Acts Chapter 14 Verses 1 – 2

* *(Literally, unbelieving is refusing to believe…disallowing oneself to be persuaded)* The ***poisoning*** of the mind...I just couldn’t get away from this when I was studying. Literally this is the *introduction of evil into the thought of another.* It’s a fun Greek word, *Kakoo*, but in its reality and application, it is perhaps the most *despicable and disgusting* action a person could **ever** take.
* Check this out, they couldn’t stand against these men. Paul and Barnabas were ***fully*** convinced, ***fully*** bold and strong in their commitment to the Lord. They couldn’t stand against the message because the message was *a) effective, b) intelligent, and c) welcomed by others*…and so when they saw they were **defeated personally** and **defeated intellectually**, ***that’s when they resorted to defamation and negativity.*** And there you have it…negativity cannot and does not continue forth from a victorious person! Wouldn’t even make sense…
* And as much as I HATE, and I am talking about, I loathe hearing it, HATE, when someone is simply spewing poison about another person, I know…that deep down, that negativity comes forth from **inner defeat.** ***Do you know where we find victory? In a relationship with Jesus Christ!*** He fixes your heart right on up and allows you, teaches you, sets you free to show grace even when your flesh just doesn’t like that person…or that person is in total disagreement with your perspective…
* Now, it’s true that some folks should be dealt with and dealt with immediately and harshly…and some people see that negatively…or as negativity…***I don’t.*** Not dealing with issues and sin I see as a negative. Some folks see that as judgment or being negative…but it’s not. We have watched Paul filled with the Holy Spirit deal with sin immediately and harshly…we have seen that in Jesus…BUT…dealing with folks that need to be dealt with is much different than ***introducing evil.*** Paul, Jesus...***may I add your name***…we never see them introducing evil…why? Because victory knows no defeat…

Acts Chapter 14 Verse 3

* I love this! When the mind of the culture is poisoned, what did they do? **Spoke boldly in the Lord!** When the mind of the culture is poisoned, and folks are sick and growing more sick, listen…it is not the time to soften the message or even *change the message* to *“reach”* the culture! **It’s time to speak boldly in the Lord!!** Bearing witness to the efficacy of the Word of God and the goodness and power of God’s amazing saving grace!!
* The methods *may, can and should* change! Paul didn’t have YouTube…we do! He didn’t have smartphone apps or Instagram…but he also didn’t have a culture fixated on gadgetry, electronics and virtual self-serving on-demand ***zombiality*** (my word). And so what do you do when the darkness moves…you pursue with the light! ***The methods may, can and should change…but never the message.***
* Here is where we have greatly err’d. **Folks still need the truth.** They still need to know and understand sin and self-deficiency. They still need to know with clarity what has happened and what did happen…a proper diagnosis and they still need the correct treatment…***apply the Gospel!*** But in the midst of changing the method to reach the culture, the message has somehow changed as well…
* Here’s something I heard this week and I ***whole-heartedly love it.*** There will always be folks out there that spread tack strips in your path. Slow you down, tell you what can’t be done or a thousand reasons why something is going to be hard…Many will straight up stand against you especially if you have a real calling on your life…remember this in those times…., Jeanette Epps of NASA once said, *“Believe so hard that eventually they will have no choice but believe right along with you!”* That is bold on display!! **All it proves when you are stopped is that you didn’t believe…not them.** My words.
* And it says here that *the Lord was bearing witness of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* Two things here…Why is the church overall known as a bunch of ***judgement filled hypocrites?*** I dare say that it is because we no longer live and speak boldly for the Lord representing Him as He truly is…if we did…if we Christians who have received the grace of God actually set out each day to show forth the grace of God and to honor Him with committing our hearts, souls, minds and our strength to Him…then the church would be known quite differently…as a group that continually bears witness to the Word of His grace…and perhaps that is why we so sparingly hear of great signs and wonders…**and the greatest sign and wonder of all is a person coming to faith…**
* Angels don’t rejoice when someone is healed of a bodily physical ailment…they don’t rejoice when the church bills are paid or the pastor’s salary is increased or even established. The don’t rejoice when you get the job and or when your effective prayers cause the sun to stand still…***heaven rejoices when a child of God comes home***…***the greatest of all signs…the highest of all wonders…***

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 4 – 7

* I like this and I think this is important. There are some that say that every day you’re going to live is already numbered and *therefore* until the day that is appointed that you should die, *you are invincible.* Have you ever heard that? ***Technically*** they are right…but I also know that I ought not to test God! HA! Notice here, they did what they could to preserve their lives…folks have said to me in the past…*I’ll eat whatever I want, I have no use for exercise…I live on the edge because the Good Lord already knows when He’s going to take me home*…ooooook. My perspective…not so smart…HA!!

