

“Don’t Drink the Kool-Aide!”

Acts 14:1-7

July 26, 2015

TEXT:

Acts 14:1-7 (NASB)

¹ *In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.*

² *But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.*

³ *Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.*

⁴ *But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.*

⁵ *And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,*

⁶ *they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;*

⁷ *and there they continued to preach the gospel.*

Acts 14:1-7 (NIV)

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.*

Acts 14:1-7 (KJV)

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.*

Acts 14:1-7 (HCSB)

¹ *The same thing happened in Iconium; they entered the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.*

² *But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against the brothers.*

³ *So they stayed there for some time and spoke boldly in reliance on the Lord, who testified to the message of His grace by granting that signs and wonders be performed through them.*

⁴ *But the people of the city were divided, some siding with the Jews and some with the apostles.*

⁵ *When an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to assault and stone them,*

⁶ *they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian towns called Lystra and Derbe, and to the surrounding countryside.*

⁷ *And there they kept evangelizing.*

ESV

1Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. **2**But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **3**So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. **4**But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. **5**When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, **6**they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, **7**and there they continued to preach the gospel.

The Way of God 30

Acts 14:1-7

July 26, 2015

Intro: **VIDEO... “True & Better”**

Have you ever noticed these repetitive themes of the Word?

Let me ask you another question...

Which would scare/concern you more:

- a. Repetition, repetition, repetition...
- b. Avoidance, avoidance, avoidance...

- *** One makes the WHOLE Bible about Jesus

- *** One makes the whole Bible about “ME”

- *** Mixing those two gets us what we’ve got...

Point: Beware anyone & everyone who edits God’s Word!

Consequence: the cultural church has lost its way because it has lost its Word... of God

Application: Lost people aren't interested in being equipped to "BE" more like Jesus or to be refined by God's Word. After a while (or a few biblical accounts), religious folks say things like: "Enough about Jesus already – tell me something about ME... something that is 'relevant' to MY life."

Illustration:

Imagine soldiers telling commanders: "We've had our fill of training... let's do something else..."

Or the coach of a football or basketball team... Imagine your team showing up for practice and insisting the team "do something else"

While some may choose to leave a team that is all about getting better at playing to win... Sadly, so be it.

"You may quit on the team... but the team will NOT quit on you!" - JDP

1Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

“Now at Iconium” = See the PATTERNS...

“they entered TOGETHER” = See missional koinonia

“into the synagogue” = “1st church... then search”

“spoke in such a way” = BOLD - in Spirit, like Jesus!

***The Gospel will ALWAYS
divide the crowd & unify the
Church!*** - JDP

***"The church of our day has no stomach
for truth... Consequently, the church of
our day has no backbone for biblical
boldness."*** - JDP

“that a great number... believed”

- Both quantity & quality are addressed...
- “Believed” is not always absolute
- See the Parable of the soils...

2But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

“But” = CONTRAST coming...

“unbelieving Jews” = UNBELIEF classifies the problem

“stirred up”

- Peace-killers
- Joy-suckers
- Spiritual “home-wreckers”
- Often times the “DEVIL’s ADVOCATE”
- Say things like: “I’m just sayin...”

NOTE: Stirring up almost always happens in the dark!

“poisoned their minds” = **Drops/Deluge of Disension**

- **Dis-concern** - “Go back to sleep...”
- **Doubt** - “Did God really say...”
- **Discouragement** - “It’s no use, give up...”
- **Deceit** - (any & all lies/untruth)
- **Division** - (divide & conquer plan)

“against the brothers” = proof of the evil involved!

- See John 17
- See Acts 2:42-47

“The Devil is in the division!” - JDP

See KORAH and His leading of the GRUMBLERS!

3 So/Therefore they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

“So/therefore” =

- Defining word....
- Sets context for what is to follow
- Explains the micro & macro mission!

NOTE: Meaning = “because of what was, the following is true”

Watch what happens here... & do the same!

“they remained” = COMMITMENT to the COMMISSION!

“for a long time” = No Shortcuts!

***“Truth in love over time = koinonia
(supernatural unity).” - JDP***

“speaking boldly” = this is the kind of speaking that affected great multitudes and led many to believe...

VIDEO: Pastor Jeff from last week

“for the Lord”

- Spirit led & God honoring
 - Actions
 - Attitudes
 - Attributes
- Christ-centered (in truth & love)
- Word of God rightly shared in full context

“who bore witness to the word of His grace... granting signs & wonders to be done by their hands”

- Miracles!

“God’s power powerfully precedes AND powerfully post-stamps the pure proclamation of the Gospel.” – JDP

- Power was used to Prove the Proclamation.
- PEOPLE are God's PRIMARY PROOF...
- Nothing has the power to impact changing lives more than changed lives...

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Moses Kigozi

(Kampala, Uganda)

Friends, THIS is Church!

We are a people in whom God is alive and active – Amen! The power of God is being lived out IN & THROUGH His family of faith – always has been & always will be!

The Lord's presence & power are not confined to a "classroom," nor corrupted in a circus environment.

We are His & He is ours... period.

Such unapologetic power is the best apologetic His people can personify! - JDP

***4But the people of the city were divided;
some sided with the Jews and some with
the apostles.***

- Again... the Gospel is offensive & it divides!
- “I did not come to bring peace...” – Jesus

Question: “Can’t we all just COEXIST?”

Answer: “Temporarily”

Remember BOTH:

You can lead a horse to water but...

