

## **Serving the Lord: An Exciting Roller Coaster Ride!**

### **Acts 14:6-21**

#### **Introduction:**

1. Paul and Barnabas were on their first missionary journey. While in Iconium, they heard of a plot to stone them, and they fled for their lives. vs. 5-6
2. They fled to the city of Lystra, 25 miles south. Once in Lystra, they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. vs. 7
3. While in Lystra, they experienced some wonderful blessings from the hand of the Lord, but they also experienced some very deep trials as a result of their enemies.
4. This is quite typical in our service for the Lord. Serving God is not always a bed of roses - going from one mountaintop experience to the other. There are valleys, trials, and rough places in the road. Just like a roller coaster, there are ups and downs.
5. The victories and valleys of the Christian life are attested to in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10.
6. Why are there so many ups and downs when we serve Christ? We need to understand this, lest we get caught off guard, become discouraged, and quit.

#### **First, because when we serve Christ, lives are impacted. vs. 7-10**

1. While Paul was preaching the gospel (vs. 7), one man was listening very intently. This man was impotent and crippled. vs. 8
  - “*Impotent*” comes from the Greek word which means “impossible.” It was impossible for this man to walk.
2. Paul perceived that this man was full of faith, so Paul said, “*Stand upright on thy feet.*” The result was that this man leaped and walked.
  - Had he just leaped and then collapsed, there would have been no miracle. It was walking that made it a great miracle Christ.
  - This crippled man was hungry for God’s Word, full of faith in God, and he immediately obeyed. What a blessing to work with people like this.
3. Because Paul was serving the Lord, he was able to impact this man's life for Christ. What if Paul had stayed at Antioch, in his church there? What if he had not obeyed God? He would have never gone to Lystra, and would have never met this man whose life was forever changed because Paul cared and went to Lystra.
4. This story could be repeated, simply with different details, over and over again by people serving the Lord here at our church.
5. When you serve the Lord (children, teens, WTB, etc.) you impact lives.
6. Paul said his joy in heaven would be the people that he had impacted with the gospel of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). If you know Christ, you have the opportunity to impact people for Christ by serving Him. There is nothing more exciting than this.

## **Second, because when we serve Christ, people are unpredictable. vs. 11-19**

1. The people of Lystra were pagan idolaters. After this man was healed, they assumed that Paul and Barnabas were two of their gods come down to them in the flesh. vs. 11-12
2. The local pagan priest began to prepare a sacrifice to offer to Paul and Barnabas. In other words, the people were preparing to worship Paul and Barnabas. vs. 13
3. When Paul and Barnabas caught wind of this (vs. 14), they ran down to the city gates and immediately put a stop to it. They preached and admonished these people to turn from their idolatry unto the living and true God. vs. 15-18; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:9
4. About this time, Jews from Antioch and Iconium showed up. They had tracked down Paul and Barnabas and persuaded the people against them.
  - The timing was right. Paul had just refused their worship and preached against their ungodly idolatry.
  - They stoned Paul, dragged him out of the city, and left his dead corpse (so they thought). vs. 19
5. So the same people who had deified Paul and desired to worship him took part in his stoning and murder. vs. 19
6. If people have any desire to serve God, they need to understand one thing - people will hurt and disappoint you. Serving the Lord is serving people, and it means working with people. Because of this:
  - One of the biggest ups in serving the Lord will be the lives that you positively impact for Christ. It is thrilling and exhilarating.
  - One of the biggest downs will be the people who hurt and disappoint you.
7. When Satan tries to discourage us, so many times the tool he uses will be people.
8. Ephesians 6:6-8 is a key passage in regard to this subject. We must keep our eyes focused upon Christ, not the people we serve and minister to. cf. Colossians 3:23

## **Third, because when we serve Christ, we are sure to endure trials. vs. 19-20**

1. When we serve Christ and infiltrate enemy territory with the gospel of Christ, we are not going to get a free pass from Satan. As we see in our text, he will fight back. Paul was stoned and left for dead.
2. God miraculously raised up Paul, and he went back into the city of Lystra. vs. 20
  - Can you imagine what these people did when they saw Paul walking back into their city? This is better than a John Wayne movie.
3. What an incredible victory! Paul experienced the power of God's deliverance.
4. But may we not forget, he **did** have to go through the brutal stoning.
  - In Iconium, God delivered Paul **from** the stoning.
  - In Lystra, God delivered Paul **through** the stoning. cf. 2 Timothy 3:11
5. Someone may ask, "Why did God allow Paul to go through this?" Was God's power displayed in a greater way in the deliverance at Iconium, or at Lystra?
6. Sometimes God delivers His children **from** trials, but sometimes God delivers His children **through** trials (vs. 22). Why is this? It is because during these trials that the power of Christ is displayed through us. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- Why is this? It is because we are resting in Christ and depending completely on Him. God desires that we draw close to Him and find strength in the sufficiency of His grace. Trials have a way of causing us to do just this.

### **In Conclusion:**

1. Have you ever ridden an amusement ride and it wasn't what you expected?
2. In the same way, I think we can easily get false expectations about serving Christ. We naively think that if we are serving Christ, "God will bless us." We will always be on top of the mountain. **Illustration:** Ever ridden a sky lift?
3. But, as we learned today, this simply is not the case. Serving Christ is more like a roller coaster ride. There will be ups and downs, but I must remember that my life is not about me. Rather, it is about my life bringing glory and praise to Him.
4. Through the trials and "down" times, hopefully others can see God's power and glory being displayed through me.