

Refuge City Church — July 10, 2022
Acts: “Adversity? Keep going!” [Acts 14]

Introduction

- **Last time:** Paul & Barnabas preach to expand the gospel in Asia Minor/Galatia. Providing proof of the resurrection of Jesus from Scripture that points to the forgiveness of sins, and freedom from religious law-keeping.
- **[map of missionary journey] Today:** The journey continues to the outer reaches of Galatia.
 - **THINK ON TWO THINGS:**
 1. Is the gospel of Jesus divisive?
 2. What is your ‘go-to tendency’ when you encounter adversity?

Verses 1-7

“Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the people of the city were **divided**; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, and there they continued to preach the gospel.”

- The gospel continues on into Asia Minor/Galatia.
 - Paul & Barnabas travel to Iconium, and there, preach the gospel.
 - LOVE: the Lord’s “witness to the word of his grace”. [“I am with you always.”]
 - We see a similar situation as we studied in chapter 13.
 - Synagogue visit, gospel presentation, salvation, and hatred/division by those opposed to it.
- The true gospel of Jesus divides, because it exposes humanity’s sinful nature.
 - There are only 1 of 2 responses to it: Accept or Reject.
 - **The gospel divides**
 - **Luke 12:49-51**, “I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other!”
 - **Matthew 10:34**, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”
 - **The very presence of Jesus provides the reality of our vision**
 - **John 9:39**, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” [those blind to truth, and those blinded by legal religion]
 - **Jesus is the light of exposure**
 - **John 3:19-20**, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who

does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”

- The division against Paul & Barnabas was so intense, they resorted to mob violence and planned to stone them.
- Rather than stay and ‘see what would happen’, they headed outta town.
 - However, an instance of persecution did not deter from the mission. They kept persevering...
 - **James 1:2-3**, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness [firm/unwavering].”
 - **Hebrews 12:3**, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

Verses 8-20

“Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain [empty] things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.”

- In his gospel presentation in Lystra, Paul ministers to one [like Peter, like Jesus], and it caused an uproar.
 - Greek mythology had infiltrated the town, as its temple lied at the entrance.
 - Mythology legend stated that Zeus and Hermes had visited Lystra, and without receiving the welcome they deserved, the people were destroyed.
 - The crowds believed in the miracle that seemingly came from the man, rather than the God they proclaimed.
 - This was primarily a Gentile town with little Jewish influence [no mention of a synagogue].
 - So Paul found it necessary to explain that there is only one true *living* God, using nature as his argument [vs. 15-17].

- **Romans 1:20**, “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”
- Notice the difference in how Paul presents God to the Jews [ch. 13] vs. a people who have no biblical foundation?
- When people *do not* have a solid foundation on the word of God, they can be easily swayed by public opinion, mass hysteria, propaganda, etc.
 - [Parable of the sower] **Matthew 13:4-6**, “And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.”
- So Paul suffered stoning by the mob, and dragged him out of the city supposing him to be dead.
- An instance of persecution did not deter from the mission. They kept persevering...
 - **Romans 5:3-4**, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Verses 21-28

“When they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.”

- No time to waste being dead! Get up and let’s go!!
- They travel to Derbe, preach the gospel, make disciples, and then return to all the cities they suffered persecution??
- But there is purpose for it... strength and encouragement [vs. 22: “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith...”]
 - **Hebrews 10:36**, “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”
 - This is why we attend church on a regular basis. This is why we remain in fellowship with other believers. This is why we pray, fast, & remain in God’s Word.
 - We need the strength and encouragement that only God can provide!
- **QUESTION:** How do you define tribulation? [vs. 22 “...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”]
 - Is it confined to being physically assaulted like Paul?
 - It’s mental/psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, economic, social, or a combination thereof?

- Tribulation is adversity in all forms.
- Just as the presence of Jesus will cause people to be exposed, adversity will do the same.
 - When it exposes your weakness(es), where will you turn?
 - **Job 36:15**, “He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity.”
 - You’re either going to accept/give in to the effects of the adversity.
 - Which can bring hurt, sadness, depression, anxiety, pain, frustration, anger, etc...
 - Or, your going to reject it’s effects, and keep your focus on Jesus and His word, who said to us, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” **[Matthew 11:29]**
 - **Psalm 119:71**, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.”
 - **Job 36:21**, “Be on guard! Turn back from evil, for God sent this suffering to keep you from a life of evil.”...this is “God-sent education”.
 - Are you going to humbly submit to His freely offered grace? Or continue to try and pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and try and handle it on your own?

Conclusion

- The very one who came to establish His eternal kingdom [vs. 22], has called you to join Him in ministry; and adversity is a promised part of that journey.
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:5**, “And God will use this persecution to show his justice and to make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering.”
- **1 Peter 5:6-10**, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”
- Don’t let an instance of adversity deter you from your mission. Keep persevering!
- In the face of adversity, press on! There are greater things in store!