&

***“I may not be able to ensure that people do
not go over the edge into hell... But IF they
go, I can do my best to ensure that they will
arrive with my fingernails embedded
in their ankles.”*** (paraphrase of Charles Spurgeon)

5When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, 6they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country,

NOTE: “*When*” (not “if”) = PATTERN!

“mistreated / stoned”

- See Jesus!
- See Jesus’ promises!
- See Jesus’ pre-requisites of discipleship!
- Read Matthew 28:18-20 (read slowly)
- Compare Acts 1:8 & Acts 8:1
- In Acts:
 - See Stephen
 - See Peter & John (twice)
 - See Paul & Barnabas (already)
 - Cypress
 - P-Antioch
 - Now in Iconium
 - And guess what’s coming next week?

NOTE: The Lord & His Word are clear about loving, blending, and “fitting in” to the world & its ways...

“When the church begins to blend in to the culture, it is no longer being the Church.” - JDP

(See Revelation 3... “church” at Laodicea)

Fight or Flight?

- This was not cowardice but courage...
- See Matthew 10:16

***“Be as shrewd as a serpent
&
as gentle/innocent as a dove.”***

- Proof of courage is in their coming back & going forward...
- BOTH remain on mission!

7and there they continued to preach the gospel.

- A. The mission never stops
- B. The missionaries keep going

***God's people & power persevere
&
overcome the devil's persecution!***

"Christians are to neither quit nor coddle."

- JDP

***The proof of God is in His power...
When the people of God persevere in
power of God, (especially in the midst
of persecution), then the world is
forced to take notice.***

We walk by faith & not by sight...

Like the countless ones before us...

We stay on mission because our Messiah is worth it!

Extending is truth in love...

ALL for His glory & ALL by His grace...

Forever and ever – AMEN!

CLOSE:

Friends... are you filled with poison or passion?

Don't drink the kool-aid...

(Beware the Jim Jone's of the church-world).

Let us BE true, unwavering witnesses of Christ...

Let us BE the missional Church...

Because WE BELIEVE!

VIDEO: Vermont Rainbow

Let's Pray.

STUDY NOTES:

Iconium—Division

This city, more Greek than Roman, was in the Roman province of Galatia. Paul's ministry in the synagogue was singularly blessed and a multitude of Jews and Gentiles believed. Once again, the unbelieving Jews stirred up hatred and opposition, but the missionaries stayed on and witnessed boldly for Christ. (Note the "therefore" in [Acts 14:3](#).)

God also enabled the men to perform signs and wonders as their "credentials" that they were indeed the servants of the true God (see [Acts 15:12](#); [Gal. 3:5](#); [Heb. 2:4](#)). Faith is not based on miracles ([Luke 16:27-31](#); [John 2:23-25](#)), but faith can be bolstered by miracles. The important thing is "the word of His grace" that performs the work of His grace ([Acts 14:26](#)).

The result? The city was divided and the Christians were threatened with public disgrace and stoning. Obedient to their Lord's counsel in [Matthew 10:23](#), they fled from that area into a different Roman district and continued to minister the Word of God.

- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Daring

We can apply that same acronym, SOS, to [Acts 14](#) because it is the "Same Old Story." Everywhere the Apostles went, we see God working mightily, bringing conversions from both Jews and Gentiles. In the midst of bold preaching, divisions occurred, opposition arose, and hostility set in, and the Apostles were barely able on very many occasions to escape with their lives.

This is what happens when people are faithful to the gospel. When people preach the gospel without compromise, inevitably it provokes division because the truth of God divides. We need to understand that,

because we live in a time when we abhor anything that could possibly divide us, particularly in the context of the church. As a result, we continually compromise and water down the truth of the Word of God so as to offend no one. Our efforts to keep the peace result in a Rodney King theology—we are all just trying to get along.

The Apostles, however, were convinced of the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and they were willing to turn the world upside down to be faithful to their mission, with the same results as before: **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 (vv. 2-3).**

***** APOLOGETIC ILLUSTRATION/APPLICATION:**

In Lystra and Derbe

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 (vv. 4-6). Luke tells us that the Apostles fled to Lystra and Derbe, which were situated in the province of Lycaonia. This minor detail is of great significance. In the nineteenth century we saw an unprecedented attack by liberal scholarship against the trustworthiness of the biblical record, and at the very front of this assault was an attack against the historical reliability of Luke, who gave us this history of the expansion of the early church. One of the things about which the critics carped was this little clause, “They fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.” The critics said that Lystra and Derbe, while closely situated, were not in the province of Lycaonia but in different provinces. That, the critics said, is a clear example of a historical error and inaccuracy in Luke’s writing.

One of those scholars, distinguished for his historical expertise, was the British Sir William Ramsay. Ramsay decided to embark on a journey that followed the biblical record of Paul's missionary journeys and wherever possible to do archaeological research pertaining to the accuracy of the details supplied by Luke. Ramsay was a skeptic. He agreed with the liberal viewpoint that Luke's book had been filled with error, but everywhere he went, every time he turned over a shovel of dirt, his findings verified the details Luke had included in both his Gospel and in Acts. When Ramsay came in his journey to the places noted in this particular passage, he found the boundary marker between Derbe and Lystra, and indeed the boundary marker had the two cities in different provinces. However, upon further examination he found that at various times in antiquity the boundaries of those provinces changed, and, to his amazement, he discovered that between the years AD 37 and AD 72 Lystra and Derbe were in the same province—the exact province Luke mentions here in the text. At the end of his tour Ramsay said that he could not find a single error of historical reliability in the book of Acts, and he joined other later scholars who now call Luke the most reliable historian of the ancient world.

