

- WELCOME TO -
MAURICE REFORMED CHURCH

...FOLLOWING GOD, LOVING OTHERS...



410 MAIN STREET | PO BOX 148 | MAURICE, IA 51036
712.567.4665 | WWW.MAURICEREFORMED.ORG

**ACTS:
PART 2**

ON THE JOURNEY

THE EARLY CHURCH & THE HOLY SPIRIT



MAURICE REFORMED CHURCH
SERMON SERIES WITH PASTOR JEREMY

DAILY DEVOTIONALS
WEEK OF: JULY 14 - 20

SERMON DOODLES + ILLUSTRATIONS

MONDAY, JULY 15

[ACTS 14:1-4](#) | THE PEOPLE OF ICONIUM

We start our week some 90 miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch. Remember Paul & Barnabas left Antioch because some of the people started persecuting them. Iconium is another important town in the area of Galatia. It was known as the capital of ancient Lycaonia. This capital city housed between 30,000-80,000 people and was an important military town for the Romans in the area.

Once Paul and Barnabas arrived in Iconium they got right to work and the people they met were their usual crowd. They first went to the synagogue in town and started to teach. We don't hear that they were invited like they were last week, but they speak nonetheless. With the persuasive words that they speak, many Jews and Gentiles believed. Of course, the jealousy of the other Jews stirred up some division. The Greek word literally means to make evil or to make bitter. The Jews were building up this evil and bitter spirit towards Paul and Barnabas. This did not stop Paul and Barnabas from speaking the truth, and God also provided miraculous ability to show His power through them. All of that still wasn't enough to convince some of the people in Iconium and so there remained a division.

I'm guessing some of us have been in a situation like this before where we are sharing good news with someone and immediately a "friend" of theirs comes and tells them our good news is wrong. It's as if a tug of war for the soul of the person is happening between good and evil and each side is using a person like you and me to speak the perspective. Sometimes people hold fast to the truth that was placed in their lives by the Holy Spirit and others choose to firmly plant themselves in a life of deception. The more they plant themselves in deceit, the more they convince themselves it is the truth and fight even harder. In Iconium there is a clear division between those who believe and those who don't. When that happens, I suggest you ask God to open the eyes of the unbelievers to the truth of who God is.

TUESDAY, JULY 16

[ACTS 14:5-7](#) | THE PROBLEM IN ICONIUM

As is typical when you are doing the work of the Lord, you do not have to look too hard for problems to arise. We see again that the threats go from verbal to physical quickly. Until now in Iconium there had just been verbal attacks against Paul and Barnabas, but now the word is out that they want to mistreat and stone them. The word mistreat here in the Greek means to speak rudely of them and to treat them with shame. Thankfully Paul and Barnabas were made aware of this action that was about to happen and were able to escape.

For Paul and Barnabas this was their first official death threat of the trip. We have already heard of two disciples dying for their faith and they won't be the last. In fact, of the 12 disciples, it is thought that 11 of them will die from persecution and 1 will die a "normal" death. Facing death was common for the early church and yet it expanded over the known world. We will see later this week Paul's reaction to a near death experience. It makes me wonder what we would do in the face of a death threat? For Paul & Barnabas, they quickly remove themselves from the situation and go speak the name of Jesus in other cities. Sometimes when problems arise, you must remove yourself from the situation and go do what God is calling you to do.

As we saw a few chapters ago with James and Peter, it is not just the Jews that are coming after the Christians now. In the town of Iconium there are both Jews and Gentiles that are believing and both who are actively planning to hurt Paul and Barnabas. Christianity is now catching the attention of all the peoples in the world and not just the religious few. In our world today we see the same things happening. We see religious folks and unbelieving people stand arm-in-arm against true faith in Jesus Christ. They demean and speak rudely of those who would dare stand for the truth. May we be ready to stand boldly like Paul and Barnabas in a world that is quickly turning away from God.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

[ACTS 14:8-18](#) | THE PEOPLE OF LYSTRA

After Paul and Barnabas escaped death in Iconium, they traveled 20 miles south to the town of Lystra. Lystra was a diverse community that had a temple to Zeus, but not to God. This was possibly the first community that they visited that did not have a Jewish temple and so the story of their ministry here starts with the healing of a man who was crippled. As Paul was telling others about Jesus, this man listened and believed. Paul could see that the man had faith and so he invited him to stand up and walk. Immediately the man stood up and began walking.

In the past this led people to declare their faith in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, here in Lystra it led people to declare that Paul and Barnabas were the gods Zeus and Hermes. It is understandable that this would happen. When they did miraculous signs in the non-religious or the Jewish towns, it was natural to those listening to point to God most high and believe that Jesus did really come. In a town that has only believed in false gods, it would be natural to miss the teaching and assume that the power comes from their god. Thinking that the power was from Zeus and Hermes, they started to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Remember a few chapters ago when Herod was worshipped as a god? Paul and Barnabas react differently than Herod. They tear their clothes and shout, "We are just men like you!". Their testimony of God continues as they declare the one true God as God over all.

