

**“A Rock Of Offense”**  
**Acts 14:1-7**

**Introduction:**

1. Please Head Back With Me This Morning:
  - To The Book Of Acts:
    - Acts Chapter 14!
  - Where We Have Been Introducing Ourselves:
    - To The Cities & The Churches:
      - To Whom The Apostle Paul Wrote When He, Under The Inspiration Of The Holy Spirit, Penned His Letter To The Galatians!
  - There Are Four Cities Paul Visited:
    - On His First Missionary Journey:
      - That Were All Within The Roman Province Of Galatia!
    - First Was:
      - The City Of Antioch Of Pisidia:
        - Where We Have Already Spent Some Time:
          - Both Seeing & Hearing The Message Of The Gospel He Presented To Them There!
      - The Other Three Cities:
        - We Will Visit - A Bit More Briefly - Are:
          - Iconium, Lystra & Derbe!
    - So - In These Four Galatian Cities:
      - Paul Proclaimed The Truth Of The Gospel!
        - Clearly / Completely / And Courageously!
  - 2. Last Week - We Left Paul And Barnabas:
    - As They Were Leaving Antioch Of Pisidia:
      - Under Duress And Persecution!
        - Because Back In 13:50 - “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts!”
    - So - What Did They Do?
      - They Moved On:
        - In 13:51 - “But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium!”
    - And This Is Where We Begin Our Message This Morning:
      - About 90 Miles Away From Antioch:
        - Where Paul & Barnabas At First Had A Great Opportunity To Preach The Gospel!
          - But For Now - That Door Has Been Closed – But A New One Is Open:
            - In Iconium!
    - 3. Let’s Read Together:
      - Acts 14:1-7 - “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!”
      - Upon Arriving At Iconium, In 14:1:
        - God Once Again Blessed The Ministry Of The Gospel!
          - Just As He Had Done In Antioch!
      - The Lord Blessed:
        - The Place Of Ministry!
          - Once Again, Paul & Barnabas Head Over To The Local Synagogue:
            - Once Again, Probably On Another Sabbath Day, When Most Of The Worshipers Would Be Present There:
              - Of Both Jews & Seeking Gentiles!
          - And Once Again:

- It Says - They Spoke!
    - They Would Not / They Could Not Neglect The Purpose Of Their Ministry - To Proclaim The Good News Of Jesus Christ!
    - As Paul Wrote In 1 Corinthians 9:16 - “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”
  - And The Lord Blessed The Place Of Their Ministry!
  - The Lord Blessed:
    - The Pattern Of Ministry!
      - Not Only Did Paul & Barnabas First Go To The Jewish Synagogue In Most Of The Cities They Visited:
        - But The Pattern Of Their Message Stayed The Same!
      - This Is Why In Antioch:
        - From 13:16-41 - We Are Given A Detailed Description Of Paul’s 3-Point Message On The Gospel:
          - The Promise Of A Savior!
          - The Provision Of A Savior!
          - The Purpose Of A Savior!
        - It Was All About Jesus:
          - And How By Believing In Him They Can Receive Forgiveness For Their Sins & Be Justified By God!
      - But In Iconium:
        - What We Read In 14:1 Is This:
          - “And So Spoke!”
        - That One Little Word:
          - “So” - Reveals To Us That Everything Paul & Barnabas Said In Antioch Was Then Proclaimed In Iconium!
            - They Spoke In The Exact Same Manner!
            - And They Proclaimed The Exact Same Message!
    - And The Lord Blessed This Pattern Of Ministry!
      - They Spoke:
        - The Same Content – It Was The Same!
          - Of Jesus - His Life, His Death, His Burial, His Resurrection, His Appearances
          - All For The Purpose Of Being Their Savior!
      - And They Also Spoke With:
        - With The Same Courage!
          - In Antioch - In 13:46 - “Paul And Barnabas Waxed Bold!”
          - In Iconium - In 14:4 - They Were “Speaking Boldly!”
        - Of Course, This Courage & Boldness To Speak Could Only Come From The Living Lord Jesus!
  - And The Lord Also Blessed:
    - The Preaching Ministry!
      - What Happened When The Gospel Was Presented In That Synagogue In Iconium?
        - 14:1 - “A great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed!”
        - This Was The Result Of Another Great Evangelistic Meeting!
      - Perhaps Paul & Barnabas Thought:
        - Things In Iconium Would Be Different Than What Happened In Antioch!
          - Perhaps After Reading 14:1, We Even Think - “If Only The Story Could End There!”
          - What A Great Ending!
      - But As We Saw In Antioch:
        - And As We Will See In Iconium This Morning:
          - Faith & Belief Is Not The Only Response To The Gospel!
    - And Even Though The Lord Blessed The Preaching Ministry:
4. We Also Learn That:
- There Is An Offense To The Gospel!
    - And Even Though Every Opportunity To Share The Gospel:
      - Is A Great Opportunity:
        - There Still Can Be, And Likely Will Be, Great Opposition To The Gospel!

