

“Unbelief, Trouble, & Division”

Acts 14:1-18, ESV

Introduction: The gospel does not allow for a middle ground. In fact, the gospel demands a response which often creates conflict. The gospel is divisive. Loyalties must be declared and commitments made even to the point of separating relationships. Jesus once said, “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division” (Lk. 12:51). In the text for this morning, we see the effects of the bold preaching of the gospel, and it is not always what we would expect.

Highlights of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (v. 1-7).

God uses their preaching in a dynamic way; a great number of Jews & Gentiles believed (v. 1).

The UNBELIEVING Jews stirred up the Gentiles-poisoning their minds against the brothers (v. 2).

The gospel divided—some sided with the Jews; some sided with the apostles (v. 4).

An attempt was made to mistreat/stone the apostles, but they fled and kept preaching the gospel (v. 5-7).

Application: Sometimes responses to the gospel are unbelief, trouble, and division. Sometimes responses to the gospel are belief, joy, and radical life change. We share the seeds of the gospel and trust God with the varied results/responses.

Highlights of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (v. 8-18).

Paul encountered a crippled man (v. 8-9). Crippled from birth. This man had never walked.

Paul commanded him to “stand upright on your feet.” He sprang up and began walking!! (v. 10).

The crowds responded in a bizarre manner. Why? (v. 11-13). .

Barnabas and Paul were having none of that (v. 14-15). Tore their clothing (an act of horror & revulsion).

We are ordinary men. We are preaching a simple message—you should turn from vain things to a living God.

In past generations, God revealed Himself generally, through nature (v. 16). But, now, through His preached Word and the ministry of the church, God reveals Himself and our desperate need for Jesus.

God never leaves Himself without witness (v. 17). Rain, crops, nature, one’s conscience are evidences of His presence and goodness. Paul would later write that the extraordinary glory and beauty of nature leaves people without an excuse for unbelief (Rom. 1:20).

Application: If you intend to turn to Christ, then you must turn from vain things. Worthless. Empty. Valueless.