

Iconium and Paul

Paul had been in Antioch in Pisidia. This is where his first recorded message was and afterwards the Jews were sort of filled with envy because they saw that many people were going to the Saturday morning fellowship to hear Paul. They didn't quite like that. So Paul says, "Well we turn to the Gentiles now." He starts teaching them as well as a number of the Jews that believe. The other Jews that didn't like it finally stirred up trouble and pushed him out of the city.

Acts 13:50:

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

"devout and honourable women" – they didn't just pick on some of the regular town people, the common people. They picked on some of the devout and honourable women. The ones who were married to some of the top business executives in the community, some that were married to the mayor and some of the top men or perhaps, if the culture merited it, they were in great positions themselves.

"chief men of the city" – they picked the chief men; men who were in those top positions; men in authority. The Jews went to get them; the ones who would pull a little weight; the ones who knew who their contacts were among the mafia.

They're not going to work any different today. Satan uses the same tactics today that he used in the first century. He is in no way original and he doesn't use anything new. He uses the same old rusty equipment he used back then. He raised up persecution using men and women who could pull ropes.

This is all it says about it here. It doesn't say what else happened. We're going to read in a few other records that you just don't expel men of God like Paul and Barnabas out of your coasts and expect the best to follow. Whenever somebody tries to buck against men who are moving with the Word, they're not fighting against men. Like Ananias; he didn't lie to men. Who did he lie to? God, see it? It doesn't say anything more here but we'll read in some other records, later on, some of the things that followed because of that.

Acts 13:51:

But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

"shook off the dust of their feet" – is an orientalism meaning; they had no animosity; they held no bitterness. They didn't say, "Boy we're going to get even with them. We're

going to come back here with the Greek Legion, or the Roman Legion.” They had no bitterness, no ulcers. If you let it build up within you and hold that bitterness, they ulcers and other things follow. Paul and Barnabas didn’t. They just shook the dust off of their feet.

Matthew 10:5-6:

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Was it available to the Gentiles at that time? No, not like it was in the book of Acts. Sure, a Gentile could become a proselyte but Jesus’ ministry wasn’t to the uncircumcision, it was to the circumcision.

Matthew 10:7-11:

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

“enquire who in it is worthy” – isn’t that what Paul and Barnabas did? They said, “Who’s worthy here,” in essence. They started teaching the Word and those that were hungry heard the word. Those that weren’t hungry got mad, full of envy and raised up persecutions.

“there abide” – abide where? With the unbelievers? No, with the ones that are worthy; the ones that want to hear it.

Matthew 10:12-14:

And when ye come into an house, salute it.

And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

“shake off the dust of your feet” – don’t hold any animosity; no bitterness; no ulcers. Just walk out shake off the animosity; just forget about it and move on to the next community.

Jesus sent forth his twelve here. He was training them. He gave them power for a temporary period during his administration. They weren’t born again during this administration; filled with the holy spirit. They only had it for a temporary period. He sent them forth to do the same thing basically that they could do after the day of Pentecost except they could only go to the house of Israel and they couldn’t get people born again of God’s spirit.

Matthew 10:15-16:

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

“wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” – in other words; be smart on the Word but don’t walk around with a ball bat or a chip on your shoulder or as two by four. Walk around with love. Be harmless as doves; no bitterness; no animosity, shake the dust off your feet and be smart at the same time; you’re not ignorant as to what’s going on.

Sometimes people might look at you sense knowledge-wise and laugh. They might laugh and say, “Boy, he sure doesn’t stand up.” You show them how you stand up; with the love of God in your heart. They’re not going to say it very long when they take that kind of a stand. I don’t care what anybody says about me and you shouldn’t care what anybody says about you. It’s not a matter of what people say about you, it’s a matter of what God says about you. I care a lot more about what God says about me. We get our lives walking accordingly.

He was training. They were in the school of THE prophet, Jesus Christ. He was training them and he gave them this power on a temporary assignment. He says, “While you’re out there, you don’t carry a lot. You’re going to travel fast and far. You’ve got to travel light. Get rid of the burdens. Don’t hold any bitterness. If you throw your ‘peace’ out there and it slaps you back in the face, keep it and move on. Take it to where somebody’s going to receive it. And be smart all the time.” He was training them and after the day of Pentecost, they were ready to go.

Peter used the same basic tactics. Paul wasn’t trained by him back there. He had his own training, on the field; a do or die situation half the time. But Paul walked it. He didn’t hold any animosity; no bitterness. He just kicked the dust off his feet. He knew what God had forgiven him for.

Acts 13:51:

But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

If you never kick the dust off, you're always thinking about their dust on your feet and you keep dwelling on those people that did you dirty. You keep dwelling on what they did but if you kick the dust off your feet, you're saying, "Here, you keep your dirt. I'm not even going to worry about it. I'm not going to think about it."

