



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### "RIDING THROUGH"

## THE BOOK OF ACTS-LESSON 14

We ended chapter 13 with the disciples being thrown out of the city of Antioch, near Pisidian. Many had accepted Paul's message, but some of the Jews had instigated a persecution against them, resulting in the disciples being expelled from the city (Acts 13:50). Paul and Barnabas continued on their first missionary journey to the city of Iconium, about 90 miles east.

Iconium was a very ancient city, claiming to be older than even Damascus. E.M. Blaiklock writes in the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia, "In spite of becoming a Roman colony under Hadrian, Iconium remained predominately Greek in tone, and somewhat resistant toward Roman influence. With the organizing of the province of Galatia, Iconium became an independent unit. As a Greek city, Iconium was governed by the assembly of citizens."

Because Iconium had a citizen-run government, it was dangerous to the disciples. The town could do whatever they wanted, without any Roman involvement.

### First Day

1. Read Acts 13:51-52. Then read Acts 14:1-28. Write any key words, phrases, or reoccurring themes.
2. Look up any words that are unfamiliar to you and write the definition. Also look on a map and locate the cities that are mentioned in this chapter. It is helpful to become familiar with the places that Paul and Barnabas traveled during their journey.
3. Make an outline of this chapter. What would you title it?

4. Who are the main characters?
5. Write any new facts or thoughts that are interesting to you.
6. Reread Acts 14:1-4. Where did Paul and Barnabas go first to preach?
7. In your own words, explain what happened in verses 1-4.
8. Why do you think the Jews did what they did in verse 2?

The city of Iconium became divided. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword. It is living and powerful, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

God's truth will cause division many times. God's truth is so contrary to the lies and sin of this world, that when people accept it, division is almost inevitable. **How is it possible for light to dwell with darkness?** Jesus Himself warned His disciples about the cost of following Him in Luke 12.

9. Read Luke 12:51-53 and Matthew 10:34-37. What was Jesus saying?
10. Have you ever experienced opposition or division as a result of being a Christian and sharing the truth? What did you do? What was the outcome? How was God glorified?

We will end today here in verse 4 with part of the city siding with the Jews, the others with the apostles. The winning side was obviously that of the apostles. You've all heard the saying, with God on your side, you're the majority. I'd say that gave the apostles a "**Reason to Rejoice,**" wouldn't you?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God." Acts 14:22b

## Second Day

**Review your memory verse.**

1. Read Acts 14:1-10.
2. Did the disciples stay in Iconium for a while, in spite of the opposition? (verses 2-3)
3. Soon the city became divided (vs 4). What was the result of the division? (vs 5-6) How did God use this persecution to further the Gospel?
4. Where did the disciples run to?
5. Do you think the missionaries lacked faith because they escaped when their lives were threatened? (Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:23.)

Sometimes the disciples stayed and continued ministering during persecution, while other times they fled.

6. How do we know when to continue on or when to flee? Give Scriptures to support your answer. Give an example from your life when you stayed in spite of persecution, and an example of a time when you fled.

The disciples fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe, which were both cities of Lycaonia. Iconium was officially a Lycaonian city also, but its inhabitants were mostly Phrygians. Lystra was a Roman colony about 20 miles SW of Iconium. Derbe was about 30 miles SE of Lystra. Lystra was thought to be the home of Lois, Eunice and Timothy (Acts 16:1, 2 Timothy 1:5).

7. Could the people who drove them out have been some of the same people who welcomed them previously? How do you think Paul and Barnabas must have felt? Have you ever had someone be for you, and then turn on you suddenly the next minute? What did you do?

Notice that Paul and Barnabas did not go straight to a synagogue in Lystra. By this we assume that there was not the required amount of 10 Jewish males in the city, or they would have had a synagogue. The missionary men instead ministered to the people on the streets and in the villages.

8. Read Acts 14:7-10. The story of the lame man being healed reminds us of when Peter healed a lame man in Acts 3:1-8.
9. Read Acts 3:1-8. What are the similarities between the two stories? What are the differences?

Acts 14:9 says that the lame man heard Paul speaking. This word usually refers to ordinary conversation rather than preaching. The lame man most likely overheard Paul sharing Jesus with the people on the street.

10. Would people want to know Jesus by overhearing your everyday conversations? Does your conversation reflect Christ -- His love, His joy, His peace, His truth? **What would people think of the Lord if they overheard you talking to people on the street?**

Tomorrow we will look at the crowd's reaction to the healing of the lame man. It is really interesting to watch how many times the people in this chapter go back and forth -- liking the disciples and then hating them. They probably felt like yo-yos! I rejoice in the knowledge that God's love for us remains constant and steadfast. He loved us yesterday ... He loves us today ... and He'll still love us tomorrow. Hallelujah!

