

To The Ends Of The Earth

LESSON 14: PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY, PART 2 (ACTS 13:42-14:28)

Paul and Barnabas had been traveling during their first missionary journey. After arriving in Antioch (of Pisidia) they had an opportunity to preach to the Jews in the synagogue. Their message about Jesus as the Messiah presented a choice about whether they would believe Him.

MORE PREACHING IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA (ACTS 13:42-52)

13:42-49. As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people begged them to speak again the next Sabbath. Many, however, immediately followed Paul and Barnabas to continue learning the gospel and God's grace (including Jews and proselytes). The following Sabbath, almost the whole town assembled to hear God's word. This caused jealousy among the Jews so that many of them opposed what Paul was teaching, and insulted Paul (attempting to paint Paul and the gospel in as negative of light as possible). Paul and Barnabas replied to these things with boldness (freely and with confidence). They indicated it was God's plan for the gospel to be spoken to the Jews first (as they should have been the most prepared to hear it, Romans 1:16; 3:1-2; Galatians 3:19-26). However, the Jews in Antioch had largely rejected the gospel. By choosing to reject the gospel, they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life so as not to participate in it. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas would turn their attention to the Gentiles, as God had commanded them (Acts 26:16-18) and had given the Gentiles the opportunity for light and salvation through the Messiah (Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:29-32)! The Gentiles rejoiced at this and glorified God's word so that as many as were determined to receive the eternal life God had offered to give them believed! Note that each one had the choice of whether to believe the gospel or not (v. 46). God's word then spread throughout that entire region.

13:50-52. The Jews were not pleased at the success of the gospel throughout that area. So, they stirred up prominent and leading people in the city to persecute Paul and Barnabas. They were then expelled from the area. Yet, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet against them (Matthew 10:14; Luke 9:5), demonstrating the rejection of the gospel that had taken place, and traveled to Iconium (in Galatia, about

90 miles southeast of Antioch). However, the disciples in Antioch were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (perhaps including miraculous gifts).

PREACHING IN ICONIUM (ACTS 14:1-6)

14:1-6. In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas again taught in the Jewish synagogue and a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. However, they again faced opposition from the unbelieving Jews, who stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:8; 2 Peter 2:2). Paul and Barnabas, though, stayed for an extended time and spoke God's word with boldness. God was also testifying to the accuracy of His word of grace they spoke through the accompanying signs and wonders (Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:1-4). The people were divided into two camps: Those who rejected the message (siding with the Jews, v. 2) and those who accepted it (siding with the apostles, evidently referring to them in the general sense of the word, meaning to be sent out, Acts 13:1-3). Both Jews and Gentiles, along with their various rulers, tried to harm and stone them. But, Paul and Barnabas found out about the plot and fled to Lystra (about 20 miles south of Iconium) and Derbe (about 60 miles southeast of Lystra), both in the Lycaonian district of Galatia.

PREACHING IN LYSTRA AND DERBE (ACTS 14:7-20)

14:7-20. In Lystra, a man who had never walked listened intently to Paul. Paul saw the man had faith to be made well (possibly to be healed physically; or to be receptive to the gospel and be healed spiritually). When Paul told him to stand on his feet, he jumped up and began to walk around! As the people saw what happened, they began shouting in their own language that the gods had come down in human form. They called Barnabas "Zeus" (the chief/most powerful deity) and Paul "Hermes" (the god of eloquence, messenger for the gods). The priest of Zeus (whose temple was outside town) brought bulls and wreaths (probably put around the bulls' necks) to the gate to be sacrificed to Barnabas and Paul. However, Paul and Barnabas were grieved (tore their robes) and rushed to stop the crowd from trying to worship them (being people just like the others, Acts 10:25-26)! They pleaded that the people would recognize their message was meant to turn people from such useless idolatry to the living God. Only the living God who made heaven, earth, the sea, and everything in them (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 146:6) is worthy of such worship. Although not approving of idolatry in the past, God had allowed it to go on in the various nations (not giving them all the guidance He had to Israel in Old Testament times). Still, God always

had a witness for His existence and goodness (Romans 1:18-23) – including the rain and food He provided. Despite these words, the people were barely stopped from sacrificing to them. After this, some Jews who had caused trouble for Paul and Barnabas in Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra and won over the crowds. The people stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead (2 Corinthians 11:25). As Paul’s body had been dumped outside the city, the disciples gathered around him (perhaps including Timothy, his mother, and his grandmother, Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:10-12), and Paul got up and went back into the town. The next day, he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

RETURN TRIP TO ANTIOCH (ACTS 14:21-28)

14:21-28. Paul and Barnabas continued the work of preaching the gospel in Derbe so that many were made into disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). After their work in Derbe, they then began their return trip. As they did, they went back through the three towns where they experienced significant persecution (Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch). They were concerned about the disciples there and desired to encourage them to continue in the faith of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:27; Jude 1:3), encouraging them that enduring many hardships (struggles, tribulations) are necessary to entering God’s kingdom (the eternal kingdom in Heaven, Romans 8:14-18; 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 4:12-19). As the disciples grew and churches were formed in each of these places, Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders (shepherds, overseers, Acts 20:17-35; 1 Peter 5:1-3) in every church (who meet God’s qualifications, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They prayed with fasting and committed the care of these disciples to the Lord. Paul and Barnabas then continued their return journey by passing through Pisidia (southern Galatia), through Pamphylia (province south of Galatia), preached the word in Perga (in Pamphylia, Acts 13:13), to Attalia (seaport in Pamphylia), and sailed back to Antioch (of Syria). When they arrived, they gathered the church and reported what God had done through them on their trip, including how the door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles. They then spent a significant amount of time with the disciples in Antioch.

CONCLUSION

God used Paul and Barnabas (being sent by the church in Antioch) to preach the gospel in many places on this first journey. Disciples had been made and churches had been established. Now, Paul and Barnabas were spending time in Antioch before their next traveling mission.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

How did people respond to the gospel in Antioch (of Pisidia)?

What did Paul and Barnabas experience in Antioch (of Pisidia)?

How did people respond to the gospel in Iconium?

What did Paul and Barnabas experience in Iconium?

How did people respond to the gospel in Lystra and Derbe?

What did Paul and Barnabas experience in Lystra?

Why did Paul and Barnabas return through the towns where they had been persecuted?

What did Paul and Barnabas do when they arrived back in Antioch (of Syria)?

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