

Acts 14, "The Conclusion of Paul's First Missionary Journey" 2024-08-18

Intro & Review:

In the last two weeks we started looking at Paul's first missionary journey. Last week we got to see his first sermon and how he preached the gospel telling the Jews that Jesus was the only one who could ever be completely righteous and how he was raised from the dead.

He and his companions were driven out of that area by prominent people who didn't like what he was saying. **1. What is the general outline of chapter 14? Where are the three places mentioned?** Today we see that they have a similar experience in the next place they go, Iconium (v1-7). Then in v 8-23 they go to the Galatian region and have two very strange experiences. Then, in v24-28, they go back through the cities they visited and planted churches to check on them and then back to Antioch from where they came.

It's worth noting that this area that Paul goes to in modern day Asia Minor, or Turkey is known at the time as Galatia. Galatia was a region, not a city or town. So, when Paul later writes his letter to the Galatians, it is most likely that these are the people in these cities that he is writing to. Perhaps you want to go read the short letter he wrote to them this afternoon. It's only seven pages in my Bible. You can read it in about 10 minutes if you go straight through.

-Go through the text and make commentary. -

Questions:

1. What is the general outline of chapter 14? Where are the three places mentioned?

See above.

2. What kind of responses did they get in v1, 4, & 21? Compare and contrast the outcomes.

In v1, "a large number of people believed."

V4 but the city became divided into those following the apostles and those following the unbelieving Jews.

In v21, "they made many disciples."

It's a mixed bag. There are always people who receive the message and people who reject it. You'll remember Jesus' words in Matthew 13 about the different kinds of soils. There He gives examples of four soils. Only one of them is good soil. In this example, 25% of the time there is a real conversion. But, that conversion has a multiplying factor of 30, 60, and even a hundred-fold (Matt 13:8).

A lot of time with false converts, they want the benefit of salvation but not obligations. They want the utility without the substance.

3. In v3, how much time did they spend in Iconium? What were they doing there & how were they doing it? What is the relationship with v 28?

"a long time."

"speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord"

V28 "they spent not a little time."

They were investing in these people, heart, and soul. They were living in and among them, teaching and preaching and showing them the way.

So many so-called leaders and pastors today want to be rock stars. They want to be "on stage" and platformed. They are trying to gain a following instead of shepherding the people. They say and do intentionally shocking things in order to gain a following. These shock jocks are really just Jesus hocking for profit. Not ok.

Paul later says to the Thessalonians (2:8) that they not only shared the gospel but their lives.

4. After being driven out of Iconium to what did they "continue" to do in v7, 15, & 21?

PREACH THE GOSPEL.

This is the most repeated part in this whole chapter. I wonder what the point is? Look with me in each of these verses (3, 7, 15, & 21)

Preach the gospel to *yourself*.

Preach the gospel to your *spouse*.

Preach the gospel to your *children*.

Preach the gospel to the *world*.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, PREACH THE GOSPEL.

5. What are Barnabas and Paul called in v14?

Apostles

6. What happened to Paul in v21? What was previously threatened in v 5?

He was stoned, not in the dazed and confused way. They tried to kill him. That was their intent.

Notice how quickly things changed. In v 8-18 Paul heals a guy and the people think he's a god! The background to this encounter probably involves a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This is an ancient story that predates Christianity in which the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes visit a valley near Lystra and end up destroying it because of a lack of hospitality.

The people want to sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul. In v18, they barely kept them from doing so. It's a crazy, wild, scene. In v11, Paul heals a guy and the people attribute this to him being a god. Even though Paul makes it clear to them that they are mistaken, the crowds are insistent that B&P are gods.

And then, everything changed in the course of one verse. In v19, it says that the Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, the two places that B&P had been run off from, and they won over the crowds. How long did this take? We don't know but it appears to be a short time.

So, in one verse, the crowds claim Paul is a god. In the next verse, they stone him. Wow!

