

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 14TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

POISONED (ACTS 14:1-7) THEY SPOKE

After leaving Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas traveled approximately 90 miles southeast to Iconium, where they immediately went into the synagogue to begin teaching.

- Given their past experiences, it might seem unwise to continue starting in the synagogues, but Paul remained undeterred. **This perseverance is enabled only by the Spirit.**

"POISONED THEIR MINDS"

After jealousy arose among the unbelieving Jews, they launched a smear campaign against all who believed, causing a significant division in the city.

- What does it mean to poison someone's mind? **Jealousy, anger, and distrust can influence how we perceive others and how we represent them to others. We must be cautious about who we allow to speak into our lives and how we speak into others.**

"MESSAGE OF HIS GRACE"

Despite the opposition, Paul and Barnabas were inspired to become even bolder, and they stayed for several months to teach about God's grace.

- The message of grace had a very polarizing effect, particularly among Jews who clung to the law in their self-righteousness. **This message shifted the focus away from them and put it on God.**
- This was the very strength that Paul and Barnabas relied on—a strength that was solely from God.

THEY FLED

After the people divided over Paul and Barnabas's teaching, some conspired with the rulers of Iconium to stone them. **This illustrates how the gospel has the power to unite hearts while also creating division among others.**

- Once Paul and Barnabas learned of the plot, they fled to other areas. **They remained steadfast in the Spirit, fully aware of the work that God had entrusted to them.**

IDOLS (ACTS 14:8-20)

LYSTRA

It was a small town, located about 20 miles south of Iconium. Lystra served as a Roman frontier outpost and became a hub for retired Roman soldiers. The town had very little Jewish influence, making it one of the first places visited without a synagogue; however, we later learn that Timothy was from here.

- The residents of Lystra, often seen as uneducated, held firmly to pagan beliefs and embodied a spirit reminiscent of the Wild West.

A HEALING

While preaching in town, Paul noticed a man who had been unable to walk since birth.

- Sensing the man's faith through discernment of the Holy Spirit, Paul boldly told him to stand up. Miraculously, the man not only stood but jumped up and began to walk.
- God was able to use Paul because he stayed sensitive to the Holy Spirit.**

THEY ARE GODS

Witnesses, in their awe, misinterpreted the miraculous events and proclaimed that Paul and Barnabas were gods. They referred to Paul as "Hermes," and Barnabas as "Zeus."

- The locals began speaking in their native tongue, making it unclear to Paul and Barnabas what was happening. When they saw the priest coming to sacrifice to them, it became evident that the people believed the man's healing was **due to a power the people thought they controlled.**

A FALSE BELIEF

The people knew a story of these two gods visiting them before, and no one had shown them hospitality except an older couple.

- As a result, the couple was rewarded by having their cottage transformed into a temple, while the rest faced destruction by a flood.
- Inspired by either fear or the hope of a blessing, the people made sure to welcome the "gods" appropriately. **Where do we hold false beliefs about God?**

"WE ARE PEOPLE... LIKE YOU"

Because of the people's blasphemy, Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and explained that they were mere mortals, just like them. They quickly redirected the glory away from themselves, pointing to the one true living God.

- This may have served as a test from God for Paul and Barnabas, a moment to reveal their character and how they would accept praise.** Their response stood in stark contrast to that of Herod in Chapter 12.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Paul tailored his sermon for people who were used to superstitious worship rooted in a polytheistic belief system.

- He revealed the truth that there is only **one** God and that everything good they had experienced was a result of His common grace and mercy.
- It is important for us to recognize God's goodness in every aspect of our lives. Are we able to see it? Are we ready to share it?**

SHORT-LIVED FAME

Jews from Antioch and Iconium caught up with Paul and Barnabas and swiftly turned the crowd against them again, effectively convincing them that they truly were not gods but rather "imposters" trying to deceive them.

- The same crowd that had been poised to worship Paul now turned their fury on him and began to stone him instead. One can only imagine how this must have reminded him of the stoning of Stephen.

NOT STOPPED

Paul was broken, bloody, and seemingly lifeless, but his friends gathered around him in prayer and love. To their surprise, he suddenly got up!

- Undeterred by what had just happened, Paul returned to the place that almost cost him his life. If that wasn't a sign of grit, the very next day he began a 60-mile trek to Derbe.
- Paul was filled with motivation and tenacity, inspired by the good news of the gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

PLANTING (ACTS 14:21-28)

BACKTRACKING

Instead of continuing south to Tarsus and then returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas chose to go back to the very place where they had faced severe persecution.

- Refusing to be paralyzed by fear, they returned to strengthen and encourage the brothers and sisters who still had to endure that same persecution. **Paul was driven not only to share the gospel but also to disciple those who had committed their lives to Christ.**

APPOINTED LEADERSHIP

To ensure that the churches remained in good condition, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders, forming a "pastoral team" from the local congregations.

- Preparing new converts to serve as elders would have taken considerable time and dedication. Through prayer and fasting, they entrusted the congregations to the Lord, confident that **Jesus would protect His bride.**

BACK IN ANTIOCH

Once they had firmly established the new churches, Paul and Barnabas returned to where it had all begun to share the wonderful news of what **God had done.**

- They were prepared to embark on a new chapter in their journey, during which they could enjoy fellowship, recharge, and continue to encourage the churches in Galatia.

CHAPTERS

- We all are going through different chapters in our lives. Some represent good times and moments of restoration, others might be challenges, quiet periods, or times of suffering that we never want to revisit.
- If we are unaware of where we stand in our journey, we may never fully understand what God is trying to teach us.**
- What chapter are you in?**

PROBLEMS

- As we navigate certain stages in our lives, it can be easy to forget God when we become complacent. We may not trust Him during challenging times, which can lead to fear, or we might even feel He has completely abandoned us in difficult situations, causing a loss of faith.
- These feelings often stem from a misunderstanding of His character and lack of awareness of what He has already done for us.**
- So, what has He done for you?**

PERSEVERANCE

- When we begin to understand God's goodness, even in the midst of our current circumstances, it empowers us with unwavering endurance.
- This transforms our character into one that is wholly committed to Christ.**
- Imagine what would happen if we were completely sold out for Christ. What type of hope would be produced in us? Let us confidently follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives, fueled by the love of Christ, so we can become "those" Christians!**