Once again, Paul and Barnabas run into religious people, but for the first time it is a group of people who believe in other gods. With much convincing and pointing to Jesus, they were able to convince the people of Lystra that they were merely messengers of the true God. I'm guessing not many of us have had the issue of being mistaken for a god. May we learn from Paul and Barnabas to humble ourselves and keep pointing to God alone in all we say and do.

THURSDAY, JULY 18

[ACTS 14:19-20](#) | THE PROBLEM IN LYSTRA

Have you ever heard the statement, “Their past caught up with them”? This is often used to declare when someone must take responsibility for an action they did earlier in life. For a while, they had gotten away with their bad behavior, but they finally are dealing with the consequence of their poor choice. In some ways that is what happened here with Paul and Barnabas. The people of the last two communities they had ministered in followed them to Lystra, and while in Lystra they convinced the local people that Paul and Barnabas were bad and in need of the death penalty.

This is the second time in as many communities where Paul and Barnabas face death, and in this community, the people are almost successful. They circle around Paul and start to stone him until his body lay lifeless on the ground. Assuming he is dead, they drag his body outside of town and leave it for the vultures to devour. Soon we see a group of new disciples who are just days old in the faith come out to pay their respects to Paul, the one who had told them about Jesus. As the disciples gathered, Paul started to move and, in a moment, there was a miraculous healing. Paul rose from the ground and instead of running this time, he walked right back into the town of the people who tried to kill him. After spending the night there, he went on 60 miles southeast to Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas faced the most serious problem in this world and that is physical death. Anything that could be done to end this life is the greatest problem while we are on this planet. Yes, I know that there is life after death and that the greatest problem is those not believing in Jesus Christ, but as long as we live on this earth, the greatest physical problem would be having our life ended by someone else. The people of the three communities Paul visited tried their hardest to end his life and yet Paul boldly walked right back into town to presumably preach and get some rest before moving on. Again, many of us won't face physical death, but how will you and I respond to personal attacks? Whether it be verbal, emotional, or physical, how will we respond? May we respond with boldness and faith as Paul did.

FRIDAY, JULY 19

[ACTS 14:21-25](#) | THE JOURNEY HOME

How good are you at checking in? Many of us are good at meeting the needs of others or being present in the midst of tragedy, but how good are we at checking in a week, month, or year later? Although we met the need in the moment, that doesn't mean that all the needs have been met. I recently heard someone praying on behalf of those who are working through grief years later. The same goes with growing in faith. If someone puts their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they will need accountability and encouragement the rest of their lives. We all know how easy it is to be distracted and lose focus and so Paul decides it is time to head back, but he doesn't go the most direct route home. Instead, he puts the camel in reverse and retraces many of the steps he took to get there.

Paul and Barnabas make sure that the believers in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, & Perga are set up to succeed. The journey out was meant to help them know Jesus, and the journey back was to help them be firm in their belief no matter what comes up. I'm sure Paul shared personal stories when he told them that there will be many hardships. Often today we talk about coming to Jesus and you will receive life eternal. We like to focus on the glitz and glamour of a loving God who gives good gifts and He does, but that is not all that makes up a Christian life. The Christian life in this world will have difficulties because a Christian life will often be in conflict with the worldly lives around us. That is why Paul needed to return to encourage these churches. They were going to have people in conflict with them and Paul wanted them to stand strong in the midst of disagreement and even physical harm.

I love that Paul cared for the people. Again, he didn't put his physical well-being above the need of the local church. He visits the three towns that made up the gang that tried to kill him. He could probably pick out the names of the people in the community that these early believers would have to deal with personally as well. May we learn the importance of two things in this passage. First, may we learn the importance of

SATURDAY, JULY 20

[ACTS 14:26-28](#) | THE REPORT

All good trips must come to an end. As I am writing this, our youth have been home for a couple days since their latest mission trip. It's nice to be home I'm sure, but the memories of what God did during the trip make you want to go back and experience His deep presence over and over again. I remember going to a conference that changed my faith and my life forever. Each year I would go back and bring someone with me. Each time I returned home I wanted everyone at home to experience what I had experienced, and though stories are good, it is so hard to fully explain what God did while you were down there.

Paul and Barnabas have now arrived back at the church that sent them on this mission trip. Immediately they start telling stories of what God did. They told of the places they visited that had synagogues and temples to Greek gods. They told of the people who invited them to share their faith in Jesus, those who got jealous and those who thought they were gods. They told of the people who were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit through the truth of Jesus and how those churches are now firmly growing in the faith. They also shared about the problems they faced. They talked about the jealous hatred, they talked about the division, they talked about the death threats and the near-death experiences that they had. Oh, the places, the people, and the problems that Paul and Barnabas faced. It was now time for them to find rest in their home church and to prepare for what God has next for them.

As we think about our students who just returned from the trip, I invite you to go and talk to them about what they experienced in Kentucky. Ask specific questions about where they saw God and how God showed up to transform lives. Let's become a community who are storytellers. May we always be ready to declare what we have seen God do in our lives and in the lives of others. Let's sit back, listen and celebrate the movement of the Lord.