Don't trust the fickleness of the crowd. Just because someone or something is popular doesn't validate it's reliability. Know what you believe and be convinced in your own mind. There's obviously some absolutely ridiculous ideology being popularized in our times. Things such as the LGBTQ whatever nonsense, the revival of socialism and communism, the anti-intellectualism... I could go on and on. Even in the church, the modern so called worship music heresy being put out by Bethel and Hillsong and contemporary Christian pop. These are the type of people that Dabney rightly described as those who "make success the test of truth."

For the sake of getting through the text, we will move on.

7. What kind of activity is described in v22?

Discipleship. With all this talk of preaching the gospel, that is evangelism, we need to understand that it's not an either/or situation. It's a both/and kind of job. We must do both. Paul did both.

It's funny to me that we have a situation now where entire denominations are known for their overemphasis on these two things. The Baptists spend considerable time and effort evangelizing the lost. It is no coincidence that they are the largest protestant denomination in the world.

Having been raised, educated and served in several SBC churches, I can tell you that they are a mile wide and an inch deep. Are there exceptions to this? Of course there are. But painting with a broad brush, it is widely known. As a young adult, I got so sick of being told to "get right with Jesus." Most recently, we were disenchanted with pragmatic psychological, feel good "talks". The seeker sensitive movement is Arminian in its presuppositions and anemic in its preaching.

Presbyterians on the other hand, are deep disciples who study theology and can not only articulate different forms of theology, but they can also even tell you why THEY are right and everyone else is wrong. Some people are so deep in the weeds that they get run over by the tractor. Let us not be so focused on doctrine that we get caught up in trivial matters. Paul warned Timothy of such things. 1Tim 1:4 prohibits speculations and meaningless talk.

Preach the gospel. Disciple the nations. Evangelize. Make disciples. DO BOTH. DO BOTH WELL.

8. What reoccurring NT theme is made mention of in v22?

KOG –Kingdom of God. Again, I refer you to Jesus' words in Matt 13 where he uses the term "kingdom" five times in that chapter alone.

The gospel is the gospel of the "kingdom." Jesus' rule and reign here and now on planet earth.

The kingdom of God is, in my opinion, the major theme of the New Testament's writings. How it is being inaugurated anew with Jesus' death burial and resurrection. How he is now seated at the right hand of the Father and is extending His rule over His creation.

That was the original intent found in Genesis 1:26-28 (the creation mandate). That is what it means to be created in the image of God. It's not about sentience or self-awareness or free will. It's about dominion. It's about humanity being God's vice regents. It's about us bringing all

creation under the feet of the king. It's about extending the knowledge of the glory of the LORD over all the earth. It's proclaiming the King reigns. Repent and believe. He is alive and He is coming! Prepare the way. Get right, right now! Stop what you're doing and turn to Him. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry with you.

9. What did they do in v23? What are Paul's requirements for elders in 1 Tim 3?

They appointed elders in every city. Read 1Tim 3.

10. How and who does Luke credit with the good outcomes in v27?

God did it. He opened a door of faith.

Unless the LORD builds the house, the laborers labor in vain (Psalm 127:1). Our job is to be bold and be accurate. God's job is to change hearts. God will draw all men to Himself. The field is white unto harvest, but the workers are few. Pray, therefore, to the LORD of the harvest to send more workers into His field... and then GO!

Application:

Who are you evangelizing in your family and in the world?

What price are you willing to pay?

What kind of staying power do you have?

Preach the gospel boldly. Stay faithful. Don't be fickle. Finish what you start. Embrace suffering as the cost of faithfulness.

Closing Prayer: Lord God in heaven and our Father, thank You for this word of encouragement to be bold for the gospel. Work in us to accomplish Your purposes in this place. Would you bring a harvest of one hundred-fold? Find us faithful and willing to suffer for the sake of Christ. Help us to be diligent in our efforts, not giving up but completing the work You have for us.

And now, grant us spiritual food and drink as we obey Jesus' command to partake in His supper. Open our hearts and minds. Fill them with Your truth as we remember the death of the Lord Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.