

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 14TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

A CITY DIVIDED (ACTS 14:1-7) AS USUAL...

Paul and Barnabas had developed a strategy when entering a new city. They first went to the synagogue to speak to people familiar with God: **Jews and God-fearing "Greeks."**

- The good news is the same for everyone, and it doesn't change. Strategies and tactics are necessary but **should be adaptable through the leading of the Holy Spirit.**

UNITY AND DIVISION

As in every city so far, in Iconium there were Jews who believed and Jews who didn't. The Gentiles mentioned in v. 2 are different from the "Greeks" from the synagogue. Faith united the believing Jews with the Greeks. Unbelief and poison united the unbelieving Jews with the Gentiles.

- Jesus said **belief in Him would bring division** (Matthew 10:34-35). This is evident here.

TESTIMONIES

When the **apostles** testified about God, God testified to their "message of his grace" with **signs and wonders**. Despite the obvious display of God's power, the city was divided, and persecution was bubbling.

- **God supports us** when we are in His will but doesn't promise us smooth sailing. We will attract wanted and unwanted attention.

TIME TO GO

The Jews' poisonous talk escalated and prompted the rulers' plan of severe persecution. The apostles **followed Jesus' instructions** in Matthew: "When they persecute you in one town, flee to another" (Matthew 10:23).

- The apostles weren't discouraged but continued preaching the gospel. God used persecution to push the apostles onward.

WHO MADE THE HEAVENS? (ACTS 14:8-20)

ADAPTING STRATEGY

Lystra did not have a synagogue, though there were Jews (including Timothy and his family, among others). The apostles shifted their strategy, going straight to preaching to the crowds (primarily Gentiles).

- We are called to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). **When our audience changes, so should our strategy.**

"FAITH TO BE HEALED"

Paul had been given discernment to see the lame man's faith. This was another wonder God used to **validate the gospel.**

- Sometimes, we have the faith but do not receive the healing. This doesn't mean we are lacking in faith. It means **God has a purpose** in our struggle (Job; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9). We can trust Him.

ZEUS AND HERMES

A legend of Lycaonia, "Philemon and Baucis," told of Zeus and Hermes coming to visit a town disguised as wayfarers, and only one poor couple was hospitable to the gods (*Metamorphoses*, Book VIII).

- The people assumed the apostles were these gods because they fit the category, so they did the only sensible thing: offer a sacrifice.

Paul and Barnabas didn't know what was going on at first, likely because they didn't understand Lycaonian. When someone finally explained, their reaction was to tear their robes, which was the Jewish reaction to blasphemy. They were the objects of blasphemy, and it horrified them!

- Paul and Barnabas were **careful to point people to God. We need to be careful too.**

"TURN FROM THESE WORTHLESS THINGS"

The apostles' speech here is the beginning of the gospel for people unfamiliar with Judaism. **The "worthless things" were the gods and all the things associated with worshiping them.** In Galatians 4:9, Paul asks the Believers from this region, "How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elements?"

- **Religious observance cannot save.**

TURN TO THE LIVING GOD

"Turn from," then turn to. This is repentance. Paul and Barnabas go on to use the idea of **common grace** (Romans 1:19-20), crediting God with the things the crowds normally associated with Zeus (rain, fruitful seasons, hospitality).

- Do we **give God the credit** for His goodness, His gifts, and the good He causes in our lives? (James 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:17).

IF YOU CAN'T WORSHIP THEM, KILL THEM

The apostles barely restrained the priest of Zeus and the crowds from sacrificing bulls to them. Jews from Antioch (**100 miles**) and Iconium (see v. 2), along with the crowds, stoned Paul.

- A natural outcome of hero worship. This is also reminiscent of Jesus' Passion Week. **People get upset when they can't worship who, what, and how they want.**

THINKING HE WAS DEAD

Was Paul dead? Luke was a physician but wasn't present. Either way, **new Believers** gathered around and **witnessed the miracle of Paul getting up**. Was the miracle through them and their prayers? The ambiguity of the details lends neither to Paul, nor Barnabas, nor anyone else Luke talked to being sure of either thing.

- **But he walked back into town. Powerful!**

CONTINUING IN THE FAITH (ACTS 14:21-28) STRENGTHENING THE DISCIPLES

Not much is said about Derbe. There were many disciples made and no opposition. Despite the persecution in previous towns/cities, Paul and Barnabas backtracked specifically to **pour into the disciples** they had made and to appoint elders for the newborn churches. Still no opposition.

- Paul's miracle had an amazing effect! **His courage bore witness to God's power.**

Paul's message to the disciples was two-fold but related: **continue in the faith and endure hardships**. This was how he strengthened the disciples.

- Anything worth doing is worth suffering for. **This is especially true for following Jesus.** We must be willing to suffer for Christ. **If it was easy, everyone would do it.**

"COMMITTED THEM TO THE LORD"

The selection process for elders in the church must have been purely **Holy Spirit-led** because none of these Believers were spiritually older than a few weeks. "Praying with fasting" shows the commitment to the seriousness of the office.

- **The Holy Spirit gifts as He wills** for His purposes (1 Corinthians 12:11), and the apostles had **discernment to see** where He was gifting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The apostles stopped in Perga to speak "the word." They hadn't previously preached there, and this was where John Mark had left them (13:13). We don't have details, but the two things are likely linked and **probably involved some hardship.**

- **Perseverance** is not only about fighting through struggle but also about **discerning** when to leave and fight another day.

FINISHED BUSINESS

After they arrived back home, they gathered the people who were supporting them (through prayer and finance) to celebrate how God "had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles." It was now time to recharge and reflect. Paul wrote Galatians during this time.

- **We should celebrate God's work in and through us with those who love us.**

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

- We are all called to "make disciples of all nations." That starts with evangelism but continues with discipleship.
- The good news is for everyone, but being **good ambassadors for Christ** means **adapting to the Holy Spirit's guidance.**
- We must remain **humble** and point the **glory back to God.**

GOD'S PURPOSES

- God will support us when we are on His side, but **we do not get to choose when and how.**
- **Trust that God has a purpose in all things, in the good gifts and in the afflictions.** "We know that **all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose**" (Romans 8:28).

JOYFUL ENDURANCE

- "Affliction produces endurance, **endurance** produces **proven character**, and proven character produces **hope**" (Romans 5:3-4).
- If we endure, we will see fruit. Hindsight is 20/20.
- **When we see fruit, we should celebrate!**
- **Having a true relationship with Jesus is not easy, but there is not a better life to be had!**