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ACTS

Chapter 14 SET ON FIRE BY HELL

I am more deadly than the screaming shell from the howitzer. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, and wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name----- is GOSSIP.

--Morgan Blake, Atlanta Journal

Jas 3:6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. You may remember from our last study that Paul and Barnabas had great success in Antioch.
 - 1. When the Jews there wouldn't listen, they turned to the Gentiles and a large number of them gave their hearts to the Lord. And **verse 49** said, **Act 13:49 NKJV** **And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.**
- B. You may also remember that the Jews there in Antioch, stirred up the "prominent" men and women of the city and they began to persecute Paul and his company.
 - 1. But the two closing verses of chapter 13 were very interesting:
 - a) **Act 13:51-52 NKJV** **But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. (52) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**
 - b) With all the adversity in life we can either get "shook up" or "shake it off"!
 - c) Paul and Barnabas were able to shake it off - and as a result, they **were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**
- C. In this study, the missionary "crew" heads a little further northeast to Iconium, and of course, they head for the nearest Synagogue. That is where we pick up our study.
 - 1. Remember, they are still in "present day" Turkey.

II. **ACT 14:1-2 NKJV** 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. **(2)** BUT THE UNBELIEVING JEWS STIRRED UP THE GENTILES AND POISONED THEIR MINDS AGAINST THE BRETHREN.

- A. So, upon hearing the gospel, many people believed in Jesus – but those who refused to believe stirred up strife and put doubt in the new believer's minds.

1. **Jud 1:8 NKJV** Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.
2. **Jud 1:10 NKJV** But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.
3. **Jud 1:19 NKJV** These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.
 - a) It seems there is always someone or something there to try and rob the joy of the new believer!
 - (1) Whether it is someone at home that is jealous of what they have found, or a disgruntled Christian who “**rejects the authority**” that the Lord has placed over them, and begins to “**speak evil of whatever they do not understand.**”
 - (a) It has been my experience that when gossip starts and division begins on any level – it is the new Christian that gets hurt the most.
 - (i) The “gossipers” just go find another place to cause division, the church most often recovers, but many times the new Christian is devastated for a long time.

III. ACT 14:3-4 NKJV 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. (4) BUT THE MULTITUDE OF THE CITY WAS DIVIDED: PART SIDED WITH THE JEWS, AND PART WITH THE APOSTLES.

- A. Paul and Barnabas saw the hurt and confusion – so they stayed as long as it took to see if they could remedy the situation.
 1. The end result was still division:
 - a) **1Co 1:12-13 NKJV** Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." **(13) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**
 - (1) Why is it that people like to pick a “human side” instead of staying on the side of the Lord?
 - (2) Don't you wish we had the ability to ALWAYS know God's side and stay there!

IV. ACT 14:5-7 NKJV AND WHEN A VIOLENT ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY BOTH THE GENTILES AND JEWS, WITH THEIR RULERS, TO ABUSE AND STONE THEM, (6) THEY BECAME AWARE OF IT AND FLED TO LYSTRA AND DERBE, CITIES OF LYCAONIA, AND TO THE SURROUNDING REGION. (7) AND THEY WERE PREACHING THE GOSPEL THERE.

- A. Sad to say, but here we see the work of the Lord short-circuited by gossip, lies and jealousy – at least here in Iconium.

There is a story, about a couple that was gossiping on the telephone during a freak electrical storm. The storm caused a scramble in the electrical signals and sent their conversation from the phone line to a cable TV network – and close to one million people heard their conversation.

Would we say the things we do if we thought our conversation would be transmitted through the TV to one million people? Is our conversation honoring to the Lord? Or does it grieve Him as it short-circuits ministry and hinders His work? (Jon Courson)

1. So the evangelistic team heads south for Lystra and Derbe.
2. To "set the stage" for what they can expect in these cities: there was a legend that many years before, Jupiter and Mercury came to Lystra and only one couple recognized them as gods, so they killed everyone there and turned the couple into trees to stand in front of the Temple of Jupiter.
 - a) So, you can see the superstition that surrounds this city and a bit of what they are up against.

V. ACT 14:8-13 NKJV AND IN LYSTRA A CERTAIN MAN WITHOUT STRENGTH IN HIS FEET WAS SITTING, A CRIPPLE FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB, WHO HAD NEVER WALKED. (9) THIS MAN HEARD PAUL SPEAKING. PAUL, OBSERVING HIM INTENTLY AND SEEING THAT HE HAD FAITH TO BE HEALED, (10) SAID WITH A LOUD VOICE, "STAND UP STRAIGHT ON YOUR FEET!" AND HE LEAPED AND WALKED. (11) NOW WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE, THEY RAISED THEIR VOICES, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE, "THE GODS HAVE COME DOWN TO US IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN!" (12) AND BARNABAS THEY CALLED ZEUS, AND PAUL, HERMES, BECAUSE HE WAS THE CHIEF SPEAKER. (13) THEN THE PRIEST OF ZEUS, WHOSE TEMPLE WAS IN FRONT OF THEIR CITY, BROUGHT OXEN AND GARLANDS TO THE GATES, INTENDING TO SACRIFICE WITH THE MULTITUDES.