- But This Should Not Take Us By Surprise!
  - This Was Prophesied Hundreds Of Years:
    - Before Jesus Was Alive!
  - In Isaiah 8:14 - While Referring To The Coming Messiah - Isaiah Writes - “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem!”
- For Many - The Gospel Of Jesus Christ:
  - Is A “Rock Of Offence!”
    - Something That Would Cause Them To Stumble & Fall Because Of Their Own Rebellion & Unbelief!
      - **IE:** Drunk Car Crash - What Caused It?
  - The Gospel Exposes Us For Who We Are – Sinners In Our Pride & Self-Will!
    - And It Will Seem To Sinners As If Their World Is Coming To An End – And It Most Certainly Is!
      - And They Will Fight Tooth & Nail To Keep Things The Way They Are:
        - Unless God Intervenes!
  - Unless The Lord Does A Work In A Person’s Heart:
    - Things Are Hopeless!
      - And What We See In Iconium Are Some Other Things That Can Happen:
        - When The Gospel Is Preached!
        - When Hearts Are Hardened!
        - And When The Gospel Is A Rock Of Offense!

\* First - There Can Be:

**1. *Disobedience To The Gospel!***

- 14:2 - “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren!”
  - Although Many Jews & Greeks:
    - Believed The Gospel Message They Heard!
  - Many Others Remained:
    - “Unbelieving!”
      - Both Jews & Gentiles!
- The Word “Unbelieving” Is An Interesting Word:
  - Because - It Means - To Refuse To Be Persuaded!
    - You See - These Jews Also Heard The Message:
      - And Knew Their History & Their Scriptures!
  - But When The Truth Was Presented To Them:
    - So Clearly & So Completely:
      - They Wilfully Chose To Reject The Message About Jesus!
  - They Did Exactly What The Prophet Zechariah Described:
    - In Zechariah 7:11-12 - “But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. / Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone!”
- When The Gospel Is Preached:
  - There Can Be & Likely Will Be Many Who Still:
    - Disobey The Gospel!
      - They Will Still Refuse To Believe:
        - Because The Gospel Is A Threat To Them & Their Way Of Life!
    - Jesus Himself Said In Luke 14:27 - “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple!”
  - We Do Not Need To Be Surprised:
    - When People Remain In Unbelief:
      - And Disobey The Gospel!
        - The Gospel Is Still A Rock Of Offense!

\* But There Can Also Be:

**2. *Defiance To The Gospel!***

- These Unbelieving Jews:
  - Instead Of Keeping Their Opinions To Themselves:
    - What Did They Do?

- They Spread Their Poison & Intolerance To Those Around Them!
- They - “Stirred Up The Gentiles, And Made Their Minds Evil Affected Against The Brethren!”
  - In Antioch - The Gentiles Invited Paul & Barnabas Back:
    - The Next Week So They Could Hear More!
  - But Here In Antioch - The Jews Didn’t Give Them The Chance!
    - And They Used Their Power & Influence To Turn The Minds Of The Gentiles Against:
      - The Gospel!
      - Paul & Barnabas!
      - And “The Brethren!” - Those Who Did Believe!
  - There May Have Been Gentiles In That Congregation:
    - That Wanted To Hear More:
      - Like Those In Antioch!
  - But Instead Of Letting Them:
    - The Jews Were Actively Putting Obstacles Between:
      - The Gentiles & The Truth!
- When The Gospel Is Preached:
  - There May Be An Open:
    - Defiance To The Gospel!
      - When Unbelievers Will Openly & Actively Try To Influence Others To
    - Don’t We See This Happening Today?
  - We Do Not Need To Be Surprised:
    - When People Remain In Unbelief:
      - And Then Spread Their Opinion & Intolerance To Others!
        - The Gospel Is Still A Rock Of Offense!
- But What Can We Do When We Are Faced With This Kind Of Opposition?
  - The Same Thing Paul & Barnabas Did In:
    - 14:3 - “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!”
      - They Kept Preaching The Gospel:
        - With Even More Conviction & Courage!
  - In Antioch:
    - We Are Told In 13:44 That “Almost The Whole City” Came “Together To Hear The Word Of God!”
      - On A Single Day!
        - The City Came To Them!
  - Well - Here In Iconium:
    - Paul & Barnabas Had To Go To The City!
      - And So They Took As Much Time As They Needed - A “Long Time” – To Reach The People!
  - They Did Not Leave - They Did Not Stay Quiet!
    - And The Lord Blessed Them By “Granting Signs And Wonders To Be Done By Their Hands!”
      - Paul & Barnabas Were Likely Able To Touch & Heal People, By The Power Of The Lord!
    - And Through These:
      - The Lord Himself “Gave Testimony Unto The Word Of His Grace!”
        - That What They Were Saying Was The Truth!
  - We Would Like To Think That A Great Awakening Took Place After All These Things!
    - But Hearts Were Still Hardened - And We See That:

