

34a ACTS

This is March the 26th, 2004, and we're picking up our study tonight in Acts chapter 14. Let's take a moment at the outset to remind ourselves of the provision that God has made for us so that we can benefit from the study of His Word. Shall we pray? Father, once again we come before you and express our thanks for your mercy and your grace toward us, the provision that you have made in so many different areas, areas that in many cases we are probably completely unaware of.

Thank you for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came and died for us, made it possible for us to be related to you permanently, eternally, through the great sacrifice of Himself on the cross. We thank you that you not only honored that sacrifice but have raised Him from the dead and seated Him at your right hand, and we will one day be united with Him and with you. We thank you for this time of training, of growth, and of instruction, with a resistance, with the principalities and powers still able to confront us and to challenge us.

We thank you that we are gifted with resources in our soul to combat not only those elements of opposition but also our own fallen nature and the snares and temptations of this world. We know that you have designed our life on this earth for benefit and for your glory, and we pray that our study tonight will further that goal. We pray for those who are not with us, for those who study by means of recordings, and we pray that each one of us will find that truth and that spiritual sustenance in your word that is necessary to equip us for every good work.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. As we continue our study of the book of Acts tonight, Luke Volume 2, we pick up in Acts Chapter 14 where we left Paul and Barnabas who were being treated like gods having come to Antioch of Pisidia.

You remember the whole healing of the lame man episode in Lystra and the symbolic value of that. The priest of Zeus deciding that Barnabas was Zeus and that Paul was Hermes and that trying to completely obliterate the significance of their preaching by making an issue out of them and their presence. And this is an easy trap to fall into.

We see it happen all the time. The big news this week is that a new movie star couple has gone splitsville. And people find this compelling.

It makes headlines. And it reflects, and I think is a good illustration of the fact that our society in particular has a hard time distinguishing between what someone does as far as being a good actor or portraying a character in a movie and who they are and what goes on in their private life. Someone sees an admirable character or something that they like on the big screen and they transfer their affection or their feeling of being impressed to the actor that portrayed the role when the actor is just somebody that puts on their clothes and brushes their teeth like everybody else.

You might as well pick out somebody in the crowd at the mall and decide that they are just the be-all and end-all. We have a hard time distinguishing someone's work or someone's product from them. And the fact that someone is a great singer or a great artist or a great anything is sometimes difficult for us to separate.

And that's what happens with the apostles. Paul and Barnabas bring this very compelling message and people begin to make an issue out of them instead of thinking about the application of the word of God to them. Well, here is this new information.

How am I going to respond? The person to whom they should be looking is the Lord God in heaven, not the messengers that brought them the information. We had a similar study when we looked at the angel of the Lord. It would be wrong to get all goofy over the presence of the angel of the Lord and forget to pay attention to the reason he came, which is to convey some information.

So we saw that. Paul gives a little sermon here. And even then, in verse 18, saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

They spent most of their time trying to convince the people. You get the idea that Paul would probably have to jab himself with a stick and say, look, I bleed just like you, we're not deities, we're not gods. But now, let's pick up tonight in verse 19 and read a little bit.

But, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. Now this is Antioch of the city. You remember they were there and had to leave.

They went to Iconium and had to leave. And now they're further away. But these people weren't content to run them out of town.

They had to follow them and try to make trouble for them in Lystra, which is where they are now. So the whole episode in Lystra here began in Acts 14.8. And so we find them now in verse 19, coming from Antioch, from Iconium, persuading the multitude, stoning Paul, dragging him out of the city, supposing that he's dead. However, verse 20, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city.

And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. So we've got these four towns now. We've got Antioch of Pisidia.

We've got Iconium. We've got Lystra. And we've got Derbe.

And all of them are up. We talked about the general shape of the southern coastline of this part of Asia Minor and going kind of straight up from that part of the Mediterranean Sea. So they're in Derbe in verse 21.

When they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned

to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 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. When they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they're going to leave and go through Pisidia and elsewhere.

Well, this is the section we're going to look at tonight. So let's back up and take a look at verse 19. You remember that they initially got a good reception, but then the Jews got jealous and ran them out of town in their previous visits to Antioch, Pisidia and Iconium.

