

(Acts 14:1) Now it happened in Iconium that they went **together to the synagogue of the Jews**, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

They = **Paul and Barnabas**

(Acts 14:2) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

Poisoned their minds: evil spirits

(Acts 14:3) Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, **who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.**

(Acts 14:4) But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

This ALWAYS HAPPENS! There will also be divisions; there will always be enmity between light and darkness. There will always be a fight between The Truth and the Father of Lies!

(Acts 14:5) And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them,

This ALWAYS HAPPENS! This is a spiritual battle. Rational behaviors would dismiss this “new teaching” as irrelevant and go on with their lives; but to plot violence against teachers with whom you disagree is irrational and dark forces are pushing their buttons to react in such a manner.

(Acts 14:6) they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.

Fleeing is sometimes better than staying.

(Acts 14:7) And they were **preaching the gospel** there.

(Acts 14:8) And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

(Acts 14:9) This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,

While Paul was speaking, the Holy Spirit prompted him to fixed his eyes on the crippled man; The Holy Spirit tells him that this man’s faith was rising and would respond to Paul!

(Acts 14:10) said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

(Acts 14:11) Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

OY VEY! That wasn't the reaction Paul and Barnabas expected!

(Acts 14:12) And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. (13) Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

The crowd cried out “OMGS” (Oh my gods); The “gods” came down from Mt Olympus! Quick! Sacrifice the oxen and bring the wreaths! Barnabas, to be likened to Zeus, must have been an imposing figure, exuding strength and authority; Paul, never a man of few words, was thought to be Zeus’s son, Hermes, the messenger of the gods.

(Acts 14:14) But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, **crying out** (15) and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, **and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,** (16) who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. (17) Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave **us** rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling **our** hearts with food and gladness."

Paul and Barnabas, upon hearing such blasphemy, tore their clothes as was the custom among the Jews of their day;

They try to convince the people that there is but One Living God who created everything they see! But in doing so, he calls their pagan gods “useless” which isn’t the best way to endear yourself to those you are trying to reach!

And this God, of which they were witnesses, brought the rain which caused their plants to bear fruit and food and filled their hearts with gladness! NOTE: in verse 17, Paul includes both himself and Barnabas as the recipients of His Grace!

(Acts 14:18) And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

Oh Well...sometimes our witnessing doesn’t quite have its desired effect. Sometimes, people will not listen! Sometimes they don’t want to leave their safe harbors of lies and deceptions.

Perhaps it should be noted that Paul does NOT witness to them from the Old Covenant scriptures which they have never heard – but rather, his witness is God’s creation that they can clearly see before their very eyes.

(Acts 14:19) Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Things came to a head and the Jews who opposed them in Antioch and Iconium came and stirred up the crowd to the point where they stoned Paul and, like yesterday’s trash, dragged him dead-like out of the town! Why not Barnabas? He was thought to be Zeus and you don’t stone the father ‘god’ ...just his “son”;

Note: these are many of the same people who saw Paul perform a healing miracle right in front of their eyes and then tried to sacrifice bulls to Paul and Barnabas because they thought they were gods!

Note: some believe that it was the Jews that did the stoning;

Note: I wonder if Paul was thinking about Stephen as the stones hit his body?

Did Paul die?

Clarke: Supposing he had been dead - They did not leave stoning him till they had the fullest evidence that he was dead; and so, most probably, he was.

Others: Paul did not die! He was only unconscious!
Some also believe that this was the cause of his vision in the 3rd heaven recorded in 2 Corinthians 12.

(Acts 14:20) However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. **And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.**

Clarke: The disciples stood round about him - No doubt in earnest prayer, entreating the Author of life that his soul might again return to its battered tenement. **He rose up** - Miraculously restored, not only to life, but to perfect soundness so that he was able to walk into the city, that his persecutors might see the mighty power of God in his restoration, and the faith of the young converts be confirmed in the truth and goodness of God.

