

confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them

Acts Chapter Fourteen

~ Humans, and contemporary Americans in particular are, well, we're stupid, friends. We follow one fantastically unworthy leader one day, only to turn and commit our loyalty to an altogether different, but equally or exceedingly as degenerate cult of personality the very next day. Only the far-superior reality type television personality who confidently projects acute arrogance and utmost self-importance on every level of their existential being will satisfy our demands for leadership and be deemed a hero. You could best describe us as impetuous, fickle, and so disturbingly fond of change that we're willing to reinvent ourselves literally every single day. Just look around this forum on which I teach if you have any doubts.

Well, the individuals we meet in our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God as we travel with Paul and Barnabus are in exactly the same condition at the time in which we are studying as most people are today. Candidly, the average person, and certainly the average American Christian, is so profoundly stupid as a result of being abjectly Scripturally illiterate, that they are not even dimly aware of said ignorance. They typically run around calling everyone else ignorant, too, by the way. The ironies we'll face in this report can be fatal because, my beloved, the Bible will make a hypocrite out of us faster than we can say "a-men." We'll attempt to avoid that. So, let us continue the account of Paul in his first missionary journey that we began in our previous report.

The first missionary journey was rough, to say the least. However, when Paul and Barnabus returned to Antioch, they could honestly say the door to the Gentiles was wide open. Today, the Lord is using the internet to teach every dark corner of the world that desires to understand the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! This safari is going to people and places that have completely lost their way. I have heard the testimony – and they are on my reports comments – about how the Lord is using this

ministry to show many people the way of salvation. This missionary outreach has its antagonists, to be sure; and some of them operate very quietly but, the Gospel is being taught, my beloved – even to some who disagree on minor doctrinal points. Interestingly, it seems only Americans want to detract from my teaching to argue baseless and non-essential points until they work themselves into a hole they cannot possibly get out of; but I digress, sort of.

In our last report, we lost John Mark. He decided he hadn't been called as a missionary after all when things turned Satanic. Thank God He always gives us a second chance – and John Mark will make good before the end of the Bible. I don't know about you dear readers, but I am working on my several hundredth, or so, chance. God has been so gracious to me through the years in this ministry effort; giving me chance after chance after I have utterly failed Him. All God wants from us is to turn back to Him. Then He can and will allow us to begin again through remarkable deliverance. It's wonderful to have a Heavenly Father and a loving God such as we have.

In this report, we find Paul and Barnabas facing impenetrable paganism in the Galatian country. My personal feeling is the Galatian mission field was the most difficult these two men covered out of all three missionary journeys. When we undertake the epistle to the Galatians, this will definitely be revealed as true. Galatians is the harshest epistle Paul wrote, and he wrote to those who had a spiritual bent in the wrong direction. Our safari is going to get so ugly and personal, that most will not be able to bear it. These people were constantly going off in the wrong direction away from the true Gospel message. The record is, Paul had to visit the Galatian churches more than any other church to keep them straightened out. Today, the church has lost all understanding of Christ through Biblical illiteracy. And I don't mean a misunderstanding of some sections of Scripture, friends. I mean the whole thing. They literally have it all wrong.

Let's briefly consider the background of the region during this point in history before moving forward. In 280 BC, the inhabitants of Galatia crossed into Greece and captured Delphi. Then, at the invitation of Nicomedes IV, king of Bithynia, they joined him in civil war. These were war-oriented people. They quickly established themselves in Asia Minor at

that time. In 189 B.C they were made subject to the Roman Empire, and they became a province. Their boundaries varied; and for many years, they retained their own local customs and languages. They were blonde Orientals, by the way. The people for whom the province was named were a Gaullist Celtic tribe. This was in the ancient country of central Asia Minor in the region surrounding modern day Ankara. They were from the same stock of people that inhabited France. In the fourth century, they invaded the Roman Empire and literally sacked Rome.

These were some of the first churches Paul established on his missionary journeys. These people had many of the characteristics American's still have today. Most people residing in the United States came out of that stock from Europe and the British Isles. There is certainly a striking similarity. Caesar said of them, "... the infirmity of the Gaul's is that they are fickle in resolve and fond of change but not to be trusted whatsoever." Another writer said, "... they are frank, impressible, impetuous, imminently intelligent, fond of showmanship – but extremely inconstant and incontinent; a fruit of excessive vanity." I sum us up with a simple "... excessive vanity." It's positively shameful.

Alright, that's a fair background for now, but we will learn more about them in the epistle to the Galatians. The harsh letter they received from Paul was well-deserved. For us, almost every major organized cult and ism known to mankind began in the United States. It's simply frightening to follow our political candidate's religious philosophies as they intentionally misrepresent the facts, knowingly and willfully perpetuate disinformation, and insist on their ignorance. Something is very wrong with us today, friends. Very wrong. That is precisely why Martin Luther used the epistle to the Galatians as the basis of the reformation. The epistle to the Galatians is NOT going to make me a very popular Bible teacher when we take it up. Moving on, if you have a good Bible with a map, it will be very helpful to you at this time....

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

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

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

~ Paul and Barnabus brought deep division and dissent between religious leaders, new believers in Christ and unbelievers in every city they visited. Of course, they were both Jews. Paul used the synagogue as his springboard into the Gentile community. Well, it would be an understatement to say they didn't get a good reception at Iconium. It was a disaster. They had no success establishing a ministry on this first missionary journey. So, they begin to move from one place to another; and now they come to Lystra....