So they have come now to Lystra. They heal the lame man, the priest of Zeus and all of this that we've seen. So the multitudes are all in favor of them.

They are hugely popular, and they can hardly keep the people from worshiping them as gods. Can you get more popular than this? Can you be more at the peak of human celebrity-ship than people getting ready to worship you and saying, you came down from Mount Olympus? I mean, this is as good as it gets in terms of having a listening audience, right? But in verse 19, Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there. And having persuaded the multitudes, the pendulum of popularity swings in the opposite direction.

And instead of sacrificing to them, now they are wanting to sacrifice them. You go from killing animals to worship them to wanting to kill them like animals. Well, I want to give you a little bit of a Greek here because just from my own observation, I find this very interesting.

The words here in Greek have particular tenses, and the tenses tell you the importance of the word and the way they are arranged in the sentence. So try to hang with me, and hopefully you'll find this as interesting as I do. The first word we have here is the word where the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there.

This is the aorist active indicative from *Epirchomai*, and it just means to come. But it's an aorist, and so it's sort of like a simple past tense. So this gets us launched on the string of action.

These people come from the other towns. And you notice even in the English translation here, it says having persuaded the multitudes. There is a first-year Greek rule when you first start translating sentences.

When you have an aorist participle, participle is an ING word, an aorist participle, the action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb. Well, we haven't gotten to the main verb yet, because Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there, period. This sets the stage.

We've got the opposition. Then it says having persuaded the multitudes. So this is a pre-existing condition to whatever the verb is going to be.

So having persuaded the multitudes, our next word here is lithazo, L-I-T-H-A-Z-O. Lithos in Greek means stone. Have you ever heard of a lithograph? If you go into the history and the process by which a lithograph is made, it's basically etching on stone or a stone-like surface, and then using that slab to make prints.

And so they call it lithography. It literally means stone writing. Well, this is lithazo, and it means to rock someone, to stone them, pile rocks on them, hit them with rocks until they are dead.

This is also an aorist active participle, and it should be rendered the very same way as persuading the crowds. So having persuaded the crowds and having stoned Paul, we then have the main verb here, and the main verb is suro, S-U-R-O. And this is the word for dragging, but it's an imperfect.

So it says they were dragging. Having persuaded the crowds and having stoned Paul, they were dragging him out of the city. So this is the great thing about Greek.

If you were a movie maker and you wanted to figure out how to film this scene or how to picture it in your mind, the Greek tells you how to view the scene. The scene doesn't show the stoning. You see what I'm saying? It doesn't show the convincing of the crowd.

The scene picks up. These Jews that came from Iconium and Antioch, the scene fades in and they are dragging the stoned Paul out of the city. This is the ongoing action that is in our view.

Having convinced the crowd, having stoned Paul, they were dragging him out of the city, supposing, this is a present active participle, as they are dragging him out, ongoing action in past time, they are supposing him to be dead. So they're not even paying much attention to him. They're basically getting the trash out of the town.

So he looks so bad and so dead. It's not like they're hurling imprecations and curses at him. If you've ever seen a tar and feathering type of scene, where once they tar and feather, the people are generally still alive, and then everybody runs them out on a rail, and it's a big joyous occasion for the crowd.

It's the last act of humiliation is to ride them out of town on a rail. Well here, the Jews have convinced the crowd, gotten Paul stoned, he is apparently dead, and now as their final act of humiliation and shame to him, they're dragging his, quote, dead carcass out of the city. It's not even worth picking up and burying him, dragging him out like refuse.

So you can only imagine what he must have looked like for them to suppose that he was dead. These are people who know what it takes to kill someone with stones. It's not like they've never done it before.

So they look at him and they say, that guy is definitely dead. If they didn't think he was

dead, they would have kept on stoning him until they were sure he was. They're sure he's dead.

So this is the picture that we're given. But what I find interesting is, if you and I had been witnesses of this, or someone told us this story, how would we present it? Our emphasis would be on the evil of these people and the way that they convinced the crowd. But how did they take this crowd from an adoring, worshipping multitude and turn them into a ravening, bloodthirsty mob that would stone the object of their affection to death? This is the biggest swing that you can make.

You treat someone as a god, now you're giving them capital punishment. You're killing them for heresy. How did they do this? We're not told.