- St. Andrew's Expository Commentary

Acceptance and Rejection at Iconium

14:1 **The pattern of a mixed response set in Pisidian Antioch again greeted the missionaries at their next place of witness, Iconium.** It was no easy journey. Iconium was some ninety miles southeast of Antioch by the Sebastian way, the main route that connected Ephesus with Syria and Mesopotamia. **Iconium was located on a plateau 3,370 feet in elevation.** In many ways the city was strongly Hellenized because it had been under Seleucid rule during the second and third centuries before Christ. In Paul's day the

Roman influence was particularly in evidence, as is indicated by the name Claudiconium, which was granted to it in A.D. 41 by the emperor Claudius. It was considered a particular honor for a city to be given the right to bear the emperor's name. In short, **at Iconium Paul and Barnabas encountered a cultural amalgam — native Phrygians whose ancestors had occupied the area from ancient times, Greeks and Jews who dated back to the Seleucid period (312–65 B.C.), and Roman colonists whose presence dated from more recent times.** Geographically it was the most ideal place for human settlement in an otherwise desolate area, and there is evidence for a town there from ancient times right down to the present.

14:1–3 In setting up their witness in the major city of the area, the two missionaries followed a pattern Paul would continue to follow — establishing his work in the major population centers. Paul and Barnabas began their work in the usual manner. They went first to the Jewish synagogue. Even though Paul's words in Pisidian Antioch had a somewhat definitive ring to them about turning to the Gentiles ([13:46](#)), they evidently only applied to that city. **Throughout Acts, Paul's usual method would be to go first to the synagogues. There was wisdom to this. For one, Paul never gave up on the Jews. There would be some who would hear gladly the message of Messiah's coming. Also there would be present in the synagogues Gentile proselytes and other Gentiles who believed in God and would be particularly open to the inclusive Christian message.** Indeed,

v. [1](#) attests to Paul and Barnabas having success among both these groups, Jews as well as Gentiles.

Verse [2](#), however, points to a reaction from the nonbelieving Jews. Not only did they resist the missionaries' witness themselves, but they also poisoned the minds of the Gentile populace against the Christian witnesses.

Verse 3 creates something of a problem. One wonders why Luke said “so” Paul and Barnabas spent a long time in Iconium after such opposition had erupted against them.

Verse 4 would seem to follow more naturally on v. 2 with its note of the city being divided against the apostles, and some scholars have concluded that v. 3 is a later scribal addition and not part of the original text of Acts. It is not necessary to do so. **Verse 3 is in deliberate tension with the preceding and emphasizes the power of the Christian witness and the divine enabling behind it.** Even though there was strong resistance to the Christians (v. 2), still they were able to maintain their witness.

The two apostles were not about to back down. They had the power of the Holy Spirit to speak “boldly” for the Lord (cf. [4:29–31](#)). Far from being intimidated, they were inspired to even bolder witness.

[14:5–7](#) The opposition to the two grew to such a point that a plot was hatched to stone them (v. 5). It does not seem to have been a question of official synagogue stoning since the Gentile populace was equally involved with the Jews. The whole picture seems to have been one of mob violence rather than expulsion by the city officials, as was the case in Pisidian Antioch ([13:50](#)). In any event, Paul and Barnabas learned of the plot and fled to the nearby towns of Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia. The region of Lycaonia lay east of Iconium and was also in the Roman province of Galatia. Lystra lay some twenty miles to the south of Iconium, and Derbe was another sixty miles or so southeast of Lystra. Verses **[6–7](#)** are best seen as an introductory paragraph for the Lycaonian

ministry. The ministry in Lystra will be depicted in vv. [8–20a](#). The work in Derbe is summarized in vv. [20b–21a](#). There were no other significant towns in the region, but the reference to the “surrounding country” in v. [6](#) might indicate that they evangelized the smaller towns and countryside of Lycaonia as well

- **New American Commentary**

Ministry in Iconium

ICONIUM (MODERN KONYA) was and still is an important junction along which the east-west road from Syria to Ephesus passed. It was about ninety miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch, and Paul and Barnabas continued on the Via Sebaste that brought them to Antioch. Lystra was less than twenty miles southwest of Iconium. The sixty-three miles from Lystra to Derbe was on unpaved track. The story of how this chapter helped the great archaeologist Sir William Ramsay to come to believe in the trustworthiness of the New Testament is described in the Introduction.

Paul and Barnabas followed their "usual" practice of going first to the local synagogue ([v. 1](#)). Many Jews and Gentiles believed, which resulted in opposition from the Jews who did not believe ([v. 2](#); cf. [13:50](#); [14:19](#); [17:5-9](#)). But Paul and Barnabas persevered with the ministry of the word and of miracles ([v. 3](#)); the latter were a confirmation from God of the message preached. The confirmatory role of miracles is implied in the believers' request to God in [4:30](#) to send miracles to their ministry and is illustrated in the conversion of Sergius Paulus after Elymas was struck blind ([13:12](#)), but **here it is explicitly stated. The gospel caused the city to be divided ([v. 4](#))**, and a plot against Paul and Barnabas forced them to flee to Lystra and Derbe ([v. 5](#)).

