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Acts 14

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

We are going to see first-hand here that some, many of the Jews in this part of Asia Minor not only reject the Mercy and Grace of God, but they attack intending to kill the messengers. Not all, but the majority it appears take this position. The thing to wonder about was it out of dedicated respect for the Law of God, or was it out of jealousy that God would include the gentile “dogs” in His invitation of salvation? Would the Jews throw Grace and Mercy out of the synagogue and lock themselves in with the Law?

Just a side note on that idea, would America throw God out of the classroom and lock themselves in the schools with GodsLaw?

1And 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.

Even though it becomes more and more clear to Paul and Barnabas that they are being sent to the gentiles and in this case

the term “Greek” means gentile it is just that these gentiles spoke Greek.

Neither Paul nor Barnabas even though committed to their ministry to the gentiles could not resist telling their own countrymen, brothers about the Good News. Some would respond with joy and repentance, others not so much.

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

The first signs of a jealous response by the Jews. How could a message of salvation ever include these “gentile dogs”. There was a definite caste system at work here. The Jews allowed the gentiles to come to the synagogue, but they would not really fellowship with them through meals etc. The only thing that changed that was when the Jews and Gentiles heard the Good News, embraced it and each other and became brothers and sisters in Christ. That was an affront to the non-believing Jews.

3Long 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.

“Long time” is a phrase without explanation. Some commentators assess from weeks to months, but we just don’t know precisely. Several factors accompanied the preaching of God’s Word.

Boldness from the Holy Spirit was granted Paul and Barnabas. God's Grace was shown in the testimony towards and unbelieving world. God granted unknowns signs and wonders to accompany the teaching of Jesus Christ.

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

Whatever the length of time, it was filled with Joy in preaching the Gospel of Christ and also with tension and animosity.

So, this describes "the multitude of the city" meaning the entire population of Iconium. Part of those living there sided with the unsaved Jews and the saved Jews and gentiles sided with Paul and Barnabas.

5And 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,

A challenging verse to understand. The best understanding that I have seen is that the unsaved Jews went to the authorities of the town and put pressure on the unsaved gentiles to join with the Jews in assaulting Paul and Barnabas. The desire of the unsaved Jews was to stone them as was the Jewish custom for blasphemy which is what they accused Paul and Barnabas of doing.

6They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7And there they preached the gospel.

Apparently told of the impending attack, they left Iconium and fled to Lystra and Derbe. These two towns are in the mountains southeast of Iconium. The mountains were hard traveling and had robbers who would attack those passing through. So, our apostles gave up a known threat of attack for an unknown threat of attack.

The Visit to Lystra and Derbe

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

To know such a detail, after the healing undoubtedly Luke must have investigated how this man had become injured. Many in the town must have known this man his entire life, though it does not tell us his age.

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

This lame man could hear Paul speaking so had to have had help in getting to where he was in public to ask for alms. Hearing Paul, and likely through a gift of discernment (the Holy Spirit can give gifts to and whom He chooses when He chooses), determining

that through Paul he could be healed. He just did not know exactly where the power of healing came from but would find out.

So, in this case the “faith to be healed” resided in the crippled man, but not of his own doing. Hearing the Good News that Paul was speaking coming through the Holy Spirit we are told, reached this man and with it came “faith”. We are told that this man was looking at Paul intently, meaning he was staring into his eyes, enough so that it got Paul’s attention. At the urging of the Holy Spirit we find:

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

Not much fan fare here. The Holy Spirit spoke through Paul, the man responded and that was that. “he leaped and walked”.

11And 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.

A bit of a miscue here on the part of the observers. There was clear communication between the Holy Spirit and Paul and the Holy Spirit and the crippled man, but somehow the crowd mistook the power and its source.

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

They gave Paul and Barnabas the Roman terms of Jupiter and Mercurius. The Greek names would be Zeus and Hermes. Little matter as to what they called them, it was idol worship. The apparent reason Paul was called Mercurius or Hermes was his eloquence of speech an attribute given to that false god. Once the crowd had crowned them with these un-godly titles, the place erupted.

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

Obviously this party can't go on and Paul and Barnabas have to put a stop to it.

