

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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## The Proper Reaction to Those Who Oppose the Gospel (Part 8) Acts 13:6-12

After Paul had exclaimed against Elymas, he smote him with blindness. Many will read this and say that Paul had something that we do not. They will use this as an excuse not to say or do anything. It is true that we do not have the power that Paul had just to speak and cause blindness to fall upon someone. The sign gifts and the power to perform miracles ceased when the apostles died and Scripture was completed. While we do not have the same ability that Paul and the other apostles had, we have something just as great as they did—the power of prayer.

Our focus should not be on what Paul did, or how Paul did it, but on the result of what he did. Paul smote Elymas with blindness to cause him to leave Sergius Paulus alone. As we have seen throughout the message, Elymas was hindering the Gospel from being preached by Paul and received by Sergius. Paul stopped Elymas from hindering the Gospel by smiting him with blindness.

Our greatest weapon against those who oppose the Gospel is prayer. We must pray that the Lord will bind the forces of Hell that are opposing the Gospel. Throughout the New Testament we are commanded to pray. In Ephesians 6, where the armor of the believer is found, prayer is mentioned in verse 18. The different parts of the armor are described in verses 13-17. Verse 18 describes how those weapons can be effectively used—through prayer. Prayer is mentioned four times in that one verse—two times with a form of the word prayer and two times with supplication. How important is prayer to the defense of the Gospel? It is absolutely essential. Five of the six pieces of armor are defensive. But they will not be used effectively

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without prayer.

In Ephesians 6:19, Paul asks the Ephesian believers to pray for him for utterance and boldness to preach the Gospel. We often hear about the armor of the believer, but rarely do we hear why we are given this armor. The armor is used in proclaiming the Gospel. It is not something that we put on and parade around in. It is to be used in battle. Sadly, most believers never get around to using the armor. They are defeated before they ever get into the battle.

But we must be mindful that the proper use of the armor is possible because we pray. The armor and the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be separated. Neither can prayer be taken away from the use of the armor or from the proclamation of the Gospel. We must be people of prayer.

How should we pray? What should we pray for? We need to pray that the obstacle to the Gospel will be hindered or even sometimes removed. When Paul smote Elymas with blindness, he then needed someone to lead him around. As I read this, it seems to me that Elymas was no longer around Sergius. The verse does not explicitly state this, but I can see in my mind that Elymas is led to his house, and Sergius is left with Paul. Sergius now is able to hear Paul proclaim the Gospel without any interruptions from Elymas.

What should we do when there are false religions around that are deceiving people and damning their souls to Hell? What should we do when they oppose the Gospel? We must pray! It is the only resource that we have, but it is the only resource we need. When Elymas was trying to prevent Sergius from hearing the Gospel, Paul saw to it that he was removed. Perhaps we need to learn from that. The false religion may not leave town, but we can pray that the influence and control of false religions will be lessened. We can pray that the sinners' eyes will be opened to the lies espoused by false religions and also opened to the truth of the Gospel.

We cannot retreat. We cannot give in. We cannot just ignore the problem. We cannot yoke together with these teachers of a false salvation. We must proclaim the truth and point out their error. We must also, like Paul, seek to remove that hindrance. We must pray, pray, pray. God will give the victory if we will rely upon Him.

Now what happened when Paul reacted like he did? We know the answer because we have read the account. We will discuss the result in just a few moments, but let us think of some excuses that we often hear. Many will say that we need to try and get along with all religions. They will say that it does no good to be antagonistic. They say you will accomplish more if you are not so negative. But Paul did not try to get along with Elymas. Paul did not accept him as a fellow preacher or as a fellow believer. Paul preached hard against him and let everyone know whose side Elymas was on. Paul made a clear line of separation from Elymas. We must do the same in our day.

Others will agree that we cannot go along with false religions of today, but they want to ignore false religions. They will not yoke together with them, but they do not preach against them either. They want to stick their head in the sand and just hope that they will go away. But that is not Scriptural either. Paul did not ignore Elymas. He confronted him. Paul preached against his error. Paul let everyone know what Elymas was doing and how terrible it was. We must do the same. We cannot ignore false religions. We must meet them head-on. We must point out their error. We must let everyone know the truth.

Will there be opposition? Yes. Will some be angry with us? Yes. You will not read much further into Acts until you find Paul being rejected, scoffed at, and even being beaten, etc., because of his preaching. But Paul was willing to pay the price so that the truth would be known and error exposed. We should be willing to pay that same price.

But what happened on this occasion? Consider now **The Result**

**of the Preaching.** After the opposition is exposed and exits the scene, verse 12 says, *“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed.”* We see here The Acceptance. Sergius Paulus was saved by the wonderful, marvelous grace of God! There could be no greater ending to this account. Satan tried to do all that he could to stop Sergius from believing, but Satan was defeated. Elymas, the child of the devil, used all of his tactics to deceive and persuade Sergius, but Sergius believed the Gospel and became a child of God. Hallelujah! A sinner is now saved. One who was a child of the devil is now a child of God. One who was on his way to Hell is now on his way to Heaven. The deputy of the country is now a citizen of Heaven. Praise be to God!

But I cannot go any further until we think about the clause found in between the words deputy and believed. Notice again verse 12. It says, *“When he saw what was done.”* What had he seen? He had seen Paul and Barnabas preach the Word (v. 7). He had seen Elymas try to hinder the preaching of the Gospel (v. 8). He had seen Paul stand up to Elymas, declare who Elymas was working for, and what Elymas was really trying to do (vv. 9-11). He then had seen Paul stop this opposition by smiting Elymas with blindness (v. 11). It was upon seeing all of this that Sergius Paulus believed. Some may disagree, but I believe that Sergius Paulus was converted because Paul reacted properly to one who opposed the Gospel. If Paul had tried to reason with Elymas, or if he had said that Elymas was not so bad and did not mean any real harm, or if Paul had ignored what was going on, Sergius Paulus would not have believed.

Is it important to take a strong stand against those who oppose the Gospel? Let me answer that question with some other questions. Do the souls of men matter? Do you care if they follow false religions that will damn them for eternity? Yes, souls do matter. Yes, we should care that people are following false religions. Therefore, we **must** take a strong stand against those who oppose the Gospel. Paul did. We can do no less!

The second result of the preaching is The Amazement. Verse 12 concludes with “*being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.*” The word astonished is used of the glad amazement of wondering people. The word doctrine means teaching. Sergius Paulus was amazed at what he heard. We can only speculate as to exactly what doctrine astonished Sergius, but I do not think it would be a far stretch to say that he was amazed that God would love him. Sergius was a sinner and deserved the judgment of God, but God loved him. That is astonishing! That is amazing! God—holy, pure, and righteous—loves me—a sinner deserving of Hell. Sergius heard that Jesus suffered and died on the cross, not for his own sin, but He died for Sergius. That is astonishing! As Charles Wesley wrote, “Amazing love! how can it be That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

Was it worth it to stand up and expose error? Sergius believed. Yes, it was worth the price, and it will be today. May God the Holy Ghost so fill us that we will have the proper reaction to those who oppose the Gospel.