

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 14

Verse1- After being banned from Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas traveled on to Iconium where they again visited the synagogue first. There they preached so effectively that many Jews and Greeks believed. But one still wonders why they kept starting with the Jews, especially since it was the Jewish leaders who had incited the Gentile leaders against them in the last city. (Luke 24:46-47, ESV p 981), (John 20:21, ESV p 1008)

Verse2- Unfortunately, once again the stubborn nonbelievers convinced the uncertain Gentiles to go against Paul and Barnabas by speaking harmful things against them. (Matthew 5:10-12, ESV p 898), (Luke 21:16-19, ESV p 976)

Verse 3- This only made Paul and Barnabas speak out bolder for the Lord. Then the Lord recognized their faithfulness over a considerable amount of time and allowed them to perform signs and wonders. Notice that we are not told how long they spent there enduring ridicule and distrust. Only God determines how long we must endure. (Acts 1:7-8, ESV p 1006), (Psalm 119:71, ESV p 570), (James 5:7-11, ESV p1115-1116)

Verse 4-7- Once again, Paul and Barnabas had to move on because the people were divided. Again, the stubborn unbelievers plotted against them. Still, though their placement changed, their purpose remained the same- preaching the gospel of Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:58, ESV p 1065) *, (1 Peter 5:9-10, ESV p 1119)

Verse 8-10 – So, Paul and Barnabas moved on to another city, Lystra. It is important to note that Lystra, unlike the previous cities that they visited did not have a synagogue. It was not mainly people who believed in Jewish law or in Jesus Christ. These were pagans (people who mostly worshipped nature, Earth and multiple gods or goddesses). And in this pagan city, Paul and Barnabas met a man who couldn't walk there. This man had never walked since birth, so he had no way to know how to stand or move his legs. His muscles and brain had no memory of how it was done. He probably had very little opportunity to get out and hear the word, so he likely knew little or nothing about Jesus, especially since this was not a primarily Jewish city. Yet, he listened with such interest to Paul that he caught Paul's attention. The bible speaks about the benefits of listening intently to the word (Romans 10:17, ESV p 1048), (Proverbs 4:20-22, ESV p 589). Paul could tell just by watching him that he had faith in being healed. And in this instance being healed did not just mean his physical healing. The Hebrew word used here is "sozo (sode'-zo) which means to be made well and to be saved from sin. The scripture says that the light of Christ shines from those that believe. This must have been revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 34:5, p 513), (Isaiah 60:1-2, p 691), (2 Corinthians 4:6, p 1068). This discernment given to Paul manifested itself by Paul speaking with a loud voice, in other words, with a voice of

*our theme

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authority telling the man to stand and walk. And the man did not just stand but he leaped (jumped up) and began to walk. What better way for God to show His power!

Verse 11-13 - Though Paul knew where his authority came from, the crowd did not. They gave credit to their pagan Gods, believing that they had come down to earth in the form of Paul and Barnabas. They called Barnabas the head of the gods, ruler of the sky and thunder, (Zeus or Jupiter). They called Paul the son of Zeus, god of communication, travelers and boundaries, (Mercurius or Hermes). They even went so far as to send for a priest from outside the city to come and offer sacrifices to them.

Verse 14 – When Paul and Barnabas heard about what was going on they were deeply disturbed. This is evident by the fact that they “tore their clothes” They not only tore their clothes to show that they were completely human, but they tore their clothes to show deep emotional distress and indignation over the blasphemy of being called gods. Since clothes were not easy to come by, tearing one’s clothes, according to ancient Hebrew custom, showed how serious one felt about something. You may remember Job tore his clothes when he found he had lost all his possessions and his family had died. Jacob tore his clothes when he was mourning, thinking his son Joseph was dead. This was an urgent matter that needed to be fixed by Paul and Barnabas. They were desperate to correct this terrible offense against God. (Exodus 20:3-5, ESV p 68), (Deuteronomy 6:14-15, p 168), (Joshua 24:14, p 221)

Verse 15- 18 – Paul and Barnabas explained:

- They were human just like those they spoke to.
- We have been preaching that you turn from worshipping worthless things to worship the living God who actually created those things.
- Even though, God allowed this in previous times, he revealed Himself to you through His kindness and care for you in providing for your needs with food, water and things to enjoy.

Unfortunately, even after Paul and Barnabas pointed this out to them, the people still wanted to sacrifice to them. They didn’t want to give up their old ways. (Romans 1:21-25, ESV p 1040), (Habakkuk 2:18-20, ESV p 874)

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Verse 19- Ironically, even though Paul and Barnabas telling the truth could not convince the people of Lystra to refrain from sacrificing to them, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium were able to persuade the people to hate them using lies. They hated Paul so much that they dragged him, stoned him and left him for dead. And though this is unexpected to us that they should first want to honor them as gods, then, turn and hate them enough to want to kill them, this is not unexpected to God. It was all part of his plan. (John 3:19-21, ESV p 984), (John 15:18-21, ESV p 999), (Acts 9:15-16, ESV p 1016), (Acts 7:58-60, ESV p 1014)

Verse 20- So, Paul experienced exactly what Stephen had experienced, with one change, he was not dead. 1) He was not dead because God honored Stephen's prayer request. 2) He was not dead because he still had work to do to fulfill God's purpose for him. God sent the disciples (his people) to gather around him, and he rose up and went right back into the city to prepare to go on to Derbe with Barnabas the next day. (Galatians 6:10, ESV p 1078), (John 13:34-35, ESV p 998), (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, ESV p 618)

Verse 21- 23- In Derbe, they saw fruit from their labor. They preached the gospel and won a large number of disciples, which in turn compelled them to return to the very cities that had rejected them before- Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. (Galatians 6:9, ESV p1078), (1 Corinthians 15:58, ESV p 1065) *, (2 Chronicles 15:7, ESV p 406) Once Paul and Barnabas received encouragement, they were able to use that to encourage other disciples, especially those left behind in the cities where they had suffered persecution. They not only shared their encouragement, but prepared elders or other mature believers to lead them in prayer, fasting and commitment to the Lord. Then, having fulfilled God's purpose there, Paul and Barnabas moved on again. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, ESV p 1066)

Verse 24-28- Paul and Barnabas returned to four other cities that they had previously visited- Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia before they returned home. Once home, they provided testimony of all that God had done while they were on their journey. Then, God allowed them a long rest time at home with their fellow believers, proving that God doesn't just provide tools for our work, He provides tools and time to rest. (Exodus 33:14, ESV p 82), (Isaiah 40:28-31, ESV p 669), (Matthew 11:28-29, ESV p 905)