

Got Joy?

Acts 13:50-52; 14:1-7



Rock Hill Baptist Church

605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Brother David Buffaloe
731-845-6104

online at bibleteacher.org

FOCAL Acts 13:50-52 (KJV) "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. {51} But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. {52} And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

FOCAL Acts 14:1-7 (KJV) "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. {2} But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. {3} Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. {4} But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. {5} And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, {6} They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: {7} And there they preached the gospel."

We have a tendency in our present age to *magnify* the present problems of the Church while at the same time ignoring that the *same problems* were in the Church of yesteryear. For instance, many say "look at the division and infighting in our local Churches. We just don't have unity anymore". Yet the same conditions existed in the

early Church as exist today. People may be *more open* about their sinning than they were long ago, but nothing has really changed. The ancient text of Scripture said it over a thousand years ago when it said:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (KJV) "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

The reason there is **no new thing under the sun** is because people haven't changed. **Neither has Satan!**

The fallen one, Satan, has been at war with God from the beginning of time. God's Church, His Beloved Bride, is on the front lines of that war - and a terrific war it is! Our ancient enemy Satan does not want Christ's Church to grow, nor to be obedient to His Great Commission. The enemy, mobilizing forces of fallen angels and fallen man, strikes at the heart of God, the Church, with every means at his disposal.

How are we, God's Rock Hill, to stand against such an onslaught? Let's see how the early Church handled the problem.

1. There Is A Real War Between Two Forces: The Force of God and the Force of the Fallen

FOCAL Acts 13:50 "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

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Though Jesus Christ our Lord had repeatedly commissioned His Church to **go into the whole world and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20)**, the early Jewish Church had resisted this Commission. A few inroads were made here and there. Philip went to the Ethiopian Eunuch (**Acts 8:27-30**), Cornelius went to Peter (**Acts 10:31-34**), but for the most part the Church remained around Jerusalem. Then the Lord led Paul to salvation on the Damascus Road (**Acts 9:9-6**) and things really started to move. God the Holy Spirit ordered that *Saul and Barnabas* be commissioned to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles (**Acts 13:1-5**) and they set out on their *first missionary journey* to Cyprus.

1 You need to know this: the devil _____ when you live your life halfheartedly for the Lord. But when you begin to do the work of God, Satan will raise his ugly head.

You need to know this: the **devil doesn't mind** when you live your life halfheartedly for the Lord. If you do no more than the minimum - occasionally go to Church, drop a dollar in the plate, say "grace" at the dinner table - the devil is delighted with you. **But when you begin to do the work of God Satan will raise his ugly head.** The

devil didn't come into the Garden of Eden on a stormy day, but came into God's House when the gardens were cultivated and Eve was looking at the forbidden fruit. The devil - nor his fallen world - want the Church to do its job. Watch the wars begin.

The spiritual nature of what Paul and Barnabas were doing - and how much the devil hated it - was evident when they got to Cyprus. As soon as they got there the Bible says:

Acts 13:8 (KJV) "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."

This is what the devil does - striving to turn the Church from accomplishing its goal of preaching the precious Cross of Christ. After Cyprus Paul and Barnabas head to Antioch of Pisidia (**Acts 13:14**), and at the next Sabbath they head toward the local Synagogue or Jewish worship services. Now we come to our focal verses. We read:

FOCAL Acts 13:50a (KJV) "But the Jews stirred up¹ the devout² and honorable³ women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. ..."

The first three words "**But the Jews**" emphasizes who was causing the problem in God's newly formed Church. These Jews *were not* believers - we can see that when we

- 1 Aorist Active Indicative parotruno {pronounced par-ot-roo'-no}, to incite (a riot), to inflame, stir up
- 2 Present Middle Participle sebomai {pronounced seb'-om-ahee}, *those habitually worshipping*
- 3 euschemon {pronounced yoo-skhay'-mone}, beautiful, honorable, elegant

see what these Jews were doing. They **stirred up** the people against the Apostles. These Jews, outwardly righteous, were inwardly yet unbelieving, carnal, and worldly. They *incited a riot* against God's Apostles.

