

The First Mission Trip Acts 14

This is a very exciting time in the life of the early Church. This first journey occurred in 46 – 48AD and was the shortest of the three trips at 1400 miles. They launched from Syrian Antioch, sailed to Cyprus, landing at Salamis. From there they walked 100 miles across the island where they sailed to Perga (Turkey) and walked to Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. They retraced their steps to return to Syrian Antioch. (See Acts 13-14.)

During this journey, they experienced intense persecution. In Acts, gospel proclamation is often met with gospel opposition. Even so, they were determined to speak the message. It seems that tough circumstances could not squelch the joy of making Jesus known.

So...how do we find such joy today?

One of the things you will want to see in Acts 14 is this:

The joy of the Lord can be your strength even during hard times.

The Church in Acts never had a time when it was easy. If there was to be joy, it was not to be based on circumstances. When the early Christians experienced joy, it was the joy of the Lord.

There are two very different types of gospel opposition recorded in Acts 14. One looks negative. One looks positive. In reality - they are the same.

Gospel opposition is easy to spot when it involves intense persecution. People want to stone them. Gospel opposition also came in the form of false adoration. People want to sacrifice to them.

These two very different forms of opposition both carry the same goal – reject Jesus. Ignore Jesus. Stay away from Jesus. If you don't have Jesus in your life, your reason(s) don't really matter. If person A has a different reason for not pursuing Jesus than person B, it's not like one of them is going to be better off in this life or on judgment day.

In Acts 14, the Jews rejected the message of Paul and Barnabas by saying "You are terrible."
The Gentiles rejected the message of Paul and Barnabas by saying "You are gods."

One group says they are demons. The other group says they are gods.
Either way, Jesus is set aside and the devil wins.

Notice the response of Paul and Barnabas to spiritual adversity. It's the same response. The opposition came in the form of intense persecution and false adoration. Either way – the response of the apostles was the same: ***They kept evangelizing.*** Acts 14:7, 21.

Paul and Barnabas had three resources that kept them close to God and joyful and focused on the mission.

- 1) The Holy Spirit – Acts 13:52
- 2) The Word of God – Acts 11:26
- 3) The People of God – Acts 14:21-22

Home Group Questions:

1. Do you connect very well with the statement, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” or does that feel more like a cliché to you?

2. What does spiritual adversity sometimes look like in your life? Do you feel prepared for spiritual adversity or does it tend to knock you off your feet?

3. You may have heard Pastor Karl mention three resources that Paul and Barnabas leaned on...

The Holy Spirit – Acts 13:52

The Word of God – Acts 11:26

The People of God – Acts 14:21-22

...how do you connect with any of these in your own life?

4. Is there anything in your life that you have successfully turned away from to keep your devotion fixed on our Lord Jesus?