

Paul and Barnabas Persevere

(Acts 14)

Pre-Session Warm Up

We have been learning that Paul and Barnabas set out on a missionary journey and the word of the Lord continued to spread. Not everyone received the message of Salvation that they shared, however. As we learned last week, many of the Jews rejected the gospel and attempted to persecute Paul and Barnabas. They endured many hard situations as they tried to spread the word about Jesus.

It's not always easy to tell people about what Jesus came to do for us. But today we will learn that the Holy Spirit empowers all believers to share the Gospel, despite difficulties.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that you give us the strength to keep on going even when we face hard situations. Help us to know that the Holy Spirit is with us and can enable us to do all that You have called us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2-3 ESV)

Lesson

God had a special job for Paul and Barnabas. While they were fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit told them to go out from Antioch in Syria to spread the Good News to other parts of the world.

[Teacher trace Paul's first missionary journey on the map as you review.] First, the Holy Spirit sent them to the island of **Cyprus**. They visited the town of **Salamis**, then they went across the entire island

to the town of **Paphos**. That's where they met Bar-Jesus, the Jewish sorcerer and false prophet empowered by Satan, who tried to prevent the governor from believing Paul's message about Jesus.

Next, they went to **Antioch of Pisidia**. There Paul shared the Good News with power and boldness. Many people received Paul's message of salvation and believed in Jesus. Unfortunately, there were some people who refused to believe. The unbelieving Jews stirred up trouble for Paul and Barnabas and kicked them out of their city!

The next place they went was **Iconium**. That's where we left off last week.

Acts 14:1

The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.

The Holy Spirit gave Paul and Barnabas the power to speak boldly.

Acts 14:2

Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.

The Jews who refused to believe poisoned the minds of the Gentiles. In other words, they criticized the message Paul and Barnabas were sharing and said bad things about them.

Even though people were stirring up trouble, the Holy Spirit empowered Paul and Barnabas to keep doing the work that God told them to do. They stayed in Iconium a long time, teaching God's word boldly. And, God's power could be seen through Paul and Barnabas when He gave them the ability to do miracles.

Acts 14:3

But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.

The people in Iconium were divided into two groups of people. Some of the people believed that Paul and Barnabas were teaching God's truth to them. Others did not believe.

Acts 14:4

But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

The group of people who did not believe made plans to kill Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:5

Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.

When Paul and Barnabas learned of this plan they quickly left and went to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe.

Acts 14:6-7

When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. (7) And there they preached the Good News.

Paul and Barnabas didn't leave Iconium because they were afraid. They understood that the Holy Spirit was leading and guiding them on to the next place He wanted them to share the Good News. They trusted God to both protect them and to empower them to preach, knowing that their lives could be in danger wherever they went.

Acts 14:8-10

*While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting (9) and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, **Paul realized he had faith to be healed.** (10) So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.*

What an amazing sight this was to the crippled man who was healed and to the crowd who knew he had been crippled from birth. It was a miracle that this man could stand on his feet and walk.

A *miracle* is something only God can do. When God performs a miracle, it is to show us His power and point us to Him. When you see a miracle take place, praise God and thank Him for what He has done.

Acts 14:11-13

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" (12) They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. (13) Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

God created people to have a relationship with Him. He is the One and only true God and He alone deserves to be worshiped.

The people who lived in Lystra worshiped false gods or idols.

When they saw the crippled man healed, the people thought that the gods had come down as humans in the form of Paul and Barnabas. They thought Barnabas was Zeus and that Paul was Hermes.

They believed the Greek god, Zeus, was the king of the gods and Hermes was the messenger of the gods. Since Paul was the chief speaker, they thought he was Hermes!

The priest of the temple of Zeus brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the city gates as a way to worship Paul and Barnabas.

When Paul and Barnabas realized what the people were doing, they tried to stop them and told them they were only men like them.

Acts 14:14

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,

What do you think might have happened to Paul and Barnabas if they had allowed the people to worship them as if they were gods? [Allow discussion.]

Paul and Barnabas shared God's words with them and told them to turn away from their worship of false gods to the Living God.

Acts 14:15-17

*"Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to **the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.** (16) In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, (17) but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, **he sends you rain and good crops** and gives you food and joyful hearts."*

Why did Paul and Barnabas stress to the people that it was the living God who had created everything, including the rain? (A statue, or a story, is not what created the world, or blesses the fields with rain. It is the living God, who cares for people, who provides what we need to live. He is the One who should be worshiped.)

Even when Paul shared God's words with these people, they were having a hard time not worshipping them.

Acts 14:18

But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

God did not want the people of Lystra to worship His messengers. He wanted them to turn from their sin and worship Him, the one and only true God.