### Third Day

#### Can you remember your memory verse?

Yesterday while Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra, Paul healed a man who was lame from birth. The man was excited, and he leaped up and walked! The townspeople were excited too, but for a different reason. Let's read on ...

1. Read Acts 14:11-18.
2. Whom did the people think that Paul and Barnabas were?

To explain the miracle, the people of Lystra resorted to mythology. These pagan people believed in a legend which caused them to assume that Paul and Barnabas were gods. William Barclay explains this legend to us. "The people around Lystra told a story that once Zeus and Hermes had come to this earth in disguise. None in all the land would give them hospitality until the last two old peasants, Philemon and his wife Baucis, took them in. As a result the whole population was wiped out by the gods except Philemon and Baucis, who were made the guardians of a splendid temple and were turned into two great trees when they died. So when Paul healed the crippled man the people of Lystra were determined not to make the same mistake again."

Zeus, or Jupiter, was the chief and father of the gods. Mercury was the messenger of the gods, and the god of oratory. Jupiter was also the patron deity of the city.

3. What did the priest of Zeus intend to do in verse 13, and why?

**Garlands** (vs 13) were woolen bands or wreaths that were used to adorn sacrificial animals.

4. Did Paul and Barnabas realize what was happening at first? (vs 14:11)
5. What did they do when they finally realized what was happening? (14-15)

6. Read Paul's speech in verses 15-17. Is it different than how he speaks to the Jews in the synagogues? Why and How?
7. What does Paul tell them about the true God?
8. What did God allow the nations to do according to verse 16?
9. What happens when people choose their way instead of God's way?
10. Even though man turns away from God, what does God, in His goodness, allow? (vs 17)

When the people praised Paul and Barnabas as gods, the temptation to receive the praise had to be there. This flattery must have felt good, especially after being kicked out of Iconium. But Paul and Barnabas refused to sit on the pedestal the people were trying to put them on. Paul tried to shift the attention from himself to his message. Paul knew that he was simply the messenger. The message he was bringing was the important part.

11. Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you've been put on a pedestal? How long does it take you to jump off? Name some ways that we can resist this temptation.
12. Why is it stealing from God when we receive glory for things we do?
13. Do you find yourself putting people on pedestals? Whom? How are you setting them up for a fall?

Regarding putting people on pedestals, **Lloyd John Ogilvie** said ... "We make idols out of people and forget that the greatest honor we can pay them is to become what we admire in them."

In Acts 14:15 Paul tells the people to turn from their vanities, or vain things. Paul is referring to the gods of Jupiter and Mercury, as well as all the other vain idols they worshipped. An idol is any object of ardent or excessive devotion or admiration. An idol can be anyone or anything that comes before God in your life.

14. Name some things that can become idols to Christians.
15. Do you have any idols in your life? What vanities is God telling you to turn away from? Is there anyone or anything that you have put before God? Even today?
16. What does John say about idols in 1 John 5:21? Who was he talking to?
17. Memorize 1 John 5:21, substituting "little children" with your name.

This ends our lesson for today. Paul and Barnabas go from being hated to being worshipped in only a few short verses. One minute they were on the bottom of the world, the next minute, the very top.

Can you find a "**Reason to Rejoice**" from today's lesson? Remember to keep looking for Reasons to Rejoice in the Lord! We want to rejoice in Him every day.

### Fourth Day

**Can you repeat your memory verse to someone?**

In today's lesson we meet some people who were following our beloved missionary team.

1. Read Acts 14:19-20.
2. Who was following the team? (vs 19)
3. What did they do to Paul, and why? (vs 19)

The same people who were calling Paul a god were now treating him like a dog. He was experiencing the same brutality that Stephen felt as he was martyred. But unlike Stephen, Paul's course was not yet finished.

4. After they thought Paul was dead and they dragged him out of the city, what did Paul do?
5. Paul told the believers in Corinth about this incident in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9. How did he describe this "trouble in Asia"?

It's thought that Paul refers to this stoning in 2 Corinthians 11:25. Many also believe that Paul received his vision of Heaven at this time (2 Corinthians 12:1-6).

6. Read Paul's vision in 2 Corinthians 12:1-6. How did he describe it?

Was Paul dead or not? I believe that he was not. It seems that Luke was very careful not to say that he was dead, but that the Jews supposed he was dead. Paul definitely experienced a supernatural strengthening to be able to get up and continue on his trip after being stoned.

7. After Paul got up, where did he go first? (vs 20)

Paul did an extremely brave thing by going straight back to the city where they had just tried to murder him. John Wesley said, "**Always look a mob in the face.**"

8. Has God ever asked you to "look a mob" in the face? Have you been asked to face your opposition?

I wonder what was going on in Paul's mind at the time. I bet he was remembering Scripture, and that was giving him the courage to continue.

9. Can you find some Scriptures from the Old Testament that may have been encouraging to Paul? (I found Psalm 56. It certainly encouraged me!)