BRIDGING CONTEXTS:

RESPONDING TO OPPOSITION. This chapter gives us several features about the opposition early Christians faced that can be instructive to us today. While many things have changed since the first century, **there are many similarities between the way people opposed the gospel and its proclaimers then and the way they do so now. The way the church responded to opposition can also be instructive to us.**

- (1) Just as the people of Iconium were divided over the gospel ([v. 4](#)), **communities today can also become divided when we share the gospel with them. This is in keeping with the words of Christ, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" ([Matt. 10:34](#)).**

- (2) **We see the powerful way in which a mob can be swayed from adoration to contempt in such a short time ([vv. 11-19](#)). The sudden change in the attitude of the mob is reminiscent of the change that took place in Jerusalem when the crowd that had welcomed him as they would a king ([Luke 19:37-38](#)), shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" ([23:21](#)) less than a week later.**

(3) We find these bold proclaimers of the gospel taking evasive action and fleeing from places of danger ([v. 6](#); cf. [v. 20](#)). **They were certainly not timid, for even after the Gentiles were stirred up and their minds poisoned ([v. 2](#)), Paul and Barnabas "spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord" ([v. 3](#)). But when staying on would do more harm than good, they left the area.** Though Paul left Lystra, we know that the church there survived the ordeal so that he visited them on his way back ([14:21](#)), and then visited them again on his next missionary journey ([16:1](#)). He recruited his beloved assistant Timothy from there ([16:1-3](#)). Though he left the place, he seems to have made arrangements for the survival of the church. All this suggests that while boldness is a prerequisite for effective evangelism, there are times when wisdom suggests that we move away temporarily from an explosive situation.

CONTEMPORAY SIGNIFIGANCE:

WISDOM IN RESPONDING to opposition.

This passage contains three keys to understanding and responding to opposition.

(1) The first is a sad one, in that **the gospel does sometimes divide communities**. Well do I remember being at a Buddhist temple facing the wrath of the monks and their lay supporters in an area where we had started an evangelistic work. **Our accusers said to us that they had lived in peace for so many centuries and that now we had come and ruined the peace of the community.** And **we knew that this was partly true. It was a**

hard accusation to take, for Christians seek to follow Paul's advice: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (*Rom. 12:18*). **QUOTE:** *We who aim to be instruments of peace had become agents of disharmony.*

In much of the discussions on social harmony today, evangelism with conversion as a goal is considered a major hindrance. In earlier generations, people viewed evangelism as taking the gospel to those who had forsaken the path of human righteousness. But today we realize that the living religions of the world also advocate human righteousness. Thus, **some view our evangelism as disrupting the harmony of religious people who pursue righteousness.**

For this reason even some Christians are not enthusiastic about evangelism. They feel conversion is desirable, but if it is going to cause so much disruption to families and societies, they ought to downplay its importance. For **example**, some evangelists in Sri Lanka went to an area and won many Buddhists to Christ, provoking opposition to Christianity. Then other Christians, who were doing joint social projects with the Buddhist temple nearby, tried to discourage the evangelism because it was disrupting their program.

QUOTE: *...when we realize the supreme worth of an individual and of his or her salvation, and when we realize that we are carrying the message of ultimate importance from the Creator to his creation, we are challenged to persevere despite the cost...* When we take the gospel to primitive tribes, we are criticized for

disrupting the "pristine beauty" of cultures that have not been affected by the ravages of modernization; but the message of the gospel is so important that we must take it to them. However, as Donald McGavran used to say, we must aim at conversion with minimum social dislocation.

(2) We must also take into consideration the mood of the people, realizing that sometimes unnecessary harm can be done by our staying in a situation where a mob mentality has taken over and reason will not prevail. Note how twice in this chapter Paul and Barnabas leave an evangelistic situation because of the hostile environment.

QUOTE:

Boldness & wisdom combine to produce an effective evangelistic strategy.

Because of the ethnic conflict in our land, there are some places where YFC works that I cannot visit, even though I would dearly like to go to those places. But if I go there, I would be putting my colleagues at risk. Similarly, we may sometimes need to let someone else do what we like to do if we sense that our presence there will not help.

(3) It seems that when Paul and Barnabas came back to these cities where opposition had developed, they came in a new role—to strengthen believers. This may be the role that foreigners have in certain sensitive missions situations: let the locals preach the gospel and train them to do it. Nevertheless, there are other times when the presence of a foreigner may be more effective in evangelism than that of a local. In our ministry we generally do not

use Westerners for evangelism among the Easternized people, who speak only the local languages. But we have found music and drama teams and preachers from Western countries can be effective in evangelism with the Westernized youth of our land. All this indicates that we must be wise in our strategizing so that what is most effective will be done to get the gospel out.

- NIV Application Commentary

We have, in this chapter, a further account of the progress of the gospel, by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles; it goes on conquering and to conquer, yet meeting with opposition, as before, among the unbelieving Jews. Here is, I. Their successful preaching of the gospel for some time at Iconium, and their being driven thence by the violence of their persecutors, both Jews and Gentiles, and forced into the neighbouring countries ([v. 1-7](#)).

