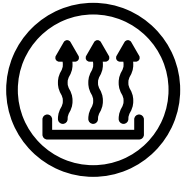




ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES



WARM-UP

Was there ever a time in your life where you suffered after doing something good?

Pray for your time together as a group.

Split into 2 groups and each take 2 passages below. Compare and contrast the verses in your groups. Then bring back together and share what you discussed.

ACTS 13:4-12 (NIV) SALAMIS AND PAPHOS

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. 6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

ACTS 13:42-52 (NIV) PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. 44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. 49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 14:1-7 (NIV) ICONIUM

1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.

ACTS 14:8-20 (NIV) LYSTRA AND DERBE

8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 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.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 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." 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

19 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. 20 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.



Compare and contrast the missionary stories of Paul and Barnabas.

Possible Answers:

Compare: They mostly started at Jewish synagogues before going out, there were mixed responses, often Jewish opposition, Paul and Barnabas constantly responded with boldness and faith despite their circumstances, the gospel continues to spread despite opposition and violence, a lot of Paul and Barnabas' travel is spurred on by necessity of fleeing persecution, etc.

Contrast: obviously different locations and people groups, slightly different tactics, different responses to miracles and messages (often based on the people's cultural contexts), in Paphos the miracle leads to belief but in Lystra the miracle leads to misunderstanding, etc.



What does this tell us about the work of the Gospel?

Possible Answers: the gospel is offensive and invokes a response (whether positive or negative); the gospel can't be stopped, it continues to grow and spread despite any opposition; the gospel gives motivation and joy to Paul and Barnabas as they are not hindered from sharing the gospel; the gospel is always the same although the way you present it could vary depending on your audience.



The Jewish people ended up being some of the disciples' fiercest opposition because of jealousy. What are some of the roadblocks that could cause us to feel jealous towards other Christians?

Possible Answers: Pride, prejudice, coveting something others have, self-righteousness, greed, fear/doubt, misunderstanding of how the Holy Spirit works. All these can pop up if we see God using others in ways we want to be used or we see their notoriety.



Verse 52 says that the disciples were filled with "joy and the holy spirit" despite the fact that they were being persecuted. How can we practically take hold of the joy that belief in Christ offers us, when we are tempted to give in to the roadblocks we talked about above?

Possible Answers: We can put things in perspective and think about what the gospel offers us. We are offered freedom from our sin, and new life now and forever. We are offered community with God himself, the author of all things and savior of the world. What could we ever lack? What could we ever be jealous for, or covet, or have pride in? This joy should supersede our sin! It should turn our mourning into laughing! We are able to know our security is in Christ, not in whether people accept or reject us. We know ultimately they aren't rejecting us, they are rejecting Jesus. We know that no matter what comes against us God will have his way and the gospel will spread. We rejoice in remembering what we read about the disciples in Acts: opposition usually leads to more rapid spread of the gospel.



Verse one states that Paul and Barnabas spoke in such a way that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. Do you think it takes a special gift to spread the Gospel?

Possible Answers: It doesn't take a special gift to speak truth. Everyone has different gifting's, and some people are more naturally suited to speak to large crowds than others. However, our comfort level shouldn't dissuade us all from spreading the gospel among those with whom we have influence. Just look at Moses! Also the Spirit is ultimately what moves and He will do what He sees fit! References: 1 Peter 3:15 & Exodus 4:10-12.



The people of Lystra mistakenly attributed the work of God to their own gods. How do we sometimes miss the work God is doing in our lives or attribute it to other things?

Possible Answer: Answers may vary. We are prideful. We want to believe that we have it all together and that we are successful because of the work we do or our innate abilities. We may also feel skeptical or attribute God's miracles to coincidence or luck, which might show a lack of faith in God. However, God is sovereign and ultimately the source of all good things. The book of Esther is a book of seemingly coincidences where God is never mentioned and yet we know within the rest of the canon of Scripture that God is behind it all.

ACTS 14:21-28 (NIV)

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 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. 23 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. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.



Why do you think Paul decided to return to the places that had rejected him and even tried to stone him the first time he preached the Gospel?

Possible Answers: His love for God and people along with his willingness to go where God calls. Paul displayed the fruit of the Spirit as he spread the Gospel. Paul returned to the areas in which he had shared the gospel to remind new believers of the truth and to encourage them in their faith. It was clear that he wasn't simply checking off places to visit but truly had a love for the people.



Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, the place which initially sent them out. What do you think this did to the Church in Antioch?

Possible Answers: they lost two important people who built up their church and who loved them. Having them return probably filled them with joy simply having their presence there. To hear about all the wonderful things God did probably reinforced their own faith. Faith that God had reasons for it: their grief at having time apart from friends ultimately led to the spread of the gospel and building of the Church. It probably increased their excitement at what God was doing and passion for preaching the gospel in their own contexts!

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- Are there currently any areas in your life where you are responding to Christ or other Christians with jealousy instead of joy? How can your small group help you overcome this jealousy?
- How might being better aware of God's work in my life on a daily basis encourage me to further the Gospel?