

Life Group Discussion Guide

Against All Odds: How the Name of Jesus Spreads
Week 9: Gospel Reactions • Acts 13:42–52

This week’s message is an exploration of what Pastor Jon termed, “gospel reactions.”

“The gospel does not leave those it touches the same. The gospel comes to a place and ignites all kinds of reactions. Today we’re looking at three: jealousy, persecution, and joy.”

1. Jealousy

Last week, we watched as Paul concluded his sermon to the Jews and God-fearers of Pisidian Antioch with a challenge—not to scoff at the message, but to believe it. This left us with the question, *How will they respond?*

Our answer is found in verses 42–45, which reveal that many of the people were intrigued by what Paul and Barnabas had to say, and invited them to speak again the following Sabbath. The next week, *“almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord”*—how incredible! But not everyone was happy about it.

“When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.” Acts 13:45

Pastor Jon explained that the word translated “jealousy” would be better translated as “zeal.” It means to have an intense positive interest in something. That’s what the Jews of Pisidian Antioch are feeling. They’re zealous for their own history and customs and identity, and feel defensive against this new message. Their reaction reveals something that’s still true today: the gospel threatens other ideologies, and intense zeal can come out of those who hold them.

- Can you give examples of ideologies in our culture that conflict with the gospel message?
- Have you experienced what happens when the gospel comes head-to-head with another ideology? How have you seen others react?

Pastor Jon pointed out that this gospel collision isn’t only a reality for *others*, but for us:

“You have intense zeal about some things that the gospel is going to challenge. If it’s not challenging them, you may not really be wrestling with the gospel. What’s your heart passionate about? When the gospel starts meddling with your passions, that’s when you know you’re beginning to get it. Until then, it may just be a so-called spiritual thing you do. But Jesus is not in it.”

- What are you passionate about? Have you allowed the gospel to challenge those things?
- What might it look like if you invited the gospel to meddle with your passions?
- What’s stopping you?

2. Persecution

In their jealousy, the Jews in the city started attacking Paul and Barnabas. Inevitably, there are always people who feel threatened by the gospel. That's what jealousy is: something you hold dear is threatened. As a result, persecution ensues.

- What type(s) of persecution do we fear in our culture today?
- Have you experienced persecution for the gospel? What was your response?

Pastor Jon reflected that mockery is perhaps the highest form of persecution in our country:

"Now, we could say, 'Oh, who cares! Who cares what people think?' We all do. It's why we don't talk about Jesus more freely, more frequently, more fiercely. Mockery. That's it. It's the look on people's faces. It's the atmosphere in the general public that a Christian is dumb, bigoted, conservative (which is bad). And it's the shame we feel when we perceive that's how others are viewing us. That's enough to make us silent. Silent about the Savior."

In contrast, the author of Acts tells us that Paul and Barnabas did not back down in the face of persecution. Instead, they "answered them boldly."

- Have you ever allowed mockery (or the fear of it) to silence you?
- What would it look like for you to be bold in the face of persecution?

3. Joy

Jealousy in the Jews. Persecution toward Paul and Barnabas. But for the Gentiles? Joy.

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed... And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."
Acts 13:48; 52

"Even though the opposition to the gospel is strong in this place, Luke does not want us to miss the note of Spirit-empowered joy. He wants us to know that amidst all the reactions to the gospel, the disciples are filled with joy—a joy that comes from God's Spirit, a joy that abides."

- Are you aware of the activity of God's Spirit in your life? Tell us about it.
- Do you find that He changes your desires, so that you love what God loves and hate what God hates? Share an example.
- Do you find that the Spirit deepens your assurance of God's love and your strength under trial? How have you experienced this?
- Consider this quote from Pastor Jon: *"The Spirit blows the breath of God in us and things in Scripture that were frozen and two dimensional come alive, in full color."* Do you experience God's Word this way? What has come alive to you in recent days?

Pastor Jon closed with this week's **Big Idea: The gospel ignites all kinds of reactions.**

"Church, the gospel changes everyone it touches. There will be gospel reactions wherever it goes. Some will be filled with passion against it. Others, the messengers, will be mocked. But still others, those appointed for eternal life, will be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."

- What reaction is the gospel igniting in you?