Their Successful Preaching at Iconium, and, Being Driven Out by Their Persecutors

In these verses we have,

I. The preaching of the gospel in Iconium, whither the apostles were forced to retire from Antioch. **As the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, so the banishment of the confessors has helped to scatter that seed.** Observe,

1. How they made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews in their synagogues; thither they went, not only as to a place of meeting, but

as to a place of meeting with them, to whom, wherever they came, they were to apply themselves in the first place. **Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, yet they did not therefore decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium,** who perhaps might be better disposed. Let not those of any denomination be condemned in the gross, nor some suffer for others' faults; but let us do good to those who have done evil to us. **Though the blood-thirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek their soul (Proverbs 29:10), seek the salvation of it.**

2. How the apostles concurred herein. Notice is taken of this, that they went both together into the synagogue, to testify their unanimity and mutual affection, that people might say, See how they love one another, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another's hands and confirm one another's testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. They did not go one one day and another another, nor one go at the beginning and the other some time after; but they went in both together.

II. The success of their preaching there: They so spoke that a great multitude, some hundreds perhaps, if not thousands, **both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, that is the Gentiles, believed.** Observe here,

1. That the gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination that believed came together into the church. In the close of the foregoing chapter it was preached first to the Jews, and some of them believed, and then to the Gentiles, and some of them believed; but here they are put together, **being put upon the same level.** The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them; both are reconciled to God in one body (Ephes 2:16), and both together admitted into the church without distinction.

2. There seems to have been something remarkable in the manner of **QUOTE: the apostles' preaching here**, which contributed to their success: **They so spoke that a great multitude believed-so plainly, so convincingly, with such an evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with such power; they so spoke, so warmly, so affectionately, and with such a manifest concern for the souls of men**, that one might perceive they were **not only convinced, but filled, with the things they spoke of, and that what they spoke came from the heart and therefore was likely to reach to the heart; they so spoke, so earnestly and so seriously, so boldly and courageously, that those who heard them could not but say that God was with them of a truth. Yet the success was not to be attributed to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God, who made use of that means.**

III. The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created them; lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given them this thorn in the flesh.

1. **Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of their trouble here, as elsewhere (v. 2): they stirred up the Gentiles.** The influence which the gospel had upon many of the Gentiles, and their embracing it, as it provoked some of the Jews to a holy jealousy and stirred them up to receive the gospel too ([Romans 11:14](#)), so **it provoked others of them to a wicked jealousy, and exasperated them against the gospel.** Thus as good instructions, so good examples, which to some are a savour of life unto life, to others are a savour of death unto death. **See 2 Corinthians 2:14-17:**

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. **15** For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. **16** To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? **17** Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

2. **Disaffected Gentiles, irritated by the unbelieving Jews, were likely to be the instruments of their trouble. The Jews, by false suggestions, which they were continually buzzing in the ears of the Gentiles, made their minds evil affected against the brethren, whom of themselves they were inclined to think favourably of.** They not only took occasion in all companies, as it came in their way, but made it their business to go purposely to such as they had any acquaintance with, and said all that their wit or malice could invent to beget in them not only a mean but an ill opinion of Christianity, telling them how destructive it would certainly be to their pagan theology and worship; and, for their parts, they would rather be Gentiles than Christians. Thus **they soured and embittered their spirits against both the converters and the converted.** The old serpent did, by their poisonous tongues, infuse his venom against the seed of the woman into the minds of these Gentiles, and this was a root of bitterness in them, bearing gall and wormwood. It is no wonder

if those who are ill affected towards good people wish ill to them, speak ill of them, and contrive ill against them; it is all owing to ill will. *Ekakōsan*, they molested and vexed the minds of the Gentiles (so some of the critics take it); they were continually teasing them with their impertinent solicitations. **The tools of persecutors have a dog's life**, set on continually.

IV. Their continuance in their work there, notwithstanding this opposition, and God's owning them in it, [v. 3](#). We have here,

1. The apostles working for Christ, faithfully and diligently, according to the trust committed to them. **QUOTE: Because the minds of the Gentiles were evil affected against them, one would think that therefore they should have withdrawn, and hastened out of the way, or, if they had preached, should have preached cautiously, for fear of giving further provocation to those who were already enough enraged. No; on the contrary, therefore they abode there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord. The more they perceived the spite and rancour of the town against the new converts, the more they were animated to go on in their work, and the more needful they saw it to continue among them, to confirm them in the faith, and to comfort them. They spoke boldly, and were not afraid of giving offence to the unbelieving Jews.** What God said to the prophet, with reference to the unbelieving Jews in his day, was now made good to the apostles: I have made thy face strong against their faces, [Ezekiel 3:7-9](#). But observe what it was that animated them: They spoke boldly in the Lord, in his strength, and trusting in him to bear them out; not depending upon any thing in themselves. They were strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

2. **Christ working with the apostles, according to his promise, Lo, I am with you always.** When they went on in his name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace. Note,

(1.) The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us and the means of his good work in us. It is the word of Christ's grace, for it is in him alone that we find favour with God.

(2.) Christ himself has attested this word of grace, who is the Amen, the faithful witness; he has assured us that it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. As it was said in general concerning the first preachers of the gospel that they had the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following ([Mark 16:20](#)), so it is said particularly concerning the apostles here that the Lord confirmed their testimony, in granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands-in the miracles they wrought in the kingdom of nature-as well as the wonders done by their word, in the greater miracles wrought on men's minds by the power of divine grace. The Lord was with them, while they were with him, and abundance of good was done.

