

Acts Chapter Fourteen

Acts 14:1-7

And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore they spent a long time *there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.* But the multitude of the city was divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel.

In chapter 14—the apostles face significant paganism in Galatia. You can see what these men were up against when you read the Book of Galatians.

This territory is the land of the ancient Gauls—a warlike people who established themselves in Asia Minor. This was a Celtic tribe who invaded Rome in the 4th century and sacked it. They later crossed into Greece and captured Delphi in 280BC. In 189 BC—they came under the dominion of the Roman Empire and became one of its' provinces.

- Persecution in Pisidian Antioch is why Paul came to Iconium (the heartland of Asia Minor).
- Goes to synagogue—they way they still attempted to approach a work in a city. The synagogue was not only a place for worship—but community gathering as well.
- Message delivered would have been the same for both Jews and Greeks—the word of His grace.
- Speaking boldly with reliance on the Lord—how the Holy Spirit enable the work.
- When the apostles spoke—their witness caused their listeners to believe. They are sharing a message that they are living participants in. They understood exactly how to impart the message of the Kingdom to bring their hearers to repentance and faith.

- Granting signs and wonders—their gospel confronted other power structures and thought systems. How did their gospel make such significant progress?
- They heard a story—that ultimately included Jesus—and were able to hear it—see it—believe it.
- Paul and Barnabas are referred to as apostles for the first time here.
- Unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of gentiles against the word of Paul's message. They stayed here to strengthen those who had believed.

Acts 14:8-12

And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and *began* to walk. And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

- Lame man was attentive to the message before he was healed.
- Man was regarding the word with faith.
- Apostles focused on preaching the gospel—God attended their word with signs and wonders as gospel penetrates this region.
- These are pagans—eyes on men—begin to worship the apostles
- This is the region where they believed Zeus and Hermes had visited earth and had been largely ignored except for two elderly mortals. May have been the reason they were so attentive on this occasion.
- Paul and Barnabas have come to confront such a pagan culture—and are perceived as the very ones they are opposed to.
- Mood of the crowd changes when the apostles will not go along with their desires to worship
- People saw an incredible miracle—yet totally unaware of what was truly going on. Miracle attracted attention but saved no one.

Acts 14:13-18

And the priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

And *even* saying these things, they with difficulty restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

- Violence is the result of confronting these pagan strongholds.
- Priest of Zeus wanted to lead the people in worship
- Apostles tore their robes—their reaction to such blasphemy
- Their message is about God as Creator. The worldview they are confronting worships a large variety of gods and they do not have the basis of a Jewish culture that holds to God being One.
- Until now—the realm of God has focused on Israel—but because He is Creator—the nations have never been without a witness.
- To confront the pagans with a message about God as Creator—goes for root of their deception—multiple gods who required homage and worship. They must turn from idolatry to worship the Living God.
- Jesus not mentioned in this situation.

Acts 14:19-23

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the

kingdom of God.” And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- Paul and Barnabas find themselves with a message that is at odds with both groups.
- Jews came from Antioch (over 100 miles away)—where church was having a significant impact. Gave a reason to resist the gospel being presented.
- They stoned Paul. These are the same people who had just tried to worship him. Read Gal 6:17 and II Cor 11:25.
- Supposing Paul was dead—perhaps this is the time Paul experiences being caught up to the third heaven (II Cor 12:2-4)
- Paul experiences what he witnessed concerning Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:1)
- They return by the way they came—they wanted to make more than converts—they wanted to make disciples—go and check on their return to Antioch. They are planting churches as they make disciples.
- Message about suffering and tribulations—rightly understood—strengthens rather than dissipates the strength of the church.
- Prayed with fasting—earnest prayer on behalf of this fledgling church—the church belongs to Jesus—He will bring it to maturity.
- In Acts 16:1—we learn about a young believer from Lystra—Timothy.

Acts 14:24-28

And they passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; and from there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the disciples.

- They retrace their steps on their return—except Cyprus.
- God is the One who is powerfully at work—the church must continue in such reliance—never trusting in any human effort to accomplish their Kingdom assignment.
- Churches were being planted all over the gentile world.
- This is probably the time period when Peter came to Antioch (Gal 2:11)

Acts Chapter Fourteen—Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Compare verses 14:19 with 7:54-60. What could be going through Paul's mind?

Dig:

- 1) Describe the nature of spiritual warfare in Iconium. What response do the apostles make?
- 2) What response is made against Paul and Barnabas in Iconium?
- 3) What conditions were present for the lame man to receive healing?
- 4) What is the response in Lystra to the healing of the lame man? What does this uncover concerning the spiritual climate of this place?
- 5) How do the apostles stand in response? What aspect of God's character do they speak of to this pagan audience?
- 6) By reading chapter 14—how would you describe the work of an apostle?
- 7) How is the church established in each location that is mentioned in this chapter?
- 8) What frequently accompanies the preaching of the gospel on this first missionary journey?

9) What is the apostle's attitude toward suffering?

10) Using the Parable of the Soils in Matthew 13—what kind of soil are they finding on this first missionary journey?

Discuss:

- 1) How does planting a church today differ from planting a church in the Book of Acts?
- 2) Where is the church facing its greatest resistance today? What response are we making as this happens?
- 3) Take time to share around the table the 'God sightings' you have experienced this week (vs 27).

Point of Prayer:

Pray for wisdom concerning spiritual strongholds we face in our city.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) What is your response when a strong disagreement or argument takes place?
- 2) What qualities in the life of Paul and Barnabas encourage you in your own walk with the Lord?

- 3) Which part of this missionary journey do you feel most equipped to face?
Least equipped to face?
- 4) Who is your greatest source of spiritual encouragement?
- 5) What would have discouraged you the most if you were a partner on this trip?
- 6) What are the indicators of spiritual strongholds in your neighborhood?
- 7) If you were going to plant a church in our city, what should you know about the spiritual climate?
- 8) Is there someone in your sphere of influence that is bound by one of the spiritual strongholds here? What have you discovered about this kind of opposition to the gospel?