

Building Blocks Of God's Kingdom

Acts 14

Phil de Martimprey

10/16/22

The most important and valuable things in life are often times the most difficult to obtain: A good education, a good and Godly spouse, children that are respectful, honest and hard working, a good reputation, etc. These things only come through hard work and often times immeasurable difficulty. The same is true with entering the Kingdom of God. Whether it is the difficulties faced when presenting the good news of Jesus to loved ones, or the challenging hardwork of our own sanctification process, it is only through various trials and tribulations that anyone embarks on the kingdom life. In our section today we will see that this has been the case since the birth of the church until now.

A Positive Reception is Poisoned (14:1-7)

When Paul and Barnabas got to Iconium, they followed their typical strategy of heading into the synagogue and preaching the message of Jesus, the crucified and resurrected messiah. Their message was met with open hearts and a “great number” of Gentiles and Jews believed! This wonderful kingdom breakthrough was quickly met by the unbelieving Jews, who “poisoned” the minds of the Gentiles to such a degree that the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles plotted together to persecute and even kill Paul and Barnabas. This hostility and attempted violence did not stop Paul and Barnabas but it did drive them out of the city for the time being, as they fled to Lystra and Derbe to continue their mission.

Unwanted Worship is Turned to Violence (14:8-19)

In Lystra we see a much different course of events. As they were moving through the city, Paul healed a man who had been crippled from birth. When news spread through the city a very unusual and unwanted response took place. The polytheistic people of Lystra began to herald the coming to earth of the gods Zeus and Hermes! These pagans saw the work of God, but their polytheistic world view quickly misinterpreted the miracle. It was a chaotic scene as the priest of Zeus and the people prepared to bring sacrifices and celebrate the coming of the gods to their city. It was all that Paul and Barnabas could do to stop this unwanted worship!

In verses 15-17, Paul made a rushed and scattered attempt at redirecting their worship toward the one true God and creator, but at this point we do not see any reception of his message. What we do see, is that the unbelieving Jews from Antioch and Iconium have followed Paul and Barnabas, and when they had arrived in the city they persuaded these pagans to attempt to kill Paul by stoning him. It would seem like these hostile Jews either convinced them that Paul and Barnabas were frauds, OR that they were there to blaspheme the many gods they worshipped. Whatever the given reasons, these Jews were able to turn the peoples worship to violence, and incited them to actually stone Paul, drag him out of the city and leave him for dead! Thank God he survived the attack. He then spent the night back in the city and he and Barnabas

departed east for Derbe, then went back into Lystra preaching and made their way all the way back to Antioch in Syria.

The Building Blocks of God's Kingdom (14:20-28)

As Luke gives us the ten thousand foot view of their return trip and return report back in Antioch in Syria, he relays some of the foundational building blocks of God's kingdom that were seen in this missionary journey.

- **The making and strengthening of disciples.** This is in direct fulfillment of what is commonly known as "the Great Commission" found in Matthew 28:18-20. Paul and Barnabas are following the instructions of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. This included both the preaching of the good news of justification salvation through faith, as well as sanctification salvation through obedience to Jesus' commands.
- **The appointment of Elders.** This is where we first see the regular and necessary practice of appointing Elders in these fledgling churches. (See also Titus 1:5) These men will be the shepherds of the church when Paul and Barnabas have left them. What a massive task these men had, and we can only imagine the concern of Paul and Barnabas as they fasted and prayed for them and "committed them to the Lord". They knew full well many of the difficulties that awaited these young disciples and Elders, but they needed to learn to rely upon Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God and Prayer, as all healthy churches have from then until now.
- **The encouragement to remain faithful, since entrance to the kingdom of God is only accomplished through tribulation.** Paul knew as well as anyone, the challenges that face those who proclaim the truth of the Gospel and seek to make and mature disciples. The hostility Paul and Barnabas faced in this first missionary journey, set the tone for what the vast majority of believers have faced throughout history. Living the kingdom life through faith, obedience to the Law of Messiah and the leading of the Holy Spirit is ALWAYS met with resistance. Both from external forces and from internal disputes and conflicts. In fact, our very own flesh wars against our justification and sanctification. As our culture continues to grow more pagan and hedonistic, the external persecution will only grow, and speaking the good news of God kingdom will divide families and friendships. Let Paul's encouragement ring afresh in our ears today, that we would remain faithful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, regardless of the pressure and persecution we will face.

- **Voice of the Martyrs Needs for October: Foam nerf balls / Chapstick**

- **Ramona Senior Center Car Show, Sat the 22nd, 10am-2pm in the parking lot.**