

# The Acts of the Apostles

## LESSON 18

## **Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts 14:1-7)**

*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. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 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. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. 7 And they were preaching the gospel there.*

Notice several things that happened in Iconium that was becoming a pattern for cities that had a synagogue.

- They went and preached in the synagogue where many Jews believed.
- The unbelieving Jews stirred up the multitudes against them.
- They continued ministering boldly until the door closed.
- They left the city to either take the heat off of the new believers or to escape for their lives.

## **Paul and Barnabas Confront Idolatry in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)**

*And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 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!" 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. 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." 18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 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. 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.***

Notice several things that happened in Lystra that were becoming a pattern for cities that did not have a synagogue. Lystra was a Roman colony. In Roman colonies, synagogues were not allowed. The Romans wanted their colonies to only reflect the worship of the state and Roman gods.

- God used signs and wonders to open the door for the preaching of the Gospel.
- The people readily believed what was preached.
- The tendency was to blend their traditional religions with Christianity.
- Jews from other places followed Paul and stirred up opposition.
- The apostles became the object of persecution.
- The apostles had to flee for their very lives.

Note: It is very likely that Timothy witnessed the stoning of Paul. Lystra was his home. This stoning very likely resulted in the death and resurrection of Paul (II Cor. 12:1-7).

***It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.***

## **Paul and Barnabas Head Home to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)**

***And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 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.” 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. 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. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. 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. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.***

They went back home by the same route they had come (bypassing Cyprus) so that they could follow-up on the works that they had started. They arrived at home with the good report, “Mission Accomplished!”

## **Paul and Barnabas' Basic Method in Church Planting**

They had four main considerations in choosing an area of focus.

- Natural wisdom and sound judgment

Paul began his second journey while in a conversation with Barnabas about the wisdom of visiting the churches that they had started on their first journey to “see how they were doing” (Acts 15:36).

When Paul finished visiting those works he thought the next logical step to take was to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7).

- The leading of the Holy Spirit

On Paul's second journey when he was thinking about going into Bithynia he had a supernatural encounter by way of a vision where the Holy Spirit interrupted Paul's plan and directed him to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). It should be noted that this direction was general and not specific. Macedonia was a region and not a specific city.

- Keying in on chief cities

On Paul's second missionary journey when the Holy Spirit directed Paul to Macedonia he responded by passing through several small towns to go to Philippi which was the foremost city of the region and a Roman colony (Acts 16:12).

This plan would harmonize with the natural demographic. They would go where the people were. They would follow the natural lines of commerce. They would establish a beachhead in the central city and from that city the Gospel would go to the peripheral areas (I Th. 1:8).

- Following the open doors and the moving of the Spirit in a locality

There is no point in preaching the Gospel where the doors are closed. When you are an apostle you must follow the anointing. You must go into fields that are ripe for harvest. This is how Philip ended up in Samaria (Acts 8:14). This is how Barnabas ended up in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26, 4:36).

They had a basic method to follow in establishing churches. Paul is the best New Testament ministry example of a church planter. We know that he traveled through hundreds of cities. We know that he preached in at least 30 cities. We know that he established at least 10 strong, reproducing churches all in only 20 years of ministry, four of which he was held prisoner. Paul followed a general pattern that can serve as a guide to us today.

This method is seen by taking a close look at the verbs or action words in chapter 14 of the Book of Acts.

- They were recommended (vs. 26; Acts 15:50).

This word literally means “to give over into the hands of another.” There comes a point in the ministry of an apostle where the church must release him and turn him over to the direct oversight of the grace of God or the Holy Spirit. He is then ready to go out.

- They went both together (vs. 1).

The apostles in the New Testament were dedicated to the principle of team ministry (Acts 3:1; 5:29; 8:14; 11:25-27; 12:25; 13:5, 13, 21; 15:39-40; 19:29;

20:4, 13; 21:16). They followed the pattern that Jesus had given them to go two by two. In this case they had a third person who represented a minister in training (Acts 13:5; 16:1). They believed that two are better than one (Eccl. 4:9-10).

