

ACTS LESSON 14

Acts Chapter 14

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Memory verses for this week: *Eph 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Eph 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Introduction: In Chapter 13, we studied how that Paul and Barnabas were moved by the Holy Spirit to go on their first missionary journey. The church at Antioch sponsored the two men as we saw the Lord give us the example of how mission work should be done through His plan.

The Jews in Antioch of Pisidia rejected the gospel, and they turned to the Gentiles who readily believed. After being driven from this location, we pick up in Iconium where Paul and Barnabas next moved. Paul traveled to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, while encountering much opposition along the way. Paul took the same route back to Antioch and visited the churches before returning to the sending church in Antioch.

I. The Work at Iconium

Acts 14:1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

Acts 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Having departed from Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas headed southeast over 40 miles upon a Roman highway to Iconium, which was the chief city of the region of Lycaonia. The name Iconium literally means 'little image' or 'little icon.' As was his custom, Paul found the synagogue and preached to the Jews first. Many Jews and gentiles heard the Word of Truth and believed.

The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. The word translated as unbelieving (apeiyew apeitheo) conveys a sense of more than a lack of faith. Rather, it has the idea of 'willful resistance' or 'rebellion.' It at times is translated as 'disobedient.'

These Jews willfully rejected the Gospel of Christ and went about inciting the gentiles. The word translated as stirred up (epegeirwepigeiro) essentially means to 'incite.' The word translated evil affected (kakow kakoo) basically has the idea of 'causing bad or evil.' They poisoned the minds of others by slander and outright lying about Paul and Barnabas as well concerning their new brethren.

We see that after Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Antioch in Pisidia by the Jews they came to Iconium. Iconium was the chief city of the district of Lycaonia, sometimes called southern Galatia. We find this is one of the cities where Paul addressed the Epistle of the Galatians later on. As before, the men go to God's chosen nation, Israel first. But as was the case in most places, the Jews rejected the gospel and they turned even the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. It says in verse one that many of the Jews and the Gentiles believed on Christ, but many of the unbelievers spoke evil of the men.

It is amazing what an effect just a few negative people can have on the work of the Lord. God help us all to speak positively of other Christians and encourage and exhort one another. If we are not careful, we can let Satan use our lives to defeat the work of the church, sometimes just by ignorance. James warns us of using the tongue wrongly and how much strife we can cause by careless words.

James 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

James 3:3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

James 3:4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

James 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

James 3:7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

James 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Acts 14:3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts 14:4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

It appears that they spent nearly six months preaching at Iconium, giving “testimony unto the word of his grace.” God allowed them to do signs and wonders by their hand. These miracles were a part of the interim gifts of the Spirit to the early church in the absence of a New Testament.

When the canon of the New Testament was complete, these various gifts, in part, were done away. These gifts for all practical purposes died with the apostles.

In verse 4, you see that the city became divided. It is significant that the division (scizw schidzo) of the city was of the gentiles. Some held with the Jews and others with the apostles. Here, for the first time, both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles. The use of the word by Luke here means sent one (a sent messenger). The more restrictive technical use is representative of the twelve sent by Jesus Christ, having witnessed His resurrection. Whether Barnabas had witnessed Jesus’ resurrection, we do not know. However, certainly Paul had.

The word (apostolov) apostolos is used elsewhere in the Pauline epistles in its more generic sense in referring to James (Galatians 1:19), Epaproditus (Philippians 2:25), Apollos (I Corinthians 4:9), and others. Today, we send missionaries in like manner as the church at Antioch. They are sent ones.

II. The Work in Derbe and Lystra

*Acts 14:5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,
Acts 14:6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:
Acts 14:7 And there they preached the gospel.*

As the opposition mounted at Iconium, Paul and Barnabas became aware of a plan, by both the Jews as well as the rulers of the city, to assault them and stone them. They wisely departed and traveled about eighteen miles south on the new imperial Roman highway to Lystra. The plain of Lycaonia, on which both Lystra and Derbe were a part, was of the greater province of Galatia. Upon arriving there, “they preached the gospel.”

This phrase “they preached the gospel” is translated from the word (euaggelizw) evangelidzo which in its most literal sense is to ‘evangelize.’ Therefore, as Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra and Derbe, they there evangelized.

We see that even though Paul and Barnabas performed miracles and wonders for the people, the problems were so great that the men had to leave the city. It is amazing how God's Word divides people. Those that believe get saved, while the lost that reject the Gospel become bitter and antagonistic against those that spread the Word of the Lord. These were so bitter that they tried to get the people to stone them.

