

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XXXIII. God's Validations Of His Servants' Ministries

(Acts 14:1-6)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. When Paul and Barnabas evangelized Antioch of Pisidia, there was a sharp contrast in the responses the people gave to their ministry and the apostles were even expelled from the city (Acts 13:44-52). This could lead either the apostles or onlookers to their ministries to question the validity of those ministries.
- C. Accordingly, the events of Acts 14:1-6 showed God's validation of His servants' ministries, what provides insight and application for us to our edification today (as follows):

II. God's Validations Of His Servants' Ministries, Acts 14:1-6.

- A. Due to the great conflict that occurred between the apostles Paul and Barnabas and the Jewish leaders of the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia who moved the city's leaders to expel them, either the apostles or onlookers who witnessed their ministry might wonder if Paul and Barnabas were ministering outside of God's will.
- B. Thus, the events that occurred in Iconium, the next town they ministered, were arranged by God to validate from man's perspective the apostles' ministries as being of God (as follows), Acts 14:1-6; *Ibid.*, p. 391:
 1. Similar to what had occurred in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas entered the Jewish synagogue at Iconium and proclaimed Christ's Gospel there, and a "great number of Jews and Gentiles believed," Acts 14:1 with 13:14-42 NIV. "The Spirit of God was clearly prospering the apostles' ministry," *Ibid.*
 2. However, as had also occurred back in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas similarly faced opposition when unbelieving Jews stirred up many Gentiles, poisoning their view of not only the apostles but also of the new converts who had trusted in Christ by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:2.
 3. Since the apostles' foes did not immediately expel them from Iconium as had occurred back in Antioch of Pisidia, the apostles continued to minister in Iconium for a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord's power, and God provided additional validation of their message by granting that "miraculous signs and wonders" be performed by Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:3. Such miraculous signs and wonders in their missionary ministry were later reported by Paul and Barnabas to the First Jerusalem Council of the Early Church to vindicate the Lord's sanction of the Gospel they taught of justification by faith alone and not by faith plus circumcision, cf. Acts 15:12 with Acts 15:1-2.
 4. The working of miraculous signs and wonders by Paul and Barnabas resulted in a great division in the city, with some siding with and others supporting the ministry and Gospel taught by the apostles, Acts 14:4.
 5. Paul and Barnabas then learned of a plot by their foes to mistreat them and to stone them, so they fled from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, Acts 14:5-6. ["Luke's accuracy as a historian has been vindicated here," for "(t)hough Iconium was also a Lycaonian city its citizens were primarily Phrygian. In location and nature Lystra and Derbe were Lycaonian (cf. "Lycaonian language," v. 11)," *Ibid.*]

Lesson: *Though one might question the spiritual validity of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia simply because their ministry was so opposed there that they were expelled by its city officials, the fact that many Jews and Greeks believed when they ministered the same Gospel in the next town of Iconium, with similar opposition, coupled with God's validating their ministry with miraculous signs and wonders being performed by the apostles shows from man's perspective that the apostles' ministries in BOTH Antioch of Pisidia AND in Iconium were EQUALLY of GOD, that the OPPOSITION the apostles faced was SINFUL.*

Application: *(1) If a ministry faces opposition, this is NOT NECESSARILY a signal that the ministry is ungodly, for godly believers WILL be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12. (2) Thus, if a ministry is opposed, we should look for obvious divine evidence that accompany the ministry effort to discern IF it is of GOD. (3) To do this so, we must understand that though God does NOT provide miraculous signs and wonders TODAY (cf. Hebrews 2:3-4) like He did for Paul and Barnabas, He DOES supply obvious evidences of His validations of ministries (a) by repeat, edifying coincidences that fit Scripture and Scriptural precedents (as in Acts 16:6-10), (b) by a teacher's exposition of an abundance of Scriptures with great, edifying clarity (as in Luke 24:27), and (c) by strong, edifying spiritual movements of the Holy Spirit in one's heart upon hearing a messenger's ministry of the Word (as in Luke 24:32).*