As Paul and Barnabas served God in Lystra, their enemies were still working to fight against them. Some people from Antioch of Pisidian and Iconium had followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. And they were still stirring up trouble with the people. The crowd believed the lies that Paul and Barnabas' enemies were spreading and turned against Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:19

Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead.

One minute the crowds were worshipping Paul and Barnabas and the next they turned violent against them.

The enemies of Paul thought they had silenced him. They dragged what they thought was his dead body outside the city.

Acts 14:20

But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Many believers gathered around Paul's body, thinking he was dead. To their surprise, Paul stood up and walked right back into Lystra.

Wow! Would you have walked back into that town full of people that wanted to kill you?

The Holy Spirit gave Paul courage even when he was persecuted and mistreated by his enemies.

Paul and Barnabas left the next day from Lystra and went to Derbe. Many people in Derbe heard the Good News and believed in Jesus.

When it was time to leave Derbe, Paul and Barnabas knew it was time to return to the believers in Antioch in Syria where they began their missionary journey.

Acts 14:21-22

After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, (22) where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.

They reversed their steps and travelled back to each city where they had shared the Good News. In each of these cities Paul and Barnabas wanted to encourage these new believers to remain faithful to God.

Why do you think the believers in these cities needed to be encouraged?

Paul and Barnabas knew they would need to keep trusting that the Holy Spirit would give them the courage to stay faithful to Jesus when difficulties came. They needed to remember that God would always be with them and enable them to do what He called them to do.

After going through each city, Paul and Barnabas finally arrived back in Antioch of Syria. The believers there must have thanked God for His protection and power as they heard of the dangers that Paul and Barnabas had faced. They must have rejoiced when they heard how many people had come to faith in Jesus.

God guided and protected Paul and Barnabas throughout this missionary journey through all kinds of dangers and trials. And He empowered them to do the missionary work that He had called them to do.

The same Holy Spirit will empower and protect you, too, as you do your best to do whatever God has asked you to do.

Paul believed in the Good News, the gospel. He knew that it was the truth and that God had called him to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. Paul was **persistent and persevered**. He did not give up. In this chapter of Acts, violent Jews and a stoning did not

persuade him to stop telling the gospel. He, literally, got back up again and returned to the cities that had wanted him dead to minister to the disciples and encourage these new believers to be faithful to the truth of the gospel.

Paul was humiliated at times, but he continued on because he knew that eternal souls were at stake. He also understood that some people would accept the gospel and others would reject it, but it was his job to tell the gospel to everyone no matter what happened.

What lessons have you learned from Paul today?

Do you have family or friends who need to hear the gospel? Be persistent. Don't give up. Continue to pray for their salvation and ask God to give you the words to say. He will never let you down!

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I want to have the same persistence that Paul had when sharing the gospel with people. He didn't let anything discourage him or defeat what he knew that You had clearly called him to do. Help me to not give up on anyone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. What does it mean that the Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles? (They criticized the message Paul and Barnabas were sharing and said bad things about them.)
2. How could God's power be seen through Paul and Barnabas? (When the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to do miracles)

3. What two groups of people were there in Iconium? (Those that believed Paul and Barnabas were teaching the truth and those that did not.)
4. What did Paul and Barnabas do as they stayed in Iconium? (Taught God's word boldly.)
5. What did the group of people who did not believe Paul plan to do? (Decided to attack and stone Paul and Barnabas.)
6. What miracle did God do through Paul in Lystra? (Healed a crippled man.)
7. How do you think Paul knew that the man had faith to be healed? (Allow for answers; when people are led by the Holy Spirit, He communicates spiritual discernment when needed.)
8. What is a miracle? (A miracle is something only God can do.)
9. Why were the people worshipping Paul and Barnabas? (They thought they were Zeus and Hermes.)
10. Why did Paul and Barnabas stress to the people that it was the living God who had created everything, including the rain? (A statue, or a story, is not what created the world, or blesses the fields with rain. It is the Living God, who cares for people, who provides what we need to live. He is the One who should be worshiped.)
11. Why did the people of Lystra stone Paul and drag him out of the city? (Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed Paul to Lystra and won the crowds to their side. These enemies of Paul incited the people of Lystra to stone Paul and drag his body outside the city.)
12. What did Paul and Barnabas do as they travelled home? (Stopped at the cities where they shared the Good News and encouraged the believers.)
13. Why do you think the believers in these cities needed to be encouraged? (They needed to remember that God would always be with them and enable them to do what He called them to do.)
14. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch in Syria, what did they share with the believers there? (All that God had done through them.)
15. What motivated Paul to continue to share the Gospel with people even when they refused to believe and even wanted to kill him? (He knew the gospel was the truth and that people would perish without receiving the Lord.)

