

ON THE ROAD WITH PAUL AND BARNABAS

TEXT: ACTS 14:1-28

INTRODUCTION:

1. Acts 14 is a continuation of the apostle Paul's first missionary journey, begun in Antioch in Syria (13:1-5).
2. We have here in chapter 14, a further account of the progress of the gospel, by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles.
3. Great advances were made, yet they met with fierce opposition from the unbelieving Jews (cf. 14:2, 19).
4. W. Graham Scroggie wrote, "The Divine program in this dispensation is, not the *conversion*, but the *evangelization* of the world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*).
5. In this dispensation we are to go forth proclaiming the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some will believe, but some will not (Acts 14:1-4).
6. Our Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matt. 13:47, 48).
7. The Lord and His angels sort them out (13:49, 50).

I. PREACHING IN ICONIUM (14:1-5)

II. PREACHING IN LYSTRA AND DERBE (14:6-20)

III. HEADING BACK HOME (14:21-28)

I. PREACHING IN ICONIUM (14:1-5)

1. We see in the four Gospels, that our Lord frequently went into the synagogues to preach.
2. Paul and Barnabas followed this same pattern (13:14-43; 14:1).
3. There was a good response to their message in Iconium. Acts 14:1 says, "that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."
4. "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren" (14:2).
5. There will always be division over the Gospel (14:3, 4). Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law

- against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).
6. Paul said in II Corinthians 2:15 and 16, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."
 7. When the assault appeared serious, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe (14:5, 6).
 8. It was not unwise to retreat. And it was not cowardly to retreat. It was necessary to move on so Paul and Barnabas could continue to preach the Gospel and win souls (14:7).

II. PREACHING IN LYSTRA AND DERBE (14:6-20)

1. At Lystra, a certain crippled man listened to Paul preach (14:7, 8).
2. As he preached, Paul, stedfastly looked at him and perceived that the man had faith to be healed (14:9).
3. Paul interrupted his message to say with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet" (14:10).
4. The crippled man not only stood to his feet, but "he leaped and walked" (14:10b).
5. This miracle reminds of the healing of the lame man in Acts 3. Acts 3:8 says he entered with Peter and John into the temple, "walking, and leaping, and praising God."
6. The response to this miracle in Lystra was immediate. When the people saw what Paul had done (really, *what God 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" (14:11).
7. Before they realized what was happening, the pagan people of Lystra called Barnabas, Jupiter. They called Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker (14:12). The office of Mercury was to deliver the messages of the gods; and as Paul only had been preaching, he was supposed to be Mercury.
8. Jupiter is the Latin name for Zeus, the national god of the Greeks.
9. Mercurius (or Mercury) is the Latin name for Hermes, whom the Greeks considered "the messenger of the gods."
10. *Barnes Notes'* says, "Jupiter was the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients...The worship of Jupiter was almost universal...He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a scepter of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and

- everything was subservient to his will except the Fates....Mercury was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travelers and shepherds; he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; he presided over orators, and declaimers (loud speakers), and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as the god of eloquence; and as light, rapid, and quick in his movements."
11. Perhaps because Paul and Barnabas were unfamiliar with "the speech of Lycaonia" (14:11), they did not realize they were about to be worshipped as gods (14:12, 13).
 12. Once they understood what was happening they objected (14:14-18).
 13. Paul told them they "should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (14:15). "Vanities" means things that are vain, useless, and of no purpose.
 14. Idols are vain and useless. The true God is "the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (14:15).
 15. The true, living God is not only the God of Israel, but the God of all the nations, who made heaven, and earth (14:15).
 16. "The living God, which made heaven, and earth..." (14:15). This reminds us that the promotion of evolution, and the attack on creationism is anti-Christian, pagan, and Satanic. The devil does not want people to believe that God "made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (14:15).
 17. "Suffered (permitted) all nations to walk in their own ways" (14:16), is similar to what Paul said to the men of Athens, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at" (Acts 17:30).
 18. God is good. Despite the sinful rebellion and unbelief of men, "gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (14:17).
 19. On the other hand, idols don't do any good; they confer no favors, and are therefore unworthy of confidence. In countries where idolatry is prevalent, the people suffer in poverty, crime, illiteracy, superstition, and degradation.
 20. Even after Paul's speech, he and Barnabas were scarcely able to restrain the people from offering sacrifices unto them (14:18).
 21. Once people have been brainwashed by false religion, it is difficult for them to change. But thank God, many are saved by the grace of God (cf. 14:21, 22).

22. While Paul and Barnabas were preaching the Gospel in Lystra, there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people to stone Paul (14:19).
23. Why they did not stone Barnabas we are not told. Perhaps he escaped.
24. Paul referred to this stoning in II Corinthians 11:25, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep..."
25. Paul refers to these persecutions and afflictions in II Timothy 3:10-12. "But thou hast fully known my...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. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
26. Acts 14:19 says the Jews dragged Paul out of the city, "supposing he had been dead." This indicates Paul was stoned so bad the Jews thought they succeeded in killing him.
27. Some people believe Paul was referring to this stoning in II Corinthians 12:1-5, where Paul writes of a man that was "caught up to the third heaven."
28. One minute Paul was worshipped as the great Roman god Mercury, and the next minute he was stoned and dragged out of the city like a common criminal.
29. They thought Paul was dead, but Acts 14:20 says Paul rose up, and walked back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas departed for Derbe.

III. HEADING BACK HOME (14:21-28)

1. After Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel to the people of Derbe, "they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch..." (14:21).
2. In other words, they started heading back to Antioch in Syria. Scroggie said, "But this was not just a retracing of steps. Outward bound theirs was a work of *converting*; homeward bound it is a work of *confirming* (14:22)."
3. Paul and Barnabas taught their disciples "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (14:22). Most preachers today leave this part out of their message.
4. These new converts were organized into local churches, and elders (pastors) were ordained in every church. Then they prayed and fasted

- with them, and commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (14:23).
5. The route back home was the same route as before, except on the way home they skipped Cyprus (14:24-26).
 6. Upon arriving home in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gathered the church together and "they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (14:27).
 7. They "fulfilled" (completed) their work (14:26), and so now "they abode long time with the disciples" in Antioch (14:28).

CONCLUSION:

1. God "had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (14:27). We see an emphasis on open doors in the New Testament.
2. Paul said, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (I Cor. 16:9).
3. Paul said in II Corinthians 2:12, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord."
4. Paul said in Colossians 4:3, "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
5. Our Lord said to the church in Philadelphia, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."