\* There Can Still Be:

### 3. ***Division To The Gospel!***

- 14:4 - “But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles!”
  - It Appears From This Verse That:
    - Paul & Barnabas Were Busy!
      - But So Were The Jews!
  - It Looks Like, Once Again, Nearly The Whole City:
    - Heard Of The Gospel!
      - It Was The Talk Of The Town!

- “The Multitude Of The City!”
- But What Did The Truth Cause?
  - Division!
    - There Was A Great Divide Between:
      - The Believers & Unbelievers / Jews!
  - This Is An Illustration Of:
    - The Division And Intolerance That Comes:
      - When The Gospel Light Shines In The Darkness Of This World!
    - But The Division Is Caused:
      - Not By The Light & The Truth:
        - But By The Darkness & The Unbelief!
      - Because The Offer Of Light Is Extended To All!
- This Division Was Not Just Within The City:
  - But It Likely Extended To:
    - Coworkers / Neighbors / Friends:
      - And Even Families!
        - Just Like It Does Today!
- When The Gospel Is Preached:
  - It May Lead To:
    - Division!
      - Within Countries & Communities!
      - Between Friends & In Families!
  - We Do Not Need To Be Surprised:
    - When People Are Divided:
      - When The Truth Of The Gospel Is Presented!
  - Jesus Himself Said In Luke 12:51-53 - “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: / For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. / The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law!”
    - The Gospel Is Still A Rock Of Offense!
      - But Even Further:

\*There Can Be:

#### 4. ***Danger With The Gospel!***

- 4:5-7 - “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!”
  - The Division Turned Into Danger:
    - For Paul & Barnabas - The Messengers Of The Gospel!
      - A Large Mob Gathered Together And Started Searching For Them In Order To Hurt Them & Even Kill Them!
  - This Mob Was Made Up Of Both:
    - Unbelieving Jews & Gentiles!
      - Often Enemies - But Now United Together To Get Rid Of The Gospel!
  - Even Led By “Their Rulers!”
    - Could Apply To The Rulers Both:
      - Of The Jews & The Gentiles!
  - Don’t We See This Still Going On?
    - As The Gospel Is Shared:
      - The People Don’t Want To Hear Anything About Their Sin:
        - And So They Convince Their Leaders To Silence The Truth!
  - The Lives Of Paul & Barnabas Were In Mortal Danger!
    - The Reaction In Iconium Turned Out:
      - To Be Worse Than The Reaction In Antioch!
        - So What Did They Do?
    - Another Door Was Closed To Them:
      - And So They Moved On – Quickly!
        - 4:6-7 - “They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and

unto the region that lieth round about: / And there they preached the gospel!”

- When The Gospel Is Preached:
  - It May Lead To:
    - Great Danger!
  - We Do Not Need To Be Surprised:
    - When People Want To Do Us Harm:
      - When We Present The Truth Of The Gospel To Them!
        - The Gospel Is Still A Rock Of Offense!
  - But Remember What Jesus Said In Matthew 5:11-12 - “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. / Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you!”

**Conclusion:**

1. Our Desire Is For The Gospel To Penetrate Hearts & Lives:
  - Like It First Did In:
    - Both Antioch & Iconium!
  - But We Must Not Be Surprised When:
    - There Are Other Reactions To The Gospel!
      - Like Disobedience / Defiance / Division / Even Danger!
  - Because There Is Still:
    - An “Offense Of The Cross!” (Galatians 5:11)
2. But Let Any Opposition We Face:
  - By God’s Grace & Strength - To Propel Us Further:
    - In Sharing The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!
      - As It Did For Paul & Barnabas!
        - 14:7 - “And There They Preached The Gospel!”
  - But How Can We Do This?
    - When We Face:
      - Disbelief / Defiance / Division / Even Danger?
    - Listen & Remember Some Of The Last Words Of Paul:
      - Written To Timothy In - 2 Timothy 1:12 - “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day!”

*Grace Baptist Church  
Stephen Elmer, Pastor  
4245 North 200 West  
Greenfield, Indiana 46140  
317-326-2362  
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace  
www.growatgrace.org  
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com*