

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Chapter Fourteen *Suffering While Serving*

Focus Verse: **2 Cor 4:17**

**“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”**

### I. Study Introduction

- A. To do God’s will, whatever it may be for a Christian, will always be in direct opposition to the general flow of normal humanity (2 Tim 3:12)
- B. The Christian, who has turned to Christ as both Saviour *and* Lord, has really surrendered their life to follow **Christ**, no matter where that may lead (to the highest mountain top, or deepest valley), and how hard the way. We usually allow extreme devoutness for only a few, and yet ours is to be a total love affair with the One who truly loved us, and gave His all so that we, and all the world could live.
- C. In the life of the Christian, when we serve that great Giver, we rarely experience rewards that the world offers *its* heroes, but rather struggle and suffer through each attempt to honour Him. That is because we are in enemy territory right now, and march to a different drum - that of heaven!

### II. Study Outline - Suffering While Serving (Acts 14)

#### A. Completing the First Missionary Journey (Acts 14:1-20)

1. At Iconium (14:1-5)
  - a. They head right into the \_\_\_\_\_ - why?
    - 1) Commanded to go to the Jew first (Rom 1:16)
    - 2) If they had preached first to the Gentiles, the synagogue would have been closed to them, and they would have no chance of reaching them at all! Had to do this in right order
  - b. A great multitude believed on Christ - believed the \_\_\_\_\_!
  - c. A great persecution also began
    - 1) Normally Jews and Gentile don’t mix - but when they both have a common enemy (Jesus was becoming more popular and followed more than the Gentile idols, and than the Jewish Rabbis), they end up unified, ecumenical - united together AGAINST the gospel!
    - 2) EX: of Herod and Pilate became friends when they unified against their enemy Jesus, the King (Luke 23:12)!
  - d. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the miracles (14:3):
    - 1) Done by the hands of the \_\_\_\_\_ (not by every Christian)
    - 2) Done to testify the truth of the word of God
    - 3) Always in presence of unbelieving \_\_\_\_\_ (14:2; 1Cor 1:22)
  - e. The city became “\_\_\_\_\_” - *and it was of God*. Not all walls are bad - don’t tear down all walls!
    - 1) Gospel preaching divides like a sword (Heb 4:12)
    - 2) Jesus Himself divides peoples (Luke 12:51-53)
    - 3) The Christian’s job is not to reconcile people to each other (*demonic*), but reconciling them to \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor 5:20)!
    - 4) You better have some walls in your life, and around family
  - f. How preaching divides:
    - 1) Preaching clearly identifies God’s absolute line of sin and righteousness - it is not up to the individual!
    - 2) Preaching removes distinction between peoples, nations, and races - all have \_\_\_\_\_ (Rom 3:23)!
    - 3) It rejects all forms of idolatry - no goodness in mankind!
  - g. Biblical preaching can become dangerous work
    - 1) With all the people getting saved, and lives truly getting right with God, there was only envy and hatred, and scheming by the religious crowd to attempt to assassinate Paul and Barnabas - what they called “*the trouble-makers*”
    - 2) Paul and Barnabas fled the city - there does come a time to run (Cf Eccl 3)
    - 3) But they never fled the \_\_\_\_\_ - went to the next town! Jesus said wipe the dust off the feet and go on (Mt 10:14)! And they went on, and preached the Gospel - couldn’t help it!
2. At Lystra (14:6-20)
  - a. Preaching as usual - that was their main focus always!
  - b. But the devil throws a few new “punches” this time!
    - 1) Paul’s \_\_\_\_\_ get him into trouble - not just the message

