

The Parish of Wellow

'Be Daring and Dynamic' 24 Studies in Acts

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 or join us at **Coffee 'n' Stickers** Wednesday 13th September 7.30pm at 51 Under Knoll, Peasedown St John (Call Jennifer Cole for directions 01761 437768) to discuss the questions further.

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 Gentiles believed.
- 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the 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 do miraculous 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 the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat 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 good news.
- 8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame 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 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and 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 around 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 are 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 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 verse 2 *But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.*
 - At Lystra verse 19 *Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over.*
- 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 verse 1 *There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.*
- Everywhere they go God acts with signs and wonders.
- 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.
- We too can lose touch with God and end up focussing on the unimportant things rather than on the important ones. Those Jews thought that their Jewish customs and ways were so important that the only way for the Gentiles to come to God was by adopting them.
- As a church or a group of believers here in Wellow our task is to do the same thing. 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 be become. We will be builders rather wreckers.
- Every time resist change and insist on doing things our way rather than God's way we will become wreckers rather builders in God Kingdom.

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' verse 15: *We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God.*
- Despite being hailed as Gods themselves Paul and Barnabas point the people of Lystra towards the living God and away from the false Greek Gods that they were worshiping.
- Who or what are the false Gods in our society today? Who or what are the false Gods in 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.*

2.3.2 To be persistent

- To be effective builders Paul and Barnabas need to be persistent verse 3 *So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord.* Despite every effort of the wreckers Paul and Barnabas dig in at Iconium and keep going.
- Again Paul's persistence is remarkable at Lystra we read verses 19 and 20 *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.* What an example these two set for us all. They know they are on God's business and despite every effort of Satan to try and block the spread of the good news they keep going.
- How persistent are we in spreading the same good news?
- Paul and Barnabas establish 4 churches in Galatia 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 verse 3 *enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.*
- At Lystra verse 10 *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.*
- We too can be filled with that same Holy Spirit. Is that our desire to be builders in God's kingdom? Do we want to see God move in power with miraculous signs and wonders here at Peasedown St John?
- If we do then we need to walk closely with God we need to be spending time with him. That way we too will be able to be 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.

3. Coffee 'n' Stickies Questions

- 3.1 What would happen in 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 we describe St Julian's are we builders or wreckers? How would describe yourself?