When we read this text we have the tendency to say "*those hateful Jews! look what they did to God's men!*". It is true that the unbelieving Jews incited a riot against Paul and Barnabas. It is true that they actually enticed *righteous people* - our text says that *women who were dedicated to worshipping God* joined in the riot. It is true that *key or important businessmen* in the city joined in, bringing financial pressure against these two Apostles. But this was not the force behind these attacks. The Apostle Paul, writing under inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, wrote:

Ephesians 6:11-12 (KJV) "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Beloved, that which drives the attacks on God's people is not flesh and blood, but it is **devilish, principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness**. In

2 Beloved, that which drives the attacks on God's people is **not _____**, but it is **devilish, principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness**.

America we are so *material driven* that we can barely see spiritual truths, but pray that God will open our eyes

while there is time. That **fallen angel** attacked God's Apostles at Cyprus, and now at Antioch. He stirred up people so much that God's men were literally, the text tells us, **expelled ... out of their coasts.**

2. In This Spiritual Conflict It Is Normal To Expect Attack

The Apostles next go to **Iconium**. Did they have no trouble there? What do you think?

FOCAL Acts 14:1-2 (KJV) "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. {2} But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Beloved, I want you to know there is a war going on, a war for the souls of men. The devil stands on one side, and God on the other.

And the devil does not want Christ's Church to succeed. He does not want *any Church that belongs to Christ* to be a focused light of salvation. He doesn't mind if we become an *entertainment station*, or a *feeding station*, or a *singing station*, or a *playing station*. But when the main mission of the Church is pursued, to **go into the world and preach the Gospel, to equip the saints to fulfill this Divinely ordained function** - well, the devil just isn't having that. When you're off target he doesn't care, but get on target and the devil gets downright *upset!*

3 The _____ does not want Christ's Church to succeed. He does not want *any Church that belongs to Christ* to be a focused light of salvation. He doesn't mind if we become an *entertainment station*, or a *feeding station*, or a *singing station*, or a *playing station*. But when the main mission of the Church is pursued, to **go into the world and preach the Gospel, to equip the saints to fulfill this Divinely ordained function** - well, the devil just isn't having that!

So Paul and Barnabas are *expelled* from Cyprus, and now they're under attack in Iconium. Doesn't God care? Of course He does!

In the book "We Were Soldiers Once, and Young" Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore (Ret.) told his young troops that "*it is normal in a war to expect the attack of the enemy*" (and I paraphrase this). It is normal to expect the enemy of the Church, the fallen one, to attack God's Church when it begins to move forward. Our **General Jesus Christ** warned us of the same thing long ago. The mind of the world and the mind of God are naturally *at war with one another*. It's the way it is, and the way things will always be. Jesus said:

John 15:18-20 (KJV) "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. {19} If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. {20} Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

"**The servant is not greater than his Lord**". If the unbelieving world hated and pursued Jesus, attacking Him from the very beginning, it will certainly hate and despise those who follow His leading. Why does the world hate us? Because the world's master, the fallen one, hates anything that promotes salvation of the soul. He hates the Cross of Christ with a passion! He hates the Grace of God, and the fact that **God so loved the world.**

When God's Israel began to preach a *works based salvation* rather than *faith alone in Christ alone*, **God's love intervened with the Cross**. When the early Church failed to reach out to the Gentiles (that's all non-Jews, by the way) with that marvelous Gospel of salvation, **God's love sent Cornelius to Peter**. When the predominantly Jewish Church began to infuse the rituals of Judaism and the Mosaic Law into Christianity, **God's love saved Paul on Damascus Road**. Just as it is normal for the fallen one to cause confusion and every evil work:

4 When God's Israel began to preach a *works based salvation* rather than *faith alone in Christ alone*, _____ **intervened with the Cross**. When the early Church failed to reach out to the Gentiles (that's all non-Jews, by the way) with that marvelous Gospel of salvation, _____ **sent Cornelius to Peter**. When the predominantly Jewish Church began to infuse the rituals of Judaism and the Mosaic Law into Christianity, _____ **saved Paul on Damascus Road**.

James 3:16-17 (KJV) "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. {17} But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and

without hypocrisy."