- a) Paul heals to authenticate himself and the words he was speaking - *not trusting the work of the Holy Spirit here*
  - b) Note the discernment of the man's "*faith to be healed*"
  - c) Compare this with the "faith healers" and their failures: usually blame the failures on the sick not having "*enough*" faith
  - d) Compare with Mark 6:5,6. Unbelief hinders God's work
  - e) Here, Paul commands the man to stand-up, instead of believe the Gospel. This is important, because the Gospel message is to *be-lieve*, not *be-healed*!
  - f) The people just get more confused
    - (i) Believe the "\_\_\_\_\_" have come down from the stars
    - (ii) Believe they must worship "humanoids" - like in *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, etc.
  - g) Paul and Barnabas quickly react by stopping the worship, and attempting to clarify the MESSAGE, not the MIRACLE! *Pope John Paul II would never stop someone from worshipping him!*
    - (i) *God's vessels* - Christians are only human, with similar \_\_\_\_\_
    - (ii) *God's command* - Everyone must turn away from dead idols, and turn to the only living God who allows people to go this far in their life because of their ignorance, but commands all men everywhere to \_\_\_\_\_ when they know better
    - (iii) *God's witness* - In every country, every life, God has some sort of witness (the good in life, even the weather) telling people God is there, and that He cares, and that we need to be saved from our sins!
- 2) Paul's enemies don't seem to die (14:19,20)
- a) One minute people worship you, but then the next minute, someone can spread an evil report about you, and they will turn on you (just like they did Christ)
  - b) Paul gets mobbed, and stoned, and left for dead
  - c) Paul gets up and heads back into the town of people that had just stoned him! Why? Only one explanation (2 Cor 12:1-6) - he is now a Spirit-filled, suicidal maniac because he has had a glimpse of heaven!
3. At Derbe (14:19,20)
- a. Paul and Barnabas preach, teach all along the way
  - b. Decide they have had enough excitement, and head back home
4. Heading Home (14:20-25) - Back the way they had come.
- a. Through Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, Perga, and Attalia
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ the souls - putting people to the test:
    - 1) Seeing if they have any fruits that demonstrate their faith
      - a) Fruits to show seriousness at salvation (Mt 3:8)
      - b) Fruits showing a changed life (2 Cor 5:17; Mt 7:20)
      - c) Fruits that show you live by faith (Jam 2:17,18)
    - 2) Allow them to prove their love for God - not just talk about loving God - seeing if they are \_\_\_\_\_, and growing - going to church, in their Bible's, witnessing, serving!
  - c. Exhorting (challenging) the Christians:
    - 1) To continue in "the faith" (Cf Jude 1:6) - it will not always be easy (2Ti 4:1-4). Not just faith, but in the "narrow way"
    - 2) To endure \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Tim 2:3; 3:12)
  - d. Ordaining elders/pastors - putting people "in charge" - responsible for the spiritual well-being of the Christians (Heb 13:17)
    - 1) Men were encouraged to seek God's will about becoming pastors, and taking God's calling seriously, and beginning to follow God's call by faith! Studying under their pastor.
    - 2) The Christians had nice "fellowships," but they needed to take up the responsibility of having a pastor - someone they submitted to, and ministered to, as he ministered to them.
  - e. They prayed and \_\_\_\_\_ with these Christians - their burdens became Paul's and Barnabas' - a true Christian community
    - 1) True test of Christianity is whether we stay together (fellowship), pray together, and bond together as a \_\_\_\_\_
    - 2) We are far too hesitant to lower our shields - be a family
  - f. They \_\_\_\_\_ (gave-up) them to the guidance and protection of the Lord - they could not lean on Paul and Barnabas forever. Like when parents let go of their children when they leave for college, marriage, and their own life - pass back to God's care

**B. Back Home at Antioch (14:26,27) - A Furlough**

1. It had been 2 1/2 years since they had left in Acts 13
2. Time for a reflection and evaluation - see if they have learned anything, and if they can influence more people to go!
3. Held a “Missions Conference” among the Christians at Antioch
  - a. Rehearsed all that God had done through them - glorified God
  - b. Announced that the door to reaching the Gentiles was wide open (remember, people had problems with this for years and years).
  - c. Never talked about their hardships, but just that people were getting saved right and left - that was their only focus - not the pain, and struggles, and defeats!
  - d. Developed the pattern that is our model to follow in winning people to Christ the world over
    - 1) Get sent out by a strong, Bible believing local church with a world vision - they will financially support you
    - 2) Focus the effort on the key cities of each area
    - 3) Preach the word - miracles and the like were only secondary, unless you were among Jews
    - 4) Plant local churches everywhere you go- don't “just” preach
    - 5) Return home, and report to the Christians who have supported you and prayed for you through it all! And get refreshed, and prepared to go out again!

**III. Conclusion****IV. Study Questions**