



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: From Rejection to Direction

Date: 6/21/2026

## Acts 13:13-52

### Big Idea: Rejection isn't failure, it's direction.

Paul and Barnabas are on their first missionary journey when they arrive in Antioch in Pisidia. They walk into the synagogue on the Sabbath, preach the greatest news in human history, and get hit with a wall of hostile rejection. But God doesn't fold. He doesn't abort the mission. He uses the closed door to open a much larger one. **Acts 13:13-52** gives us four truths about how God consistently transforms rejection into direction - and why that pattern matters for us today.

#### 1. We move forward making the message known.

In order for something to be rejected, it first has to be made known. Paul steps up when given the opportunity to speak - but notice his strategy. He doesn't open with theological confrontation or drop a hammer on his audience. He builds a bridge of common ground first, walking his Jewish audience through their own history: God's choice of their ancestors, the Exodus, the wilderness years, the Promised Land, the judges and kings, all the way to David. And then he connects the dots - from David's family line, God brought the ultimate Savior: Jesus (**Acts 13:23**).

Paul is laying a careful foundation before delivering the challenge. He is putting his audience in a position to hear clearly before asking them to decide. The principle holds today: you can't accept or reject a gift until it's been offered to you. The message has to be made known before it can do anything.

#### 2. We move forward by sharing Jesus clearly and boldly.

Once the foundation is laid, Paul delivers the core of the gospel directly in **Acts 13:38-39** - through Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, and everyone who believes is freed from everything the Law of Moses could never free them from. That word freed carries the weight of a legal verdict. It pictures someone standing in a courtroom completely guilty, facing a death sentence, and hearing the judge declare them fully and permanently free.

Paul makes clear that the Law of Moses could never produce that verdict. The Law functioned like a mirror - it could show the problem with perfect clarity, but it had no power to fix it. Jesus doesn't just diagnose the problem. He resolves it. Through his death on the cross, guilt is broken, the verdict changes, and real freedom becomes available. But that freedom requires a decision. It has to be received.

### **3. We move forward knowing the tragedy of the rejected gift.**

Paul knew his audience and knew human nature well enough to include a sobering warning before the opposition came. In **Acts 13:41**, He quotes Habakkuk - look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days that you will not believe even if someone tells you. This pattern is not new. Isaiah 53 told us centuries earlier that the Messiah would be despised and rejected. Psalm 22 painted the picture of the Messiah surrounded by scoffers. The rejection of Jesus is not a surprise - it is predicted.

Then and now, people reject Jesus because his resurrection challenges materialistic assumptions and his exclusive claim to salvation unsettles every other path. But Acts 13:46 reveals something important: Paul tells the religious leaders they have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. God doesn't lock anyone out. The person doing the rejecting makes the choice and bears the outcome.

### **4. We move forward knowing rejection is God's door for expansion.**

Here is where the big idea shines brightest. When the religious leaders reject the message and drive Paul and Barnabas out, God does not throw up his hands. He uses that closed door to blow open something far larger. Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles - and **Acts 13:48-49** describes what follows: rejoicing, belief, and the word of the Lord spreading throughout the whole region.

The Greek word behind appointed in verse 48 is tasso - a military term meaning to arrange or station troops. It is written in the perfect tense and passive voice, meaning the action was completed in the past by someone else and its results carry forward. In other words, God had already arranged these Gentile believers to receive life long before Paul ever set foot in Antioch. The rejection by the religious leaders was not a surprise to God - it was the very mechanism he used to get the gospel to people who had been waiting for it. What looked like a dead end for Paul was God's tunnel to the global church. Rejection is never the end of the story. In God's hands, it is always direction.

## **Discussion Questions:**

- 1. Paul built a bridge of common ground before making his point. How does his approach challenge the way you typically share your faith or talk about Jesus with someone who doesn't believe?**
- 2. The sermon describes the Law as a mirror - it shows the problem but can't fix it. How does understanding that distinction change the way you think about guilt, performance, and what Jesus actually offers?**
- 3. Acts 13:46 says the religious leaders judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. What does it reveal about God that he doesn't force the gift - and what does it say about the weight of rejecting it?**
- 4. Have you ever experienced a closed door that ended up redirecting you somewhere better? How did that shape the way you now interpret setbacks or rejection?**
- 5. The word appointed in Acts 13:48 suggests God had already arranged these Gentile believers to receive life before Paul arrived. How does that truth affect the way you pray for and pursue people who don't yet know Jesus?**