

## BEARING WITNESS TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

### I. Acts 14:1-20

A. Let me tell you about the tag-team preachers I witnessed back-in-the-day...

B. Have you ever faced opposition for saying and doing what was right? Have you ever been the victim of slanderous rumors or accusations or ever made a public target because of your faith in Christ? Ever been *cancelled* on social media? Have you ever faced persecution for sharing the Gospel? This was the normal Christian life for guys like Paul & Barnabas, the original tag-team preachers.

C. Our text today finds Paul & Barnabas on their first missionary journey. They're in what was Asia Minor, now modern day Turkey. Previously in a city called Pisidian Antioch here's what happened when they proclaimed the Gospel there. Acts 13:49-52 (ESV) says: "*And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*" (So we pick up today 80 miles down the road in Iconium, modern day, Konya, Turkey...)

D. Acts 14:1-20 (ESV) is our main text this morning...

1) **V1-2: 1** Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. **2** But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **(Ever had your mind poisoned against what's right and true? Don't drink that Kool Aid!)**

2) **V3: 3** So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. **(The Gospel was being affirmed by miracles.)**

3) **V4: 4** But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. **(Presently we live in a divided nation; cultures in stark opposition. It's a powder keg. But in the end it will matter whose side you are on!)**

4) **V5-7: 5** When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, **6** they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, **7** and there they continued to preach the gospel. **(There's not much difference from being *led* and having *fled* but one sounds more spiritual. So they move on from Iconium to Lystra, 20 miles south.)**

5) **V8-10: 8** Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. **9** He listened to Paul speaking. **(He was totally dialed in as the Holy Spirit was at work!)** And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, **10** said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. **(A stunning miracle!)**

6) **V11-12: 11** *And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"* **12** *Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. (An ancient local legend purported that Zeus and Hermes once came to the hill country of that area disguised as men. Only one elderly couple extended hospitality to them. Afterwards their cottage was transformed into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns while their neighbors homes were destroyed. The people probably thought the two gods were returning.)*

7) **V13-18: 13** *And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.* **14** *But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out,* **15** *"Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16* *In past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17* *Yet He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."* **(Common Grace)** **18** *Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. (They're trying to sacrifice oxen to false gods while Paul and Barnabas want them to know that the God of all Creation actually sacrificed His very own Son for them!)*

8) **V19-20: (And they're apparently in mid sermon when...)** **19** *But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. (Talk about an abrupt shift in public opinion!)* **20** *But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, (No concussion protocol for Paul! And he walks back into the city where they'd turned on him!) and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. (How could Paul even hike 20 miles the very next day?! It had to be a God-thing!)*

E. Here's a few questions: Just how bloodied up was Paul that they thought he was dead? No pulse? No breath? And how'd Barnabas dodge the rocks? Did the healed cripple try to stop the rabid crowd? Did Paul think back to Stephen as the stones were striking him? And was a young Timothy watching with his mom & grandma since this was their hometown? But let's focus on what we do know...

F. Paul & Barnabas are mid-sermon when the stones start flying. They were pointing them to the *Maker and Creator of all things seen and unseen* and to His Son our Savior but the mob starts heaving rocks. What would have been next for their sermon? Would they've moved from *common grace* to *Saving Grace*; from universal grace to the Word of Grace; from general revelation to the special revelation of God the Son, Jesus Christ, *who* as Hebrews 1:2 says was: *'appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the worlds!'*

G. Maybe they would've shared something like Ephesians 2:4-9 as their *Word of Grace message*: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved (you), even (though you are) dead in (your) trespasses, (can make you) alive together with Christ—by grace you (can be) saved—and raised up with Him and (seated) with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable

riches of His grace in kindness toward (you) in Christ Jesus. For by (this) grace you (can be) saved through faith. And this (won't be) your own doing; (because) it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See actual Eph. 2:4-9 text in your notes...)