- They spoke boldly (vs. 3).

The apostles were always ready to speak, share and testify in a bold way. They were ever ready to use any platform that was available to them (Refer to Lesson 10 on Boldness).

- They showed signs and wonders (vs. 5).

The apostles used both the word and demonstration of the Holy Spirit in signs and wonders to open new areas of witness (I Cor. 2:1-5).

- They preached the gospel (vs. 7, 21).

Their preaching did not contain a lot of theorizing, they stuck to the basics. When people are grounded in the basics, they will be able to go on themselves.

Therefore all of the preaching of the apostles in the Book of Acts focused on Christ, repentance, faith, water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness and the cross of Christ. They preached the proper Christian birth and all of its implication.

- They taught disciples (vs. 21).

As they gathered the first group of disciples who would make up the core of this new work, they placed a high priority on teaching and laying a solid foundation in the hearts and minds of the people (Acts 11:26; 17:11; 18:11; 20:20; 28:31).

- They departed (vs. 20).

At this point they put in a temporary structure and left the work giving it a chance to walk on its own. Sometimes they were forced to move on (Acts 14:5-6, 19).

At other times they knew it was time to move on (Acts 14:21). When they had a choice, they stayed in one place long enough to organize believers into a local church.

- They returned to follow up (vs. 21).

After some time past they came back to these churches to see how they had done and to follow-up on them. They never abandon new works but they wanted to see them firmly established.

- They confirmed the disciples (vs. 22).

The word here means to “strengthen, prop up or support.” Their goal was to come in and address areas that had revealed themselves in their absence and minister to those areas which would have the result of rendering the church “more firm.” They keyed in on weaknesses that had been exposed while they were away.

- They exhorted the believers (vs. 22).

They never failed to exhort the people and encourage them in the ways of the Lord reminding them that the Christian life of one of a certain amount of tribulation and problem solving (Acts 11:23; 15:32; 20:2).

- They ordained elders (vs. 23).

The proving time for the temporary structure was over now and official elders could be set into the church.

- They prayed (vs.23).

All of this was done in the context of fasting and prayer. They realized that Jesus was the head of the church and His direction during these important times was of utmost importance (Acts 13:1-3; I Cor. 7:5).

- They fasted (vs. 23).

They commended the church and its leadership to the Lord (vs. 23).

There came a time when even as they had been commended to the Lord for their ministry that the church and its newly established leadership team would be commended and delivered as ripe fruit into the hands of the Lord who would now lead them and guide them as an autonomous local church (Acts 20:32).

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

- They returned home (vs. 27).

They had now officially completed their first missionary journey. They came back to the local church from which they had been sent a few years earlier. The apostles had covered

more than 1400 miles and were gone for between two and three years.

- They gathered the church (vs. 27).

It was time for the sending church to rejoice in the fruit that had come through their obedience to the Holy Spirit to send out the two principle figures from the church. This was the church's reward.

- They reported all that God had done (vs. 27).

There is a certain amount of accountability reflected in these verses. They had been gone for over two years, now it was time for the report. Notice how they focused on God and on the victories, not the personal sacrifice and suffering that they went through.

- They stayed a long time (vs. 28).

This kind of a trip had to be very grueling. It was now time for a rest. It was time to get back involved in the sending church. It was a time to renew relationships. It was a time to get inspired for the next leg of their journey.

If the transactions in Acts 14 occurred, as is supposed, about 45-47 A.D. and the council at Jerusalem assembled about 50-52 A.D., then there is an interval of between 3-5 years in which we have no record of Paul and Barnabas. It is probable that they took other trips during this time for which we have no record (See Romans 15:18-19).

***For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.***

We have no record of this trip to Illyricum. It may have happened in conjunction with his second or third missionary journeys or some other trip.