

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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

As we finished up last month, we noticed The Earnestness that Paul displayed in his reaction to Elymas. Too many preachers and church members are half-hearted in their service to Christ. They are not completely devoted to Christ or His work. Many simply go through the motions and give whatever is left over, whether in their offerings or in their service. This should not be the way believers live their lives. Our service to Christ should be an absolute, complete consecration to Christ. Paul, the other believers mentioned in Scripture, and even outstanding Christians of more recent times, should be our examples. Christianity should not be a half-hearted endeavor. Our faithfulness in church and outside of church should not waver. We cannot and should not be wishy-washy believers. We should not be entangled with the affairs of this life. We must be like Paul—earnest in our service.

Remember the definition of this phrase “*set his eyes.*” It carries the idea “to gaze intently; to behold earnestly; to look steadfastly.” Paul was determined to let Elymas, Sergius Paulus, and anyone else who may have been around, know that Elymas was doing wrong and hindering the Gospel. It does not matter who it is, or what position they may have, or how well-known or well-liked someone is; if they are opposing the Gospel, they must be pointed out and it is the duty of the preacher and of God’s people to let everyone know how wicked and dangerous that person is. Now someone may say, “I could not do that.” Another may say, “That is not in my makeup. I just do not react that way.” But remember The Explanation for this reaction—Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost. You may not naturally

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be inclined to respond the way that Paul did. But maybe Paul was not naturally that way either. As we tried to say so clearly, it was not Paul who reacted this way. It was Paul filled with the Holy Ghost. It was the Holy Ghost who caused Paul to say what he said. Paul, naturally, may not have done anything. But Paul filled with the Holy Ghost could not help but respond the way he did. If we are filled with the Holy Ghost, I believe with all that is within me, we will be earnest in our reaction to those who oppose the Gospel. We will stand up for what is right and declare the truth. We will be earnest in our manner! We will gaze intently; we will behold earnestly; we will look steadfastly! We will not be careless about the Gospel! We will not say that those who preach a false doctrine are “Christian” brothers. We will point them out, religion by religion, and let everyone know that they are spreading a false gospel and are damning souls to Hell. Paul was not the exception. He is the rule; he is the pattern to follow. He was earnest, and true believers will be earnest in their reaction to those who oppose the Gospel.

Now we come to the third aspect of The Reaction of the Preacher. I call it The Exclamation because it is what Paul said to Elymas. Acts 13:9 tells why and how Paul reacted. As we look at verse 10, we will see what Paul said. This Exclamation consists of four statements, the first being an exclamation *Against his Craftiness.*

The first thing that Paul says to Elymas is “*O full of all subtilty and all mischief.*” Subtilty is “deceit; treachery; properly, a bait for fish, then any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching.” Mischief refers to “ease in doing; recklessness; wickedness; false pretenses.” As we saw earlier in the message, Elymas had “*withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.*” One may argue whether Elymas was consciously aware of all that he was doing. Did he intentionally want to lead Sergius Paulus down the wrong path? That may be debatable. He may have been sincere in what he was doing and thought that he was right. But he was sincerely wrong. Most of those who follow false religions are sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. It does not matter about

intentions—it matters about content and direction. Are they preaching the truth? Are they declaring that Jesus alone is the only way of salvation? If they are not preaching the truth of God’s Word, it does not matter what we think they mean, or how nice they are, they are deceiving and damning souls, and we must identify them.

Because of the language of Scripture, I would think that Elymas was wholehearted in his devotion to witchcraft. But that really does not matter. What is important in this part of verse 10 is the manner of his opposition. The Bible does not record what Elymas said. All we have is Paul’s declaration about what Elymas was doing. Paul says that Elymas was full of subtility—he was using deceit to lead Sergius Paulus astray. As we saw earlier, this is the same word used for fish bait. He was trying to lure Sergius to him. We do not know exactly what Elymas said, but consider a few possibilities. Perhaps Elymas said that Paul was in error. He may have said, “There are many good religions. Paul is a little extreme. Don’t believe him. Be open and accept everything.” That thought has been around forever and is a lie of the devil. Oprah Winfrey recently made a statement similar to this when she said that many religions are good and any would get you to Heaven. Barack Obama said when campaigning for office in Illinois that he thought it extreme to say that Jesus is the only way. It does not matter if these people are popular or powerful, they are WRONG! All roads will not get you to Heaven; Jesus alone is the only way of salvation. Oprah and Obama are just like Elymas. They are deceiving people, resulting in the damnation of souls.

Elymas could have kept teaching his false religion to Sergius Paulus. He could have said that what he taught was right. Just like the Catholics and Church of Christ and others, he could have taught a false way of eternal life. The two religions that I mentioned both add works to salvation. They both teach that baptism is essential to salvation. The Catholics go on to add many other things that are necessary to either obtain salvation or keep it. Many other religions do the same. In that regard, they are using subtility (deception) and are leading people astray. They are just like Elymas. We must be

like Paul and react the way he did.

Paul also described Elymas as “*full of all mischief.*” I gave four meanings to this word, but I want to focus on the last part—false pretenses. Why was Elymas doing what he did? Perhaps he liked the position he had with Sergius Paulus. Maybe it gave him a position of prominence and power. When Sergius began to listen to Paul, Elymas saw his connection to political power about to wane. In order to keep it, he lied. He did not really care for Sergius. He only cared for the connections that it provided. He did not care what happened to Sergius when he died. He only wanted to be close to Sergius because Sergius was deputy of the island. Because Elymas “*was with*” Sergius, Elymas felt important. If Sergius followed Paul, Elymas would lose his position.

I wonder how many “preachers” say what they say because of the power it gives them. They do not really care for the souls of men; they themselves do not even know the truth. They “preach” what they preach and “teach” what they teach because it gives them power, prestige, or money. They do all that they do because they are full of mischief—false pretenses. They do not care to help others; they only want to help themselves. They must be revealed for what they really are. We must react like Paul.

Next, Paul exclaimed *Against his Connection*. Paul clearly recognizes and identifies the source of Elymas’ actions—Satan. Verse 10 says, “[T]hou *child of the devil.*” Why was Elymas doing what he was doing? Because he was Satan’s child. Now this will upset some people, but all unsaved people are Satan’s children. Jesus told the Pharisees in John 8:44, “*Ye are of your father the devil.*” Now most people do not want to hear this, but Jesus said it in John and Paul said it here in Acts. That is why we must be born again. Our first birth put us in the family of the devil, in a family that will be damned. We must be born again into the family of righteousness—God’s family.

In connection with this thought, it is interesting to note that the devil has concocted and published a false teaching. You may hear some teach this idea—“We are all God’s children.” However, that is not taught in Scripture. We are all God’s creation, but we are not all God’s children. We only become God’s sons when we trust in Jesus as our Savior (John 1:12). If you are not saved, you are Satan’s child. If you are saved, you are God’s child.

That is why Elymas so opposed the Gospel—he was doing his father’s business. This is the reason Muslims in Muslim-dominated countries, Catholics in Catholic-dominated countries, Mormons in Mormon-dominated areas, and so on, so oppose the true Gospel. They are children of the devil, and they are doing what their father has done since he rebelled against God. They hate the Gospel and will do anything and say anything to stop it. They will teach and practice religion, for the devil is not opposed to religion. In fact, he came up with every false religion. They do not, and the devil does not, like the truth. They will oppose it every way possible. We must be prepared, recognize the source, and react as Paul did. We will continue next month. May the Lord find us faithful.