

## Stoned in Lystra.

Acts 14:19,20.

Sunday morning, January 30, 2011.

The Jews plotted against Paul and Barnabas in Antioch, and managed to get them expelled from that city. Next they came to Iconium. Here they became aware of a plot to stone them; once again the Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against them. They fled to Lystra where they were instrumental in the healing of a lame man, and were at first hailed as gods. Once again Jews from Antioch and Iconium catch up with them and this time they succeed in turning the city against Paul and Barnabas and in stoning Paul.

### I. Insights into the nature of the human heart.

#### A. Note the fickleness of the human heart.

How easily are they moved from hailing Paul and Barnabas as gods, and standing ready to sacrifice to them, and worship them, to stoning Paul and throwing him out of their city. This should remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was hailed as the Son of David, and the One who came in the Name of the Lord, on Palm Sunday, and on the following Friday they shouted “Crucify Him” and “Away with Him.” This reminds us of the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength; whose heart departs from the Lord...” Jeremiah 17:5. Man simply can not be built upon.

#### B. Note the power of corruption and evil in the human heart:

1. It took everything for Paul and Barnabas to hold the crowd back from sacrificing to them. “With these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitude from sacrificing to them.” Vs. 18.
2. Did this kind of reaction ever take place toward the Lord Jesus Christ? He did greater works than Paul and Barnabas when He raised the dead, and He healed the sick and maimed and afflicted by the hundreds at times. There it would have been appropriate, for He was God who visited man in the form of a man, but no such reaction took place, and no such worship was brought on the part of the multitudes (with exception of a few individuals). It shows us that the currents of evil and corruption in the human heart are often directed by the evil one. “You are of your father the Devil, and the works of your father you will do” John 8:44, and “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matt. 6:13.
3. On the other hand note the ease with which the people of Lystra are moved to stone Paul and drag his lifeless body out of the city. Notwithstanding the fact that Paul had just healed a lame man who was born lame, they stone him and discard his body outside the city, leaving it to the elements and the scavengers of the night.

#### C. Note how slow, if at all, man is moved to do what is right. When man does, it is a work of grace due to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit who restrains man from doing evil, and induces him to embrace what is right.

Application:

Do you know the power and presence of evil and corruption in your own heart? Does it make you look and long and ask for the stirrings of the Holy Spirit to come and work all good within you?

## II. What did this turn of events mean to Paul?

Why was Paul stoned in this manner, but not Barnabas? What must have gone through Paul's mind when the mob seized him and started throwing stones?

- A. Did his mind go back to Jerusalem on that day when he was part of such a stone-throwing mob; as they threw Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death? Did his mind go back to the days when he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women to prison? Acts 8:3. Did he think of the days when he was breathing threats and murder against the Lord's disciples? Acts 9:1.
- B. The Lord will often allow His children to experience "the receiving end" of their own sinful past. He does so, not as a punishment, for the punishment of our sin was laid on the Lord Jesus; again, not as vengeance nor to get even, but rather to give us an experiential acquaintance with who we once were, and so to humble us. It was after Jacob, the cheater, was transformed into Israel, the Prince of God, that he ends up on the receiving end of his own deceitful past, when his sons deceive him into thinking Joseph was killed by a wild beast. Genesis 37:31-35.
- C. Paul received greater inspiration and revelation, and was raised to greater usefulness than any other apostle. To counteract the natural tendency toward pride that this brought along with it, Paul was made to suffer more than any other apostle, and here is an installment on that suffering. Acts 9:16, and "lest I be exalted above measure... a thorn in the flesh was given me." 2 Corinthians 12:7.

Application:

How do you react at the receiving end of your own sinful past? Do you take it as an opportunity to humble yourself and to embrace the affliction?

## III. What did this turn of events mean to the church?

- A. When the mob went home, leaving Paul for dead outside the city, the disciples come out and gather around Paul's body. To grieve? To pray? To prepare him for a proper burial? Probably all of the above.
- B. To everyone's surprise Paul rises up (in answer to their prayers?) and walks with them into the city on his own power. Not only that, but the very next day he and Barnabas set out on a 60 mile hike to Derbe.
- C. Does this hint at a supernatural recovery? Stoning caused massive injuries; broken bones, massive bruises, internal and external bleeding such as you did not survive, much less walked away from.
- D. One witness to these things was a timid young man named Timothy, a native of Lystra; 2 Timothy 3:10-12. Were these events used to encourage and embolden the timid Timothy to become Paul's trusted co-worker? See also Phil. 1:14. This stoning would become a part of Paul's apostolic credentials. 2 Cor. 11:25.

Application:

Are you emboldened by the suffering of other Christians? Do you see the importance of the spirit in which we carry and endure our sufferings? The spirit of meekness, humility.