

# Acts 14:1-6

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[ 0 : 00 ]      Heavenly Father, we thank you that, Lord, we have a refuge that we can run to, Lord. You are our ever-present help in time of need. I want to thank you that through the teaching and preaching and reading and understanding of your word, Lord, you've given us this life, Lord, and you so often speak to us through your word, Lord, in such a way that it literally brings refuge to our soul.

Lord, our spirits are calmed, that we know everything's okay because it's in our Father's hand. There's nothing that another person could do to bring that in that way. There's nothing in this world.

There's no substance we could take. There's no vacation we could go on. There's nothing, Lord, that can speak to our soul, our heart of hearts like your word. I pray that you would do that tonight.

In Jesus' name, amen. So our title for tonight is A Decision and a Division. A Decision and a Division.

So we're just going to go through seven verses, I guess, but Paul and Barnabas coming to Iconium. If you remember, they're coming from Antioch in the northern reaches of the Middle Eastern area above Israel.

[ 1 : 14 ]      They're outside of Israel. They're coming up into the region of Asia and Galatia and Cappadocia there. But they're launching from Antioch. They've gone to Cyprus.

Barnabas' hometown. From Cyprus, they land in Pamphylia. Nothing really happens there. We don't have a record of anything really happening. And from there, they end up in Antioch of Pisidia.

And then Paul and Barnabas, they receive great opposition from the Jews. This is really their first opposition from the Jews. So they leave there. They shake off the dust.

You know, they're not really threatened. They did raise persecution against them and expelled them out of their coasts. They don't know if anything was done to them, like physically. But anyway, they head out into Iconium.

And they're going to stay there. So it doesn't really show it here. But Galatia, there's a sub-region of Galatia, kind of that southern area where Iconium and Lystra and Durib is. At the end of 6, it says when they go to Lystra and Durib, the cities of Lyconia, they're going to be in Iconium, which is in Lyconia.

[ 2 : 21 ]      Lyconia was the region that these cities were in. And Iconium was kind of a central point in Roman times. A lot of roads intersected here.

And there was a trade route that kind of went all the way over from Euphrates River through Antioch, through Tarsus, up through Durib, and through Iconium to get all the way over to Ephesus. There is this trade route.

And so Paul's kind of following that when he leaves Antioch of Pisidia to Iconium. And if you go on Google and you just put in Antioch of Pisidia, it'll come up in Turkey.

And then you put in Iconium, it will come up too. It's not called Iconium anymore. It's like a derivative of that. But it'll come up and you can see it's a day's walk, about a day's walk through a mountainous region.

So, I mean, was Paul, you know, hustling? I don't know. He might have done it in a couple days. But where we read he just goes from one place to the next, you know, there's some time there.

[ 3 : 17 ] And there's some time that the Jews, the ones that are eventually going to follow him, that they're going to have to kind of catch up with him. You know, there's nobody sending word on ahead that like, hey, Paul's coming. You ready for him?

They don't really know. They don't know what direction he's going. He just takes off. And they don't know if he's going to go to Iconium or wherever. So it's sad to see the effort that's going to be put into tracking down Paul, where in the world is Paul.

Anyway, at the end of verse 52 in chapter 13, it says, And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. So despite the persecution, these guys leave the church there in a very good state.

And they head off and they can know that behind them, the disciples are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. And that's a good thing. And then in verse 1, 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 the Greeks, believed. So here they are at the next place doing the same thing. Like we said before, they did what was comfortable and familiar and what they were used to doing, which was going into the synagogue.

[ 4 : 26 ] They're just going to follow that pattern. Again, these guys in Iconium, they don't know, oh man, that text message came in and said, look out for this false teacher, Paul. They don't have that.

They didn't have the passenger pigeon didn't fly on ahead and let them know. They just know that there's some visiting Jews in their midst.

And as tradition was, it was, hey, do you want to say something? And so they do. Iconium means little image. It wasn't a huge, well-known city, but like I said, it was very central to some of these roads.

And it was a famous city because of those roads that kind of intersected it. And it was the capital of that, like we said, Lyconia, that region. But they go together, and I think it's interesting where it says they went both together.

If you remember back in Mark, Jesus kind of started setting this precedent. When he had called the disciples after he prayed all night and he appointed 12, then he calls them to himself.

[ 5 : 32 ] And he began to send them forth by two and two and gave them power over unclean spirits. He begins to start this kind of pattern of two. We see that right off from Acts. Peter and John go up to pray and immediately lay man on the way.

And now we have Paul and Barnabas. The Holy Spirit says, separate unto me Paul and Barnabas. Matthew 21, when Jesus is sending in the disciples to go get the colt that he's going to ride in on, on the triumphal entry, it says, And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem and were come to Bethpage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway you shall find a donkey tied and a colt with her.