**H. Oh if the people of Lystra had not picked up stones! Before them were two men who had been pillars in the Jewish faith. But the righteousness they pursued by their own efforts could never be achieved. The salvation they sought after could never be earned. Then they were saved by grace! And they were willing to be stoned to death to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, called in our text the Word of His Grace. A man crippled from birth was healed to point them to the Healer. A people crippled by sin from birth could've also been healed! Jesus bore the stripes of their punishment that they might be healed but they rejected it! Do you understand this grace we too proclaim? G.W. Wright gives a great illustration of Unmerited Favor, Grace:**

"When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God's unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God."

**I. When it comes to talk about eternal life, about heaven, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is, there's no road built from here to there. That said, there is a road from there to here. Jesus is that way! In John 14:6 at the Last Supper, Jesus said: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" In the same way there are no ships that sail from here to there. But Christ is the unsinkable Vessel that comes from that far distant shore to ferry us to Himself and this forevermore! This is the Word of His Grace!**

**J. As for those of you who already know this and have embraced Christ, glory to God! For those of you who have booked passage on that Eternal Vessel--Hallelujah! But I must remind us all, we now like Paul & Barnabas have been given the task of bearing witness to this *Word of His Grace*. And while you may not face stones (*though no violent acts these days should ever be ruled out*) you may face ridicule. You may be slammed on social media. You may be *unfriended*. You could be *disinvited* or *black-balled* or *cancelled* or sent packing or forced to run thru a gauntlet of public shame. But if so, may we be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit just like when Paul & Barnabas were kicked out of so many cities.**

**K. 1 Peter 3:13-18 (NLT) takes us home: *13 Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. 15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. 17 Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! 18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.***

**\* Close with Prayer...**

## Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

### Acts 14:1-20 (ESV)

**1** Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. **2** But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **3** So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. **4** But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. **5** When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, **6** they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, **7** and there they continued to preach the gospel. **8** Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. **9** He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, **10** said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. **11** And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” **12** Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. **13** And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. **14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, **15** “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. **16** In past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. **17** Yet He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” **18** Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. **19** But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. **20** But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

### Acts 13:49-52 (ESV)

**49** And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. **50** But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. **51** But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. **52** And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

### Ephesians 2:4-9 (ESV)

**4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace

you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

### **1 Peter 3:13-18 (NLT)**

**13** Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? **14** But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. **15** Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. **16** But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. **17** Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! **18** Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.

### **Unmerited Favor**

When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God's unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God.

- G.W. Knight, *Clip-Art Features for Church Newsletters*, p. 53.

### **Zeus and Hermes - Theological Note on Acts 14:12-13**

Reformation Study Bible

**Acts 14:12-13:** An ancient legend circulated in Lystra that the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes disguised themselves as men and came to the Phrygian hill country, seeking hospitality. Only one couple welcomed them, and in return their cottage was changed into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns. The houses of those who refused the gods were destroyed. The Lystrans may have been thinking of the legend when they welcomed Barnabas and Paul and prepared to sacrifice oxen, mistaking them for the gods, revisiting the region incognito.

- Theological Note on Acts 14:12-13, *Reformation Study Bible*, Reformation Trust-Ligonier Ministries, p. 1941.

### **Bonus Goodies**

**History of Christian Persecution - Biltmore Church**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NF2Xr7HPJ54>

**It Might Take Persecution - John Piper**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A\\_lgJY8b0os](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_lgJY8b0os)

**Persecuted Church - Francis Chan**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI494qbQJpM>

**Pastor, Jesus Doesn't Care How Big Your Church Is - Jared C. Wilson**  
<https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/pastor-jesus-doesnt-care-how-big-your-church-is/>

**What is Over-Realized Eschatology? - Nick Cady**  
<https://nickcady.org/2017/06/28/what-is-over-realized-eschatology/>

**What is Modalism? (Exposing Oneness Doctrine) - One Minute Apologist**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMPIxCDDxTs>

### **[More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras](#)**

#### **[Micah 7:5-9 \(ESV\)](#)**

**5** Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms; **6** for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. **7** But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. **8** Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me. **9** I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon His vindication.

#### **[Matthew 10:16-33 \(ESV\)](#)**

**16** "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. **17** Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, **18** and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. **19** When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. **20** For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. **21** Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, **22** and you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. **23** When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. **24** "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. **25** It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. **26** "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. **27** What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. **28** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. **29** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them

will fall to the ground apart from your Father. **30** But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **31** Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. **32** So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, **33** but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven.