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 8 – 10

* We saw Jesus do this, we saw Peter do this and now we see Paul do this! What a great *scene* and *series of statements!!* ***He saw that he had faith to be healed***…what does that statement mean? Well, who is the Author of faith? According to Hebrews 12:2? Jesus Himself…and so Paul looks at this man and Jesus says right to Paul’s heart…***I’m there…you be there too!***
* Folks twist this all up and say, *“See there, if you just had enough faith, you’d be healed…”* ***that is such a cruel and ungodly statement***…let’s be reasonable…eventually does that mean everyone is faithless? Because eventually weakness and issues of the physical/flesh kills everyone! ***It’s just a matter of timing!!***
* This is s touchy subject for sure but listen…by faith we **are** healed…we have a new body awaiting us, one not made with hands eternal in the heavens…the healing is in Jesus and while we wait in these fallen vessels…some He heals and some He does not…and that is entirely up to Him. Should we have faith that God can heal? Of course…but should we place demanding expectations on Him based on our own performance of faith…here is where we go off the rails…
* Paul looks at this man…this man that it says here was listening to every word Paul was saying…and Jesus said to Paul’s heart…***do it***…and notice this…when Jesus touches you, specifically your heart and life…you shouldn’t ***just*** stand and walk…if you have opened it all to Him…even the parts that you and I hide and weep about and writhe in shame about that no one sees…you don’t just walk man…you leap! *(Of course you don’t think you can perhaps in your current circumstance…but you can…reach a little bit higher in the Lord!)*

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 11 – 15a

* I just want to point out that again we see a circumstance where ***the miracle saved no one!*** Everyone saw this great work of God, this extraordinary and undeniable miracle but notice this, ***it didn’t change their perspective of who God is…only receiving the Word of God does that! That is, if you don’t refuse Him…if you allow your heart to be persuaded…***

Acts Chapter 14 Verse 15

* One of the ***loudest*** verses for me personally that we have covered yet in this book. What I mean by that is that it speaks to me **powerfully**…Paul calls idolatry…***useless.*** In the Greek that word is literally *“vanity”* or perhaps more direct, *“profitless.”* If there is no profit in it…I am entirely disinterested…in fact, there is something in me that vehemently despises wasting my time. I suppose after all is said and done, **I’m still a hustler.** Only now, my hustle is to honor God, seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly with the One who paid my debt…and ***constantly*** turn a profit…bear fruit…
* Here’s what eats at me the most about vanity, life wasted…***it’s a double waste***…because not only am I using my time, attention, and life in a useless manner…there is…there exists profit out there to go get!! And so vanity, idolatry, transgression…it’s a **double waste!** What!? I don’t get it…and after a month, a year, a few years of being ok with that…your life starts to really reflect it…and then regret sets in…it’s terrible…
* I heard this week, *“People waste so much time saying what can’t be done. The man who says it can’t be done should stop interrupting the man that’s doing it!”* Yes! Here’s another principle to live by…, *“Don’t overestimate the cost of doing something new or something different…and stop underestimating the cost of doing things the same!”* There’s more here…like I said, this verse **shouts** at me…but it’s not about me…it’s about the Lord and His Word so we move on…

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 16 – 18

* In locations past, Paul appealed to the Jews in the synagogue by explaining to them how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies but these people have **no knowledge** of the Jewish antiquities, no history of the scriptures…they worship Zeus and Hermes and the myriad of gentile gods…and so Paul appeals to them on the level that they can relate.
* The gods would be credited with fruitful seasons, food and gladness and prosperity…and all of that, which they attribute to the gods…should be attributed to God…here’s the issue though…
* ***You cannot simply bolt God onto idolatrous understanding***…you cannot simply add Jesus to the pagan system…especially after you just told them to abandon these *“useless”* things…its confusing and the result is seen here…and today, that confusion continues. And ***if there is confusion then there is not true conversion*** and if one’s heart is not converted by the Holy Spirit, made alive by the light of the Gospel…then what is up ahead…is conflict…

Acts Chapter 14 Verse 19

* One verse…from worshipping Paul as a god to stoning Paul as a criminal…listen, don’t look to the approval of man to validate your ministry…***look to the humility of man in relationship and closeness with Jesus!***

Acts Chapter 14 Verse 20

* Paul was essentially executed by the same crowd that loved him one verse prior…let that sink in…sheesh…and this is where many believe Paul was caught up into the 3rd heaven…

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 21 – 22

* Welcome to the **separation of church and state**…that is, the current circumstantial ***state*** of mankind…the present ***state*** of your situation…this flies in the face of the health, wealth and prosperity gospel…the false word of faith movement gospel…Paul wakens to the truth that ***in order to reach the heart of man, to affect the spirit of a man, we ought not to believe that it is done by appealing to the flesh of man…***

Acts Chapter 14 Verses 23 – 28

* All sorts of terrible hardships were thrown at them and yet *they did not back down* from God’s will and work. They did not retreat from loving God and pressing forward in their walks and calling! We have seen real, **on display** personal growth in this chapter in Paul…why? Because they didn’t turn back. Lose heart? Oh yea…Paul lost his HEART BEAT! But he could not turn cold to God…and the result is eternal…
* Here’s my question and parting thought today…*death, hardship, rejection, dejection, disappointment*…none of these things could back them down…what does it take to back me down? Here’s my prayer. ***I pray it takes much more to back me down than they have!*** And the truth is, I know they have more than enough…and so I run to the Father who gives me strength…I stay near to Him who constantly reminds me of the truth of what on earth is going on…like ***literally.***
* He teaches me of profit and of uselessness. He prepares me for daily battle with my own flesh…and in that proximity of praise, He equips me to outweigh and outlast everything that rises against me…how about you?