

## WEEKEND Edition 06/07 August 2022

### “Victory in Jealousy” (Acts 13:44-52)

Good weekend to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

We've all had the experience of a scheduled interview, a time when we will be asked some questions and given the opportunity to respond. Maybe for you it was a job interview or a doctor visit or a business transaction or a court appearance or just some time with friends. *Do you remember your anxiety as you thought about what you would be asked and what you would say?*

That's where we left Paul and Barnabas yesterday as they were leaving the Synagogue in Pisidian Antioch where Paul had been invited to speak and he had begun to share the radical truth about Jesus with these Jews who had never heard this Gospel before. *When he had finished, they requested Paul return the following Sabbath day and be prepared to answer their questions and tell them more about this Jesus.* So, Paul had a week to think about it, but so did all those who had been in the Synagogue that day, and they spread the word through the city, inviting their friends to come. Luke records in Acts 13:44 that **"On the next Sabbath day almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him."** Did you notice the trigger word? **"Jealousy"**! Look back through your life my friends. *How often has 'jealousy' risen up in your world to destroy relationships or breed mistrust or produce anger or even launch an attack on someone?* **Jealousy** can tear apart business partnerships and marriages and even churches, isn't that true?

What caused the **jealousy** here among Jewish leaders in the city of Pisidian Antioch? One word... **Popularity!** A very large crowd had gathered with great anticipation to listen to Paul. The local Rabbi's and other Jewish leaders had never experienced such crowds hungry to hear what they had to say... **jealousy!** But do you know **jealousy** is like cancer? *It destroys health and spreads very rapidly.*

In Pisidian Antioch, on this Sabbath day, a day when all Jews were supposed to be especially loving and unified in their thankfulness to God... jealous Jewish leaders couldn't stand by and do nothing, their **jealousy** drove them to react to the crowds gathering for Paul. So, they contradicted Paul, they opposed Paul, they called Paul a liar and refuted the things he said. But it wasn't enough, so they began attacking his character and making all sorts of accusations against him as they tried to stir the crowd up against Paul. Can you see the shouting match happening and the crowd of people caught between Paul and Barnabas on one side of the crowd and local Jewish leaders on the other side?

Paul paused in his message about Jesus. What should they do? Shout louder, get angry, or be quiet and leave? The record in Acts 13:46 says ***"Then Paul and Barnabas answered the Jewish leaders boldly, 'We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord Jesus has commanded us:***

***'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'*** (Acts 13:46,47) Oh my! I doubt any of us can imagine the shockwaves which rippled through the crowd and pierced the hearts of those Jewish leaders as these words penetrated their minds!

A few years before this Paul had been a Pharisee, perhaps one of the most zealous, learned, passionate young Pharisees. By his years of study and his determination to be the best possible Pharisee, Paul would have done everything he could to AVOID any contact with Gentiles. His entire world would have been focused on Jews, Judaism, the Jewish laws, the Temple and everything Jewish. He would have had no time for anything other than Jewish.

But in the perhaps seven years or so since Paul's Damascus Road encounter with the risen Jesus Christ, Paul had become a man totally changed by Jesus, now His Messiah, and by the continuous teaching of the Holy Spirit in his heart. *This Paul was not at all like the man he used to be Saul the Pharisee.* Paul had been commissioned by Jesus Himself, to take His Gospel message of new life available in Jesus, to Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire!! *Paul had experienced a total, radical transformation of his life!*

For the Jews and their Rabbi's listening to Paul that day, their minds would have felt a profound confusion for they simply could not imagine God cared in the least for Gentiles, much less that Jesus would have died for the forgiveness of Gentile sins! *Dr. Luke tells us there was a dramatic and diverse response to Paul's statement.* Acts 13:48 says: ***"When the Gentiles heard this from Paul, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region of Pisidian Antioch."*** We might call this revival or perhaps a spiritual awakening but whatever words we use, *clearly a great movement of the Holy Spirit of God was happening among Gentiles as they accepted and responded to the Gospel message of Jesus* as expressed by Jewish, Pharisee Paul, the apostle whom God had sent to the Gentiles!