It's already happened. How about the drama of the stoning itself and Io, Phibia, the Terebinthite, came with a rock and hit Paul in the head and he went down on one knee and given us a long 15 minute description of how he was stoned and how he went down and where he was bleeding. The Bible completely skips over that.

Having convinced, having stoned, they were dragging him out, supposing him to be dead. It's how the Bible pictures it. And it's one of the ways that we can detect the divine authorship of Scripture.

People would never tell the story this way on their own. We delight in the gory details, if you will. The drama.

What movie maker would skip the stoning and just show the bloody corpse being dragged out? It's bad storytelling from a human point of view. So why is it told this way? We ask ourselves this question. If God is shifting the emphasis from where we would put it to somewhere else, then it must be pretty important.

Well, I think part of the key here is in the word persuaded, the multitudes. The word persuaded here in Greek is peito. P-E-I-T-H-O And when you look at the locus of meaning or the root meaning of this word, it means to persuade people.

And you kind of have it translated that way here. But it's a special kind of persuasion. They are persuaded because they trust you.

You have engendered trust and confidence. That you have credibility. They're not persuaded by the strength of your arguments or by some abstract concept.

You've persuaded them because of your own personhood. And hang with me. I know this is kind of an abstract concept.

But what are these people's problem? What is their characteristic? They are people who easily get caught up with the person, right? That's what they did when Paul and

Barnabas showed up. Oh, you're Zeus, you're Hermes. And they ascribe and put a whole bunch of weight in the person that is standing before them.

Well, the Jews who come from Antioch and Iconium know this. Know the kind of people that live in that region. And so what do they do? They get the people to put that kind of trust and confidence or a similar level of trust and confidence in them.

And then they say, these guys are no gods. These guys are here to deceive you. They are not Christ.

They're Antichrist. They are not the solution. They are the problem.

And so they move themselves into the public eye. They now are the ones that the crowd puts a patho type of trust in. And so the way that they persuade the crowd is given to us in that word, patho.

We say, well, so what? Why is that important? Look around at what we get in our news coverage and what goes on in our culture today. What's been going on these past few weeks? This Clark guy has published a book and he's rewriting the history of the last year and a half with the Bush administration and the Iraq war and why we went to war and what was the nature of the attack on terrorism and everything else. How is that taking place? What is the mechanism by which they are at least trying to persuade public opinion and ultimately try to influence the presidential election later this year? It's all about Clark.

These ideas are not new. People have been spewing this kind of thing for a long time. People that have had an in for President Bush ever since the Chads were hanging down in Florida, right? So why is it suddenly such a flurry now? It's this exact thing.

Well, look at the credibility of the man. He actually served in the administration. He was there.

He's an insider. Look at the documentation. Look how credible he is when he's interviewed.

Look at his personal presence. And so who is it that is going to be swayed by this where they weren't swayed by the naysayers and the sour grapes people that have been saying the same thing from the beginning? People who, in fact, as a people, ever since, I mean, in my lifetime, it started with President Kennedy. People kind of look at the guy and get enamored with him, and they don't pay near as much attention to what he says and what he thinks and what his policies are as his charisma, as his presence.

Why does everybody care that Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz broke up this week? Why? I mean, I have no answer. I can't accept that it is a manifestation of this kind of thing. People put someone front and center and become enamored of them as a person.

Well, this is what's going on here in Lystra. And what are they doing? Where do you think, in God's scale of people, the Apostle Paul falls? It's safe to say he's not a man worthy of stoning, right? So how far away are these people from having any inkling of looking at life and looking at people the way God does? They're about as far away as you can get. Paul is God's man.

He's going to have an influence on more millions of people in the next couple of thousand years than Napoleon or Julius Caesar or just about anybody. I mean, this is radical, life-changing information that this man is presenting, and these people basically think they've killed him. I mean, you can't get more wrong-headed than this except maybe putting Christ on the cross.

It's just about the same thing. In both cases, you have someone who is giving you information about God and you completely miss the boat, so much so that you kill the messenger. Well, it's all about pathos.

So what do we think about this? What value do we get out of this observation? We want to be careful to not get caught up in celebrity-ship, in the identity and the personhood of people who are conveying information and to make our judgments based on the person in the same way that we don't want to make our judgments based on the outcome. Was that a good decision or not? Should I have done that or not? Well, look how it turned out. Let's see how it turns out.