V. The division which this occasioned in the city (v. 4): **The multitude of the city was divided into two parties, and both active and vigorous.** Among the rulers and persons of rank, and among the common people, there were some that held with the unbelieving Jews, and others that held with the apostles. Barnabas is here reckoned an apostle, though not one of the twelve, nor called in the extra-ordinary manner that Paul was, because set apart by special designation of the Holy Ghost to the service of the Gentiles. **It seems, this business of the preaching of the gospel was so universally taken notice of with concern that every person, even of the multitude of the city, was either for it or against it; none stood neuter.** "Either for us or for our adversaries, for God or Baal, for Christ or Beelzebub."

1. He may here see the meaning of Christ's prediction that he came not to send peace upon earth, but rather division, Luke 12:51-53. If all would have given in unanimously into his measures, there would have been universal concord; and, could men have agreed in this, there would have been no dangerous discord nor disagreement in other things; but, disagreeing here, the breach was wide as the sea. Yet **QUOTE:** the apostles must not be blamed for coming to Iconium, although before they came the city was united, and now it was divided; for it is better that part of the city go to heaven than all to hell.

2. **QUOTE:** *We may here take the measures of our expectations; let us not think it strange if the preaching of the gospel occasion division, nor be offended at it; it is better to be reproached and persecuted as dividers for swimming against the stream than yield ourselves to be carried down the stream that leads to destruction. Let us hold with the apostles, and not fear those that hold with the Jews.*

VI. The attempt made upon the apostles by their enemies. Their evil affection against them broke out at length into **violent outrages,** v. 5. Observe,

1. Who the plotters were: Both the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers. *The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, and yet united against Christians*, like Herod and Pilate, Sadducees and Pharisees, against Christ; and like Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, of old, against Israel. **QUOTE:** If the church's enemies can thus unite for its destruction, shall not its friends, laying aside all personal feuds, unite for its preservation?

2. What the plot was. Having now got the rulers on their side, they doubted not but to carry their point, and **their design was to use the apostles spitefully, to expose them to disgrace, and then to stone them, to put them to death; and thus they hoped to sink their cause.** *They aimed to take away both their reputation and their life*, and this was all they had to lose which men could take from them, for they had neither lands nor goods.

VII. The deliverance of the apostles out of the hands of those wicked and unreasonable men, v. 6,7. **They got away, upon notice given them** of the design against them, or the beginning of the attempt upon them, of which they were soon aware, and **they made an honourable retreat** (for it was not an inglorious flight) to Lystra and Derbe; and there,

1. They found safety. Their persecutors in Iconium were for the present satisfied that they were thrust out of their borders, and pursued them no further. **God has shelters for his people in a storm; nay, he is, and will be, himself their hiding place.**

2. They found work, and this was what they went for. **When the door of opportunity was shut against them at Iconium, it was opened at Lystra and Derbe.** To

these cities they went, and there, and in the region that lieth round about, [they preached the gospel](#).

In times of persecution, ministers may see cause to quit the spot, when yet they do not quit the work.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

14:3-4 QUOTE:

We may wish we could perform a miraculous act that would convince everyone once and for all that Jesus is the Lord. But we see here that even if we could perform a miracle, it wouldn't convince everyone. God gave these men power to do great wonders as confirmation of the message of grace, but people were still divided. Don't spend your time and energy wishing for miracles. Sow your seeds of the Good News on the best

**ground you can find in the best way you can,
and leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.**

- Life Application Study Bible.

14:4 apostles. See notes on [Romans 1:1](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#). Barnabas was not an apostle in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve since he was not an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ nor had he been called by Him. It is best to translate “apostles” here as “messengers” (cf. [2 Cor. 8:23](#); [Phil. 2:25](#)). The verb means “to send.” **The Twelve and Paul were “apostles of Christ,” (2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Thess. 2:6), while Barnabas and others were “apostles of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23).**

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

14:5 stone them. This proves that their Jewish opponents were the instigators, since stoning was a Jewish form of execution, usually for blasphemy.

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

14:6 Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia. Lycaonia was a district in the Roman province of Galatia. Lystra was about eighteen miles from Iconium, and was the home of Lois, Eunice, and Timothy ([16:1](#); [2 Tim. 1:5](#)). Luke mentions no synagogue in connection with Lystra and, since

Paul began his ministry there by preaching to a crowd, it likely had a small Jewish population. Derbe was about forty miles southeast of Lystra.

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

14:6 Iconium ([14:1](#)), Lystra, and Derbe were three cities Paul visited in the southern part of the region of Galatia.

- Life Application Study Bible.

ARTICLE:

Drinking the Kool-Aid: A Survivor Remembers Jim Jones

- [Jennie Rothenberg Gritz](#)
 - Nov 18, 2011

Teri Buford O'Shea fled Jonestown three weeks before all its inhabitants committed suicide. Here, she explains why the tragedy should be a cautionary tale for everyday people.



Teri Buford O'Shea

On November 18, 1978, Jim Jones and more than 900 members of his People's Temple committed mass suicide in the jungle of Guyana. Since that time, the event has occupied a grotesque but fringy place in American history. Jones's followers are imagined as wide-eyed innocents, swallowing his outrageous teachings along with his cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. Teri Buford O'Shea remembers things quite differently.

O'Shea was 19 years old when she joined the People's Temple in Redwood Valley, California. It was 1971, and O'Shea was homeless when a man pulled up alongside her in a van. He told her about the community where he lived -- a place, he said, where no one had to worry about food or housing. The leader was a visionary who was building a new future. O'Shea gladly took the ride. After all, she assumed, if she didn't like the People's Temple, she could always leave.