#### **Matthew 5:11-12 (NKJV)**

**11** Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **12** Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

#### **Acts 12:1-3 (ESV)**

**1** About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. **2** He killed James the brother of John with the sword, **3** and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

#### **Romans 1:16 (NKJV)**

**16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

#### **2 Timothy 3:12-13 (ESV)**

**12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

#### **Revelation 6:9-11 (NLT)**

**9** When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony. **10** They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before You judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?" **11** Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters--their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred--had joined them.

#### **Hath Thou No Scar?**

By Amy Carmichael (1867 - 1951)

Hast thou no scar?  
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;  
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.  
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?  
Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,

Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent  
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.  
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?  
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,  
And pierced are the feet that follow Me.  
But thine are whole; can he have followed far  
Who hast no wound or scar?

- Amy Carmichael was an Irish Christian who served the poor of Belfast and the abused of India. Her song lyrics and poems have inspired believers for decades. To read more, go to: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amy\\_Carmichael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amy_Carmichael)

### **Sermon Excerpt by Charles H. Spurgeon**

The great difference between Stephen and Saul, however, lies in this—Stephen is defending the cause of Christ at the cost of his own life and Saul is opposing him with all his might. Even in a congregation like the present, there may not be many, yet there may be some who are opposing the Gospel. There may be some here who, although they would not stone Believers, yet would make a jest of them—perhaps they have been making merry today over those Christian Brothers [Moody and Sankey] who have of late been prominent in the matter of revivals—some foolish jest they have perpetrated about them—and done their best to lower them in the esteem of their fellows. Ah, dear Friends, beware what you are doing, for the Lord of Hosts says concerning His people, “He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” Nothing brings the color into a man’s cheek sooner than any ill-treatment of his children! And if any of you want to provoke God to speedy and sudden judgment against you, you have only to join in treating, in a cruel manner, those who are really His children. May God keep all of us from such a shameful sin as that!

- Sermon Excerpt by Charles H. Spurgeon, “*Stephen and Saul*” Sermon No. 2948, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington in London, May 13, 1875. To read the full sermon, go to: <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols49-51/chs2948.pdf>

To read about D.L. Moody and David Sankey, go to: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moody\\_and\\_Sankey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moody_and_Sankey)

### **When Emperor Valens Threatened Bishop Eusebius**

When the Emperor Valens threatened Eusebius with confiscation of all his goods, torture, banishment, or even death, the courageous Christian replied, “*He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.*”

- *The Evangelical Repository*, Volume 3, Anecdotes, p. 175, Circa 1844. To read more about Eusebius, go to: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius\\_of\\_Samosata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius_of_Samosata)

### **Tacitus on Nero's Persecution of Christians**

“Then, Nero, in order to avert this report from himself, caused those called Christians by the common people, to be accused and exceedingly tormented. The author of this name

is Christ, who was publicly put to death under the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, the governor. Those who confessed that they were Christians, were first apprehended, and afterwards by making it known themselves a great multitude were all condemned, not so much on account of the conflagration, as of the hatred in which they were held by mankind. The taking of their lives was accompanied with much mockery; they were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and then torn to pieces by dogs; or nailed on crosses; or placed at stakes and burned; serving also as torches for the spectators, when the day was over."

- *The Annals of P. Cornelius Tacitus*, Roman Senator & Historian, (Circa 14 AD - 68 AD).

### **Courage During The Boxer Rebellion - John MacArthur**

During the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), extreme nationalist Chinese fomented a campaign of terror against officials of foreign governments, Christian missionaries, and even Chinese Christians. After they surrounded a certain mission station, they sealed all exits except one. They placed a cross in the dirt in front of the opened gate and told the missionaries and students that anyone who walked out and trampled the cross would be spared. According to reports, the first seven students who departed trampled the cross and were sent on their way. The eighth student, a young girl, approached the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, carefully walked around the cross, and was immediately shot to death. The remaining 92 students, strengthened by that girl's courageous example, also walked around the cross to their deaths.

- John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*. Moody Press or Logos.