

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #242

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 14

Ministry at Iconium

1. Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews and so spoke that a great multitude both of Jews and of the Greeks believed.
2. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.
3. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
4. But the multitude of the city was divided; part sided with the Jews and part with the apostles.
5. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them.

Iconium, now known as Konya, was a city about 90 miles from Antioch. Iconium is in Galatia, which is part of modern Turkey. Paul and Barnabas were there on this first missionary journey about 47 or 48 AD. Iconium claimed to be older than Damascus, or the city commonly called in Syria *al-Sham*, which is considered one of the oldest, continuously inhabited, city in the world. Paul and Barnabas follow the usual pattern of going first to the Jew in the synagogue and then to the Gentile. They spoke under such great anointing that many Jews and Gentiles believed. But the unbelieving and jealous Jews tried to stop this move of the Holy Spirit by speaking against the messengers, but Paul and Barnabas dug in their heels and stood their ground and stayed and preached that more boldly with signs and wonders following. Still the city was divided, and in the end the rulers of the city were stirred up and were persuaded to stone Paul and Barnabas. What the mob wanted to do was nothing short of a lynching. Fortunately for us and for all of civilization, Paul and Barnabas were able to escape.

As Paul and Barnabas got further and further from the more civilized areas they put their lives more and more in jeopardy. They were opposed in the civilized areas, but these areas were under Roman law, and Rome kept order

and quickly crushed any upheaval so the people were less likely to stir up trouble.

A Lame Man Is Healed

6. They became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.
7. And they were preaching the gospel there.
8. And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.
9. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,
10. said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

This is Paul's first recorded miracle of healing. It is similar to Peter's healing of the lame man in Acts 3 and is symbolic of the "crippled" walk of mankind, a cripple in his spiritual walk from birth.

Paul and Barnabas Are Deified

11. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"
12. And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.
13. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.
14. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out
15. and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,
16. who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.
17. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
18. And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

The people in this region had been taught a legend that Zeus and Hermes had once come to the earth in disguise. No one would show these strangers hospitality and take them in, except for some peasants, Philemon and Baucis. Because of this, these gods wiped out all of the population except for Philemon and Baucis and made them guardians of a magnificent temple and also turned them into great trees when they died. Barnabas must have had a noble presence, and so they thought he was Zeus. Hermes was the messenger of the gods, and so they thought Paul was Hermes. Of course Barnabas and Paul totally rejected their worship and tore their clothes at this blasphemy.

Notice that Paul uses a totally different approach with non-Jews. He no longer tries to win the people through the history of the Jews or the writings of scripture but goes back to nature and the creator of it all to try to win them over.

Paul Is Stoned

19. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

We don't know if these Jews had been following Paul and Barnabas from Antioch and Iconium in an attempt to destroy their work of bringing people to Jesus or if they were in Lystra on business and got caught up in all the excitement. Many came to Lystra to buy corn. Perhaps these Jews were just on business when they ran into Paul still preaching and were shocked and angry that he still was converting Jews and Gentiles to Jesus.

I believe this was the only time Paul was stoned. (2nd Corinthians 11:24-25: *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck....*) Many believe he actually died but was raised from the dead. At any rate, the people believed he was dead, and they dragged his body out of town because they feared Roman justice and were trying to get rid of his body to escape the consequences of their riot. But Paul was not dead or either was raised from the dead, and his first act was, with sheer courage, to go back into the city.

Paul was an incredibly brave and persistent minister of the Gospel. Brother Don Van Hoosier reminds us of 30 things that accompanied Paul's ministry from 2nd Corinthians 4 and should be expected to accompany ours:

1. Endurance and patience needed with people
2. Pressure/tribulation as a vise
3. Hardships, lack of what is needed
4. Distress, calamities
5. Bodily beaten, suffering injury
6. Imprisoned unjustly
7. Rioting as a result of your message
8. Laboring tirelessly
9. Sleepless night watches of prayer
10. Hunger, no food available
11. Being innocent, desiring purity, but accused of the opposite
12. Having knowledge and spiritual insight but ignored when sharing it
13. Having patience, longsuffering
14. Showing kindness, not repaid in kind
15. Working with the Holy Spirit
16. Having genuine unfeigned love, no attempt to use people, but they use you
17. Speaking the truth, hated for it
18. Displaying power of God
19. Using weapons of righteousness
20. Ministering amid honor and dishonor
21. Being defamed, evil reports spread about you that are untrue
22. Branded as deceivers by some, yet known by many as vindicated in truth, honesty
23. Treated as a nobody but known to God's people
24. Anguish of mind is as death at times
25. Chastened by suffering, yet not killed
26. Grieved, mourning
27. Poor but bestowing riches to others
28. Having nothing, possessing all
29. Having a mouth open to the sheep
30. Having a heart enlarged for them

Ministry on the Return Trip

21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22. strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

23. So when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

Paul later writes to his son in the faith, Timothy: *Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me* (2nd Timothy 3:11). Jesus said in Luke 14 that we are to count the cost of discipleship. What Paul endured in ministry is amazing. He even returned back to the very city that stoned him because he cared more for the disciples than he did about his own life or suffering. And he is "straight-up" with believers, i.e. *We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*. How we need to understand that *taking up our cross daily* is no picnic in the park! We, who follow on to *know* the Lord (Hosea 6:3), will suffer persecution (2nd Timothy 3:12) and will have many tribulations (Acts 14:22).

The Apostles ordained elders in every church. They were ordained with prayer and fasting and with the laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:1-2 list *laying on of hands* as one of the doctrines of Christ). The qualifications of Elders are given in 1st Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:4-9. These passages give in depth characteristics. I will summarize these as briefly as I can: no accusations against him, husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, self-control, of good behavior, modest, given to hospitality and generous, apt to teach, not given to wine, not one who whips the sheep with the Word, not after money, patient, not a fighter for himself or his position, not covetous, must be able to rule his own family and house well, not a novice, must be proven, must have a good report of outsiders, such as in business and work life.

The ministry of an elder is found in Acts 20:27-35 and 1st Peter 5:1-4. (Other passages that add to this are Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1st Timothy 5:17; Psalms 107:32; James 5:14; Philippians 1:1; and 1st Peter 5:1-7.) These ministries include the following: a. Ministry of the Word; b. Ruling, tending, shepherding the Flock of God; c. Elders together constitute the Presbytery; d. Ministry and prayer to the sick; e. Oversight of the local church; f. Elders and Deacons together minister in the local church.

Elders were never voted in or out by the people. They were ordained by the Laying on of Hands by the Presbytery or by Apostles and Prophets, before the Church.

Report on the First Missionary Journey

26. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

27. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

28. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

What a wonderful thing to be able to go back home to the home folks and report what God has done. Paul and Barnabas always made it clear that it was not they who had done the work. God had done the work. They were just laborers. They had been gone from about AD 45 to AD 47 and stayed in Antioch probably from about 47 AD to 50 AD when they left for the Council at Jerusalem in AD 50.

WE'LL SOON BE DONE WITH TROUBLES AND TRIALS

Cleavant Derricks