

## *Acts of the Apostles – Chapter 14*

### *In Iconium*

*14 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.*

In Chapter 13, we learned that in Pisidium Antioch, the leaders of the Jewish synagogue kicked out Paul and Barnabas. They have developed a plan for their missionary work:

1. Only go to the cities.
2. Go to the synagogues and preach to the Jews
3. If they reject the message, go to the Gentiles.

Paul has been called the missionary to the Gentiles, but here we see that he has not forgotten about the Jews. Acts 13:46 doesn't say that Paul turned away from ALL Jews, just the unbelieving Jews of Pisidium Antioch. Unfortunately, the unbelieving Jews not only rejected the message, but they also poisoned the minds of the Gentiles and embittered their minds against Paul and Barnabas, as well as the other believers. They literally "caused their minds to think evil". Instead of leaving Iconium, they stayed longer. They spoke boldly about God's grace and proved the message with miraculous signs and wonders. (NLT) Those that heard the message were divided. Some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.

*14:5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.*

Today, if you ask most people why they don't witness for Christ, they say people will think that I am weird or they will reject me. Here in Iconium attempts were made to mistreat and stone them. They may have stayed longer but in the end, they had to flee to cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region.

### *In Lystra and Derbe*

*14:8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.*

When they arrived in Lystra, they came upon a lame man. This healing is different from Peter's healing the man in Acts 3:4-9. In Acts 3, Peter took the man by the hand. He had not heard the Gospel message. Here in Acts 14, it tells us that the man was healed by his faith upon hearing the Gospel message.

***14:11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.***

"The miracle merely attracted attention, and in a way, it was unwanted attention. The miracle itself saved no one." (Guzik)

The people that saw the miracle praised Paul and Barnabas as gods. They called Barnabas, the god Zeus (King of the Greek gods) and Paul the god Hermes (son of Zeus, messenger to the gods). The people of Lystra were going to sacrifice bulls to Paul and Barnabas at the Temple of Zeus.

***14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.***

Paul and Barnabas were upset because the people from Lystra had missed the entire message. They worshiped the messengers and not the true God. We know that Paul and Barnabas were upset because verse 14 says, "*They tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out that they were just men and giving credit to God.*" Paul said that God was "a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." This did not stop them from wanting to worship Paul and Barnabas, they still wanted to offer sacrifices for them.

"Paul did not preach to these pagan worshippers the same way he preached to Jews or those acquainted with Judaism. He did not quote the Old Testament to them, but instead appealed to natural revelation, to the things that even a pagan could understand by looking at the world around them. "

***14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.***

Even as Christians, bad things can follow us around. Things were going well until some Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium arrived to ruin things. These Jews stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city and left him for dead. Typical human nature says that after the opposition that Paul and Barnabas had received, it is time to give up but they didn't, they headed to Derbe.

### *The Return to Antioch in Syria*

*14:21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia,*

After preaching in Derbe, they headed back through the cities that they had previously preached in. As they passed through each city, Paul and Barnabas –

1. Strengthened the believers
2. Encouraged them to continue in the faith
3. Reminding them that we must suffer
4. appointed elders in every church

When they appointed the elders, they did it with prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord.

"It has more than once been pointed out that more recent missionary policy would have thought it dangerously idealistic to recognize converts of only a few weeks' standing as leaders in their churches; perhaps Paul and Barnabas were more conscious of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the believing communities." (Bruce)

*14:25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.*

*26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.*

It is kind of obvious that Attalia is a seaport city. They took the opportunity to evangelize in this city. They missed this city on their way in from Paphos on the island of Cyprus. They caught a boat and made their way back to Antioch in Syria. The return to Antioch completed Paul's first missionary journey. He needed to report what had occurred on the trip.

"The trip was a great success, though not without great obstacles: The difficulty of travel itself, the confrontation with Elymas on Cyprus, the quitting of John Mark, being driven out of the cities of Antioch and Iconium, the temptation to receive adoration, and being stoned in Lystra. Yet Paul and Barnabas would not be deterred from the work God had them to do."