D. Spreading the Word (49)
 - Notice—"the Word of the Lord"
 - Spread through the whole region.
 - Not just by the apostles—but by all the believers!
 - Antioch was a Roman colony and a strategic center for Gospel ministry in the region.

Now, this is good news for the Gospel; however, the enemy again does not give up easily.

- V. PERSECUTION (50-51)
- Compare II Cor. 11:24-26; II Tim. 3:11—What was it like to be an evangelist in those days?
 - This passage may sound glorious and exciting to us, but reality was not all that easy!
- A. The Jews aroused "devout women of prominence"
 - Influential and wealthy God-fearers; as today, many women had followed true religion.
 - Not a reference to their character, but to their position.
 - B. They also aroused "the leading men of the city"
 - Maybe through their wives—such is often the case.
 - Likely city officials or other unofficial "foremost" men.
 - The men were not proselytes.
 - C. They instigated a "persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district."
 - Maybe they were publicly beaten before they left the city.
 - The apostles were probably made to look like public disturbers of the peace.
 - This was a forcible expulsion of the preachers.
 - **Just a few days before they had been heroes! Such is the ministry!**
 - D. The preachers "shook off the dust from their feet"—as Jesus had told them (v. 51; Mt. 10:14).
 - All further contact was ended with these unbelieving Jewish leaders.

- A protest against the injustice; even the dust of the ground was defiling; the same as calling the persons “heathen.”
- When they came back in 14:21 and on 2nd and 3rd journeys it was only to strengthen the believers.

E. The preachers did not give up on ministry—but moved on to Iconium (80 miles to SE).

CONCLUSION

But, what happened to the Christians—the “**disciples**”—when the leaders were cast out? Surely they must have been very discouraged and felt like giving up? **NO,NO,NO!**

They were filled with joy—continually—and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Persecution did not stop them.

How excited are you about your faith and your privileges in Christ?

Look at the results of persecution up to this point:

- Acts 4:31—Filled with the Holy Spirit; spoke God’s Word with boldness.
- Acts 8:4—Went about preaching the Word.
- Acts 9:31—Edified, fear of the Lord; comfort of the Holy Spirit.
- I Thes. 1:6—Tribulation brings **JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**.
- Rom. 14:17—The Kingdom of God is **JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**.

WE ARE SUCH “WIMPS”; LET US REJOICE IN THE LORD!