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### Paul's First Missionary Journey, part 8: Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

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THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED  
(Paul and Barnabas in Iconium)

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
NUMBER 55  
ACTS 14:1-5

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ACTS 14:1-5 "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them"

Paul and Barnabas left Antioch in Pisidia and they went into Galatia. The Galatians are very interesting people. They moved Westward and some settled in France and were called the Gauls. Some crossed the English Channel and became the Celts and various groups related to the Scots and the Irish. They were not the British for the British were from German stock. British are made up from three German groups--The Angles and the Saxons came from Germany. One group of Galatians decided that they didn't like it there and they went back and tried to poke their nose into Italy and the Romans stopped them cold. Then they tried to get into Greece and they were stopped by the Greeks at Delphi in 290 B.C. Then they crossed the Hellespont and found a nice place in Asia Minor and here they founded a Kingdom known in history as Galatia. These are the people Paul and Barnabas will now encounter.

ACTS 14:1 "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." They came to Iconium and entered the synagogue of the Jews. They usually went to the synagogue for they had a building and a crowd and it gave Paul and Barnabas a chance to get the gospel before the people. In practically every major city there was a synagogue. Paul knew their language. He was a Jew and he was a Roman citizen, so the Jewish synagogue was the natural place for them to go. Generally Paul was permitted to speak in the synagogue. Later on we will find that Athens had no synagogue and he had to speak in the open market place and on Mars Hill. But they didn't have auditoriums and many places where one could speak like we do in our time. Very few ever spoke in the theatres or stadiums for those places were sacred to the gods. But here in Iconium Paul found a great group here who was on positive signals and immediately they heard the gospel and were converted. There were Jews and Galatians and Greeks there and many of them believed. The use of the word "Believe" here is very interesting. It is aorist tense and this means that in the point of time when they heard the gospel, they believed. But it also means that God picked up that point of time and perpetuated it forever. (Once saved always saved). Believe is a transitive verb and any member of the human race is the subject and Jesus Christ is the object. All the credit for believing goes to him. The active voice of believe means that every man had to believe for himself. There is no way for another to believe for you, be baptized for you, confess for you. It is a personal matter. It is also an infinitive, and the infinitive of purpose. It is God's purpose that all men believe. God wants every man to believe and none to be lost.

ACTS 14:2 "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." Immediately we meet the opposition in Iconium. You see, the religious Jews were legalistic and they believed in Salvation through works. These Jews were standing right there saying, "No, No!". This is an aorist, active participle of negative volition. The participle means that it was an actual fact that these Jews rejected the gospel of grace. "Stirred up the Gentiles" actually means mob action. It means to put pressure on people through violence. They did everything they could to embitter the minds of these Greeks, Phrygians, and Galatians.

ACTS 14:3 "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." It is interesting that we read that Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time. The opposition was so great that I expect if you or I had been there we would have left Iconium the next day. But Paul and Barnabas saw a challenge in this opposition and drove down their pegs and camped right there. The grace of God was real to them and they were not afraid.

ISAIAH 41:10 "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." They understood Bible doctrine, and therefore, they spoke boldly. They knew the presence of God was real. When you are living under the shadow of the victory of the cross, then you need never be afraid. Paul knew that the most important thing that he could do was announce Bible doctrine. Nothing else would make a better world. The one answer was regeneration. God is perfect and his plan is perfect.

The greatest issue in all the world is JOHN 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Human good has no part in the plan of God. Paul faced human opposition with Bible doctrine. You see, when the Holy Spirit controls your life, then what you accomplish is divine good. When the Old Sin Nature controls your life, it is human good. They had been taught that you had to do something to be saved. It was the cross plus something. It seems that this has been the hardest lesson for men to learn in every age. We like to believe that it is the cross plus baptism, or the cross plus church membership, or the cross plus our own goodness. But Paul taught them that it was not by the works of the law that a man is justified, but by faith and faith alone. No man is ever judged for his sins if his faith is in Jesus Christ. So these Jews tried to stir up the Gentiles by telling them that it took human good for them to be saved. Mosaic law improves environment but it cannot touch the soul, and it cannot save, and it cannot provide spirituality. Now the Mosaic law provided many advantages for human life, but it never could save.

This word "Abode" is an interesting Greek word. It is "Diatribo" and means through friction, through conflict. So they stayed there under great friction and under great pressure. It means they endured pressure under pressure.

1 Cor. 10:13 is a good verse for every Christian to always remember.

1 COR. 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." So Iconium became a "Diatribo" to them. It was like being in a furnace. In a situation like this you need to forget all the little tricks of the trade and turn to the Word of God. There is no "Diatribo" too great for you if you have Bible doctrine in your mind. (Later Paul would talk about his thorn, and before it was over, would glory in his thorn.) Speaking boldly really means speaking with confidence. And the Lord witnessed with his grace. He always does. God kept his word. And some signs and wonders were done at their hands. Signs were miracles for the Jews, and wonders were miracles for the Gentiles. At certain points in history, God's work calls for miracles. But it is so easy to get our eyes on miracles and forget the message behind the miracle.

#### TWELVE POINTS EMERGE FROM THEIR VISIT TO ANTIOCH AND ICONIUM

1. In Antioch of Pisidia there was preaching only, and in Iconium there was preaching and miracles--why?

2. The believer cannot base a system of procedure on one successful operation. God uses many plans and many methods. Doctrine is universal and never changes, but procedure is varied and changes often. God is not confined to one way of doing things. He uses many methods.
3. Because the Holy Spirit permitted and used miracles in Iconium it does not follow that miracles are necessary for success elsewhere.
4. The same success was given in Antioch of Pisidia by preaching alone minus miracles.
5. The ministry to the believer must be related to the Holy Spirit, always conformable to doctrine. There are many procedures and many methods but the secret of power is always the Holy Spirit.
6. Both the distribution and operation of Spiritual gifts is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality is not vested in any miracle. A miracle is an addendum to call attention to the main doctrine.
7. The believer cannot compel the Holy Spirit to line up with a certain type of procedure--like healings, or miracles, or the gift of tongues. Since the Canon of Scripture was completed, God does not need to use miracles and healings and tongues. The tongues and miracle crowd always play down doctrine.
8. The demand for tongues and miracles is tantamount to dictating to God. Let God decide when he wants to give miracles and these strange things. Don't ever be guilty of dictating to God the procedure he will follow. Those who try to work up miracles and emotional experiences are in opposition to the plan of God, for they are trying to dictate to God how to run his business.
9. Furthermore, miracles had only one point in mind and that was not to alleviate suffering but to call attention to the gospel and to the Person of Christ.
10. The message of doctrine not miracles will always be the important thing in God's plan.
11. By emphasizing miracles we either detract from the message or we have no message at all. The Holy Spirit gives emphasis to the message not the miracles.
12. Any modern emphasis on miracles and tongues and emotional experiences today minimizes doctrine and therefore, opposes the plan of God.

ACTS 14:5 "And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them" The Gospel of Christ is always a divider. It divides homes, cities and nations. It will be this way until the end of time. Some will believe and some will disbelieve. Christ is the great watershed of history.

ACTS 14:6-7 "They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel." The gospel faithfully preached will sooner or later bring persecution. But Paul and Barnabas has sense enough to move on and not look back. Here is a lesson for us. Let us do our best, let us faithfully give the Word of God to the people, then let us all leave the results in the hands of God. It is good to know when to speak for God, and it is good to know when to move on. Paul and Barnabas learned both lessons.