

## Fact Sheet for “Polarization” Acts 13:44-14:7

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I have found, and you have found, that the gospel has a polarizing effect on people. How should we feel about this? Consider the experiences of Paul and Barnabas. They had gone into the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (13:14), where there were gathered both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (13:16, 26, 43). There Paul clearly explained the gospel with a favorable initial reaction (13:42).

ESV <sup>44</sup> ¶ **The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup> But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.**

“But ‘when the Jews saw the crowds,’ their initial interest turned to antagonism. Not only was the synagogue being flooded with Gentiles as though it were a common theater or town hall, but even more, it became clear that Paul and Barnabas were ready to speak directly to Gentiles without first relating them in some way to Judaism.”<sup>1</sup>

“jealousy” – “zeal” (ζήλος, ze'-los) – in a bad sense, finding expression in hostility to Paul's preaching (compare 17:5).

“contradict” – literally “to speak against”

“reviling” – (blas-phe-me'-o, βλασφημέω in relation to people *revile, defame, slander*

<sup>46</sup> **And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.**

“boldly” - *freely, openly, fearlessly*

“first” – See Acts 3:26; Rom 1:16

Paul goes on to quote from Isaiah, one of the most respected prophets in the OT.

This pattern was repeated in city after city (13:45-46; 14:1-2; 17:1-5, 10-13; 18:4-6; 19:8-9).

<sup>47</sup> **For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I HAVE MADE YOU A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>48</sup> ¶ **And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.**

“as many as were appointed to eternal life believed”

NLT **Acts 13:48** all who were chosen for eternal life became believers.

The same word in the same form is used in Romans 13:1.

ESV **Romans 13:1** ¶ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

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<sup>1</sup> The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol 9, p. 429.

<sup>2</sup> Is. 49:6.

NET **Romans 13:1** instituted  
KJV **Romans 13:1** ordained  
NAU, NIV **Romans 13:1** established  
NKJ **Romans 13:1** appointed  
NLT **Romans 13:1** placed there

**<sup>50</sup> But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.**

The fact that Paul and Barnabas were persecuted did not mean that something was either wrong with their message or approach. Their message was true. The gospel has a polarizing effect.

**<sup>51</sup> But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

ESV **Matthew 10:14** And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.  
*Parallels – Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5*

Notice that “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

**<sup>14:1</sup> ¶ Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.**

Iconium was situated on a high plateau, surrounded by fertile plains, forests, and mountains to the north and east.

**<sup>2</sup> But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. <sup>3</sup> So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.**

ESV **Hebrews 2:3-4** how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

**<sup>4</sup> But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.**

This is the first time any one other than the 12 were called “apostles.”

**<sup>5</sup> When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, <sup>6</sup> they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, <sup>7</sup> and there they continued to preach the gospel.**

Paul had shared the truth of the gospel appropriately and many had believed. Many didn't and went on the attack against both Paul and Barnabas. But Paul and Barnabas didn't take this personally. The reaction of the people was based on how God had prepared his hearers ahead of time.

Be sure that your message is biblically sound. Be sure to communicate that message clearly, appropriately, and politely. When you share the gospel this way and get rejected or attacked realize that it is the effect the gospel has always had.

ESV **Matthew 5:11-12** ¶ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.