God's way is to turn away from the shadow and turn fully to Christ, following Him in love. We stay in His truth, preaching His truth, that salvation is *freely available to all who will believe*:

Romans 3:20-25 (KJV) "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. {21} But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; {22} Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: {23} For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; {24} Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: {25} Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"

The mind of the world is *Jesus and anything else to be saved*, but the mind of God is *faith alone in Christ alone*. The mind of the world is *follow ritualism, baptisms, and feasts to be saved*, but the mind of God is *faith alone in Christ alone*. The mind of the world is *work hard and you may go to Heaven*, but the mind of God is *work hard BECAUSE you're going to Heaven*. The mind of the world is *unless you earn it, you cannot enter in*, but the mind of God is *because much has been given you freely, much is expected of you*.

3. Believers Must Do Exactly What Jesus Says For Us To Do

FOCAL Acts 13:51-52 (KJV) "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. {52} And the disciples were filled⁴ with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

What is the believer's responsibility to God in this great conflict between the fallen one and our Almighty Savior? If Paul and Barnabas were like many who profess Christ today, they would have stomped off mad. Their *feelings* would have been hurt when they were **expelled from Cyprus** and attacked in Iconium. I want you to notice what they did, though. They (1) **shook off the dust of their feet against them**, (2) they **came unto Iconium**, and (3) **were filled with joy**, and (4) **were filled ... with the Holy Ghost**. Let's look at each of these things.

(1) They **shook off the dust of their feet against them**. Now, where did they get this from? From Jesus Christ our Lord! Our Savior taught us in:

Matthew 10:14-15 (KJV) "And **whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.** {15} Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

Mark 6:11 (KJV) "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, **when ye depart thence, shake off**

⁴ Imperfect Passive Indicative pleroo {pronounced play-ro'-o}, they *kept on being filled up*

the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

Luke 9:5 (KJV) "And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, **shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.**"

When the Apostles *shook the dust off their feet* they were doing *exactly* what Jesus said do. This is important, Beloved! **In the spiritual battle we are engaged in, we fight an *overwhelming and much greater foe*. It is a battle we cannot win in our own power. We must do *exactly what our Commander Jesus said do*.** We must not do what many *liberal professors* have done in the past and say,

5 In the spiritual battle we are engaged in, we fight an _____ *foe*. It is a battle we _____ win in our own power. We must do *exactly what our Commander Jesus said do*.

"Well, Jesus didn't *really mean* this or that. He just meant to *spiritually* do this or that."

Hogwash! What the Commander says, that we must do. We must have the *Apostolic mindset* and cease telling God what we *thought He meant*. We must do what God says. Hell will be packed with people who *suppose* God meant this or that, but never do what God said. Jesus said **knock the dust off your feet *not take vengeance on them yourselves***. The Apostles did just what Jesus said! What happened next?

FOCAL Acts 13:51 (KJV) "But they ... came unto Iconium. "

(2) They **came unto Iconium**. They didn't get mad. They didn't go home. Paul and Barnabas didn't start fighting with one another, nor with their attackers. They *kept their eyes on the target*. Jesus said they would be attacked and they were. So they did what Jesus said and *kept the main thing the main thing*. They continued to follow the commands of the Master and

Mark 16:15 (KJV) "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

So we have these men doing *exactly* what Jesus said do. They didn't *read into the context* or *add or subtract* from one of His precious Words. They shook the dust off their feet instead of crying, and *continued on their mission* with single minded devotion. What was the third thing we see in this text?

FOCAL Acts 13:52 (KJV) "... And the disciples were filled⁵ with joy ... "

(3) This verse literally states in the original text *they kept on being filled with joy*. What! Cast out of Cyprus, unjustly accused, hated by those they went to lead to Christ - and *continually filled with joy*? How can this be?

Beloved, if you have not the joy of Christ in your life, then you have somehow lost sight of the Savior. When a

⁵ Imperfect Passive Indicative pleroo {pronounced play-ro'-o}, they *kept on being filled up*

believer *does what the Master says* no matter what, the joy of God bursts forth in your heart. Being persecuted while following Jesus the Apostles remembered His Words:

Matthew 5:10-12 (KJV) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. {12} Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

When a believer allows Christ to *live through him* then the full joy of salvation comes. We who believe are saved to serve Him, not ourselves. There is no joy in self service, in selfishness, in me first. The joy is in serving the Savior!