When Paul and Barnabas left, they didn't leave the people cold. They still had their fellowships. The people still believed and they still met in the homes. As long as the ministry continues to move in the home fellowships and they don't start buying big cathedrals or building big cathedrals, no matter what the persecution; no matter what people say or do or think or anything else, they can't kill every fellowship. That's pretty hard. Paul couldn't do it. Remember, he went into houses hailing men and women to prison but he couldn't get them all. Besides that, there's no reason why a Roman soldier or Paul or a Jew or anyone else who was doing the persecution would even have to see the believer's house. God hid Elijah three years and a half. Think He can hide your house? Why not?

"Iconium" – here's the next place. We came from Antioch in Pisidia. We go down a little farther [southeast] to Iconium. They went to Iconium.

Acts 13:52:

And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 14:1:

And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

"into the synagogue" – notice where they went again. Paul always had an "in" there because of his background.

"Greeks" – this is not "Hellenists." It's *hellēn* - that is the word "Greek." It's not Greek speaking Jews. They were actual Greek speaking Greeks. They were Gentiles. How did gentiles get into the place of believing in the synagogue? Proselytes, sure, then they could come in so far.

A great multitude of Jews in background and Greeks in background were now believing here.

Acts 14:2:

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

When Paul had been at Antioch, he had taught the Gentiles, some of the Jews were filled with Envy and stirred up a persecution against Paul. You'll find the same basic pattern in every community. In these first few verses of chapter 14, while Paul's at Iconium, it really spells out the pattern that followed in every city, basically. In some cities you had less persecution than others. In some cities you had greater persecution than others. But it's the same general pattern and it's the same pattern used today.

First of all Paul speaks and a great multitude believe. Now that multitude varied from community to community. Some places it may only be a fellowship that ever believed. Mars Hill at Athens, only a very few people believed. But there were a few and Paul found the few that wanted to believe. At Corinth he stayed a year and a half. At Ephesus he stayed two years and three months; a lot of people believing there. Here, at Iconium a great multitude believed. Some communities you go into just a few believe, others you go into and whole multitudes believe.

That's the first step of the pattern; you go in, you teach the Word and people believe. The more that believe, the more the unbelievers dislike it. Like at Ephesus; they didn't like it because now people weren't buying so many idols and books on horoscope and all the other things. They weren't buying these things anymore. They burned all their black art material. So, the idol business was going down. The silver shrine business was going down. That's where it hurt. The more who believed the Word, the greater you see the fight against it. That's the first step; you teach and multitudes believe.

Acts 14:2:

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

That's the second step. After you teach, people start believing then the unbelievers see the growth. They're filled with envy or maybe it starts to hurt their pocketbook after a while. They're filled with envy. They don't like what they see. They don't want to believe so they start stirring up others. Who do they go to? The devout and honourable; the big business men; the ones who can pull strings.

Then the third thing:

Acts 14:3:

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

“signs and wonders to be done by their hands” – who did the work? Who did the signs and wonders? They did. How did they do it? By the power of God that was in them. They weren't possessed. They weren't mediums. They weren't channels. They were doing the signs, the wonders and the miracles but by the power of God that was in them. The power was energized as they exercised.

That's the third thing; they just stayed there and spoke the Word boldly. No matter what the opposition said, they just spoke the Word boldly and the signs and wonders followed. The teaching of the Word, see that? They spoke boldly in the Lord.

“the word of his grace” – his gracious Word

First they spoke boldly and when they did that; then they got signs and wonders. When the Word was taught, afterward they saw the signs and wonders. True signs and wonders will always follow the teaching of the Word. They never precede it. Same way in Acts 2; when they taught the Word, afterwards signs and wonders followed. The signs and wonders didn't precede the Word. They just spoke the Word. The signs and wonders followed.

That's the third step. You're going to hold forth the Word and if a lot of people believe, the greater the unbelievers won't like it, especially the religious leaders. So, they'll start stirring up others. The third step then; you just stay there and teach the Word. So what! Just teach the Word. Stay faithful to the Word and signs and wonders are going to follow.

Acts 14:4:

But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

That's the fourth step. What causes division? The unbelievers stirring up the trouble causes the division. Isn't there a chapter on Why Division? The division follows the unbelievers fighting against the Word. You teach God's Word and you'll set the world right side up for a change but those who oppose it and don't like the Word; they come in and put up the opposition. That's where your division comes from. Don't blame it on the Word.

“part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles” – That's the fourth step but if you never speak the Word boldly, there won't be any division. Those that you first won will tend to go back to where they were before. The rut they get in the second time will be a lot deeper than the first one because the unbelievers will see to that. That's why it's important that you stay faithful and teach the Word. When you stay faithful teaching the Word then you're going to build them up and give them some solid ground to stand on. So there's going to be division. Don't let it worry you.

Acts 14:5:

And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

That's the fifth thing. When you got two forces; believers and unbelievers, what's going to happen? The negative moves in and assaults the positive and tries to break it down.

