



[Acts 13:48](#)

(48) And when the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced; and they glorified the Word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were appointed to eternal life.

A Faithful Version

Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch preaching [the gospel](#) to an audience of both Jews and Gentiles. After hearing them, the Jews leave the synagogue, but the Gentiles beseech them to return the following [Sabbath](#) so they could hear more. That Sabbath virtually the whole city turns out to hear the apostles. The Jews, jealous of the response Paul and Barnabas receive, make things difficult for them by contradicting the [truth](#) to the point of blasphemy. However, the Gentiles respond yet the more.

An interesting contrast arises between verse 27, where Paul says those who did not know Christ in Jerusalem put Him to death, and verse 48, where Luke, writing after the fact, relates that those who responded to the gospel in Antioch were *appointed* to [eternal life](#). This is important in understanding our unique position relative to the rest of humanity and in fine-tuning our relationship with each other and most importantly with God.

Appointed is translated "ordained" in the King James Version. However, almost all modern versions render it "appointed." It also means to set, dispose, incline, devote, designate, institute, resolve, arrange, and even addict. The word *never* indicates an internal disposition or inclination arising within oneself, but *always* contains the notion of an ordering, arranging, setting, or appointing from without, that is, from a source other than the individual himself. In this case, Luke implies that the Gentiles who responded to Paul and Barnabas' preaching were inclined or disposed to believe the gospel and embrace eternal life by [God](#) through His [Holy Spirit](#). In other words, their [faith](#) was not self-generated.

This explains, at least in part, why those in Jerusalem did not know Jesus. If God did not dispose them to know Him, they were operating entirely from their own minds

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dominated by human nature and very unlikely to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior. Because God did not incline them to believe, Jesus appeared to them nothing like what He truly was. They most commonly judged Him as a mere man from Nazareth, a religious competitor, and pretender to the throne of [David](#). Though He was popular with the people, they could easily brush Him aside and condemn Him to death for blasphemy.

Commentaries sometimes say verse 48 is controversial because it indicates predestination, but a measure of predestination is clearly involved in our calling! Paul writes in [Ephesians 1:5](#), "[God] predestined us to adoption as sons by [Jesus Christ](#) to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." He is equally expressive in [Romans 8:29-30](#):

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

If we believe in justification and glorification, is there not also equal evidence for predestination? This does not mean that every act of a person's life is predestined, but that God predestines some to be summoned to [salvation](#) while not calling others. Do not the words "call," "invite," or the even stronger "summon" indicate separating one from several or many?

We can all relate to this simple illustration: If a child is playing outside with some other children, and his parent goes out to call or summon him, though the other children may hear the parent's voice, is not that calling specifically for his child? Does it not separate him from the group? Is not the child's mind disposed or inclined to respond to his parent's call? The other children may hear the call, but they do not respond in the same way because the summons is specific to the particular child.

When a parent calls his child, he does not do it without purpose; he calls the child for a specific reason. As the child responds and separates from the group, the parent begins to reveal to him why he was called: "Go wash your hands—we are going to eat dinner"; "Get ready for bed"; "Run this errand for me"; "Clean up your room"; or "I just wanted to see that you were all right."

In principle, this is similar to God's calling of us except for the purpose. By His Spirit He supernaturally disposes our minds through His summons and begins to separate us from those He is not calling. At the same time, He begins to reveal Himself and His way.

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He does not call everybody generally, just as the human parent predetermines which child he wants to call. Thus our calling is completely within the will of the sovereign God, who specifically appoints those He desires to understand at this time.

God must predispose us to respond because we are so deceived about what to look for that we would never find Him. In addition, we are so busy doing our own thing, like a child playing around, that we do not even care. Even though He reveals Himself, it still takes us a long time to come to know Him because we carry so many false concepts, and like children, we have short attention spans and are easily distracted.

One reason this is controversial, especially among the more naturally religious, is that human nature does not take pleasure in being humbled. It avoids admitting that salvation is far more an act of God than earned through our intelligence, [goodness](#), [wisdom](#), morality, purity, conviction, commitment to [prayer](#) and study, dedication to seeking Him, or [love](#) of God. Human nature is so perverse that even in this, in the face of so much biblical evidence, vanity wants to take credit for what it simply does not deserve.

Paul says in [Romans 3:27-28](#): "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." He adds in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#): "For by [grace](#) you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Even the faith that starts us on the road to [repentance](#) and justification is God's gift!

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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