6 When a believer allows Christ to *live through him* then the _____ of salvation comes. We who believe are saved to serve Him, not ourselves. There is no joy in _____, in selfishness, in me first. The joy is in serving the Savior!

When the Wise Men - themselves Gentiles - were led of God to find where the Baby Jesus lay they started on a two year journey. When they saw His Star, the Shekinah Glory of God shining forth from His home in Bethlehem the Bible says:

Matthew 2:10 (KJV) "When they saw the star, they

rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

When the seventy disciples went out and did as Jesus commanded we read:

Luke 10:17 (KJV) "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

Beloved, you'll never have that joy until you do what He says! Joy is the property of Christ, and He gives it to those who obey Him. Paul and Barnabas served the Master *together* in love, and this unity *in Him* brought His reward of great joy. The words of Christ ring out as both an *exhortation* as well as a *condemnation* to those who will not hear:

John 15:8-12 (KJV) "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. {9} As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. {10} If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. {11} These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. {12} This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

It is the Father's Will and the Son's Will that we bear much fruit. Rebuffed by the world we must continue with our eyes on the target, glorifying Christ and preaching Him and Him alone. Finally we read:

FOCAL Acts 13:52 (KJV) "... And the disciples were filled⁶ ... with the Holy Ghost."

(4) The Apostles were not alone in their mission, but they *kept on being filled up* with the Holy Ghost. God the Holy Spirit stayed with them as they continued to follow Christ on mission.

The Apostle told the Church at Philippi:

Philippians 1:27-30 (KJV) "Only let your [way of life] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; {28} And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. {29} For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; {30} Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

Hear those words "**stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel**"? These words are addressed to the Church of every generation, Beloved of God, even unto you. The enemy wants Paul and Barnabas divided, just as he wants us divided. Refuse him that. Stand fast in love toward Jesus and toward one another. Do His will *exactly* and with the same sense of urgency that the Apostles did His will. Dear *Fanny Crosby* wrote these words to that old hymn:

⁶ Imperfect Passive Indicative pleroo {pronounced play-ro'-o}, they *kept on being filled up*

**Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.**

Refrain

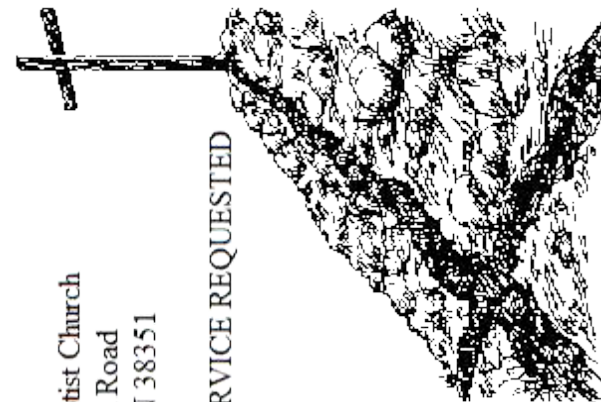
**Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.**

In the recent Southeast Asian Tsunami disaster over 158,000 people are dead, killed in the terrible wave that an undersea earthquake caused. Thousands went to death unprepared to meet their Maker. We grieve over these deaths - but what of your coworkers, your neighbors, your families, your friends? Are they in Christ? Have they heard the Gospel of salvation? When death strikes at them, will they be sheltered in the arms of God, or under judgment for forsaking His love? Are you yourself ready for His call if He calls you to Him today? What answer will you give if He asks why you should be spared eternal punishment?

If you are in Christ then God the Holy Spirit is with you as you reach outward with the Gospel call. Are you reaching outward? Are you continuing to go into Iconium for Him? Unless you are, you will never experience the full joy of salvation nor the filling of His Holy Spirit. And if you are, expect the devil to resist you with all his might. But rejoice, remembering this.

The battle is not ours, but it is the Lord's!

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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