Luke 12:51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

Luke 12:52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

Luke 12:53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

We don't know how long they stayed, but verse 3 said they were there a long time as they spoke boldly of the things of God. It says that the city was divided, half standing with the unbelieving Jews and others standing with the apostles. We know God allowed the apostles to perform the signs and wonders for a reason as is recorded over in John 20.

John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

When Paul and Barnabas learned of the persecution planned by the Jews and the Gentiles, they fled to Lystra and Derbe. And they did something that pleases the Lord very much... they preached the gospel.

Acts 14:8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

Acts 14:9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

Acts 14:10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

In a fashion similar to that of Peter at the Temple in Acts 3, Paul saw a certain man at Lystra “impotent in his feet.” The man had been crippled since birth and had never walked in his life. The word translated as impotent (adunatov adunatos) literally means ‘powerless.’ He had no strength whatsoever in his feet. A lifetime of inactivity had left the muscles totally atrophied.

This cripple heard Paul speak, no doubt, of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The phrase translated as steadfastly beholding (atenizw atenzio) is whence the English word ‘attention’ derives. This man caught Paul’s attention. Moreover, perhaps from the eager expression upon his face, Paul perceived he had faith to be healed.

The word translated as healed (swzw sodzo) is the word commonly translated as ‘saved.’ It also has the sense of being ‘made whole.’ The latter sense no doubt is what is in view here. Nevertheless, when a person is saved, they are made whole spiritually. In this case, the man was healed physically and we may well presume was saved spiritually as well.

Paul commanded him to “stand upright on thy feet.” For a man whose muscles had atrophied from a lifetime of being crippled, this was a tall order. Nevertheless, the man “leaped and walked.” When God heals, there is never a limp or halt thereafter.

We find that this man in Lystra that they came to was impotent in his feet, having been crippled from a child. Paul used those special apostolic powers to heal the man.

J. Vernon McGee said in his commentary “Paul and Barnabas had the gifts of an apostle, the sign gifts. They came into these places without any New Testament with the message of the gospel. What were their credentials? How could they prove their message was from God? The sign gifts were their credentials—they need them. You and I today have the entire Bible, and what it has to say.

1 Cor 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

1 Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

1 Cor 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Acts 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

We see that the man was healed both immediately and completely. God does not do things part of the way. When we are saved, it is Jesus who saves us and Jesus who keeps us until the day of redemption. We see the man leaped and walked as soon as he was healed, a far cry from our so called television healers of today. We see the people perceive that Paul and Barnabas were gods that had come down in the likeness of men.

Acts 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Acts 14:13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Upon seeing this miracle, the local populace jumped to the conclusion that the local gods of Roman mythology had visited them. What is translated as Jupiter and Mercurius are the Roman names for what in Greek are literally Zeus and Hermes. Zeus was the national god of the Greeks and among other things was thought to send rain. Hermes was the spokesman or messenger for the Greek gods and the spokesman for Zeus in particular.

The Greek legend held that Hermes was the inventor of speech. The word hermeneutic which means 'interpretation' derives from the name Hermes. Because Paul was the chief speaker of the pair, the Greeks assumed he was Hermes (Mercurius). The word translated as chief (hgeomai hegeomai) literally means 'ruler' or 'leader.'

What once again is clear is that Paul had become the obvious leader of the missionary team. The local priest for Jupiter (Zeus) prepared to sacrifice oxen to the presumed appearance of his god. It was their custom in offering oxen to place upon them garlands as they were led to the sacrifice.

We see that they called Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercurius because he was the one that spoke the most.. Jupiter was the national god of the Greeks (the Hellenic race) as well as their perceived supreme ruler of the heathen world. Mercurius, which they named Paul, was called Hermes, the Greek deity, whom the Romans identified with their Mercury, the god of commerce. Mercurius was the son of Zeus. (Jupiter.) Jupiter had a temple in that city and the priest of Jupiter brought oxens and garlands unto the gates. If allowed, he would have done sacrifice with the people after hearing of Paul and Barnabas.

III. **Barnabas and Paul Stop False Worship Attempts to them**

Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

Acts 14:15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

Acts 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Acts 14:18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Once the Apostles understood what was going on, they “rent their clothes” and ran to stop the proceedings. The renting of clothes was a symbol of consternation, particularly for a Jew, that sacrilege was about to be committed. Their protest was that they were mere “men of like passions with you and not gods.”