Forty years later, O'Shea is just beginning to speak openly about her seven years with Jim Jones, first in California and then at his compound in Guyana. Her memories of Jonestown are complex. Its inhabitants, she says, were warm people who worked hard to build a utopian community. Jones himself was [passionately](#)

[committed to civil rights](#) -- during the 1960s, he helped integrate churches, hospitals, restaurants, and movie theaters, and he personally adopted several children of color. (His only biological child, Stephan, had the middle name Gandhi.) The majority of the followers who died with him were African-American, and one third were children.

As O'Shea tells it, Jones's idealism was a large part of what made him so lethal. He tapped into the zeitgeist of the late 1960s and 1970s, feeding on people's fears and promising to create a "rainbow family" where everyone would truly be equal. He was charismatic enough to lure hundreds of people to a South American jungle, where he cut off all their ties with the outside world.

O'Shea, who escaped just three weeks before the massacre, recently published a collection of poems and photographs called [Jonestown Lullaby](#). I spoke to her this morning about her memories of Jim Jones, including the mass suicide rehearsals he called White Nights. She described her dawning realization that Jones was going to kill her. And she explained why Jonestown should be remembered not as an American curiosity but a cautionary tale for everyday people.



You say that you want people to remember the good parts of Jonestown. What *were* the good parts?

What was good about Jonestown was not Jim Jones. It was the people he attracted. They came from every walk of life, from the very well educated to the totally uneducated. Some had lots of money. Some were living off of Social Security, and some didn't even have that. It could have been you. It *was* me.

How did Jones manage to lure all these people in, to the point where they would follow him anywhere?

He was very charismatic and attracted people who were feeling vulnerable or disenfranchised for whatever reason. Most of them were African-American, but there were also white people, Jewish people, people of Mexican descent. There were religious Christians and communists. If you wanted religion, Jim Jones could give it to you. If you wanted socialism, he could give it to you. If you were looking for a father figure, he'd be your father. He always homed in on what you needed and managed to bring you in emotionally.

I always looked at the Temple as a utopian community that used religion to get where we were wanting to go. Other people took it as Christ's way. There's a passage in the Bible where Jesus tells people to leave their families and follow him. Jim quoted that quite a lot. He said he was Gandhi, Buddha, Lenin -- he said he was the coming back of anybody you'd ever want to come back. And we believed him.

What was your impression of Jones when you first arrived at the Temple?

The first time I met him, I was convinced he could read minds, cast spells, do all kinds of powerful things, both good and evil. I was afraid of him and stayed afraid of him for seven years.

We didn't know he was a drug addict. Drugs were anathema at the Temple; we weren't supposed to do that kind of stuff. I learned after the massacre that he drugged people on the outpost there to keep them from trying to leave, to keep them from trying to dissent, to control them in different ways, all unbeknownst to the masses.

Do you think he really believed he was doing something good for the world?

It's hard to know the mind of Jim Jones. He was a very complex, confusing character. In some ways he was a good guy. He was passionate about interracial integration. The People's Temple built schools, built housing, built a health clinic, built a kitchen, cleared fields, harvested crops. His goal was to set up this utopian community where everything would be fair and equal.

At the same time, he was very paranoid. He could not accept the fact that one person would leave him, ever. He had us all sign papers -- Jim called them compromises. They were blank sheets of paper, or typed sheets of paper that he'd

cover up while we signed our name. He had something he could blackmail all of us with. One guy tried to leave and Jim said he'd use his paper against him so he'd never see his children again. So he came back. The thing was, too, that Jim would not let children off the compound. So if you were going to leave, you were leaving your child. There was no way of getting a child out of Jonestown.

And if people did defect, Jim said he'd send them things that had poison on them. At least, that's what he *told* us he was doing. It's really hard to tell what he was actually doing. In the long run, Jim gave in to drugs and he got himself boxed into a corner. And his paranoia got completely out of control.

What were the warning signs that things might get really dangerous?

One big warning sign was that he had revolutionary suicide practices. He called them White Nights. He did this several times, both in the United States and in Guyana.

That sounds like a pretty big warning sign. How did those work?

There were loudspeakers all over the compound, and Jim Jones's voice was on them almost 24/7. He couldn't be talking all the time, but he'd tape what he said and then play it back all day long. And the rule was that we couldn't talk when Jim Jones was talking. So on the loudspeakers, he'd suddenly call out, "White Night! White Night! Get to the to the pavilion! Run! Your lives are in danger!" Everyone would rush to the pavilion in middle of the encampment.

Then he would tell us that in the United States, African Americans were being herded into concentration camps, that there was genocide on the streets. They were coming to kill and torture us because we'd chosen what he called the socialist track. He said they were on their way.

We didn't know this at the time, but he'd set up people who would shoot into the jungle to make us feel as if we were under attack. And there were other people who were set up to run and get shot -- with rubber bullets, though we didn't know it at the time. So there you were, in the middle of the jungle. Shots were being fired, and people were surrounding you with guns.

Then a couple of women brought out these trays of cups of what they said was cyanide-laced Kool-Aid, or Flavor-Aid -- whichever they had. Everybody drank it. If we didn't drink it, we were forced to drink it. If we ran, thought we'd be shot. At the end of it, we were wondering, *Why aren't we dead?*

And then Jim would just start laughing and clapping his hands. He'd tell us it was a rehearsal and say, "Now I know I can trust you." And then, in the weirdest way, he said, "Go home, my darlings! Sleep tight!" We weren't really in mood for sleeping tight at that point.