Then I'll know if it was good or not. That's not a valid basis. And it isn't a valid basis to judge a message by the messenger or to judge an idea by the one who puts it forward.

One of the first and ongoing ways that I have become aware of this is in realizing that I can actually learn good things out of God's word from the mouths of people who I generally consider to be bad ministers and bad teachers who are doing a lot of wrong things on Christian television. But I still survey and scan and listen because just because they're all looking at the Bible and they're all quoting verses, every once in a while they'll say something and it's actually a really good observation. One of the great ideas that has stayed with me for the last 10 or 12 years was something I heard by a real wacko on the radio.

But he made a really good point from the word of God about trees and the fact that he just said a simple thing. He said, you know, the Bible is always talking about bearing fruit and the thing about a fruit tree is it doesn't bear fruit 12 months out of the year. It only bears fruit about a month out of the year.

And the other 11 months, what's it doing? It's shedding leaves, it's getting its dead branches blown off by the winter winds and it's using the spring to soak up nourishment. That is a great observation. And the guy that made it, that suggested it to my mind, was a total wacko.

But it's a good concept and I can't throw the concept out because the guy that said it was a wacko. I have to judge it based on its biblicity, on its scriptural roots. That's a good word.

Biblicity is a real word. So, and don't judge it just because I said it. You have to see if it's a real word or not.

So anyway, I hope that through all of this, the idea is coming through. Look at this crowd of people in Lystra. There is a message that has come.

But these people are so easily swayed from pillar to post. At first they think the messengers are gods. A couple of hours later, they're doing their best to kill them.

Now you wonder, well, what happened to Barnabas? I mean, they thought he was Zeus. Did the Zeus priest kind of spear him away? Why isn't Barnabas stoned? Well, Paul is the one that was doing all the talking. And the Jews evidently have it in for Paul.

More so than Barnabas. Because Paul's doing all the talking. The Jews consider Paul to be the danger, so he becomes their target.

And these people are convinced by the presence and by the personal argument and the personal prestige or whatever it is. That's why it's patho. It's not pistus or pistuo.

It isn't any of the other words for persuade. It's patho. It is the credibility of the arguer that sways them.

I don't have time, but I could take you to many passages where patho is actually used as a word for placing trust in or placing confidence in with this nuance. But you'll just have to take my word for it for now or we'll never get through. So, back to the passage now.

Having pathoed the crowd, having impressed them and sort of put themselves in the public eye and made themselves the new darlings of the crowd, they then put the bug on Paul and everybody gets incensed and stones him and they think they've killed him. And so they drag him out in the city and leave him for dead. Look at verse 20 though.

However, when the disciples gathered around him. This is an interesting word as well. It is the word kuklao.

Remember kukla Fran and Ollie? Maybe that's probably before your time. When I was a little kid, they had kukla Fran and Ollie, little puppets. Well, kuklao, K-U-K-L-O-O.

You may think, well, what is that where we get the word kook? We actually have this in English because remember that a U turns into a Y when it comes over into English and Ks can turn into Cs. And so if you take K-U-K-L and turn that into C-Y-C-L, what do you have? Cycle, cyclical, even circle. All of these words are related and it means to encircle.

Kuklao means to surround. It was used to talk about Joshua and the Israelites surrounding the city of Jericho, kuklao. And so what they've done here, they stone Paul, drag him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

And then it sounds like in verse 20 in the New King James when the disciples kind of gathered around, it's like they're sort of peering around saying, hmm, well, boy, he sure looks dead to me. This is an encirclement in the sense of defense. The disciples rush out and surround him, keeping the crowd and anybody who's still lurking in the area away.

They surround him. They form sort of a defense wall around him. You wonder, well, where were they when he was being stoned? But now that he appears to be dead, they encircle him.

And when it says that they encircle him, this is also an aorist active participle. What do you know about the aorist participle? It precedes the action of the main verb. So, however, the disciples having encircled him, the main word here, the main verb is from anastasis.

At least that's a noun form. Anastasis is the word for resurrection. Ana means again and stasis means stand.

To stand again. And so was Paul actually dead? Very possibly. I think he may have been.