Their whole purpose rather was to “preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities.” The word translated as vanities (mataiov mataios) has the sense that what they were doing was devoid of truth or power (i.e., the gods of Greek mythology). They therefore should turn “unto the living God which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.”

Paul preached that the true God was in fact living and He was the Creator of all. In reply to the critics which view the creation account with doubt, the Apostle Paul clearly believed it. The living God “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” The idea is quite similar to Romans 1:24,26,28 where 3 times we read how “God gave them up.” Because of the inveterate sin of mankind, God has allowed, particularly, the heathen gentile nations, for the time being, to believe what they will.

The day of man will soon, however, be over and in the day of the Lord, He will overrule and overturn the wickedness of man. As Paul continues his brief overview of history, he points out that “nevertheless he left not himself without witness.” What is clearly implied is that even the simple and taken for granted graces of rain, harvest, and food are a witness to the goodness of God.

The high plateau of Lycaonia was typically dry. The Greeks viewed Zeus (Jupiter) as the god of, among other things, rain and Hermes (Mercurius) as the god providing food. Paul makes it clear that it is the living God of heaven, the Creator of all, which provides rain and food in His goodness. In so doing, “scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.”

When Paul and Barnabas heard that the priest of Jupiter intended to offer sacrifices to them, they did the right thing and cried out that they were just men of like passions as they to whom they had preached. He tells them that the very Gospel that they preached called men to come out of false idol worship and to turn to the Living God. Paul tells them that the Living God was the one who made heaven, earth, sea, and all things that are therein. In verse 16, he tells them how that God in the past had allowed all nations to walk in their own ways, but he now desired that all men turn to the true and living God.

Psa 81:11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

Psa 81:12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

Psa 81:13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

Paul tells the people that God did not leave without leaving a witness of himself. We know that the stars and the handiwork of the heavens declare that there is a God. And the rain and fruitful seasons bear witness of God.

Gen 8:22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

IV. Paul is Stoned in Lystra

Acts 14:19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Many Jews from Antioch and Iconium showed up in town where Paul and Barnabas were. Whether these were Jewish businessmen in town for commercial reasons or whether they had followed Paul and Barnabas to harass them, we are not told. In any event, they incited the town against them and proceeded to stone Paul. The word translated as drew (surw suro) literally means 'dragged.'

Paul was dragged out of the city and presumed dead. Paul alludes to this in II Corinthians 11:25 as having been stoned once. It may very well be that Paul in fact did die or at least was on the very threshold of death. It very well may be that it was at this time Paul was allowed to be "caught up to the third heaven" as described in some detail in II Corinthians 12:1-5.

Though nothing is said of it here, it was while at Lystra that a young man by the name of Timothy was saved. Later in Acts 16:1-2, Paul, in returning to Lystra, added Timothy (who already was a disciple) to his missionary team. Though not expressly stated, what is implied is that on his first visit to Lystra, Timothy received Christ and began to grow in the Lord. He may have even witnessed the stoning of Paul.

We see that certain Jews came all the way from Antioch and Iconium and stirred up the people in Lystra to stone Paul. They drew him out of the city and stoned him until they were sure he was dead. But God was not finished with Paul. Remember what God had told Ananias to tell Paul right after he was saved.

Acts 9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

Acts 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Acts 9:16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

V. Paul goes to Derbe

Acts 14:20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

While the other disciples stood over the crumpled body of Paul, lying outside the city of Lystra, “he rose up.” There is no question he got up physically. However, what may be implied is that he was resurrected altogether. The word translated as rose up (anisthmi anistemi) is one of the common words used to describe Christ’s resurrection throughout the New Testament.

Whether Paul actually died, was caught up to the third heaven, and then resurrected; we will never know until we get to glory. However, if that be the case it would lend strength to why he could write to the Philippians years later that he had “a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). The next day, Paul and Barnabas departed for Derbe.

Derbe was forty miles to the southeast and was the frontier of the Roman Empire in that region. It was essentially the end of the road in so far as civilization was concerned. There, they once again “preached the gospel” (literally evangelized) in that city. In more modern terms, they won souls to Christ there.

After completing their work at Derbe, Paul and Barnabas began to re-trace their journey back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Without a doubt, courage was necessary to return to places where they had faced such opposition. What is implied, however, is now their ministry was one of strengthening the young churches planted rather than public preaching and witnessing.

