

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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## The Proper Reaction to Those who Oppose the Gospel (Part 1) Acts 13:6-12

As we read through the New Testament, a clause is repeated several times. It is the clause "*filled with the Holy Ghost.*" I have preached and written on that great subject. Now I want to look at it a little more in depth. Upon finding those times that the clause occurs, it is interesting to note when the Holy Ghost would use that clause. Without a doubt in my mind, the apostles were continuously and repeatedly filled with the Holy Ghost. They were living the way Paul would command us to live in Ephesians 5:18. I believe that it would not be a far stretch to say that every time the church or a saved individual is mentioned in Acts, they are filled with the Holy Ghost. That is what enabled them to accomplish what Jesus had told them to do in preaching the Gospel around the world. It is also a fulfillment of what Jesus had said would happen in John 20:22 and Acts 1:8. But we must focus on the clause as it is recorded in Scripture. The clause is found 6 times in the book of Acts. Three of those times, it describes the church. The other three times, it describes individuals—one time of Peter and two times of Paul. The second instance where Paul is said to be "*filled with the Holy Ghost*" is where we turn our attention.

Before we focus on Acts 13, allow me to cover three ideas as an introduction to this subject. Since we are looking at an episode in the life of Paul, the first introductory point is a **Survey of Paul's Life**. The ages that I will give are debated by Bible scholars. However, though the exact time is debatable, the ages will fall within a year or two of what I will give. I list these so we can have a better understanding of Paul's life. It will also provoke a thought or two to consider after we have given the list. Here is the survey:

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1. Conversion—34 years of age (Acts 9:1-8)
2. Time in Damascus after conversion—34 years of age (Acts 9:19-25)
3. Time in Arabia—34-36 years of age (Galatians 1:17)
4. Ministry in Damascus—36 years of age (Galatians 1:17)
5. First visit to Jerusalem—37 years of age (Galatians 1:18; Acts 9:26-29)
6. Ministry in Tarsus—37-42 years of age (Acts 9:30)
7. Ministry with Barnabas in Antioch—42-43 years of age (Acts 11:25-26)
8. Second visit to Jerusalem—45 years of age (Acts 11:27-30)
9. First missionary journey—48 years of age (Acts 13:1-14:28)

Notice that Paul did not immediately enter into the missionary activity that we all know so much about. There was a time of training. Many young men, who have been called to preach, want to immediately ascend to a place of prominence. They see some men who are at the top, so to speak, and they want to be there with them. But they have not seen, nor have they heard about, the time of preparation that those men endured. Sometimes it involves a time of preparation in man's school; other times it involves a time of preparation in God's school. Many young men have quit the ministry because they have found themselves unprepared to handle situations with which they are confronted. Often those who quit have tried to bypass a preparation time. Paul was called to preach at the moment that he was saved, and he began preaching almost from the time of his conversion. His conversion took place in Acts 9:1-8. He is preaching in Acts 9:20. There is just a few days (described as "certain days" in Acts 9:19) between the two. But his special ministry of traveling the world and preaching was not yet to begin.

As we can see in the survey, Paul spent a few years in Arabia. It is thought by many that this is the time when Paul was taught by Jesus Himself. To put it in modern day terminology, Paul went to "Bible college." He had the greatest of all teachers—Jesus. Many scoff at the suggestion that they go to school. Some will say, "God

called me to preach; not to study.” But may I say that a call to preach is a call to study. You will not be a preacher of any quality if you do not learn how to study. You may not spend time in a school, but you must learn from someone. There are times that I wonder if time spent in a school is the best preparation. Perhaps it would be best if a young man who feels called to pastor a church spent some time, maybe years, working with a pastor. The pastor could teach him how to prepare messages and also how to pastor. Instead of going to school and then getting into a position at a church, why not skip the school and learn directly what one needs to know from a pastor, preferably the one under whom he was saved and called to preach. If one feels called to evangelism, he could labor and train with an evangelist. If one feels called to mission work, he could labor and train with a missionary. Regardless of how the training is done, whether in school or individually, we can learn from Paul that there must be a time of preparation.