Do you think the people who died on November 18 thought at first that it was another dress rehearsal?

No, when the final time came, I think people were aware it was real thing. It had been a very, very bad day. Congressman Ryan had come to investigate the compound and people were leaving with him. People argued with Jim, but anyone who didn't want to commit suicide was held down and shot with needles filled with potassium cyanide. Unless you were one of the lucky ones who happened to sneak off into the jungle, you were dead. They went around with stethoscopes, and if you still had a heartbeat, you'd be shot.

Furthermore, they killed all the children first. That killed a lot of the people at heart before they actually took the Kool-Aid.

How did you figure out that you needed to escape?

By the time I got to Guyana, I knew things were getting bad. You walked into the jungle there and saw a sign that said, "Welcome to the Jonestown Agricultural Project." Then you saw guards with guns up above in watchtowers. And there were the beatings. I remember mentioning that I was in the mood for bacon and someone told me, "Oh, don't talk that way! You'll get beat!" I thought, "Oh my God, I can't even talk about food desires!"

The worst beating I witnessed was when somebody was accused of being a pedophile. Jim took hold of a rubber hose and proceeded, in front of others, to beat this man's private parts to the point where he was bleeding. I know pedophilia is horrible, too, but that was just cruel and totally abusive. There were a number of beatings like that -- they were really bad.

It was a combination of that and finding out little by little what was real and what wasn't. The turning point for me was in the jungle one day, when one of the aluminum roofs slipped off one of the cottages and made this loud bang. Jim Jones went out of his skin. He was terrified. And I thought, *Wait a second -- why hasn't he been terrified all these other times when people were supposedly attacking us with guns? Now a tin roof falls and he's scared?* That's when I realized that the guns weren't real.

You've written a poem called ["I Do Not Love You"](#) in which you describe an incident where Jim Jones held you at gunpoint. Can you talk a bit about that?

He called me down to his cabin one day. He had designated me to be one of his partners, which was a dubious distinction. I had never, ever told him I loved him. Because I didn't -- I was afraid of him. He held a gun to my head and said, "Tell me you love me." I thought, *I could tell him what he wants to hear. On the other hand, he's paranoid, so maybe I should tell him the truth.* It was a flip of the quarter.

I said, "I don't love you." And he accepted it. You never knew, from one minute to the next, how he'd react. He told me one time, while he was close, that he would like to die while strangling me. He had hands around my neck. I thought, *I hope this isn't the moment he finally cracks.*

From that point on, I minded my manners with Jim Jones. My mother was schizophrenic, and he started really reminding me of her. I was one of his many secretaries, and he had me writing all kinds of letters -- letters to people in the government, letters to people who had defected. When he started dictating those rambling, 20-page letters, I realized they were the ramblings of a madman. I knew from my mother that the rational approach wasn't going to work with him. I needed to keep his trust in me and get out the first opportunity that arrived.

How did that chance finally come?

There were a number of lawsuits going on in United States, calling on Jim Jones to come back. Jim's lawyer, Mark Lane, had come down to Guyana and told him there was a conspiracy against him. So Jim sent Mark back to the United States to handle the lawsuits and take care of the situation.

I suggested that I go back with Mark and work as his secretary. I told them they shouldn't hire an outside secretary who couldn't be trusted. So Jim sent me back. I went to San Francisco and packed up my stuff - what little I had -- and said I was going to the dentist. Then I got the next plane out to New York. I changed my name to Kim Jackson for the longest time, until the FBI finally found me.

What was your life like after the massacre?

I was as shocked as anyone. I was 26, and I'd spent the past seven years of my life with these people. They were beautiful and hardworking. I've spent my life since working as a counselor for people with disabilities, both physical and emotional. I

regret being in the Temple, regret my role in it, but the only thing I can do for redemption is to live my life and serve people as long as I can. We all wore both white hats and black hats. Except Jim Jones -- his hat was primarily black with maybe a little polka dot of white.

How do you feel when you hear people casually use the phrase "drink the Kool-Aid" -- as in, "I drank the Kool-Aid. I love everything Lady Gaga does"?

It makes me shudder. I know it's part of the culture now and I shouldn't be so sensitive to it. But Jonestown was an important part of American history, and it's been marginalized. We have to ask ourselves, why did 918 people leave this country and go with Jim Jones to Guyana? That's a big question. Why did this group feel they'd rather live in a jungle than in San Francisco, Oakland, Atlanta, wherever they were living?

There's a lot of disagreement over the word "cult." How would you define it?

A cult is when you aren't allowed to see your friends or family. I'm not talking about a retreat, or two weeks at a spa. I'm talking about total isolation -- someone takes all your money and brings you to a place where there's no communication, or if there is you aren't allowed to use it. Those are the lessons I took from Jonestown, and that's the message I think the American people should take from it. Trust your gut and don't give up your liberties.

I was fortunate that I had an opportunity to escape and I took it. Even then, I thought Jim Jones would find me and kill me. I had to get to the point where I didn't care if I died. I just wanted to have my own life, however short it might be. My goal, in fact, was that I wanted to live to be 30 so I could have a rich and full life. Now I have a daughter who's 29, and I'm 60. I've had double what I wished for.