Maclaren: Luke shows no disposition to easy belief in miracles. He does not know that Paul was dead; his medical skill familiarized him with protracted states of unconsciousness; so all he vouches for is that Paul lay as if dead on some rubbish heap 'without the camp,' and that, with courage and persistence which were supernatural, whether his reviving was so or not, the man thus sorely battered went back to the city, and next day went on with his work, as if stoning was a trifle not to be taken account of.

Regardless of the results of the stoning, whether he was rendered unconscious for a time or dead and made to rise, the apostle did not relent, did not cower, did not retreat but rather boldly walked back into the town to take up his cross once again and preach the Greatest Story Ever Told!

Having completed their work there they then went on to Derbe.

(Acts 14:21) And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

Now in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas continue to preach the gospel with much success. Then they returned to the cities where they had previously taught:

(Acts 14:22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**"

I will come back to this later. For now, let me share the words of Jesus himself when he was about to be betrayed into the hands of those who would insist that He be crucified:

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

(Acts 14:23) So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Commended = committed; This wasn't just an off-the-cuff appointment/ordination; Paul and Barnabas thoroughly depended on the Holy Spirit to ordain these elders. And thru prayer and fasting they committed them to the LORD Jesus – to be under His authority;

(Acts 14:24) And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. (25) Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

(Acts 14:26) From there they sailed to **Antioch**, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

Commended = **recommended**, perhaps in prayer, for God to continue to pour out His grace upon them!

(Acts 14:27) Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

(Acts 14:28) So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Some speculate that the opposition and persecution and stoning may have cooled Paul's jets. Especially from the Jews who opposed with so vehemently! And, some others surmised that he was confronted there by Judaizing Christians who wanted the Gentiles to convert to Judaism first to be saved.

Summary:

Paul and Barnabas missionary journey was like a roller-coaster; Triumphs and defeats: Salvations, Oppositions and Persecution;

We saw how Paul "spoke in such a way" that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed; Paul has stated elsewhere:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (3) I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

And this was in Corinth, much later in his missionary journeys.

But even Paul's message **was not wholly accepted** by those who heard the Truth; This is everyone's experience who has shared the Good News.

Why does the word take root in some and not others?

Luke 8:4-8 And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: (5) "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. (6) Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. (7) And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. (8) But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 8:11-15 "Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.** (12) Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the **devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts**, lest they should believe and be saved. (13) But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; **and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.** (14) Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are **choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life**, and bring no fruit to maturity. (15) But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

And many people hate the Word because of the Light it shines into the dark corners of our hearts:

John 3:19-20 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

But, the message is not only of forgiveness of sin and eternal life with God, but the message is also about the truth of this life, right here, right now. The truth is as Paul told the believers..."**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**" (acts 14:22b);

Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles shied away from the realities of being a believer. All of them spoke of trials, tribulations, persecutions, suffering and martyrdom on the narrow road that leads to Life! It's not a pretty message; it's not a message we want to hear! But it is the Truth! Not all of us are called to greatly suffer for the Kingdom, but we all do in some measure.

Why? Because Truth matters! No one likes to be blind-sided by the things of this life!

We need to be prepared for any and all things that happen in this life to us and around us; We need to be strong in the face of these things; we need not shrink back, or worse, turn away from the **Truth** that leads us down the narrow **Way** to **Life** everlasting; We are strengthened IN HIM who is strong; we are faithful IN HIM who is faithful!

And not just for ourselves!

How is the world to learn compassion, without us showing true compassion? How is the world to learn forgiveness without us showing true forgiveness? How is the world to learn humility without showing true humility? How is the world to learn godliness, faithfulness, grace, mercy, real justice without us demonstrating them these things of God?

The simple truth is, they can't, without Jesus! And our calling is to love them as ourselves; So, we live out "Jesus"; We stay the course and get up when we are stoned and continue the fight!

And, while I haven't said so, NONE OF THIS CAN BE DONE IN OUR OWN STRENGTH! DON'T GET ALL "RAMBO" AND THINK YOU CAN CONQUER THE WORLD OR EVEN BE JESUS TO THE WORLD! YOU CAN'T

But the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit in you can and WILL if you allow Him access to your heart, your hands, your feet and your mouth! Speak Truth! Live Truth!

