

## Day 7 : Acts 14:19-28 – Derbe

### Understanding

Paul is stoned and left for dead – but revives (we are not told to what extent it was miraculous) and departs for the city of Derbe. Luke is very brief in his report of Derbe – many disciples were made (v21).

Each new local church in the cities where Paul had been was re-visited, and the disciples were exhorted, and elders were appointed. Churches are not intended to be permanently reliant upon missionaries, but each one was to be independent, governing itself under the Lord.

When this was all done, they returned to Antioch in Syria from where they had been sent out. Luke says that they had “completed” the work, so we understand that the destinations visited during the mission had been revealed to them by God. This was the first Gentile mission, and God had blessed it and clearly indicated that the Gentiles were welcome into the church on equal terms with the Jews.

The first missionary trip ended, and Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, and reported “all that God had done with them” (v27) – and remained there for a long time. The next thing that Luke reports will be the controversy that developed as Jews within the Jerusalem church reacted to the coming in of the Gentiles into the church.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- Each local church is to be governed by elders – capable men who fulfil the qualifications given in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. Nobody is to have power in the local church apart from people who are members of the local church – not even the missionary who began the church is intended to have a permanent role (unless of course he stays there permanently!). No other system of church government has support from the Bible – ideas such as territorial bishops, or Popes, or national conventions which can intervene in local churches, are all contrary to the will of God.
- Difficulty is normal in the Christian life (v22). We must be ready for it, and persevere through it, if we would inherit eternal life.

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- Have you begun the Christian race – and if so, are you persevering? What is hindering your perseverance? How can you be better prepared? What does this passage have to say?

## The Acts Of The Apostles

### *Daily Bible Reading Notes*

### *Week 10 (Chapter 13:1-14:28)*

### Grace Church Belper

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<http://www.gracebelper.org.uk/readingnotes.php>)

## Day 1 : Acts 13:1-3 – Saul and Barnabas

Prayerfully read (above and): Psalm 22 (a Messianic Psalm)

### Understanding

A major new section in Luke's account now begins. The rest of the book will now focus on Paul's missionary activity. The gospel has begun to go out “to the ends of the earth” (1:8) – but it will be through Paul's mission that this promise is more particularly fulfilled and the gospel is taken right to the heart of the empire, Rome.

This missionary advance comes from Antioch, not Jerusalem – showing that the “centre” of God's operations is now moving from Israel: the church is becoming a world-wide body.

As the church at Antioch was seeking God's will, the Holy Spirit made known (presumably through one of the prophets) that he had a particular work for Saul and Barnabas and that the church must release them for it.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- In general, those who should go out to pioneer new gospel works in new places should be men who are experienced and proven – such as Paul and Barnabas. Leading a missionary effort is not for the untested, but for the most capable.
- Thus, if in future you wish to be serving the Lord in a larger way, the thing to do is to serve him the best you can where you are here and now. The Lord prepares those who he wishes to serve.
- The missionary task is in the hands of the Lord: it is not a human idea or effort. This is what guarantees the task's ultimate success – God has called his labourers to it, and will also enable them to fulfil it.
- There is an expectation in the New Testament that Christians will fast (Matthew 6:16-18, 9:14-15, 17:21) – especially in times of particular spiritual need or conflict or when needing to find the Lord's will. Private fasting must be kept secret; but here we have an example of the church fasting together. The point of fasting is not that there is some special merit in denying oneself, but to withdraw from the world and normal indulgences so that we might show and enhance our earnestness in prayer.

### Applying – be detailed and specific!

Every believer should be involved in the missionary task, whether or the front line or in support and prayer from home (Matthew 28:18).

## Day 6 : Acts 14:8-20 – Idolatry at Lystra

Prayerfully read: Psalm 115

### Understanding

Lystra was a short distance from Iconium – short enough for those who opposed Paul to also make the trip in order to oppose him there too (v19).

Here, like back in chapter 3, was a man who had never walked – who is immediately healed. (Luke is showing us that Paul was an apostle just like Peter and John, and that the gospel was just as much for the Gentiles as for the Jews).