But it was quite a different response among the Jews. Do you see what Luke writes in Acts 13:50? ***"But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of Pisidian Antioch. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas. So, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet as a warning to these Jews and they went to the next city, Iconium."*** What happened here my friends? **Jealousy** had thrown the town of Pisidian Antioch into an uproar and called everyone to choose sides.

*Not only was it a spiritual decision regarding who the people would believe Jesus really is and what His crucifixion and resurrection achieved, but it had become another line of demarcation between Jews and Gentiles in this city.*

I'm fascinated by what happened next. *Paul and Barnabas chose to leave the town of Pisidian Antioch rather than fight! I believe the Holy Spirit gave them great wisdom and clear direction.* They had planted the seeds of the Gospel truth about Jesus through their speaking on two separate Sabbath days. Lots of people had heard them and been thinking deeply about what they had said. **What this city needed now was TIME not a BRAWL.** The brawl would have pit friends and family members against each other and could have caused very deep rifts in relationships which may have required years or decades to heal. *But with TIME the Holy Spirit could do his work deep in the hearts and minds of all who had heard Paul.* What work? The work of 'illumination'. You know what it is like my friends when you are hearing something new and suddenly you get it, you understand. It's like someone turned the light on and you could see something clearly... that's illumination!

But the Holy Spirit was also doing what Jesus had promised, He was teaching the people radical, important truth... the truths Paul had proclaimed so clearly and powerfully. It would require the Holy Spirit working in minds and hearts all across this city, for that truth to burrow down deeply and take root, and that takes TIME! *Do you see the wisdom of Paul and Barnabas simply leaving town to give the Holy Spirit TIME to work in the hearts and minds of the people, Jews, Gentiles and leaders, in the city of Pisidian Antioch?*

Luke gives us one final, summary statement: **"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."** (Acts 13:52) Do you understand my friends? These Luke calls **"the disciples"** are NOT the 12 disciples who walked with Jesus. Two of those men are dead by now. Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3-5) and James the brother of John (Acts 12:1,2). The other 10 are now called Apostles and are busy traveling about Palestine sharing the story of Jesus. Then who are these **'disciples'** in Pisidian Antioch? Those are the people, BOTH Jew and Gentile, who trusted Paul's words to be true and have placed their full faith in Jesus as their Savior. They are now Jesus followers... **'disciples'**, learning all they can about Jesus. Luke says they **'were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit'**. What a great statement! JOY is a natural by-product of an authentic, vibrant relationship with Jesus! It's true in every part of the world, every type of person. *JOY is a work of God in EVERY redeemed, truly 'born again' person!* And **"filled with the Holy Spirit"** is the promise of God for every person who has fully trusted Jesus to be their Savior and King.

As Paul and Barnabas left Pisidian Antioch, I imagine they were not walking alone. I can see many new followers of Jesus walking alongside Paul and Barnabas for a while, thanking them for coming to their town, thanking them for the Gospel message they brought, thanking them for helping them to meet and be totally changed by Jesus!

Then eventually handshakes, hugs, and prayer together alongside the road... and then Paul & Barnabas headed toward Iconium, while these excited '**disciples of Jesus**' turned back home to start a new life, 'walking with Jesus' as Paul and Barnabas were.

May I ask... *is that a beautiful description of YOU my friends all around the world this weekend?* **"Filled with Joy and with the Holy Spirit"**? If not, can you discern why not and do you want to change? Are you willing to trust Jesus fully and invite Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit and with His Joy? Why not right now... go ahead, talk with God and invite Him to do that life transforming work in you!

Here's a wonderful new song as Charity Gayle leads a group of people in praising Jesus. If it had been written 2000 years ago, can't you imagine those new Christians walking back to Pisidian Antioch singing this song and clapping as they go? Let's join them...

**Today's Scripture is Acts 13:44-52.**