10. Many times God calls us to face our enemies. Moses did. Daniel did. David did. What enemy has God been telling you to face? Do you lack the courage? How do you get it? (The enemy doesn't have to be a person -- it can be a situation, a temptation, or any fear you have.)



This ends our lesson for today. My "**Reason to Rejoice**" is that God Himself is with me wherever I go and whatever I do. Thank you, Jesus!

### Fifth Day

**Can you write out your memory verse? How was Paul an example of this Scripture?**

Paul and Barnabas may have felt like giving up. (Especially Paul, after being stoned.) But God gave him the grace and the courage to go on, in spite of the pain. Now Paul and Barnabas proceed to their next stop on their journey, a city called Derbe.

1. Read Acts 14:19-28.
2. According to verse 21, was their mission in Derbe successful?

Their visit to Derbe seemed to be more peaceful than their visits to the previous cities. Paul tells Timothy (2 Timothy 3:11) about the persecutions in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, but he doesn't mention Derbe. Derbe was also the home of Gaius, who later became one of Paul's traveling companions (Acts 20:4).

It's time to turn around! It would have been safer and closer for them to return to Antioch by going east, and cutting through Tarsus. But instead, they go right back into the cities that had the most intense persecutions. Paul and Barnabas wanted to backtrack through the cities they had just evangelized to assist and encourage the new converts and warn them of the trials that were sure to come their way.

3. What did Paul and Barnabas do in each of the cities they revisited?  
(vs 22-23)

Paul and Barnabas knew that new believers needed to be built up in the faith, like babies need to be nourished. They had no Christian books, tape series, or conferences to attend. They didn't even have the New Testament! Paul and Barnabas wanted them to understand who God was, and understand the importance of growing in knowledge and obedience.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states this: "New believers must understand what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." **Do you know this?**

Discipleship of new believers is teaching them to think Christianly, and showing them how to live out God's Word by the example of our own life. This was Paul and Barnabas' aim -- to make them mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:13, James 1:4).

4. Paul and Barnabas did four things to build up the new believers:

1. **They strengthened their souls (Acts 14:22a).** The word strengthen means to make more firm, or to give added strength. They were devoted to teaching them.
  - a. How can we strengthen the souls of new believers in our church, families, and friends?
  - b. Read Ephesians 6:10 and 13. How can we be strong?
2. **They encouraged them to persevere through trials (vs 22).** They wanted them to be prepared for the battle that was surely ahead.
  - a. Read John 16:33. What gives us hope to face the battle?
  - b. How can we encourage new believers to persevere?
3. **They helped them organize leadership (vs 23).**
  - a. What two important things did they do as they chose their leaders? (See also Acts 13:2.)
  - b. What can happen to a church without leadership that has met the spiritual qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9?

Notice that Paul and Barnabas stayed in each city until the church was established. They desired to develop a strong leadership. The church does not refer to the structural building, but to the people who make up the household of God. Those who claim Jesus as their Lord and Savior make up His Holy Temple (Ephesians 3:21).

- 4. They commended them to the Lord (vs 23b).** The word commend means to deposit as in a bank. They entrusted the new converts to God's care -- they were His.
- a. Why was it so important to teach them to depend on God and not on them?
  - b. What are the dangers of a new convert depending on the one who is discipling them? How can we avoid these dangers?
- 5.** Are you discipling anyone? What about your kids? Are you teaching them how to live and think like Christians?
- 6.** If you are discipling anyone, have you taught them to depend on you or on Christ?
- 7.** Are you a new believer? Are you hanging around with older Christians, gleaning all you can from their example? Do you understand the dangers of putting anyone on a pedestal? Are your eyes on God alone, understanding that man will always fail you, but God won't?
- 8.** Pray and ask the Lord if there is someone in your life that He has put there for you to disciple. Will you take the step of faith, and obey His voice?

After they committed the new believers to the Lord, they started home, continuing to preach on the way. Paul and Barnabas embarked from the port of Attalia (vs 25), and sailed directly home to their home church in Antioch of Syria.

- 9.** What did they do when they got home? (vs 27)
- 10.** What two things did they share with their home church?

11. Why is it so important for missionaries to share what God has done when they come home?

Notice that they emphasized what God had done, and not what they had done. They gave all the glory to God!

This ends Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. They finished the course that the Holy Spirit sent them on, by the grace of God (vs 26). How long this trip lasted is not known for sure, but it is estimated to have lasted about two years. Paul must have marveled at what God had done! Through all the trials and opposition, not to mention the pain of being stoned, God had prevailed! I'm sure Paul had dreams of the entire world coming to know Christ! He had a true missionary heart. But for now, he would remain in Antioch, refreshing those in his home church, and being refreshed himself.

I'd like to end with this quote: **"The mission of the church is the missions, and the mission of missions is the church."** Is sharing Christ your mission? I'm rejoicing that someone once made ME their mission field. How about you?