

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”

Chp. 13-14 Being sent on the way (1st trip)

14:1-28

“The tale of three cities (part a)”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 1-5 Iconium: A war of words

I.) Intro.

We have been looking at Paul and Barnabas 1st missionary journey. They had been sent out by the Holy Spirit, commissioned by the Church at Antioch and from there they spent as much as a year in Barnabas’ home area of Cyprus, after this God moved them to Asia Minor to an area known as Galatia. Again persecution arose and they were kicked out of that city. Now what I glean out of this section is what it takes to be a successful “soul explorer”. Paul and Barnabas were world travelers discovering new lands and peoples. To borrow a phrase from “*Star Trek*” they were “*boldly going where no man had gone before*”. History is full of those who have ventured out and explored the world around them but most of them did so for personal gain. Paul’s journey was much nobler in that He and Barnabas were sent on a mission on behalf of another for the benefit of others. He would describe their mission in 2 Cor. 5:20 saying “*we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*”

We have taken note of his message last week this week we shall also take note of his method. Folk’s God is a missionary God, His desire is to plead through us for the world to be reconciled to Him. A missionary professor once shared this very text to a group of potential missionaries’ years ago he concluded his message by saying, “*Never has anyone done so much with so little for the kingdom of God!*” He then paused and

looking around the room he continued, “*And never has anyone done so little with so much!*” Here in this passage we will look at **six methods** that the first missionary team used. Oh that we may learn much from Paul’s methods and start our own missionary journey here in Montana.

II.) Vs. 1-5 Iconium: A war of words

Vs. 1 In chapter 13 Paul and Barnabas left shaking the dust off of the rejection of Jesus in Antioch, now they travel some 80 miles to the southeast to Iconium. But what is not told in the text is why they went to Iconium?

The Romans were great road builders; it was how they conquered the world. In fact if you travel to this area of the world today you will still find traces of the roads they built linking different parts of their kingdom. Cesar Augustus had built this major road from Ephesus to the Euphrates extending all the way into Galatia in 6 B.C. Being the proud man that he was he named it after himself, (Via Augustus or Via Sebastos in Greek). As Paul and Barnabas came out of Antioch of Pisidia they were faced with a greater decision than shaking dust of them, for the Via Sebastos branched into two roads right at the edge of town. One went north 120 miles to the Roman colony of Comana. The other went southeast to this Greek city Iconium. The bottom line was that the direction they took would change the course of the outreach.

So here’s the application **point** that instructs us in how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT:** We are **not** told of the process of why they chose the road that went through the rolling hills towards the Greek city instead of the taking the mountain route to the Roman city but it is safe to say the Holy

Spirit was leading them to where He wanted them. The question we need to ask ourselves is **how open are we to the Holy Spirit's 'leading us** to whom he would have us to share? The Roman city would have meant more comfort and it would have been more modern. Folks, **God led them to the sticks!**

Iconium was a Greek city that had been resistant to Roman rule and instead of becoming a town ruled by the Romans it chose rather to continue to be ruled by an assembly of Greek citizens called a (*Demos*). The name comes from the Greek word for image in which we get our word icon. Further more we are told that it had quite a few Jewish people living there as they had a synagogue.

That leads me to the **second point** about how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **START WITH WHAT YOU KNOW:** Paul and Barnabas went right back to a synagogue and spoke to those who were the most familiar with the message, the Jews and gentile converts. In business I learned this phrase, “*Location, location, location!*” I think that this is a good principal to use in sharing the gospel as well. Go to where you have the most natural contact. Maybe that is those that you work with, perhaps it’s those that you have a common hobby with. Now I think we can carry this a bit further to say that when we go to those that we already have a contact with, start or at least look for an area of interest where you can begin to plug in the truths of Jesus. Look for areas where you can speak to them about the Lord. That’s what Paul did as he went to a

place that was most open to the truth and then spoke to them about the subject that they knew.

Vs. 2 Now look at what happens in this synagogue as Paul began to teach:

- a. Vs. 1b “*So spoke that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed*”:

Paul shared the truth that they had heard many times before but it suddenly clicked. There was an immediate response; the word of God touched hearts. They had been kicked out of the last region and yet they go back into another synagogue and proclaim the exact same message. Simply put, **they did not alter the message because of the lack of the results or the persecution in the last place!**

- b. Vs. 2 “*But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren*”: The word “*unbelieving*” literally means refused to obey! In other words **it was not the message that was lacking but rather the hearts of those that heard it.** So because of the success of the gospel they set about to poison the minds of those that had responded or would have responded.

