

On the Mission Field, Part III- Iconium

Text: Acts 14:1-7

Introduction:

Paul and Barnabas have been sent out into the mission field, by the Holy Spirit, and through the church at Antioch. They have already worked through the island of Cyprus. They have traveled up north (from the west coast of Cyprus, in Paphos) to Perga of Pamphylia, which is where they parted ways with John Mark. And last time, we found them in Antioch of Pisidia. All in all, the Lord has blessed their labors, calling out and saving His people, but none of their Gospel achievements have come without much conflict and opposition, especially from the unbelieving Jews.

This morning, we continue on with Paul and Barnabas, as they move east, further into Southern Galatia, into the city of Iconium. Having been expelled from Antioch of Pisidia, they begin working east then.

I. Iconium

"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" (vs. 1).

In accordance with their customary practice they go to the Jews first, and into the local synagogue. And once again, they are given the opportunity to speak, and they preach the Gospel.

Question #1: Notice that we are told that they "so spoke" ("spoke in such a way" ESV) that a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed. What are we to make of this?

[With the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit? In a way that would address both Jews and Gentiles? Notice, we are not given any of the details of the message, which we have been given on other occasions--Antioch in Pisidia]

"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned (embittered) their minds (souls) against the brethren" (vs. 2).

Question #2: How might God's proclamation in Genesis 3:15 be reflected in what has been happening, concerning those who do not believe?

Question #3: What might this teach us about the importance of "words," "doctrine"...etc? Consider Ephesians 4:11-16 (emph. vs. 14).

Question #4: This would have been one of the cities of Galatia, to whom Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. In light of the main problems, which Paul addressed in that letter, how can we anticipate such challenges erupting here, in light of our present context?

Question #5: Seeing the people believing, certainly would have brought great joy to Paul and Barnabas. Consider the downer of seeing the opposition poison the minds of the Gentiles, so as to hinder the work of the Gospel there. How might we be tempted to respond in such circumstances?

"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" (vs. 3).

Question #6: What especially motivated Paul and Barnabas to stay there "for a long time?" [Consider also 1 Corinthians 16:8-9]. How might these things speak to ministers today, in light of the very real and inevitable challenges they will face? Does this say anything to Christians in general, as they strive to bear witness to the Gospel?

Question #7: How did the Lord help authenticate the message they were preaching, in the light of the great opposition, which they were facing? How might God aid His people today, in these regards? Besides the miraculous signs and wonders, in what other way did the Lord help Saul and Barnabas? [See also Acts 4:29-30]

Question #8: What is the "word of His grace?" Why are these words used here? [See Acts 20:32 as well]

"But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles" (vs. 4). [Discuss Apostles plural---General "sent ones" on this particular mission or...? See also vs. 14]

Question #9: How might 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 & Matthew 10:34-39 relate here?

"And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region" (vs. 5-6).

Question #10: Compare verse 3 to this verse. What kind of wisdom and discernment can we take, from these two different actions on the part of Paul and Barnabas?

"And they were preaching the Gospel there" (vs. 7).

Question #11: Discuss the pattern here, which we find in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. How might this encourage us onward, no matter what we face, in our Gospel labors? What should we expect from a positive and a negative standpoint? What keeps us going? [Consider Philippians 1:21]

AMEN!!!