

"The First Missionary Journey Continues"

Part 12

Acts 13:13-14:28

Introduction: Last week in our study we followed Paul and Barnabas as they left Antioch because of the persecution and they came to Iconium. At Iconium they preached the Gospel in the synagogue and a great multitude of the Jews and the Gentiles were saved. But the unbelieving Jews in the city began to poison the minds of the Gentiles.

Notice Acts 14:1-2

They did this as they mixed the Law in with grace. We know this because of what Paul wrote in Galatians when he wrote to the churches of Galatia and the church at Iconium was one of them.

Galatians 3:1-3

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

² *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

³ *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

Paul and Barnabas remained in Iconium for some time teaching the believers of the grace of God and God granted power to do signs and wonders while they were there to show the authenticity of their message. But even with the signs and wonders the city was divided. In the midst of all of this Satan was busy gathering people to try to end their ministry

"Continued Persecution"

Part 2

Notice Acts 14:5

The word "assault" refers to a violent motion, so there was some sort of movement that was being organized to come against Paul and Barnabas to kill them. The expression "use them despitely" refers to damaging mistreatment either verbally or physically. There was therefore a plan by these unbelievers to stone Paul and Barnabas.

Notice Acts 14:6-7

God allowed Paul and Barnabas to become aware of what was being planned and they were then able to flee and to escape the persecution.

Application:

Sometimes God allows His disciples to experience persecution and even die and with others they are permitted to escape. Paul would escape the stoning here at Iconium but he would not in the next city of Lystra. God has different plans for each of our lives. Some people face much more pain in life than the person next to them. It can be because of sinful life choices but many times the pain is felt by people who are true followers of Jesus Christ and who are walking in fellowship with the Lord. We will one day know the purpose of all we face but until then we must rest in the fact that God always gives sufficient grace to get through every storm we face. Let us notice a conversation between the Lord and Peter.

John 21:18-22

¹⁸ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

¹⁹ This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

²⁰ Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

²¹ Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

²² Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

➤ **The Miracle**

Notice Acts 14:8-10

As they arrived at Lystra they encountered this man who was crippled from birth and unable to walk. Now every time we read of these miracles which Luke records, we can be sure they were divinely appointed meetings and miracles. So, this then brings us to a question, "What was the purpose of this miracle here at Lystra?"

This miracle was a picture of what God desires to do for every person. What God did for this man physically is what He desires to do for every man spiritually. This crippled man is a picture of every sinner. Man was unable to take one step toward God or toward heaven.

Because we were all crippled in the fall. Man is completely powerless to heal himself in his spiritually crippled condition. Then the Gospel is proclaimed and man believes as he exercises faith and is spiritually healed. Just as this man rose up after he was healed, the lost man then rises out of his sinful condition and is given the power to walk in righteousness with His Lord. He is able to enjoy a new life in which he can glorify God because he was healed/born again. Here in Lystra the focus fell upon the men used by God instead of God, who did the healing. (This is often the situation today in many churches. The pastor or the teacher is but an instrument in the hands of God and so God is to get the glory but too often it goes to the instrument.)

Notice Acts 14:11-12

The people could not deny the miracle because it was so amazing. They then considered Paul and Barnabas to be gods who had come down to them. Let me show you a little history that will help us to understand why they did this. Notice the words of Whitcomb.

"Fifty years before Paul and Barnabas arrived in this region, there was a certain Roman writer, Ovid, who wrote a narrative poem entitled, Metamorphoses. He told about an ancient legend that may have been well known in southern Galatia and may help to explain the wildly emotional response of the people as they called Paul and Barnabas gods. According to the legend, Zeus and Hermes once came to the local area disguised as mortals, seeking lodging. Although they asked for lodging at a thousand homes, none took them in. Finally, at a humble cottage of straw and reeds, an elderly couple, Philemon and his wife Baucis, freely welcomed them to a banquet that strained their poor resources. In appreciation, the gods transformed their cottage into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns. Philemon and Baucis were appointed as the priest and priestess of the temple. When it came time to die, they were transformed into an oak and a linden tree. As for the inhospitable people, the gods destroyed their houses. Just where in the hill country this took place Ovid does not say, but it appears that in seeing the healing of a crippled man and possibly remembering this legend, the people of Lystra believed that Zeus and Hermes had once again returned and they felt they must pay them homage lest they incur a similar wrath from the gods"

Notice Acts 14:13-18

Paul and Barnabas would take no glory for the miracle. Remember what happened to Herod?

Acts 12:21-23

²¹ And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

²² And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Paul and Barnabas stopped the people from offering sacrifices to them. I want to look closely at what Paul said to the people and consider his words.

Notice Acts 14:15-17 again.

Paul was speaking of what Moses said in Exodus 20:11.

Exodus 20:11

¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

This is what Paul was referring to but he never mentioned Moses nor did he mention the Old Testament reference. Why? These were Gentiles who most likely never heard of Moses and certainly did not know the Old Testament So Paul gives them a basic summary to help them understand who the real God is. Notice also there is no mention of the Gospel but we can be sure that Paul preached the Gospel to them.

Notice Acts 14:6-7

Paul and Barnabas did preach the Gospel to these people. I point this out because just to point to God as the Creator and Sustainer will not save anyone.

Application:

There are many conversations that we can have with people about what is happening in our world and how God is in control of all that is happening and that He has a plan. But all of that is for nothing if we do not tell the people who God is and what He has done out of love for them. Sin has to be realized and the cross and the empty tomb must be proclaimed or we have only helped someone understand that there is a God which they already know. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Notice again the words of Whitcomb.

"Today we have a significant movement, spreading around the world, called "Intelligent Design." This movement has been the source of many wonderfully written books proving that the universe, the solar system, planet Earth, and all living things could never have originated by blind chance. They had to be designed by an intelligent being. With this we

would heartily agree. The problem is that Intelligent Design advocates will not tell you who this intelligent Being is. They are extremely reluctant to identify Him. This is the colossal failure of the Intelligent Design movement. They want to defeat evolution on a horizontal level of intellectualism and rationalism. They are able to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the theory of evolution very easily. Scientifically and logically they -8- are able to defeat the arguments of materialistic evolution, often embarrassing their opponents in public debates. Yet all their efforts are insufficient when it comes to bringing people to a saving knowledge of Christ. Our goal is not merely to bring people out of evolution, but to bring people to Christ... Sadly, there are many people who reject evolution and believe in intelligent design, and yet they have never believed the gospel. What will it profit them?"

Notice Acts 14:16-17 again.

I want to draw your attention to the longsuffering of God in our lives as seen in these two verses. God allowed all of us to walk in our own ways in the past. That does not mean that He approved of our ways because He did not. The path we were on was taking us further away from Him and it was allowing us to be used by Satan to fight against God and His purposes. But even while we all walked in our own ways and were enemies of God, He still never left Himself without a witness. That means that while we were living in our sin and suppressing convictions, He was still reaching out and making Himself known to us.

Notice Acts 14:17 again.

He met our needs; He allowed us to experience joy and gladness and yet we never were willing to give Him the glory. Instead, we attributed our "success" to hard work or to personal talents or may be "luck." Paul wrote about this in Romans.

Romans 2:1-6

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

² *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

³ *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

⁴ *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

⁶ Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Conclusion:

We were storing up wrath which would have been poured upon us had we not been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. I will leave you with a verse deeper in Romans that takes on new meaning in this light.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.