The reaction of the people of Lystra was to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Paul and Barnabas urged them to not do so. They spoke to them the word of God – though in a very different setting to the worship of the synagogue!

As Paul was speaking to pagans and not to Jews, he did not assume that they knew or believed the Jewish Scriptures. Instead, he exhorted them on the basis of the realities of God and creation. He spoke to them of the one creator God who made and sustains all things; who was good and had shown that goodness to all. He is the living God, and there is no other – and the people ought to turn away from their foolish behaviour to serve him. Of course, Paul was not preaching a full sermon – he was rather trying to avoid giving any encouragement, even through misunderstanding, to idolatry.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- All people everywhere have had revelation from God (Psalm 19, Romans 1:21ff.), through the created world. Realities about God are imprinted upon our natures, and revealed everywhere in creation, so that we are without excuse if we deny them. These includes the glorious being and power of God,

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- How aware are you of the presence and reality of God? Look at some of the things that Paul lists and says. How should we respond? It is easy to have a “divide” in our lives between “ordinary” and “religious” things – what does this passage have to say about that?
- How does this passage help us in understanding how to interact with those who don't have any background in understanding Christian things?

## Day 5 : Acts 14:1-7 – At Iconium

### Understanding

Iconium was around 60 miles or so from Antioch.

We see a pattern in Paul and Barnabas' activity. First, they went to the synagogue, and preached to the Jews and God-fearers gathered there. They went “first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles” (Romans 1:16). Many of the Jews were violently opposed because of the message's implications for their equality with the Gentiles; but many Gentiles embraced the message gladly. Of course, there were also Jewish believers and Gentile unbelievers. Here, in Iconium, we are told that great numbers of both believed (v1) – and also there was a number who banded together of both in violent opposition (v5). Because of the many believers, the missionary team stayed there for a long time until matters came to a head and it became too dangerous to remain. Their escape showed that it is not necessarily a Christian duty or the most faithful policy to remain in a situation of unnecessary danger – here an apostle on a missionary visit flees.

As had been done in Judea, so many signs were done here also, showing that God's power was not limited to certain places, and that the time in which his activity was basically restricted to Palestine had now come to an end – now was the era of world-wide blessing through the gospel.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- The gospel will meet with a great variety of reactions, from whole-hearted acceptance to violent rejection. This is because the gospel is the word of God, which reveals the contents of men's hearts. This is part of God's will. When there is a strong reaction against gospel preaching, it does not mean that the gospel ought to be changed – rather, it means that the hearers' hearts need to be changed!

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- How do I react when I hear the gospel? Am I cold and indifferent, antagonistic, or do I take delight in it? What does this say about my situation before God?

## Day 2 : Acts 13:4-12 – Cyprus

### Understanding

Many Bibles have maps in the back, and often one of those maps will be of Paul's missionary journeys – this is the first.

The first place they went to was Cyprus – the island which was Barnabas' home (4:36). Salamis (v5) and Paphos (v6) were towns on opposite ends of the island.

John (v5) is John Mark, mentioned in 12:12. Whilst leading missionary work is for the experienced and proven, still others may be involved under the oversight and guidance of the leaders.

Notice that the main activity of the mission was proclaiming the word of God (v5, 7, 8, 12). Whilst the proconsul was affected by the sign that he saw, Luke makes it clear (v12) that he had already heard and been deeply affected by the teaching that he had heard.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- The gospel advances through preaching. The main activity of missionary work is in spreading the word of God, so that people might hear it, understand it, believe it and call on the Lord Jesus who is declared in it. Unless the spreading of the word is at the centre of a missionary's work, he is not a true missionary, whatever other useful and valuable work he may be doing.
- The apostles had the capability to perform miracles in order to authenticate their identity and the truthfulness of their message. Though others also in those days (and maybe today) had power from Satan to perform miracles (v10), yet the apostles had superior power to defeat them, in order to demonstrate the superiority of the message that they were bringing.