Loose them and bring them unto me. So there's two. Paul quotes in Corinthians, writing to the church in Corinth, talking about, hey, I'm coming back again to you.

He says, this is the third time I'm coming to you, and in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. He's quoting Deuteronomy 19, 15. And then Ecclesiastes, yeah, this series of verses tucked away.

Ecclesiastes 4, 9 through 12 says, Boy, there's all kinds of connotations there, isn't there?

[ 7 : 04 ] Spiritually and among the body. Again, if two lie together, they have heat. But how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him.

And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Again, like we kind of looked at on Sunday with Abraham and Lot, that we are to battle on behalf of our brothers. Sometimes you can't stand alone.

But I like in the beginning there in verse 9 where it says, Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. Idea being that you add a second person to whatever you're laboring at, and it exponentially increases the potential of what you can do.

And so there's this principle there. And Paul and Barnabas, they go together. If God's called you to something, find a Barnabas. Find a Silas. Find a Timothy.

Make sure that you're listening to the voice of the Spirit. Because we know here we have precedent where he said, Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas. That God is probably going to yoke you with someone in the calling he's given you in ministry.

[ 8 : 10 ] It could be your spouse, yes. But it also could be a fellow believer. And so the two of them, they go into the synagogue. And what do they find there? They find the Jews and they find the Greek proselytes.

Of course, because the Jews have been scattered and they're way out now up into this region of Galatia and Lyconia. And so they're making converts in their way. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

So you have the Jews that believed and the Greeks that believed. And you have those that didn't believe. This is where we have a decision and a division. The word unbelieving there, it doesn't just mean like, you know, we know what unbelief means.

But there's this idea within it of perverseness. Very interesting. Unbelieving means not allow oneself to be persuaded. I'm not going to allow myself to be persuaded.

I'm choosing that. And it also means to willfully and perversely refuse belief. There's this idea of perverting within it. And as a principle, I think there, that the only response to truth is belief.

[ 9 : 25 ] There's no other response. Everything else is a perversion. Because truth is always going to be truth. There's nothing else you can do with it. You can't twist it. You can't change it. It's truth. So you either accept it or you don't accept it.

But to not accept it, to not believe it, is going to lead to perversion. Because there is nothing else. There's only the truth. You know, God is love. And in him is no darkness at all.

That means there's no other love. There's no other light. There is nothing outside of that. It's going to lead to this perversion. To willfully and perversely refuse belief. And it's sad because that's what it does.

These guys don't just go, you know what? That's interesting. I'm not interested. It's good for you. I'm just going to go do my thing over here. No, they don't. Because unbelief seeks validation through numbers.

Whereas truth stands boldly alone. So you see right away, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles. And made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

[ 10 : 24 ] They couldn't handle that the truth that they had rejected was still standing there. And while I've rejected the truth, now I'm in a lie. And I know I'm in a lie because my conscience bears witness to it.

I'm going to go get a lot of people to join me in that lie. So I can validate myself in my unbelief. Whereas the truth stands boldly alone. I thought it was interesting.

This made me think of the scripture in 2 Timothy chapter 4. Where Paul says that in the last days, we know the time will come. When they will not endure sound doctrine. But after their own lusts, they shall heap.

Literally meaning to pile up. I love that. You know, it's just like, just keep piling them on. There's not enough. There's not enough. Make it a bigger, make it a bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger barrier between me and the truth.

Keep piling. Keep piling. You know, have you heard that latest lie? Well, that's enough to make me feel good. But it didn't last. I need something else that's false so that I can validate myself.

[ 11 : 20 ] But they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. Idea being, you can scratch it, but it's going to keep itching. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth.

And what happens when you turn from the truth? The perversion. You turn to a fable. You turn to the strangest falsehoods. And we are living in a time where the falsehoods are so strange.

But no matter how big or how numerous, no lie can stand against the truth. Because it's why. This is very profound. No lie can ever become truth. Okay? No lie can ever become truth.

Like, well, we know that. Yeah. But no matter how big it is, no matter how many people we pile on, it's never going to turn into truth. And so no lie can ever stand against the truth. That's why one child with the truth can stand against a world of deception.

You can't touch them. Because it's the truth. It's the truth. And here you see, unfortunately, these men turning from the truth and then pulling others with them to do the same thing.

[ 12 : 26 ] And so they stirred up their minds. The word stirred up means to rouse up. But they went and actively recruited. You know, the idea is this wasn't anything they were concerned with.