The word translated as confirming (episthrizw episteridzo) has the sense of to ‘establish’ or to ‘strengthen.’ It in no way conveys the contemporary idea of ‘confirmation’ so prevalent in some churches. Rather, Paul returned to young believers who had turned to Christ in the face of family disapproval and even worse opposition. These young churches needed encouraging which is exactly what the word exhorting (parakalew parakaleo) means.

His encouragement, among other things, was that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” That remains true to this day. The Christian life at times is not an easy road to travel upon. There is temptation and often opposition, especially as we seize the initiative and take the gospel to others. In no way is Paul implying that Christians must go through the Tribulation as some mid or post-tribulation rapturists claim.

We see that after being left for dead, Paul rises up and he and Barnabas go to Derbe. They preached the gospel in that city, and then went back to the very cities where their lives had been threatened. It said they did this to confirm and exhort the Christians there to go forward for the Lord. In John Calvin’s commentary on Acts, he states: “This was the principal way to confirm; by encouraging the disciples who had already embraced the Gospel and professed it, they urged them to make progress.

We are far from being as ready and active as we should be, and so our laziness needs spurs, and our coldness must be warmed. But because God wants his people to be exercised with different sorts of battle, Paul and Barnabas warned the disciples to be ready to suffer hardship. It is a very necessary warning that if we are to live devoted and holy lives, we have to continue in the warfare in this world. If the flesh caused us not trouble, if Satan did not scheme against us, if wicked people did not trouble us with stumbling-blocks, there would be nothing troublesome about persevering; but because we are assaulted every moment, on every side, perseverance is rare. If we are to persist right to the end, we must be prepared for war.”

Paul and Barnabas came not only to exhort these brethren, but also to ordain

elders (preachers or pastors) in these churches. (Verse 23)

Matthew Henry said this about confirming the disciples.

Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintances beg they will not leave them. Those that they look upon to be wiser than themselves set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger, of a change. They were allured, by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers; they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the apostles come and tell them that *this is the true grace of God wherein they stand*, and therefore they must stand to it that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that, whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this *confirms the souls of the disciples*; it fortifies their pious resolutions, in the strength of Christ, to adhere to Christ whatever it may cost them. Note, [1.] Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. ¹

VI. Paul and Barnabas return to home church Antioch

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

The ordaining of elders in every church is simply the selecting leadership in these churches. The they of the context clearly is of Paul and Barnabas. However, evidently, in helping each church, they encouraged them to elect elders. The word translated as ordained (ceirotoneo) has the sense of 'electing by a vote.' It is noteworthy that the terms elder, bishop, and pastor are used interchangeably in the New Testament.

The term elder (presbuteros) was a Jewish term which paralleled the ruler of the synagogue after which the early churches closely patterned themselves. The Greek word for leadership was 'bishop' (episkopos). As churches became less Jewish in character, the term for leadership changed from 'elder' to 'bishop.' Paul used both terms interchangeably in Titus 1:5-7.

After a season of prayer and fasting, "they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." The word translated commended (paratithemi) has the sense of 'entrusting one's self.' Paul and Barnabas therefore entrusted these young churches and their leadership to the Lord upon whom they had

¹Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

believed in the first place. These young churches were now in the hands of the Lord.

Acts 14:24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

Acts 14:25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

Acts 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Acts 14:28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

These called men continued to retrace their journey back through Pisidia, Pamphylia, and to Perga. They evidently had not preached in Perga initially, so they did so now. Then they continued the short journey to Attalia (later called Anatolia) which was a major port of that area. From there, they sailed back to Antioch “from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.”

The word translated as recommended (paradidwmi paradidomi) has the sense of ‘being delivered’ or ‘given over to.’ Indeed, it was at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas had been delivered or committed to the grace of God for their missionary journey. Moreover, it is highly significant that they fulfilled the work which God had given them to accomplish. They, afterward, had the church gathered and reported to them “all that God had done with them.”

There is a pattern to this day for missionaries to report to their supporting churches of how God has used them. Moreover, they noted how God had “opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” Some of the Jews perhaps, still needed convincing that the gospel indeed was for the gentiles as well. The gentiles could enter salvation by the door of faith rather than by circumcision, keeping the Law, or any other way. They therefore abode a long time with the disciples.

We see that the scriptures declare that they fulfilled the work that God had called for them to do. They return back to the church that had sent them out as missionaries and report all that the Lord had done through their efforts. As we mentioned earlier, this is the biblical way that God intends for mission work to be carried out. It worked in those early days, and it will still work today.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed