



PAUL AND BARNABAS
ACTS 14

Open to Acts 14—today we’re going to be looking at Paul’s first missionary journey of three. In Acts 13 and a guy named Barnabas were sent out from the church in Antioch. And the travel through the region of Galatia. (Slide) When you read the book of Galatians, you’re reading what Paul wrote to folks in the cities we’re going to read about. They get chased out of two cities in a row—not because people aren’t believing but bc the Jews who don’t believe create a stink and run them off. So they flee Iconium they come to a city 18 miles SW

Ch 14:8—Third city—Lystra. This is where we’re going to spend our time today. Want to walk us through this text—read and narrate—and we’ll make a few stops along the way to talk about what’s going on and make some observations. And then we’ll end with 6 implications for disciple-making; 4 helps as we seek go and share Christ. **Pray.**

“Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, 10 said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking.” Now this miracle is about to trigger everything that happens in the rest of this passage.

But first, notice the close connection here between miracles and the preaching of the Word. Same thing happened in Iconium, 3“remained there for along 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.” Almost without exception when you see miracles being performed by the apostles in Acts it’s in the context of preaching the Word. And this is really important to understand.

Always wanted to see one—for fun. Never performed for fun. These aren’t magic tricks. They’re not entertaining people. Jesus is granting them the ability to perform miracles to prove that what they’re saying is true; to establish the truthfulness of the Gospel.

Miracles are signposts to something greater—that’s why people are often scared when Jesus does them. Who is this man? And these people understand that miracles point to a greater but they connect it with the wrong God! That’s why miracles have to be connected to the Word—otherwise people will fit the miracle into their worldview.

Which is what they do—they interpret the miracle through their pagan worldview. “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!” 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 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.”

Just a little background here. There was a local legend record 50 years earlier by a poet named Ovid. And in this legend Zeus and Hermes come to earth in human form to a city just north of Lystra. And no one

would give them shelter except for an old poor couple who agreed to take them in. Later on the gods rewarded the elderly couple and destroyed everyone else's home with a flood.

That was the neighborhood legend so it's reasonable to assume they had this story in mind and don't want to make the same mistake the Phrygians did. And so made so they see this miracle and their convinced that Zeus and Hermes have come to visit them in human form.

Now Paul and Barnabas don't correct them immediately bc they don't understand what they're saying. vs 11 says they were speaking Lycaonian. But when the priest comes with the animals all together and realize these people have completely misinterpreted the miracle that just happened—and rather than worshipping Jesus they're worshipping them. And Paul and Barnabas are horrified...

Vs 15, 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 then he begins to preach to them and we'll look at what he said in a second...

Do you notice how immediately disgusted Paul and Barnabas with the thought that there are people worshipping them. They shut it down immediately. This is instructive for us because many of us work hard to be the object of people's praise approval and admiration.

Even as I think about it—if I had a whole crowd cheering for me, excited about me, loving you even to the point of bringing sacrifices I can't help but feel that there's a sinful part of me that would just soak it all in. I'm a celebrity. I'm really somebody!

As awful as it sounds, a part of us loves when people worship us—not with sacrifices. When people see us indispensable, irreplaceable, everything they need. We feel so valuable when we're the object of people's praise. But it's idolatry. And it robs God of the glory that he is due. But if look back to chapter 12 and you see you serious this is. A guy named king Herod is in a similar situation. And after he delivers a speech to the people it says vs 22, "And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" 23 Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last." Friends let's remember that however much people may look to us we are not what they need—Jesus is—my hope is that you would leave today not saying "Man what a great sermon" but "Man what a great Savior."

So they shut it down and Paul uses it an opportunity to tell them about the true God. But just as soon as the people praise them the Jews they've been running from in the other cities caught up with them In vs 19 "and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him to of the city, supposing that he was dead." Like the crowd that was just worshipping Paul is now stoning Paul.

What does this show—it shows that hype can draw a crowd but it can't change a heart. Just as soon as people come get in on the excitement they fall away. And this is warning for us. There are so many churches that draw people through creating exciting experiences with a Christian spin. And they leave people entertained but not equipped. Motivated but not transformed. And as soon as the jokes aren't as funny and the lights aren't as cool and the music isn't as edgy—they get bored and move on to something else. Hype draws crowds, but it doesn't change hearts. Only the Gospel.

That's why we preach Christ as he's revealed himself in the Word. You may say why don't we do the movie theatre series? Because excitement and hype can never fix sin and brokenness. Popcorn with a TED Talk at the end won't do anything to help you fight your addiction, or repair your marriage, or your self-centeredness or anger or bitterness. Only Jesus only the gospel can do that. And that's why we're here.

Told my youth “my biggest fear is looking back and all you remember is that it was a great time.” Hype can draw a crowd, but it can’t change a heart. Lots of people come to the miracle, only a few come to Jesus...the rest stone him. Fortunately, they don’t kill him, the text says he got back up and went back in the city—that’s some courage right there.

And the next day they go to another town called Derbe vs 21 where they make many disciples—no persecution mentioned here and it’s this point where they turn around and head home to Antioch but on their way they stop by many of the cities where they preached the Gospel to encourage the believers

And eventually they make it home to Antioch vs 26 where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled 27 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. 28 And they remained no little time with the disciples.”

Notice that the text says they fulfilled their work. They accomplished their goal. Which means that this gives us a picture of success looks like missions and disciple-making. So not only is this an inspiring story about courageous disciple-making but it’s an example that’s instructive for us as we think about making disciples. So from this successful missions trip, I want to close today by drawing 4 implications for Disciple-Making from this text. 4 implications for ordinary people doing ordinary life with Gospel intentionality.

Four Implications For Disciple-Making

(1) Remember the ultimate purpose for disciple-making.

One thing that strikes you when you read these accounts of Paul’s missionary journeys is the incredible perseverance he displayed. I mean at every turn he’s getting run off threatened, persecuted. Here he gets stoned, and gets up and goes back into the city—this kind of stuff characterizes his whole ministry. Whoever said the safest place for you is in the center of God’s will clearly never read Paul. Like the best place for you? Yes! The safest place? No! Paul even tell these churches on his way back in vs 22 that it’s through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom.

And you’ve got to ask yourself man what fuels this guy? What empowers him to get up and keep pressing on for the sake of the Gospel? Like if you stoned me I’d probably hate you. How’s he do it? A spirit-fueled passion for the glory of God. Paul wants to see every people group on the planet praise the name of Jesus. God’s glory fuels disciple-making. 1 Chron. “Sing to the Lord all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day, Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among the peoples! For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be held in awe above all gods.” Don’t get me wrong our hearts should break for the lost—Paul’s did. But the ultimate motive for missions is not pity for man but glory for God. What is going to keep you going when the people you’re trying to share the gospel with in your context hate you for it? What’s going to keep you going when your feelings of pity dry up? The only thing that will keep you going is God’s glory. We go and say, “He is to be held in awe above all gods. Sing to the Lord all the earth—that means you.”

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.” (Piper) Keep persevering in your contexts.

(2) Know your audience.

Paul regularly found a point of contact with people. Something he could use as material to turn into a conversation about Jesus. And in many cases, he went to the synagogue in that city and argued from the OT that Jesus was the messiah. If you flip back you can see this. “13:5 when they arrived at Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews. In Pisidian Antioch vs 14, “And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.” 14:1, “Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke...” And Paul uses this strategy until he gets arrested in Acts 21.

But what’s unique about our text is that Lystra is the first place Paul goes without a synagogue. They’re literally pagans. And in recognition of that, Paul changes his approach. (Preaching in jail) He doesn’t start with the Old Testament—that may not even know that that is. “...we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 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.”