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

This was a Jewish reaction to what was perceived to be blasphemy. When Paul and Barnabas realized they were being looked on as god's their reaction was one of horror and their response left no doubt in the seers mind as to what the two thought of being called gods.

15And 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: [16](#)Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Paul and Barnabas want to make it clear that they are human with all the same desires and frailties that these people have. It is these very passions or desires that have put mankind at such risk. The source of this is man's free will. It is systemic, afflicting all of mankind in every nation. Now when we think of free will we think of course that we make our own choices on all things. In reality there is an unseen force that is pushing mankind in one direction: evil. The only counter to man's nature is turning our lives over to Christ and striving to walk in His Will, against our own flesh.

God has allowed Free Will as He did pre flood, in that man could choose his own destiny. It, evil got so pervasive that God had to intervene and end humanity except a remnant. Even after that new beginning it did not take man long to pursue every evil, creating in their own minds gods made of stone and wood. Brining humanity once again to evil thoughts just like in these towns believing that two men speaking the Good News were god's, created in the minds of man.

Now, Paul must convince these folks that he and Barnabas are simple humans but with news that will change their lives. So, he begins to tell this larger crowd about Christ and what He did.

17Nevertheless 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. 18And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Vs 18 is speaking of a few Jews who had restrained themselves from joining in with the worship of Paul and Barnabas. Back in vs 8 we know that Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra. We also know from several other Biblical verses that some that were saved during this missionary journey were a, grandmother, mother, and son. Timothy called Timotheus in Greek as his father was Greek, but his mother was Jewish. Timothy surrendered to be circumcised to follow Paul on his missionary work. This all took place in Lystra.

2 Timothy 1: 3I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; 4Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; 5When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

19And 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.

Recall how Paul and Barnabas had fled Iconium from the threat of death by stoning and came to Lystra. The anger of those from Iconium followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra to now stir up the city who had previously wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods, to now stone them.

20Howbeit, 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.

Nobody dies till God says they die. Especially His Own, who are filling a purpose that God has detailed them on. Those from Antioch assumed they had killed Paul with stoning, but not so. He rose up, probably battered and bruised but none the less alive. Just to prove the point he went back into the city, which was likely an encouragement to Lois, Eunice and Timothy among others who had believed. They thought Paul dead but now they see him alive. So, Paul and Barnabas set off toward Derbe, which was about 20 miles away. The problem being that this journey again took them into the mountains where robbers would wait for travelers and rob them. Maybe not Paul and Barnabas but others would be robbed.

The Return to Syrian Antioch

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

Every place they had gone there were some that would come to Christ. It is now their intent to complete the mission by returning to those locations and encourage the new Believers.

22Confirming 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. 23And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

It was an early practice to place in positions of authority those who were found to be faithful and filled with the Holy Spirit.

24And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

From Pulpit Commentary

“Paul and Barnabas had come from Cyprus to Perga (see Acts 13:13, note). Thence to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They now returned from Derbe by Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Perga. But, instead of taking ship at Perga, after preaching the Word there they went down to Attalia, now Adalia or Satalia, the chief seaport of Pamphylia, some miles west of the mouth of the Cestrus, probably hearing that a ship was about to sail thence to Antioch. It does not appear that they made any converts or even preached at Attalia.”

It is believed by most commentators that Paul's first missionary journey lasted about 2 years (44 to 46 AD). He and Barnabas return to Antioch and remain there for about 3 years (46 to 49 AD).

The Report to the Church at Antioch

26And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. 27And 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. 28And there they abode long time with the disciples.

It is hard for us to read these words and really understand all that had transpired. Consider all of this was put on a single page at the most two pages in the Bible. On those two pages represents 2 years of a person's life. In those 2 years Paul and Barnabas traveled by sea and land covering several hundred miles, visiting many cities. They were welcomed in some and threatened and beaten or stoned in others. People's lives were change both physically and spiritually. Eternity with Christ was brought to many. Many more rejected the free gift and their bodies lie in the dirt to this day waiting to be raised at the Great White Throne Judgement. In the meantime, their souls are subjected to the same thing that the rich man experienced in the abyss across

from Abraham's bosom, in Paradise. Paradise is now in heaven with Christ, but Hell is there holding its captives.

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