

- How persistent are we in spreading the same good news?
- Paul and Barnabas establish four churches in Galatia: Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe in two years. They do that because they are persistent.

2.3.3 To be filled with the Holy Spirit

- Paul and Barnabas are clearly filled with God's power.
 - At Iconium: 'enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders' (Acts 14:3)
 - At Lystra: Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (Acts 14:10)
- We too can be filled with that same Holy Spirit. Is our desire to be builders in God's kingdom? Do we want to see God move in power with miraculous signs and wonders in the benefice of the St J's Group with Wellow?
- If we do then we need to walk closely with God we need to be spending time with him. That way, like Paul and Barnabas, we too will be able to speak out boldly and to be persistent. We will truly be builders rather than wreckers.



St Paul Healing the Cripple at Lystra.
Painting by Karel du Jardin. 1663

3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 What would happen in the benefice of the St J's Group with Wellow if God used similar signs and wonders to those he used in Iconium and Lystra?
- 3.2 Why do the local Jews in Antioch and Iconium keep stirring up trouble for Paul and Barnabas?
- 3.3 What are 'the worthless things' we worship today?
- 3.4 A close friend asks you how you walk closely with God. How would you respond?
- 3.5 How would you describe the benefice of the St J's Group with Wellow are we builders or wreckers? How would describe yourself?

Matthew Street 25th February 2024



The St J's Group

Acts 14:1-20 - Builders or Wreckers? Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Acts 14:1-20

1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. **2** But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **3** So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. **4** The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. **5** There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to ill-treat them and stone them. **6** But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, **7** where they continued to preach the gospel. **8** In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. **9** He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed **10** and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. **11** When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!' **12** Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. **13** The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. **14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: **15** 'Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. **16** In the past, he let all nations go their own way. **17** Yet he has not left himself without testimony: he has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.' **18** Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. **19** Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. **20** But after the disciples had gathered round him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Builders or Wreckers?

- Building something up is so much harder than tearing it down.
- We join Paul and Barnabas, the builders, on the tail end of their first missionary journey as they take the message of the good news to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe all towns in the southern part of Galatia. Every where they go the wreckers follow.

- How would we describe ourselves? Are we builders or wreckers in God's kingdom?
- Are our hearts like Paul and Barnabas who want to see the good news about Jesus Christ spread or are we more like the Jews who are more concerned about doing things in the way they have always been done with the result that they miss this new thing that God is doing and become wreckers rather than builders.

2.2 The Wreckers

- At every turn the wreckers are there trying to undermine what Paul and Barnabas are doing. We see this at both Iconium and Lystra:
 - At Iconium: *'But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.'* (Acts 14:2)
 - At Lystra: *'Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over.'* (Acts 14:19)
- The Jews do not like this new radical message that Paul and Barnabas are preaching. Paul is claiming that Jesus is not only the son of God but that Jesus is alive and that Paul personally met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul is also claiming that God now wants the Gentiles to be able to come into relationship with him and to do so they do not need to become Jews first. This is at the heart of the letter that Paul writes to the Galatians.
- Everywhere Paul and Barnabas go both Jews and Gentiles believe: *There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.* (Acts 14:1)
- Everywhere they go God acts with signs and wonders: *'So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.'* (Acts 14:3)
- But what is true then is true today. These Jews have lost touch with God. They are no longer in relationship with him and as result they have become wreckers rather than builders in God's kingdom:
 - At Iconium: *'The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to ill-treat them and stone them.'* (Acts 14:4-5)



- At Lystra: *'Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.'* (Acts 14:19)
- We too can lose touch with God and end up focussing on the unimportant things rather than on the important ones. Many of the Jews in Iconium and Lystra thought that their Jewish dietary and ritual laws and customs were so important that the only way for the Gentiles to come to God was by adopting them.
- Our task is to be an example of what living in relationship with God is like. The better we are at this task the more attractive we will become. Will we be builders rather wreckers?

2.3 The Builders

- To be effective builders in God's kingdom we need to learn three other lessons from Paul and Barnabas.
 - i) To be 'on message'
 - ii) To be persistent
 - iii) To be filled with the Holy Spirit

2.3.1 To be 'on message'

- Paul and Barnabas are always 'on message':
 - At Iconium: *'There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed'* (Acts 14:1)
 - At Lystra despite being hailed as Gods themselves Paul and Barnabas point the people towards the living God and away from the false Greek Gods that they were worshipping: *'Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: he has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.'* (Acts 14:15-7)
- Who or what are the false Gods in our society today? Who or what are the false Gods in our own lives? Do we prize family, career, money or political correctness above our relationship with the living God?
- Are we prepared like Paul and Barnabas to step out of our comfort zones and challenge those around us *'to turn from these worthless things to the living God.'* (Acts 14:15)

2.3.2 To be persistent

- To be effective builders Paul and Barnabas need to be persistent.
 - At Iconium despite every effort of the wreckers Paul and Barnabas dig in and keep going: *'So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord.* (Acts 14:3)
 - At Lystra Paul's persistence is remarkable: *'They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city.'* (Acts 14:19-20)
- What an example these two set for us all. They know they are on God's business and despite every effort of the enemy to try and block the spread of the good news they keep going.