

## ▼ Building Up The Church - Part 1

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### • Read the Passage: Acts 14

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the good news.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

### ▼ Homiletical Idea:

- Building Up The Church - Part 1

### ▼ Sermon's Purpose (what listeners should do)

- Observe how the early church was built up.
- Understand the phases of the church-building process.
- ▼ Contrast this process with other stories:
  - My own path to salvation.
  - My own efforts at evangelism.
  - Typical church-based evangelism.
- ▼ Setup for Next Week:
  - How can we apply this to our own ministry activity?
  - What do we need in order to cooperate with God's church-building activity?
- ▼ **Observe how the early church was built up.**
  - ▼ Explain It: What does this mean?
    - Paul and Barnabas build up the church by visiting new cities, preaching the good news, and establishing them as the church in that city. They do this despite the risk of opposition that often becomes violent.
    - Acts 14:1-7 - In Iconium  
Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, perform miracles, win believers, and experience opposition, but God rescues them.
    - Acts 14:8-20 - In Lystra and Derbe  
Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel to Gentiles, perform miracles, win believers, and experience opposition, but God rescues them.
    - Acts 14:21-28 - Return to Antioch in Syria  
Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel, win a large number of disciples, return to strengthen and appoint elders for the churches they've recently established, and then return home to Antioch and report what God has done.
  - ▼ Prove It: Is it True? Do I believe it?
    - People who keep pursuing a behavior despite persecution are motivated by something important enough to make them overlook their own self-interest.
  - ▼ Apply It: What difference does it make? So What?
    - God wants to build up the church.
    - Our salvation is the result of others who built up the church before us.
    - The gospel has power and it both draws people to Jesus and generates opposition. Those who proclaim the gospel should be prepared for success and opposition.
    - People who respond to the gospel need to be nurtured and folded into an existing congregation or formed into a new congregation.
    - When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.

▼ **Understand the phases of the church-building process.**

- Commissioning - Acts 13
- Arrival - Acts 14:1, 8, 21
- Preaching / Signs and Wonders - Acts 14:1-3, 8-10,
- Harvesting - Acts 14:1, 21
- Opposition
- Departure
- Follow-up - Acts 14:21-23

▼ **Contrast this process with other stories:**

- My own path to salvation.
- ▼ My own efforts at evangelism.
  - Campus evangelism at MIT as a new convert.
  - Relied on church for overall pastoral care and basic instruction.
  - Black Christian Fellowship for small group relationships.
  - Personal follow-up and discipleship.
- ▼ Typical church-based evangelism.
  - Evangelistic message.
  - Altar call.
  - New Converts Class.
  - Additional classes.

▼ **Setup for Next Week:**

- How can we apply this to our own ministry activity?
- What do we need in order to cooperate with God's church-building activity?

▶ **Make Disciples!**

▶ **Conclusion**

▼ **Followup**

• **Q&A**

▼ **Discussion Questions**

- Describe your own experiences with evangelism.

▶ **Discipleship / Skills Development**