The crowd certainly thought he was dead and they would know. But it says the disciples having surrounded him, he having stood again. And this is also an aorist participle.

The disciples having encircled. Paul having stood. Once again, the biblical account is bypassing the most interesting parts.

What happened when the disciples encircled him? Were the crowds still there? Did they have to fight? Did they have to fend people off? The most miraculous part of this is the dead Paul standing back up. Anastasis is the noun translated resurrection all through the New Testament. The resurrection is the anastasis.

And this is the verb form is anistemi. Histemi is to stand and ana is again. To stand up again.

Disciples having encircled him. Paul having stood up. All of this is kind of past tense.

The next scene we see, the active verb here, the main verb is eis elfen. He entered into. He went back into the city.

So the main verb that we saw in the first part of this was the people dragging him out. The main verb in the second part is Paul walking back in. The emphasis in this story is these opposers, these enemies, these evil people who sway the crowd drag Paul out.

Paul having been surrounded, having stood back up, enters back in. What kind of a nut ball would go right back in where you just got stoned to death? Well, the apostle Paul. And he's not a nut ball.

He has faith in God. But I ask myself this question. If this had happened to me, would I stand up with my wounds? Many people think this is where Paul developed the problem with his eyes that I've spoken of later.

Was his face bashed in horribly? Were his eyes disfigured? Was he never again able to see like he did before? He had to have been a complete bloody mess to have been left for dead by this enraged crowd. If I were to stand back up and miraculously not be dead, what would I be thinking? Well, God certainly doesn't want me to go back in there. This is a sign from God that these people are rejecters.

Why should I go back in where I just got stoned to death? This is not the rationale that Paul uses. He, having been surrounded and having stood up, walks back in. The main verb in the first part, they drag him out.

The main verb in the second part, he walks back in. Not only that, the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derby. I can't even imagine how banged up he had to be.

And you would think, you know, I'm going to need at least a week to recuperate and get over this horrible experience that I've had. Now, is this a bad experience? I think so. In fact, if you look over, keep your finger here and turn over to 2 Timothy 3, this is probably, this set of days here in Antioch and Iconium and Lystra and Derby is one of the all-time low points in Paul's entire life.

2 Timothy is one of the last letters that Paul wrote before he died, before he was executed in Rome. Look at what he says in 2 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 10. He's talking to Timothy.

He says, Timothy, you followed my teaching, you followed my conduct, my manner of life, in other words, my purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance. He says, you have carefully followed. This is the example that you've seen in me.

Doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me where? At Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. What persecutions I endured. And out of them all, the Lord delivered me.

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Not may suffer, not sometimes suffer. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Just prepare for it. Count on it. If you're not living godly in Christ Jesus, have you let the persecution get the better of you? Have you decided it's not worth it? If you are desiring

to live godly in Christ Jesus, you can expect opposition because this is a part of that godliness.

This is a part of the training. How do I know this? Let's go back to our passage in Acts chapter 14 and look at what Paul preaches in verse 21 and following. When they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

Where did the Jews come from that whipped up the crowd and got Paul stoned? Iconium and Antioch. Not only did he go back into the city where he was stoned in Lystra, he went back to Iconium, he went back to Antioch, and went back to Lystra. Again, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and what were they saying? We must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God.

If you want to enter the kingdom of God, you will go through. This is *dia*, and it's not by means of, it means you pass through. I picture this like David in Psalm 23, seeing a wonderful green pasture, seeing a whole new undiscovered country of green pastures and still waters.

But to get there, you have to walk through the valley of the shadow. And you have to decide, well, is it worth it? Do I want to get to that kingdom? Because if I want to go in there, I've got to pass through this valley. And the word for tribulation is *Philipsis*.

It's even a trial to say the word. T-H-L-I-P-S-I-S, *Philipsis*. And the word *must* is the word *de'i*, we are bound.

The *de'omai* here, the noun form of this is used for bonds and chains, something that you tie someone up with. The demon-possessed man that Jesus went across the sea and freed. And it's said many times he broke his bonds.

It's from the same root word. We are bound to endure tribulations in order to enter the kingdom. Well, should we be happy about this or not? We'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll examine what Paul has to say here and see some of the scriptures that talk about it and what it means to us. That's what we'll do when we come back.