From the time of Paul’s conversion at 34 to the commencement of his first missionary journey at 48, there is a period of 14 years. God told Ananias in Acts 9:15-16 that Paul would take the Gospel to the Gentiles and stand before kings. Whether Paul was ever told this, I do not know. But God knew what He wanted Paul to do. And before Paul was ready to accomplish this task, God had to prepare him for that task. I cannot say it enough. There must be preparation for the ministry.

But I must move on to another lesson that we can learn from this survey. When I see this survey, I see that we must learn patience. If Paul did know what God had told Ananias, he had to learn that God’s timing is always right. If he did know what God had said, he may have wondered during that 14 year period when he would begin to do what God had called him to do. Somewhere in that time period, he learned patience. We must learn the same.

Oftentimes, I wondered when God would allow me to begin the ministry that I felt that He had called me into. To be honest, I was

often impatient and failed to learn what I should have learned. But as I look back, I see that there had to be a time of preparation. I did not know it and did not understand it at the time, but God was preparing me for this ministry. I had to learn to be patient with God and wait for His perfect time. If God has called you into the ministry, learn with David to wait “*patiently for the LORD.*” God knows what He is doing, and God always does everything right. Learn to be patient while undergoing preparation.

Consider also the **Sending of Paul**. In Acts 14:1-3, we find some important information prior to Paul’s first missionary journey. The sending was first a *Consequence of Service*. Verse 2 says “*as they ministered to the Lord.*” This describes all of the men in verse 1, but it also summarizes Paul’s life for the last 14 years. While being prepared for what he was about to do and while learning patience with God since his conversion, Paul was busy laboring for the Lord. It may not have been as a leader in the church or as the main preacher on the schedule, but he was busy in God’s service. Notice what Paul was doing prior to his first missionary journey. “*He preached Christ in the synagogues*” of Damascus (Acts 9:20), he “studied” in Arabia (Galatians 1:17), he labored in Damascus again (Galatians 1:17), he went to Jerusalem and “*spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 9:26-29), he labored in Tarsus (Acts 9:30), he went with Barnabas to Antioch and “*taught much people*” (Acts 11:25-26), and he took some food to Jerusalem to help the believers who were enduring a famine (Acts 11:27-30). Paul did not sit on a church pew after receiving his “training” and complain that no one was giving him a chance to preach. He was busy serving the Lord. He preached when he had the opportunity, and he did many other things in the church. Many men want to serve the Lord in a big way, and they want to immediately be the main preacher. When they do not reach the top when they think they should, they either spend time complaining because they are not the main preacher, or they quit serving the Lord altogether. We must learn that we must be busy serving the Lord. For some, it may be doing youth work or teaching Sunday school classes; for others, it may be preaching in nursing

homes or jails. Or, it may be some other kind of ministry. But we must be like Paul and be busy serving the Lord.

The sending of Paul was also *Called of the Spirit*. Acts 13:2 clearly states “*the Holy Ghost said.*” That is the key to an effective ministry! (I did not say easy.) The only preachers we need are men who are called of the Spirit! If that is all that we had, then we would see more working by the Spirit. Instead we have men in the ministry because they wanted to be in it, or because daddy and mommy wanted them in it, or for some other unbiblical reason. I did not become a preacher because I wanted to or because my parents wanted me to be a preacher. I became a preacher because God the Holy Ghost called me to be a preacher. If we had more God-called men, we would have less men quitting the ministry. I cannot quit because it was not my idea to be in the ministry in the first place. God called me into the ministry, and I can do nothing else but be in the ministry.

Notice it also says, “*For the work whereunto I have called them.*” We will know where we are to go and what we are to do when we follow His calling. Too many are in the wrong place and the wrong ministry because they led and did not follow. May the Spirit have His way and may we listen to His call.