

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 14TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

### PERSISTENT GOSPEL (ACTS 14:1-7)

#### THE SAME THING...

To understand what is happening at the beginning of Chapter 14, we must have knowledge of Chapter 13. Paul and Barnabas are still on the move, intent on sharing the gospel and planting churches.

- Their mission has not changed, but neither has their reception from others. **As the gospel is shared, the Church grows, as does persecution.**

#### BACK TO THE SYNAGOGUE

In Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were dismissed from the synagogue, and here, in Iconium, they decide the synagogue is the best place to start. Some Jews believed, and some did not.

- Regardless of the reception, Paul and Barnabas were doing what they were called to do. **Poor reception from individuals should not discourage us from persisting in God's will.**

#### SIMPLE GOSPEL

Luke records that they "spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed." The gospel they shared was simple.

- If we claim to follow Christ, we must also be evangelists. The gospel we share must not be difficult to understand. **If people walk away from the gospel, it must be because of their desire and not an inability to understand.**

#### SOME REFUSED TO BELIEVE

The Greek word used in verse 2, *apeitheo*, for "the unbelieving" is synonymous with willful disobedience and non-compliance.

- There were those who did not simply misunderstand or miss the point but **refused** to believe. It did not end with their refusal but continued as they rallied others against the gospel. Their resistance turned to hatred.

#### BITTERNESS GOVERNED OVER SOME

Following their refusal, the unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the remaining Gentiles. Here, the phrase "poisoned their minds" is derived from the Greek word meaning to **injure** or **abuse**.

- Those who reject the gospel are enemies of God (James 4:4). An enemy will stop at nothing to destroy their opposition, and we must not be surprised when we are confronted similarly.

#### SIGNS AND WONDERS

Not only did their verbal message testify to the Lord, but He also "enabl[ed] them to do signs and wonders." These signs were a testament to the work of the Holy Spirit in them and not something they performed of their own accord.

- Their works confirmed the gospel message they had shared. **The message we share with others must be confirmed in what we do.**

#### SHOULD THEY STAY OR SHOULD THEY GO?

Earlier in this passage, in response to the poisoning of minds against them, Paul and Barnabas decided to stay and speak boldly, but now, at the threat of mistreatment and stoning, they flee.

Why the sudden change of heart?

- Some will resist, some will be tentatively inquisitive, and some will be ready to accept the gospel.

### MISTAKEN IDENTITY (ACTS 14:8-20)

#### PREACH, THEN HEAL

The healing of this man in Lystra followed Paul's teaching and not the other way around. As we saw in the previous passage, the work proved the message. The apostles had not gone out with the sole intention of healing, but it was done (through the power of the Holy Spirit) to support the gospel.

- Performing miracles in Jesus' name should always point people to Jesus.

#### GREEK GODS

With such prominent dedication to Greek mythology and the gods, the crowds glorified Paul and Barnabas as Greek gods in response to the miraculous healing. They rationalized miracles by declaring that they belonged to another universe.

- Because the people of Lystra were familiar with Zeus and Hermes, they credited the miraculous to an improper and incapable source.

#### BLASPHEMY

Throughout the Bible and in Jewish culture, when an individual was feeling anguish, sadness, or frustration with themselves or others regarding repentance or blasphemy, they would tear their robes. In verse 14, Paul did this to express his frustration with the people and his desire for them to know the truth.

- **How do we feel when truth is misunderstood?**

#### TURN FROM PAGAN WORSHIP TO TRUE WORSHIP

Paul wanted the people of Lystra to turn from "worthless things to the living God." He saw them as creations of God, in His image (Genesis 1:27).

- **Whether it is the created or the Creator, we all worship something (Romans 1:25). God, in His entire Trinity, is deserving of true worship.** For from Him and through Him are all things, for which He deserves glory (Romans 11:36).

### ESCALATED PERSECUTION

Another uprising begins in this chapter when "some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium" to Lystra. Hatred had taken root in some of them, such that they were desperate to travel to Lystra, "win over the crowds," and attempt to kill Paul.

- **Evil is eternally opposed to good, and vice versa.** During this persecution, most would have fled, but Paul left with Barnabas "the next day."

### PLANTING CHURCHES (ACTS 14:21-28)

#### DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

The Church was commissioned through the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Starting in verse 21, Paul and Barnabas live this out by planting churches through the process of making disciples.

- As Christians, one way we mature is by sharpening one another (Proverbs 27:17). **A dull tool, or a wrong tool, cannot sharpen another.**

#### THEY RETURNED AND ENCOURAGED

Not only had Paul and Barnabas worked through these various regions preaching the gospel, but **they also returned** to these areas to **check in**, and they **encouraged** those who were left to continue the work they had begun.

- We must not grow weary in doing Kingdom work. **People will come to know Jesus if we do not give up as evangelists** (Galatians 6:9).

#### CHURCH STRUCTURE

Paul and Barnabas desired for the planted churches to thrive and not just survive. This is why it was so crucially important to appoint elders, pray, and fast.

- A healthy church will have **direction, purpose, and layers of leadership**, among many other things. These things are clarified through prayer, fasting, and the appointing of elders.

#### CELEBRATION AND FELLOWSHIP

Following many of these missionary journeys contained in Acts, there is a time of celebration and fellowship among the disciples. Here, they reported **all that God had done**, including more of the Gentiles responding to the gospel.

- We must not forsake gathering as God's people (Hebrews 10:25). **It is there that we renew and unite in His Spirit, ready to continue His work.**

#### A DIVIDED PEOPLE

- **When it comes to Jesus, we land on one of two sides. To be apathetic or indecisive is also to decide. We are either for Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30).**
- In Iconium, the people were divided, and in our current culture, we are divided. On which side do we land?
- **Are we pleased, or are we looking for change?**

#### PASSION FOR JESUS

- The apostles and disciples had such a heart for people that they were willing to endure hatred and the threat of death for others to hear about Jesus.
- **Do we have that same passion for others?**
- **What is standing in the way of us truly experiencing the life-changing power of Jesus?**

#### PERSECUTION

- **"Consider it a great joy...whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2-3).**
- "It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).
- In persecution, we must rejoice as we share in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13).

#### PAST AND PRESENT

- God's power is still present, the miraculous is still possible, and the gospel message is still simple yet perfect.
- If God has not changed, has the Church changed?
- **If we do not see the modern Church as the same Church that exists in Acts, the difference is not God but man.**