

Acts 14:1-28

Lessons in the Face of Adversity

How many of you have had a bad day today or this week?

A) Diary of a bad day!

- Your horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the freeway.
- You see a 60 Minutes news team waiting in your office.
- Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.
- You call suicide prevention and they put you on hold.
- You wake up to discover that your waterbed broke and then realized you don't have a waterbed.

B) Paul the apostle had his share of bad days – but as we will see tonight – sometimes the best things came out of the worst days

C) Last time – we left Barnabas and Paul at the start of their first missionary journey.

Their first stop was in a city called Antioch of Pisidia – Mixed reaction to their message. –

A) Some Jews were converted – an every larger group of gentiles were converted

B) But then they were ran out of town by the orthodox Jews

Ch. 13:50 ⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ 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.

C) Expelled in V.50 – Expelled from School ? - Dad 3X

1) Laughing – more time to goof around

D) Expelled – Driven out with a degree of violence

1) This is Paul's first missionary Journey – surprised there was a 2nd & 3rd

So that is where pick up the story tonight

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, **(their routine- Jews first)** 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.** 3 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.

So Paul and Barnabas come to Iconium – preaching – and a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed!

A) But once again – see this pattern the unbelieving Jews - stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

B) Here we go again more hostility – what we see next is probably not what we would expect

3 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.

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith tells this story in his autobiography *A life in our times*

It had been a wearying day, and I asked Emily Watson (family housekeeper) to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. **Lyndon Johnson** was calling from the White House. “Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson.”

“He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him.” “Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him.”
“No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you.”

“When I called the President back, he could scarcely control his pleasure. “Tell that woman I want her here in the White House.”

In the same way - Paul was not detoured or intimidated by negative public opinion because he KNEW who he WORKED FOR!

A) He stayed a long time and continued to speak boldly!

Lesson #1 Boldness is needed in the face of adversity

B) Boldness is what enables believers to persist in the face of opposition

1) Paul was a man on the move but he was not a man easily moved when things became difficult

C) Don't quit: To Soon to quit!

The memo from the testing director of MGM, shortly after **Fred Astaire's** 1st screen test, read: "Can't act! Slightly bald! **Can dance a little!**"

An older "expert" once said this of another younger coach, "**He possesses minimal football knowledge. Lacks motivation.**" He was referring to **Vince Lombardi**.

Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for "lack of ideas."

Thomas Edison's teachers gave up on him. "He's too stupid to do anything," was their evaluation.

Before he succeeded, **Henry Ford** failed and went broke five times.

An old seaman said, "In fierce storms we can do but one thing. There is only one way (to survive); we must put the ship in a certain position and keep her there."

C) As believers when we resist the temptation to quit or to run – we give God an opportunity to work.

D) Notice V. 3 Paul's boldness was accompanied by God's power – signs and wonders – miracles accompanied their ministry.

E) Lesson #2 God meets our boldness with his power!

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 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.

Lesson #3 Discernment is also needed in the face of adversity

A) When they became aware of the plot to stone them – they fled

Are they suddenly being chickens? – No being smart discerning

B) You can be bold and foolish. – Jump off a cliff shallow water

1) Paddle out at Oceanside Harbor – 10 foot day – novice surfer

C) They were bold but also prudent. They were wise.

1) Jesus even said, if you are persecuted in this city, flee to the next city.

2) So don't be persecuted and die unnecessarily. So they didn't.

D) They head for Lystra –

Caesar Augustus made LYSTRA a Roman colony in 6 B.C., establishing it as the easternmost of the fortified cities of Galatia.

A) Lystra was sort of a frontier outpost.

B) Hicksville – People were backwards – uneducated

NO SYNAGOGUE THERE

C) Unfortunately in Lystra they are going to experience more of the same –

1) Paul's all time worst day – is going to result in maybe his biggest blessing

⁸ 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.

A) That is a good start in Lystra- Lame man gets healed

B) Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed—

1) the gift of faith and discernment is working in conjunction with the gift of healing

C) The man had faith – Paul had discernment – somehow discerned the man's faith – Paul also in faith – exercised the gift of healing

D) Sometimes people ask me to pray for healing – Gift of faith and healing – I know God is going to touch them!

1) Pray with faith and boldness

E) Other times I don't – So I pray in Hope – Lord I know you can – Hoping you want to!

1) Great picture here – Gift of faith discernment and healing in operation

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.

Now why would they do that? A little history will help.

A) The people of Lystra had a legend that once Zeus and Hermes visited their land disguised as mortals,

B) Zeus was the chief among the Greek gods and Hermes was the messenger.

C) The legend stated that when Zeus and Hermes showed up disguised as mere mortals no one gave them any hospitality

1) except for one older couple.

D) In their anger at the people, Zeus and Hermes wiped out the whole population, except for the old couple.

This may explain why the people of Lystra were so quick to honor Paul and Barnabas.

A) Not making that mistake again!

B) Since Paul was the speaker – they thought he was Hermes the messenger –

1) And since Barnabas had an air of authority about him they assumed he was Zeus!