It was none of their business. They were doing their thing. And somebody went into their world and said, come on, you need to be part of this. And so they stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil, affected.

That word made literally means to hurt, harm, or vex. Or it says made their minds. They harmed their minds. They hurt their minds. They vexed them. The idea being that they were so incessant in their recruiting of them that it's like, okay, fine.

We'll come with you. They vexed them. In their minds, they were evil, affected against the brethren. Those are the same two words where it says, and made their minds evil, affected.

The word made is hurt, harm, vex, and evil affected is hurt, harm, vex, and it's couched around. Two Greek words, couched around mind. Those like pointing back at their minds that like their minds were very affected by this against the brethren.

[ 13 : 31 ] And we've said before, no, if you're not in the truth, then you can't discern the lie. But the enemy cannot meet them on level playing field, can he? Look how he has to come.

He's got to come with all of this mob. He can't just come and say, hey, let's just talk about this. I don't believe your point's valid. I don't believe the truth is correct. Here's why. They're never going to meet us on level ground because they can't.

And that's why one child with the truth can just destroy any lie. And you don't need to fear the layers that they pile on. Remember the teaching teachers having itching ears and piling on false teachers?

Well, there's layers. Some people come with layers of that. They've got Darwin, and they've got transgender, and they've got feelings, and they've got, can God make a rock so big that he can't move it? And what about pain and suffering in the world?

Layers on layers on layers. Just give them the truth. Hey, we're sinners. God loves you. Jesus came to die for your sin. What are they going to say against that? They can't move you because you have the truth.

[ 14 : 32 ] And so then it says in verse 3, They were long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord. There's a couple things there. I think part of it is Paul and Barnabas had a head start.

They show up here, and they start teaching. And, you know, okay, so some of the Jews didn't believe, and they start stirring up these guys. Well, Paul and Barnabas aren't really worried about that.

They're just worried about what their calling is. They're there to teach and to preach. And they start doing this. And there's a few phrases here, three phrases here. We see long time, abode, or long time, abode they, and speaking boldly.

They did those three things here. And the phrase long time is a Greek word that means sufficient enough time. So they were there for a sufficient enough time to do what?

To do what? To speak boldly. They were there sufficient enough time that they were abiding there. And the word abode there means to rub hard, wear away, or wear through time.

[ 15 : 34 ] In other words, just where we saw that those guys were evilly affecting, you know, they were vexing their minds. Well, Paul and Barnabas, they're not doing that. But they're staying here long enough that the truth they're speaking begins to have an effect, begins to wear away, and to grind down.

And just that slow grind of teaching and preaching and giving the truth and letting the truth do its work. And what they're long enough to do to have this effect, right, they're speaking boldly.

Which means speaking freely. Nothing hid through fear, right? Because it's the truth. Do they have anything to hide? Because that's what speaking boldly is. I'm going to say this because it's true.

Now, we don't have to say it in a jerky way, right? We don't have to be in someone's face and nasty about it. It's like, you know, Calvary Chapel has at times really tried to segregate children and adults.

And it's like, well, how can you teach them on their level? What if you need to say something? Like, well, you know what? I can hand my Bible, the Bible to my 10-year-old, and he can read it. And it will not defile.

[ 16 : 39 ] Okay, the Bible will never defile. And it says things very discreetly that we all know what it's talking about. But a child can read it, you know? So we can say things in a way that is discreet, but we know what we're talking about.

We know the meaning. And we can do the same with the truth. We can speak boldly. It doesn't always need to be in someone's face in a way that may offend them because of the way we're presenting the truth, instead of just the fact that it's the truth.

So the idea, though, is nothing was hid through fear. And that's Paul and Barnabas. These guys are getting all stirred up. And they're like, you know what? We're just going to continue. We're just going to continue here.

We're going to let this process play out. We're going to speak boldly. And they speak boldly in the Lord. There's a couple of meanings there.

It can mean that they were speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. And it can mean that they were speaking boldly in, like, in the Spirit and the Lord. I think it's both, of course.

[ 17 : 38 ] It wasn't on their own initiative. Right? It's like I'm speaking in the Lord. I better be because I don't get anything apart from that. Right? When I sit down and study the Bible, I tell you guys this all the time.

The first time I read through it, very rarely is it like, wow. Usually I read through the text, you know, and I'm like, well, that was interesting. I wonder what the next page has.

It's just, you know, but then you start to break it down. It's like, okay, well, let's see. Let's look at the map. Where's Iconium? Oh, that's interesting. What's Iconium mean? And then you see, like, a word jumps out. Oh, they're both together.

Why did the Holy Spirit put that there? Why didn't you just say they went into the synagogue? And your mind goes to, oh, you know, a mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established. It's not going to just be one dude showing up. It's two guys who can verify.

