

The Great Adventure...continues...

SUPERNATURAL

Acts Season 4 – April 17, Spring 2011

“Keep On Keepin’ On!”

---Anyone here today have a bad week?

Anyone here today ever had a bad week?...month?...year?

---Today our SUPERNATURAL series has us following Paul and Barnabas facing, what I think we will all agree, a set of circumstances that can easily be categorized as “bad” :0) LIKEWISE, we will see how, in spite of these circumstances, they continued to press on!!!

Acts 13:44-14:7

⁴⁴ The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For the Lord gave us this command when he said,

‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.’”

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. ⁴⁹ ***So the Lord’s message spread throughout that region.***

⁵⁰ ***Then the Jews stirred up*** the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. ⁵¹ So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. ⁵² ***And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.***

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.*** ² Some of the Jews, however, spurned God’s message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. 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. ⁴ But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵ ***Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack*** and stone them.

⁶ 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.***

PRAYER

---Ms. Beverly

-Lost her husband 5 years ago, her son 6 months later, cancer diagnosis 6 months after that...and 2x’s since and even now faces a life-risking surgery tomorrow and yet, in spite of all this...she smiles from the inside out???

-How does Ms. Beverly do it?

-Is she in denial? Is she naïve to what she should expect life to be like?

-OR...does she possess the same thing that Paul and Barnabas possess?

2 Corinthians 4:8-18

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. ⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. ¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ¹² So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

¹³ But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke." ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

-Ms. Beverly possesses the same Spirit Jesus Himself possessed the day He offered His life as a living sacrifice so that we could enjoy the extraordinary benefits of such a Spirit ourselves!

Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. ³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

SQUARE ONE...

LIVE WELL POINT--- "There is nothing that compares to a supernatural life that is lived with a sense of being 'filled' with joy and the Holy Spirit...AND...it's the only way one can constantly move forward in the face of opposition"

The only way we can expect to press on in the face of constant ongoing opposition (and if you are furthering the Kingdom you will constantly face opposition) is to live life filled with the Holy Spirit. Funny thing about filling any vessel though...it MUST **FIRST BE EMPTIED**. Preaching/teaching with anointing, experiencing miracles that move the mission forward should be ANTICIPATED by any would be Spirit-filled minister/ministry. If one is not experiencing this dynamic they might do well to ask themselves what's already in their vessel or bucket that is taking up too much room &/or what is

causing them to otherwise resist or grieve a supernatural filling of the Spirit?---fear?---lack of faith?---lack of proper sense of expectation? Etc.?

CLOSE WITH...Galatians 6:9

⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

DIVE DEEPER MATERIALS...

From David Guzik's Enduringword.com Online Commentaries...

2. (44-45) On the next Sabbath, envy creates opposition.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

a. **On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God:** The scene is easy to picture. The whole city is ready to hear the gospel from Paul on the next Sabbath, and this dramatic response makes the leaders of the synagogue envious, because they aren't in charge any more!

i. This is inevitable for those who are more concerned about being popular than serving God. When someone else is more popular, they get envious! We can't all be popular to the same degree, but we can all serve and please God to the same degree in Jesus Christ.

b. **Contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul:** Suddenly, Paul's preaching is opposed as if he were conducting a debate, his opponents **contradicting** him, and **blaspheming** God.

i. The blasphemy mentioned probably has to do with abusive and degrading language directed towards Jesus, whom Paul preached.

c. Why? Why would these religious people reject the Messiah they had waited for so long? One great reason was they wanted to keep the division between Jew and Gentile, and if Jesus was to be the Messiah of all men, they wanted no part of Him.

i. "They simply could not accept a teaching that opened such floodgates. For themselves and their adherents they could accept a message as God-sent and tolerate some change in their teaching and practice, but they could not endure that the Gentiles should be made equal with God's ancient people." (Williams)

ii. "The Jews could not endure that the Gentiles should be equal to them, being as much concerned against the Gentiles being exalted, as against their own being depressed." (Poole)

iii. **Some people end up rejecting Jesus because of the way He changes our relationship with other people.** Some would rather hold on to their bitterness and animosity towards others than turn to Jesus and be reconciled.

3. (46-50) Paul and Barnabas respond to the Jewish opposition.

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. 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.