C) They intend to show their appreciation by worshipping them and offering sacrifice to them

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out¹⁵ and saying, “Men, why are

you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you....”

Lesson #4 Humility is needed in the face of praise!

Temptation – Let's go with this for a while – Kind of nice change of pace – from persecution – milk it

A) Satan's tactics – Persecution wasn't discouraging these guys – so let's try Flattery.

B) Your life – Persecuted – stand in your face- Your rise up – more bold study more.

1) Satan says – persecution isn't working. – Lets try flattery!

“I think the greatest danger of the ministry is not when you're under severe persecution, but when God has used your life, you're highly effective and everybody begins to speak well of you, begins to praise you, begins to declare what a marvelous person and all you are. That is when you are facing there the gravest danger of your ministry, because if you accept that praise, you will soon find yourself sitting on the shelf.” Pastor Chuck Smith

C) When God is using you - Satan whispers in your ear – You are the man/ woman – you are God's man!

1) God's woman – so special – Don't believe it!!!

D) God can use a DONKEY -

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Well Paul and Barnabas don't fall for this!

A) They tear their clothes – we are men just like you!

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out¹⁵ 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.

Notice Paul's approach in talking to them:

A)When he is addressing people like this, he doesn't begin with the Bible.

B)When he's in the synagogue, he begins with the Bible because they're familiar with the Bible and they believe the Bible.

1)These are unbelievers. These are pagan worshippers.

C)He does not begin with the Bible. He begins generally, with like, here we are in creation, God made it all, gave us cool stuff,

D)Now, why is that important? Because if you go up to an unbeliever and you say,

1)you know, the Bible says-- they don't care. They don't believe the Bible.

You've got to start at a different place.

A)Your approach has to be different.

B)Even Jesus' approach to people was different. Scribes and Pharisees, he would counter them with the Bible.

1)Have you not read--?

C)When he's in Samaria talking to the woman at the well, his approach is very different.

He's speaking to a woman who tried to fill the spiritual thirst in her life by a series of men, relationships.

A)And the men did not fulfill her.

B)So Jesus said, you know, if you drink of this water, you'll thirst again. But whoever drinks the water that I give will never thirst.

1)It got her attention. She's thirsty.

C)He begins with her need, not the Bible that she does not believe all of because she is a Samaritan. The approach is different.

D)So you need to read and know your audience when you share the gospel. And Paul does that quite well.

So Paul and Barnabas were barely able to calm the crowd down that day!

A)What happens next show you how fickle people can be

¹⁹ 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.

B)This is by far Paul's worst day – the Jews from Antioch and Iconium come down – rouse the crowd – stone Paul –

1)Many commentators actually believe that Paul died here – they definitely think he is dead

C)Many scholars believe this is when Paul had his vision of heaven

“I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. ³ Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know ⁴ that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell.” 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 NLT

D)So the people stone Paul and leave thinking he is dead!

²⁰ **However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city.**

A)He is ALIVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! IMAGINE THAT!

B)Instead of hightailing it out of there – don't miss that last line –

Crazy- he rose up and went into the city. - WHAT?

C)Now here is why I say that this being Paul's greatest affliction turned into one of Paul's greatest blessings

You know who lived in Lystra? – A young man named TIMOTHY

A)His mom and Grandmother – devout followers of Jehovah and Judaism – His Father was a pagan

B)We learn in Acts 16 that Timothy and His mom and grandmother all became Disciples of Jesus

C) Most scholars believe that – their conversion was connected to this event – heard Paul preach –

1) Heard or watched him get stoned to death

D) Then saw him raised – come back into the city and they like many others believed!

1) And Timothy would become known as Paul's son in the faith

E) Timothy would become his most trusted companion and ministry Partner

As I mentioned early Paul moved around a lot – He was a church planter – but there was one place he stayed longer time - **That Place was Ephesus**

A) But when Paul was feeling called to leave this church he had pastored for 3 yrs

B) His longest stay – he thought who can I leave here who will love them the same way that I do? – **TIMOTHY WAS THAT MAN!**

C) No one as liked hearted or liked minded in the faith – He will care for your souls the way that I do!

D) The Source of Paul's greatest pain – resulted in his greatest blessing!

Lessons #5 Affliction has a way of birthing blessing!

Child birth – Husband – I hate you – never touch me again - Beautiful baby

Paul's affliction resulted in the spiritual birth of Timothy his son in the faith! – See more when we get to chapter 16

And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 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."

Good little outline of what discipleship consist of:

- **Strengthening souls** - Helping get grounded – good foundation – so they are not tossed to and fro by false teachings
- **Exhorting them to continue in the faith** – The newness wears off – there is the tendency to get lazy – complacent – so we need to be exhorted to continue – to grow – expand in the faith
- **Reminder: Tribulation is a part of the Christian life** – Often when first saved – we get a reprieve – hedge

But eventually that is lifted and we need to learn to do battle and to stand strong in the Lord – put on the whole armor 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.

The team comes home – give their missions report
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."