And just, then as you go through and you break things down, what does this word mean? And you see the fact that here's these guys standing alone. And then all of a sudden, those that didn't believe decided they needed a crowd to bring in.

[ 18 : 42 ] And it's like, well, wait a minute. Why would they need a crowd? Like, oh, well, they've rejected the truth. And so when you reject the truth, you need validation. But anyway, they're speaking boldly in the Lord.

And the Lord then, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. What did they not come preaching? They did not come preaching rules and regulations and standards and ideals.

Rules, regulations, standards, and ideals come out of a life of grace. But they do not create the life of grace, right? So out of a life of grace, it will look to you like that person lives by rules, regulations, standards, and ideals.

Man, what a structured life. That's amazing. And if you try, though, to reverse that process and copy their life and put rules and regulations and structures and ideals upon your life, hoping for grace then to show up, it doesn't work that way.

It then becomes a burden, right? They try and live under the law. Grace produces those. But they came with the word of his grace. And God then gave testimony and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

[ 19 : 47 ] Literally, the word hands there, by their help. Kind of, you know, like, all right, you can help. Come on. Come on, boys. Sure. You know, but that's how the Lord does it. Most of the time in our lives, it'll be through the body that God's going to use helps to help one another.

It's going to be by our hands. He wants us to help one another. Yes, God intervenes miraculously. We're going to see that when he gets over to Derb and Lystra.

There are going to be signs and wonders. But right here, and it says right here, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided.

They were divided. Here's that division we were talking about. And the part held with the Jews and the part with the apostles. That seems terrible, doesn't it? On the face of it, it's like, ah, divided.

I want all my stories to end with a happy ending. We should be like, and they all believed, you know. Like the next section. Like in our fairytale world, this is how it should be. Oh, they received Paul and Barnabas and sacrificed to them.

[ 20 : 53 ] Well, we don't want them sacrificed to them. But sure, they can receive them as heroes. But the gospel forces decision. And decision by its very nature creates division. So when we choose, make a decision, we are by nature excluding something else.

Right? All of life is, as they say, triage. It's making an informed decision to go one way or the other. But when we choose, when the gospel comes in, it forces a decision.

Am I going to choose to believe or am I not going to believe? And then that creates division. Well, how do we know that's true? Oh, remember what Jesus said?

That I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I came to bring division. There's going to be division in households. There's going to be division. But when it comes to the truth and the gospel, never focus on the negative side of division.

Right? Just like we're looking at here. Part believed and part didn't. Right? Oh, what a bummer. What a bummer. But when it comes to the gospel, don't focus on the negative side of division. Focus on the positive side.

[ 21 : 58 ] Even that person like, well, I gave them the gospel and they didn't believe. You know? True. What's the positive side? Man, God's word didn't return void. God's word is truth. And it did what it was intended to do.

And you don't know that the person who just rejected, how that's going to affect their life. And so here, as the truth is presented, you have the multitude of the city that was divided.

And again, now we've got the multitude. This is just getting bigger and bigger, this whole thing. And part held with the Jews and part with the apostles. When there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews with their rulers to use them to spitefully and to stone them, they were aware of it and then fled.

The word there, assault, means rapid, violent impulse. Very rapid and violent impulse. It's the same word that James talks about when he talks about the tongue and how he compares it to a ship with the helm.

That word listeth at the end or lists, wherever the governor lists or wills or chooses to turn it, is the same word, rapid, violent impulse. In James 3, verse 4.

[ 23 : 02 ] And so they bring upon them, this says that when there was an assault made. So it's very quick. And that's how mobs work, right? It's very quick. It's very violent. We're going to go after these guys.

We're going to get them. Well, wait a minute. What happened to the Jews that believed? What happened to the Greeks that believed? Where were they? Well, I'm going to quote one of my favorite authors. He wrote Winnie the Pooh.

But he wrote some other stuff and he should have wrote more. Just witty and funny. But A.A. Milne says, In a crisis, it is the old love and not the greater love which wins.

And so here, these men are like, yes, wow, this is great. Something new, something great, something wonderful. But then the crisis comes and they fall right back. It seems like just into the channels of association they're used to.

And I think that's why it's important for us to be in fellowship with the body. So that the greater love becomes the old love, the tried and true one.

[ 24 : 06 ] The one that's most prominent in our life. So when the crisis comes, I don't revert back to my psychiatrist. I don't have a psychiatrist. And I don't revert back to my medication or my substance or my alcohol.

I don't have alcohol. But I don't revert back to those things because, well, I don't know how else to handle this crisis. You know, no, hopefully I pick up the phone and go, hey, am I having a crisis?

