

## THE FIRST 15

Friday, January 31, 2025

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Today is Friday, January 31. As we continue our study on the Practice of Prayer, we study what the Bible says about listening to God.

### OPENING PRAYER

*As a new day dawns, I seek the presence of the God who loves me. I claim a quiet space set apart from the rush of the world. I pause and become still, and breathe deeply and slowly. Quiet my mind to listen. Help me recognize the distinct sound of Your voice speaking to my soul. Reveal the message You have for me through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### SCRIPTURE

***On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. Acts 13:46-48***

### REFLECTION

In the book of Acts, Paul preached to a Jewish audience in the city of Antioch. He told them that Jesus fulfilled the words of the prophets and cited Old Testament texts to prove that the resurrection of Jesus was the fulfillment of those scriptures. Paul left the synagogue with Barnabus and the people invited them back to speak again on the next Sabbath day. Many of the Jews and devout converts followed them and talked with them as they walked the streets of the city. Next week an even larger crowd gathered to hear Paul speak. This caused anger and jealousy among the Jews, but the Gentiles were hungry to hear from God and listened attentively to the word.

I try to imagine an entire city gathered to hear the word of God. How wonderful to have so many amassed and longing for the truth. Perhaps if my entire city gathered to hear a preacher from a religion other than my own, I might be jealous too. I consider times when I have been envious of the success of other churches instead of happy for the kingdom. I remember times I have been critical of the message because it did not come from a place with which I am familiar. Paul and Barnabus are contradicted, rejected and abused by the unhappy portion of the crowd. They answer this ridicule boldly.

After all, they did preach to their own people first, but when they rejected God's word they turned to others to share the Gospel. Am I like the Antioch Jews in this story who reject and contradict or am I like the Antioch Gentiles who are glad and honor the word of God? Am I able to recognize the truth of God even when it comes from a new place? Am I able to recognize lies

about God? Do I know I am destined for eternal life because of my acceptance of Jesus and belief in His word?

The phrase "I have made you a light for the Gentiles" applies to Paul and Barnabus, but it also applies to me. I am called to honor God's word and bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

**Ask:** How do I honor the word of God in my life? When have I dishonored the word of God?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord, I am here, listening for Your word. Speak to me of eternal life and truth. Do not turn away, but shine the light that brings salvation to me and to others all over the world. I am thankful for your offer of redemption and promise of eternal life. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and I strive to honor Your word. I treasure these quiet moments with You as I begin my day and ask You to direct every step of my journey and teach me to walk the way of holiness. Amen.*