Now he either gets cut off or this is just a snippet of his sermon because he doesn’t get from creation to Christ like he does when he uses this same strategy in Acts 17. But noticed that he’s changed his point of contact. He’s not changing the Gospel. He changes his conversation piece and instead of using the OT to get to Christ, he uses things in creation that they’d be more familiar with. And we need to learn from this. In a postmodern world. (Slide) Freedom.

(3) Expect some positive responses.

Used to sell Cutco. For whatever reason, we share the Gospel—if we share—like no one wants to hear it. And even if someone lets us share no one will ever believe. Do we really think Jesus died to save people, gave us the Holy Spirit, commanded to share the Gospel only for no one to believe when we do? I’ve got to believe one of the reasons this story is in the Bible is to remind us that in the most hostiles places with he most hostile people there is going to be someone who Jesus as beautiful.

This things looks like a total bust—miracle wrongly attributed, doesn’t finish his sermon, gets stoned Vs 21” They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch strengthening the souls of the disciples.” Which means people came to faith in Lystra—one of them we’ll learn later was a guy named Timothy. What looked like a total failure on the outside was a part of God’s plan to save folks in Lystra. Like a lot of people said no. But a lot said yes. We do not share the Gospel crossing our fingers hoping it works. We go trusting in God to save whenever and however he chooses to. But we go with expectation. And when he does save number 4 we need to make sure we...

(4) Follow Up.

Notice that Paul and Barnabas when they leave Derbe and head back to Antioch they go to the places they’ve already been—Lystra, Iconium Pisidia. They could have gone to new cities on their way back and preach to people who haven’t heard. Because Paul isn’t just interested in getting “decisions” he wants to make disciples. And notice it’s not until after they do this that the text says their work had been fulfilled. And so what do, they go back vs22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, I love that phrase. Paul has come back to help them grow in their faith and become spiritual adults. How does Paul strengthen the souls of the disciples? 2 ways: Training in doctrine. They strengthened them by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

This phrase “the faith” refers to a basic body of beliefs or doctrine in other places called the tradition or the teaching—what Paul includes in his letters. Paul sees growing people in their understanding of theology and doctrine—things like sin and repentance, salvation, Holy Spirit, the community of faith, personal holiness, how to approach suffering, how to study the Bible—all of these things are crucial to strengthen your soul.

I think some of us have a temptation to think about things as for the more intellectual people not at all. Learning about all the benefits of the gospel is for every believer. And there are too many people who have been believers for years and they’re still in the spiritual nursery, with a faith that’s almost the same as when they first believed. This is why we do discipleship and systematic theology, and Bible studies—Josh teaching a class, marriage conference—not so we can sit around and say deep things, so we can strengthen our souls. Are you availing yourself to resources and opportunities that are going to strengthen your soul. Please don’t get content to stay in the shallow end. Please press in to see the glory of God more clearly in the Word. So he trains them in doctrine and appoints pastors to oversee and teach them.

23 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.”

Word elders means the same thing as pastor or overseer. Paul gives qualifications in 1 Tim. 3 Notice the elders are selected from inside the church and there’s more than one. I know that people see me as the pastor of this church, but I’m not I’m A pastor. We have 5 and two in training (slide)

Now it may shock you that setting up the church in a certain way was part of Paul’s plan to strengthen people’s souls—church structure? Yes, because if you want your soul to be strong you have to plugged into a healthy local church. Paul never separates someone’s personal relationship with Jesus from their belonging to a local body of believers. And folks especially in my generation love the version of Christianity where you can get Jesus without the church—a Jesus that hates religion and all the rest. See it right here. Prayer, fasting, doctrine, elders, a commissioning service. This is part of Paul’s plan to strengthen people's souls.

In fact, planting was his strategy. It would be my dream for us to plant a church someday. Church plants reach unbelievers more effectively than established churches.

Returns to Antioch “and when they had 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.”

Close.