- a. **Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold:** Praise God for their zeal for the things of God! They wouldn’t let this challenge go unanswered, because they really believed the truth about Jesus.
- b. **Since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles:** They rebuke those who reject Jesus, letting the Jews know that it was a privilege that this message should come to them first, a privilege they are rejecting.
- c. **Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed:** They respond with more evangelism to open hearts, now directing their efforts to the Gentiles, in obedience to God’s command (Romans 1:16) and in fulfillment of prophecy (the quotation from Isaiah 49:6).
 - i. The Gentiles respond to Paul’s invitation with enthusiastic belief, learning with joy that God *does not* hate Gentiles, but offers them salvation in Jesus.
 - ii. Paul shows wisdom in not spending all his time trying to persuade hardened hearts. We know that even after he made Gentiles the focus of his evangelistic efforts, he still prayed earnestly for the salvation of Israel (Romans 10:1), but he spent his missionary time ministering to more open hearts.
- d. **And the word of the Lord was being spread:** It was being spread through the efforts of Paul and Barnabas, but especially through the lives of these people being brought to Jesus Christ.
- e. **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:** Wherever there is revival, the second party to be revived is the Devil. Jewish opposition was strong enough to force Paul and Barnabas to leave the area.

4. (51-52) Paul and Barnabas react to their expulsion from the city of Pisidian Antioch.

But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

- a. **But they shook off the dust from their feet against them:** In doing this, Paul and Barnabas are treating the city as if they were a God-rejecting Gentile city.
 - i. If Jewish people had to go in or through a Gentile city, when leaving the city they would shake the dust off their feet as a gesture saying, “We don’t want to take anything from this Gentile city with us.” In this sense, Paul is saying “I don’t want to take anything with me from you Jesus-rejecting religionists.”
 - ii. This rejection did not make Paul and Barnabas think there was anything wrong with *themselves*. They knew the problem is with their opposition, not themselves.

b. **And came to Iconium:** They carry on the work, going next to **Iconium**. All too often, rejection and opposition for the sake of the gospel makes us want to give up. But Paul and Barnabas respond with appropriate determination.

c. They were **filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit**. Being filled with joy and being filled with the Holy Spirit go together, and they have a joy that contradicts their circumstances.

i. Paul is a great example of his own command to *be constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18).

ii. “The happiness of a genuine Christian lies far beyond the reach of earthly disturbances, and is not affected by the changes and chances to which mortal things are exposed. The martyrs were more happy in the *flames* than their persecutors could be on their beds of down.” (Clarke)

Acts 14 – The Conclusion of the First Missionary Journey

A. In the city of Iconium.

1. (1) Paul and Barnabas have evangelistic success in Iconium.

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

a. **They went together to the synagogue of the Jews:** Again, notice that they follow the familiar pattern for evangelism, beginning in the Jewish synagogue.

b. **So spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed:** Paul and Barnabas have success among the Jews and the Greeks, presenting the same gospel to both. The fact that **Jews and . . . Greeks believed** shows that Paul preached the same thing to both groups: That salvation is in Jesus, and we appropriate it by our belief (trust in, reliance on) in Him.

i. The success is refreshing, because they had just been kicked out of Pisidian Antioch, after much success there (Acts 13:50).

ii. Because Paul was inclined to stay in a region for an extended period of time, strengthening the churches and working where evangelistic efforts had already borne fruit, perhaps we should see the kind of persecution Paul had in Pisidian Antioch as God’s way of moving him on to other fields.

2. (2-6) Successful ministry in Iconium creates opposition, forcing Paul and Barnabas out of town.

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 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. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.

a. **Speaking boldly in the Lord:** Paul and Barnabas did what they always did, they preached boldly despite the opposition, **bearing witness to the word of His grace** and touching others with the power of Jesus.

i. **Granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands:** “For no apostle could work a miracle by himself; nor was any sign or wonder wrought even by the greatest apostle, but by a special grant or dispensation of God. This power was not resident in them at all times.” (Clarke)

b. **Therefore they stayed a long time:** They stayed as long as they could, despite the opposition, leaving only when it was absolutely necessary.

i. Why did Paul and Barnabas decide to stay **a long time** if there was opposition arising? Because they knew that these Christians would need all the grounding they could get to stand strong in a city with much opposition.

c. Paul and Barnabas preached **the word of His grace**, because that is the only word by which both Jews and Gentiles can be saved on an equal basis.

i. “The gospel is here called *the message of his grace* because divine grace is its subject matter.” (Bruce)

d. **A violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled:** When forced to, Paul and Barnabas leave Iconium for Lystra (some twenty miles away) and Derbe. This shows that Paul and Barnabas did not rush headlong towards martyrdom. They did what they could to preserve their lives.