Now what application point can we draw from this? Well here is a **third point** about how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **THE MESSAGE MUST BRING OUT A RESPONSE:** That is the common denominator in the two opposite reactions to the preaching of the gospel. I suggest to you that Paul could see that the message was hitting home because of both of the reactions. Paul would later say in 2 Cor. 2:16 “*To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life*”

leading to life.” The character of the Word of God is that it is alive and it always stirs people up, some to life some to death. As far as an indicator is concerned to determine whether or not the message is hitting home or not opposition is as good as reception.

Vs. 3 Now look at how Paul and Barnabas handled this opposition. It say’s in verse two that those who refused to obey the Word went about to those who would receive the Word and poisoned them against it. So you would think, “Well it’s time to move on from here, no open doors now!” But instead of that we read the exact opposite, “Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord.” Paul said, “Hey these guys are poisoning the minds of those that would hear the truth so let’s stay as long as it takes and keep on speaking the Word of the Lord!”

So what’s the application point? The **fourth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **BE CONSISTANT NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS SAY:** There is an interesting book written a couple of 100 years latter called “*The Acts of Paul*”. Most of it is legendary stories of Paul’s ministry in this region. One of the fanciful stories is called the “*Acts of Paul and Theckla*”. The setting of the story is Iconium and according to the story Paul falls in love with a young woman Theckla and their love affair is so wide spread that breaks up her family and turns the whole city against them. Now we know that the story is not true but what is interesting is that **this is consistent with how the enemy would seek to destroy the message of the gospel by attacking the credibility of the messenger.** Again we are not told how they poisoned the

minds of the folks of Iconium but Paul did not allow that to stop him from speaking of the truth, not even if they made false accusation against him.

Next notice that it says, “*the Lord ...was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*” The Lord was defending the truth of the message by working miracles through Paul and Barnabas. Look at the order, **they were speaking boldly in the Lord, the Word of His grace and the Lord was bearing witness to the Word of grace by signs and wonders.** That is just the opposite of what most Church’s or ministries do today. They use signs and wonders to draw people and then use the Word of the Lord to support the signs and wonders. No wonder people’s lives are not being transformed. Folks, we don’t need signs and wonders to get people into the Church we need the Word of the Lord, the signs and wonders God will do to support the Word of grace!

So what’s the application point? The **fifth point** on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **DON’T TRY TO SENSATIONALIZE THE TRUTH:** Folk’s we don’t need to worry about trying to make Jesus and His word more exciting, let God do what He wants to do in supporting His truth. All that we do when we put signs and wonders ahead of the message is cheapen or lessen the importance upon the truth. Roman’s does not say faith comes by seeing the signs and wonders it says that it comes from hearing the Word of God! **It was the Word of grace that preformed the Work of grace!**

Vs. 4-6 The result of all this tension was a city divided between the truth and a lie. They stayed there as long as they could until they were forced to leave. Now notice here that

Luke calls both of them Paul and Barnabas “*apostles*” he will do so again in verse 14.

Perhaps you’re wondering about that? The bible says that there were 12 apostles not 13.

Obviously Barnabas was not an official apostle in the since of the 12 or like Paul. But he was an apostle in the general use of the word which means “*messenger*”.

This leads me to the sixth and final application point on how to be effective in reaching our world for Jesus:

- **NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR JOB:** Paul and Barnabas stayed as long as there was an opportunity to proclaim the Word of grace but when the doors closed they were not too proud to leave. You see they were just messengers it was not about them or their ego. So they stayed their teaching the Word but when the city became so divided, that an angry mob was going to take them by force and kill them it was time to move on. Now what is interesting to me is that we are told in verses 21-22 that they came back to Iconium to “*strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith.*” So they leave for awhile let things cool down a bit and then come back. All too often we Christians share the word of grace in such a way as to win the argument but in so doing we lose the soul! So:

- **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT**
- **START WITH WHAT YOU KNOW**
- **THE MESSAGE MUST BRING OUT A RESPONSE**
- **BE CONSISTANT NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS SAY**
- **DON’T TRY TO SENSATIONALIZE THE TRUTH**
- **NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR JOB**