

24 May 2025

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### “Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia”

Acts 13:14-16

*[Paul and Bernabe] passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.” So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen”.*

The mission of the apostles continues. In Antioch of Pisidia they were asked to address those who had gathered in the synagogue on the Sabbath, both Israelites and other God-fearing men. Paul used the occasion to lead his listeners through the history of Israel and the prophets to the coming of Jesus, in whom the promises were fulfilled and whose resurrection he had come to announce to them (Acts 13:17-41). After Paul's speech, the account in the Acts of the Apostles continues as follows:

*“And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.’ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to*

*Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 13:43-52).

Once again, the great fruitfulness of the mission aroused the envy of certain Jews. They began to contradict and insult the apostles. Insults usually indicate the influence of evil spirits on those who utter them. For the most part, opposition to the Lord's message had taken on an ugly and malicious character. Usually it was no longer a dispute about the truth, but the hearts of the hostile Jews were poisoned by evil feelings.

Paul and Barnabas realised that they could no longer reach these hostile Jews and drew the relevant conclusion: *'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.'*

The time had come not to limit the proclamation to the Jews only. Those who were closed to the Lord's message could not pass through the door to eternal life, for they rejected the grace God offered them. The apostles could no longer stop at proclaiming the message of salvation to those stubborn hearts. They said so themselves, remembering the Lord's command: *"I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth."*

Evidently, it had now become clear to them that they were to address the Gentiles. The hostile Jews, for their part, would now have to bear the consequences of not having been open to the message of salvation.

This is also an important lesson for us who want to pass on the faith to people: if we have tried to convince certain people of the truths of the faith or have tried to pass on the gospel to them, but they are unwilling to listen, then we must turn to those who do want to receive the message. We can continue to pray and offer sacrifices for the former, but if we see that they close their hearts to the truth, it is right not to continue wasting time and energy.

Many Gentiles rejoiced to hear that they too were destined for salvation and embraced the faith. The Word of the Lord spread throughout the region.

The hostile Jews, on the other hand, gave no respite. They took advantage of their influence and incited those in authority in the city. Thus another persecution broke out and the apostles were expelled from their territory.

On this occasion, we read that the disciples shook off the dust from their feet against that city, concretely applying the words of Jesus: *“If any one will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.”* (Mt 10:14-15).

This is a very serious warning from the Lord, which in this case is directed in particular against those Jews who closed themselves off from the message of the Gospel and incited others to do the same, thereby obstructing their access to the Word of the Lord.

For their part, the apostles went on their way filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

---

**Meditation on the day's reading:** <https://en.elijamission.net/the-true-leader-of-the-mission-2/>

**Meditation on the day's Gospel:** <https://en.elijamission.net/7663-2/>