You know, help. And it's the body, like I said, done by their hands. And so then they're chased out of this city and they flee.

They try to stone them. To use them despitefully means insolent or shameful. To use them in a way that is just, you wouldn't do that, you know, if you're the worst enemy in a sense.

And they're going to do that to them. And to stone them, which was done to the lowest criminal. And it's also quick, easy, but very dirty. And when they were aware of it, and that word wear there means like to have an awareness, almost like a supernatural awareness that someone tipped them off.

[ 25 : 13 ] They fled unto Lystra and Durb, cities of Lyconia, and unto the region that lies about. Lystra means ransoming. And it's a city on the eastern part of the plain of Lyconia. It's way to the east.

They're kind of moving east backwards. On the second, the missionary journey, the one where Paul will go with Silas, they're going to kind of traverse this backwards.

Instead of going from the west side up through the region of Galatia, they're going to come up from Antioch, the Antioch that's over near Israel. And they're going to come up through Tarsus. They're going to come backwards up through this region.

And so right now they're moving east. They're heading towards Lystra, which means ransoming. And they're going to come to Durb. Durb just means covered with skin or cover of skin, like tanning.

There's a tanning center there. But in this region of Lyconia, and the word Lyconia means wolf land. That's where they are right now. They're preaching in the wolf land. But like we said, that they have the truth.

[ 26 : 12 ] And that gives them boldness and freedom to stand alone. Have you heard the term, don't throw water in a grease fire? Well, why? Because the grease is in the pan, and there's only a small surface area on the surface.

So let's say you got three inches of grease, and on the surface, that surface area, that's what's on fire. You throw water on, the water instantly turns to steam, creates an explosion. And now all of that grease is up and out of the pan, and there's all this extra surface area that ignites.

Why do I say that? Persecution resulted in greater distribution of the gospel, right? That was like what they did. They came in, they think, we got to take care of this. Every time they chase these guys, they're just pushing it further and further out, and just spreading this gospel further and further.

And it just continues to spread. And so as they spread them out, then verse 7, and they preached the gospel. So persecution results in a greater distribution of the gospel.

But one of the principles, you know, with truth and with faith, you've just seen sight deceives. I will deceive. You know, this looked bad for them, and they're just chased out of this city.

[ 27 : 16 ] They wanted to stone them. But faith in God never deceives. Do you realize that? You can't be deceived by trusting God, ever. There is safety in believing. Why?

Because the truth's not based on sight. We walk by faith, not by sight. That's our security. If the truth was based on sight, oh, I could be deceived. That looked bad, but it was good.

That looked good, but it was bad. But there's safety because it's not based on sight. It's based on something else. It's based on the word of God. And that truth will never deceive.

Paul will tell Timothy, he'll refer to this region. Later on, he's writing to Timothy from jail. He'll say, Persecutions and afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which is next time.

What persecutions I endured, but out of them all, the Lord delivered me. And God was faithful to do that. And if you continue reading in 2 Timothy, that's the section where he says that, But continue thou in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

[ 28 : 25 ] And that from a child, you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. For all scriptures given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He says, Continue in the things which you've learned. Persecution may come. It may look bad. All right.

Just continue in that. Because you have something that no lie, no amount of persecution can ever touch. You know, we think, What would I do if like I was tortured?

I don't know. But I know the Holy Spirit at that time can equip me. You know, I don't think any of these heroes of the faith were amazingly strong on their own when they faced those moments of being burned at the stake or crucified or whatever.

I don't think it'll happen to any of us, but we'll have our moments where we'll have to choose to stick with the truth or to slide off into a perversion, into a fable. Father, just thank you.

[ 29 : 30 ] Thank you for how you spread your word, Lord. Lord, I thank you that we are so blessed, Lord. It's a gift to live in a world, in a country that lets us believe without forming mobs.

It's coming. It's getting worse. There's some mobs out there. But, you know, just because we hold a belief and we want to share our faith, we can do that. We know there's parts of the world that that's not allowed.

You have to have permission from the government or you can worship Jesus, but you can never share it with anybody else. Lord, I pray that as we pray now, that we would be a strength, Lord, to one another and to the church around the world, the church that is standing in that, Lord, that it would be by our hands, like we just read, that you by our hands, Lord, by our help, our intercession, that, Lord, you would spread the gospel, you would put down falsehood.

Lord, I just thank you that we have the privilege to continue in the things we've learned. We know from whom we've learned them. I don't mean, you know, whose teaching or the teachings we've heard. We've heard them from the lips of God himself, that Jesus, that word made flesh.

We love you and thank you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.