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

~ Paul and Barnabus had the apostolic gifts because they needed credibility, friends. The apostolic gifts are also referred to as “sign gifts” in theology. They were a sign of Christ at a time when a Bible was unavailable to the lost man. They had no access to Scripture after Paul departed. When Paul came into town, he didn’t have a New Testament Scofield Study Bible to open up and show everyone, either. They may have had some or all of the Old Testament in scrolls but, primarily, they had the Gospel message. They encountered great difficulties and resistance attempting to share that message in every city. Paul and Barnabus were provided those gifts by God to establish trustworthiness and authority. We don’t need that today. The church and the Gospel have been established for two thousand plus years, and the Word of God is in our midst on every continent; and it doesn’t matter what men do outwardly today – what matters is what is IN the Bible! If we could only get these super-duper saints that ain’t to understand these truths we could clean up our churches tremendously.

Those who insist on sign gifts today continuously allow the theological point to divide them. My personal feeling is most of them are just not saved. Sure, they say they are “born again” - but they have no love and no desire to learn of and focus on the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and what that really means. They certainly aren’t very lovely to me. They know basic Bible facts, but their lives don’t measure up to their profession of faith, and they never seem to get around to glorifying Christ in anything they do. They simply cannot get their eyes off of men - or off of themselves! They constantly complain about false teachers, and they say so and so isn’t anointed – and all that garbage – but they never focus on the Lord Jesus Christ as the risen Son of God. They ALWAYS focus on man. Never God or His Word.

Oh, how we Christians need to learn and recognize God says we can only approach Him through Jesus. Unfortunately, modern theologians will cut and paste a theology that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever; and deem it Scriptural. When they put Christ first, their agenda is contradicted!

When we stand before God Almighty, it will ONLY be our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ that matters! I'm sure I don't reach those people because I see them taking new approaches all the time. Most of them have never heard anything like what I am teaching in these reports. I doubt they want to hear it. I can only continue to pray the Spirit of God will lead some of them to see things correctly, properly, and completely. We need to understand ALL Christians have feet of clay. Well, these people at the time in which we are studying, are looking to Paul and Barnabus for instruction in this matter. When Paul healed the man, trust was established. When a sign gift is claimed today, the only possible result can be the usurping of glory from the True and Living God....

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

~ In contemporary America, one superstar athlete will rise to fame one year; but the next year, someone better comes along, and the former is completely forgotten. Almost all claim some mysterious connection to some hazy, undefined and abjectly liberal deity. They are worshipped during their careers; but increasingly retire as convicted felons. Likewise, we idolize one actor or actress until the next big movie is released, and then we begin worshipping the new celebrity. The same goes for religious leaders and even sincere Bible teachers, by the way. People praise my reports one day; and the next day, they want to nail me to a cross at the left hand of Jesus. That's exactly what we're going to see happen to Paul and Barnabus as we move along....

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these

vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

~ Paul and Barnabus are trying to deflect attention away from themselves – not draw it TO themselves. They are startled, amazed and shocked that people want to worship them. It frightens them; because they know how easily this can go very wrong. All they can say is they are human just like everyone else is. Remember, Peter had to do that, too. Cornelius bowed down before Simon Peter and Peter had to tell him to get up. My friends, stop falling down before men. A Christian is NOT to be obsequious. That is a Christian Tragedy. No man is any different from any other individual. All come short of the glory of God. Now, I'm sure some of you are appalled right here – but don't bother writing to me – you just pray the Holy Spirit will straighten me out if you think I'm wrong. Let me know how that works out for you. I can guarantee you I will not be changing my theology in this connection....

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

~ I believe they supposed Paul had been dead because Paul WAS dead! Paul tells the story of a man who was dead and went to the third Heaven in first Corinthians. That man was himself. But the point is not going to Heaven, Paul is reaping what he has sown here. Paul stoned Steven when he was a Pharisee, and now it's his turn. Even though we may be converted, my friends, you're going to reap what you have sown. If you sow watermelon, you won't get something like watermelon. You'll get a

watermelon. You'll reap what you sow. Those stones would have left Paul brutally marred, too, by the way. It is nothing short of miraculous God raised him up at this time.

This is another gift of an apostle, my beloved: being raised from the dead. Make a note. One of the meanest exchanges I've ever had was a comment from someone claiming they had seen someone raised from the dead. It's funny how word of dead people being raised doesn't seem to get around. You would think a man raised from the dead would make the headlines of every major newspaper in the world! Well, I've never seen anyone be raised from the dead because no one has ever been raised from the dead – except for the Lord Jesus Christ! And of those in the Bible whose lives were restored – Lazarus, Dorcus and the young man that fell out of the window when Paul was preaching – the restoration was temporary, and they all died again. Christ lives. No, friends – death is a one-way door and, once you go through it, you aren't coming back....

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

~ So, our safari ends this report with Paul having made a full circle in his first missionary journey. He brings a report back to the church that had sent him out. God has definitely opened the door to the Gentiles, and we have churches being established in this section of Scripture that are one hundred percent Gentile. The Gospel begins in Acts exclusively as Hebrew in Israel. Then, it was taken to the Gentile nations. As we continue, we'll see this presents a huge problem: the Jews insisting Gentiles observe and submit to the Mosaic Law and System. In the next leg of our Spiritual Safari, we will see the first Great Council of churches at Jerusalem. It will be a critical report for any sincere student of Scripture to understand if the goal is to present the Bible properly, correctly and completely to others. Decisions that have lifelong ramifications will be considered. I hope you will read our next report very, very carefully after praying for wisdom, judgment and spiritual discernment ~