“with their rulers” – where’d they go? They went back to those devout and honourable ones. They went back to the chief men of the city; the rulers. They knew who was paid off. They knew who they could hire “to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them.” First they worked with words trying to ridicule them. Finally they start using physical force. When it gets to that point, it’s time to kick the dust off of your feet.

Acts 14:6:

They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

That’s when the apostles escaped. To escape means; to avoid that thing there. That doesn’t mean that they would always flee. Jesus was sometimes threatened with stones and he spoke to them and the Word cooled it, temporarily. Other times he left the building or left the community, depending on the revelation. There will always be a way to escape. God will see to that. What happened here was they were aware of it. They considered it. They didn’t consider it sense knowledge-wise. They considered it spiritually. That’s why they moved on. The believers were still there and they could still meet in the homes.

You go into a community, you hold forth the Word and people are going to believe. When they believe, the unbelievers aren’t going to like it and they’ll stir up. When they start stirring up, you just be faithful to hold forth the Word because if you quit then, your people fall by the wayside. That’s when you have to keep speaking boldly, so your people get built up with the Word till they know the truth. If you don’t speak the Word, all they’re going to hear is Satan’s words; the words of the world. When those people who believe really get it in their heart they’re going to stand. Then the unbelievers are going to cause division. When there’s division, they’ll make the assault to try to destroy the opposition. That’s when you look and see if they’re ready to stand. Then you move on to the next community. When you leave, you shake the dust off of your feet.

“Lystra and Derbe” – they went to Lystra first. Look at **Acts 14:20:**

Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

So, first he went to Lystra. Then later he went down to Derbe. What we’re going to read now happened specifically at Lystra.

“unto the region that lieth round about” – he not only went to these cities but the region that lieth round about them. They were concerned about the whole region.

Acts 14:7-8:

And there they preached the gospel.

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

If you've got a problem with your foot, you've got a little problem walking but you can walk, I believe. The problem wasn't in his foot, it was in his legs. That's what made him a cripple. The Greek text says "feet." Lamsa translates it that he was "lame, being a cripple from his mother's womb." I think it has to be an Aramaic expression or idiom, meaning that something had happened that he couldn't walk

Acts 3:1-8:

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*.

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

There's Peter who ministered to a man who was lame from his mother's womb.

Here's a man in Lystra, which is just south of Iconium. Do you think Paul healed other people? Sure, many people ministered healing but not all of them are recorded. It's sort of significant that this one was recorded; a man who was lame from his mother's womb similar to the one Peter had healed.

Acts 14:9:

The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

He heard the word; he heard Paul speak: "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word." He heard the Word and then he believed.

Acts 14:10-11:

Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

And when the people saw what Paul 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.

“saying in the speech of Lycaonia” – Paul couldn’t understand Lycaonia. They were running around yelling it in their language. Paul and Barnabas didn’t understand them. Nobody knows what that language is. I guess not.

Acts 14:12:

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

“Mercurius” – Mercury – Mercury was the speaker

Acts 14:13:

Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Jupiter was called Zeus in Greek mythology. He was Jupiter in Roman mythology. Mercury was called Hermes in Greek mythology. He was Mercury in Roman mythology. Jupiter or Zeus was the head god. He was the head over all the earth. Hades was the head over the underworld. Neptune in Roman, Poseidon in Greek, was the head over the ocean. Hades was called Pluto in Roman. Zeus or Jupiter was head over all the earth and working very closely with him was Hermes who was the messenger god. So, Mercury did all the talking. He carried all the messages for Jupiter.

They said Paul must be Hermes or Mercury and Barnabas must therefore be Jupiter because he’s letting Paul do all the talking. It’s sort of neat because this is in Lycaonia in the Galatia area in Lystra. Lystra is in the section of this area called Lycaonia. Antioch was in Pisidia. And the whole region where these are is Galatia. To the west is an area called Phrygia. In Phrygia, Jupiter and Mercury or Zeus and Hermes, as they were called, had sort of a reputation. So this is why they must have classified them as those two.

There is a poem in the eighth book of Ovid's Metamorphoses in Greek writing. It’s one about Baucus and Philemon. It’s all about these two poor people named Baucus and Philemon who were visited by Zeus and Hermes or Jupiter and Mercury as they’re called. The story seemed to originate in Phrygia. Naturally it would be very popular in this area. Because of what happened there was why they had this temple to Jupiter, why they had the priest of Jupiter that it mentions in verse 13, why they thought Barnabas was Jupiter and why they thought Paul was Mercury, Now they’re ready to do sacrifice to them. They were running around saying, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” Remember that Paul and Barnabas didn’t understand the speech of Lycaonia. That’s why, when they saw them running around getting all the stuff together ready to do sacrifice, it says in verse 14:

Acts 14:14:

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

They finally found some who spoke Aramaic. They started putting two and two together they were disgusted. That's when they knew what was going on and that's when they started giving them the Word.