- A. The first thing I would like to point out is that this lame man was not "set up" by the apostles, like so many televangelist have been exposed for doing!
1. The entire city knew this man and that he was lame from birth.
 2. As Paul looked at him, the Lord gave Paul a word of knowledge and he knew in his heart that the man would be healed, so he spoke and God did the healing!
 - a) Paul knew very well that it was the Lord that did the healing, but that was not what the people thought.
 - (1) They thought it was Zeus and Hermes or translated = Jupiter and Mercurious: Zeus being the chief god of the Greek Pantheon and Hermes the patron god of orators.
 - (i) That is why they thought Paul to be Mercurious because he was the chief speaker!
 3. Of course the next superstitious thing to do is to worship Paul and Barnabas

VI. ACT 14:14-18 NKJV BUT WHEN THE APOSTLES BARNABAS AND PAUL HEARD THIS, THEY TORE THEIR CLOTHES AND RAN IN AMONG THE MULTITUDE, CRYING OUT (15) AND SAYING, "MEN, WHY ARE YOU DOING THESE THINGS? WE ALSO ARE MEN WITH THE SAME NATURE AS YOU, AND PREACH TO YOU THAT YOU SHOULD TURN FROM THESE USELESS THINGS TO THE LIVING GOD, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN, THE EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THINGS THAT ARE IN THEM, (16) WHO IN BYGONE GENERATIONS ALLOWED ALL NATIONS TO WALK IN THEIR OWN WAYS. (17) NEVERTHELESS HE DID NOT LEAVE HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS, IN THAT HE DID GOOD, GAVE US RAIN FROM HEAVEN AND FRUITFUL SEASONS, FILLING OUR HEARTS WITH FOOD AND GLADNESS." (18) AND WITH THESE SAYINGS THEY COULD SCARCELY RESTRAIN THE MULTITUDES FROM SACRIFICING TO THEM.

- A. Paul and Barnabas could have “enjoyed their moment of glory” as many would have done, but even the thought of this grieved their hearts!
 - 1. They did everything they could to bring the attention and glory back to the Lord, but that made the people want to worship them all the more!
- B. And guess what? Just about the time you think the gossiping and division is over look who shows up!

VII. ACT 14:19-20 NKJV THEN JEWS FROM ANTIOCH AND ICONIUM CAME THERE; AND HAVING PERSUADED THE MULTITUDES, THEY STONED PAUL AND DRAGGED HIM OUT OF THE CITY, SUPPOSING HIM TO BE DEAD. (20) HOWEVER, WHEN THE DISCIPLES GATHERED AROUND HIM, HE ROSE UP AND WENT INTO THE CITY. AND THE NEXT DAY HE DEPARTED WITH BARNABAS TO DERBE.

- A. What a fickle thing fame is! You’re a “god” one minute and the next the same people want to kill you!
 - 1. Later Paul will say he didn’t know if he was dead or not: **2Co 12:2-4 NKJV** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. (3) And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— (4) how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
 - 2. But Paul isn’t going to let a little thing like being dead stop him, so after prayer by the disciples – he gets up and heads back into the city.

VIII. CONCLUSION

- A. **Act 14:21-28 NKJV** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (23) So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (24) And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. (25) Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. (26) From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. (27) Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (28) So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

To What Are You Listening?

A man was walking with his friend through the busy streets of a large city, when he suddenly stopped and asked, "Do you hear that cricket?"

His friend laughed. "You could never hear a cricket with all this noise from the traffic." "But I hear a cricket," said his friend. He stopped, turned over a stone, and uncovered the insect. "Did you actually hear the cricket chirping above the noise of the street?" asked his amazed friend.

"Yes," He said. "I've spent most of my life listening to nature, whether I am in the forest, the field, or in town. Everyone hears what he listens for." To prove his point he took a coin from his pocket, he dropped it on the pavement, and each passer-by put his hand in his pocket to see if he was the one who had dropped it. **They were listening for coins.**

If we are listening for the truth - for that which is elevating, and inspiring, we will hear it, even above the noise of this busy world, above the barrage of lies, and gossip so common today. But if our ears are attuned to scandal, backbiting and false reports, we will hear that, regardless of how loudly - love, justice and truth may be "shouted" in our direction.