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- What are some of Satan's strongholds in our society, through which he commits “deceit and fraud” (v10) and keeps many away from the Lord? We should make the defeat of his strategies a part of our prayers.
- What opportunities do you have to spread the word of God? Sometimes there are possibilities through speaking, through inviting people to our homes, through giving away literature, through writing letters. Let us make sure that we use them!

## Day 3 : Acts 13:13-41 – Antioch in Pisidia

### Understanding

The missionary band left Cyprus and sailed to Pamphylia (in modern day Turkey). However, John Mark then left them (v13), and returned to Jerusalem. We are not told why, but in 15:38 we learn that it was a serious matter: John Mark seems to have lost heart or conviction for some reason, and showed his unsuitability at that time for the work.

The missionaries now come to Antioch – not the Antioch in Syria that they had begun from, but Antioch in Pisidia. They attend a typical Sabbath service in the synagogue. Some of the Scriptures were read; and they were invited to give some word of encouragement or help to the people. Paul used this opportunity to preach the Lord Jesus Christ to them as the fulfilment of all that was written in the law and the prophets. The synagogue contained both Jews and Gentiles who respected the God of Israel (v16) – i.e. Circumcised and uncircumcised.

There are a number of similarities between this sermon and Peter's sermons. Paul preached Jesus as the Messiah, preached his life, death and resurrection, even using the same two Psalms (2 and 16) as have been used before (in chapters 2 and 4). He preached free forgiveness, and added words of warning and exhortation to them. Paul's preaching showed that there was only one gospel for Jew and non-Jew.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- God has had a single plan throughout all of human history – the climax of which is in Jesus Christ. There was not one plan in Old Testament times and another one later.
- The gospel is essentially the same for all people everywhere. All people are sinners, and exposed to God's judgment. God has accomplished a great salvation in Jesus, which is available to everyone who believes. There are no other conditions for anyone, and no special privileges which anyone has which give them an alternative.

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- Do I understand and have I believed this gospel? Am I resting on the Saviour who is preached in it for my soul's salvation?
- Do I know how to explain the gospel to others? If you have never done so, take time to think about what are the key points, using the sermons in Acts to help you. How would you explain them to people today?

## Day 4 : Acts 13:42-52 – Antioch in Pisidia (II)

Prayerfully read: Romans 9

### Understanding

What the synagogue in Antioch heard was revolutionary to them. Maybe they knew some of what had happened in Jerusalem and Judah over the recent years – but now they were being told that they, in Gentile Antioch, could be equal inheritors of all the blessings of the promised Messiah! It is hard for us living today to understand how revolutionary this message was.

Many unbelieving Jews, though, saw things differently. For uncircumcised Gentiles to gain equality with them meant the end of their national pride and status. This pride was wrong-headed (as Israel was meant to be bringing blessing to the Gentiles, not arrogantly lording it over them), but not uncommon. Their opposition brought the response from Paul recorded in v46-48. If the Jews rejected the word of God, then the word of God would be taken to the Gentiles: the Gentiles were not dependent on unbelieving Jews for gaining their acceptance with God, but God was quite able to bless the Gentiles and reject the Jews if it pleased him. The Gentiles who heard these things were extremely glad (v48) – again, we have to try to understand just how ground-breaking what they were hearing was.

Luke records in verse 48 that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed”. This is a clear statement of the doctrine of election.

Like the apostles in Jerusalem before them (5:41), Paul and Barnabas took their mistreatment with joy, knowing that it signalled that they were walking obediently to their master who had suffered before them.

### Doctrines (Teachings)

- The ultimate reason why some believe the gospel where others do not is not because they are wiser, less sinful or more deserving. It is because God in his grace and mercy has appointed them to eternal life, despite their sinfulness and unworthiness.

### Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- What effect should the doctrine of election have upon you – in your assurance, and thankfulness, and evangelism? Is it doing so?
- Maybe you are asking “how can I know if I am elected?” The answer is simple, from verse 48 - “because I believe”. Do you believe?