

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 30 “Clarifying Misconceptions”

I. Introduction - We have been studying through *Acts* and how the gospel went viral through various revivals in the first century throughout the book of *Acts*. This is what turned the world right side up in a generation.

A. Last week we studied through *Acts 13-14* and the Outpouring of the Spirit in Galatia through Paul and Barnabas’s Ministry. They left Antioch in Pisidia and went to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

1. The persecution was so intense Paul wrote about it 17 years later. **2 Timothy 3:10-12.**
2. The persecution amplified with the introduction of signs and wonders. After the Apostles left Lystra, where the people began to proclaim they were gods, they went to Derbe where Paul was stoned and left for dead.

B. We are going to pick up today where Paul was stoned and left for dead and finish studying the conclusion of his first missionary journey. We are going to focus on clarifying 2 major misconceptions people have drawn from scripture that are addressed in these passages. **These misconceptions have been passed down over the years and distorted our view of God and our view of ourselves as image bearers of God.**

1. 1st misconception - Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a sickness God gave him.
2. 2nd misconception - When we get saved we will not suffer tribulation. Many Christians assume the day they God saved they entered the Walt Disney World of the Spirit. Not true; in this life we will suffer persecution. We must figure out how to overcome if we are going to make a difference in the world.

II. Misconception 1 - Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh Was A Sickness God Gave Him

A. **Acts 14:8-20**

1. Paul healed a man through the power of God in Lystra.
2. Those in the town began to worship Paul and Barnabas like they were gods. The power of God stopped the idolatry at Zeus’s temple because the priest of God had encountered the presence of the true God. Unfortunately he and the people didn’t have their mind renewed so they began to worship Paul and Barnabas.
3. Paul and Barnabas tried to correct the people and get them to worship the one true God, but they did not so they tried to flee.
4. Unfortunately, the Jews (mean angry religious people) stoned Paul at Lystra.
5. This series of events is what Paul’s thorn in the flesh is about - **Galatians 4:13** Paul had a physical infirmity when he was in Galatia (at the first - in other words

he got healed). His infirmity wasn't an eye disease like many believe. He had problems with his eyes temporarily because he was hit with rocks in the face.

B. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh Was Persecution

1. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**
2. **2 Corinthians 11:22-30** persecution was Paul's infirmity.
3. **Numbers 33:55, Joshua 23:13, Judges 2:3**
4. When we understand God doesn't make his kids sick or poor or withhold to teach them something it gives us a better picture of God and will cause us to want to serve Him - My Cousin Vinny example - many of us have a dirty window of the soul and this causes us to distort the image of God.

III. Misconception 2 - Christianity is the Walt Disney World of the Spirit

A. Acts 14:21-28

1. Paul made disciples (devoted followers of Jesus)
2. **Verse 22** We enter the kingdom of God through tribulation **John 16:33.**
 - a. While God doesn't put sickness, poverty, and bring bad things to happen to us to teach us things, we live in a fallen world and Satan will try to bring evil into our lives through persecution.
 - b. Because many people don't know this, they have an escapism mentality - they are looking for a rapture to save them. They have a greater belief in the return of Christ than the power of the gospel.
 - c. God's goal for us isn't just to go up. It is to grow up in the fulness of Him and make a difference.
 - d. The Bible is very clear about a catching away of the church in **1 Thessalonians**, so the rapture is biblical. The escapism mentality introduced by proponents of the pre-trib rapture, however is not biblical and has done damage to the body of Christ and our world because it caused Christians to withdraw.
 - e. We must know we are already in tribulation and be prepared to endure. The punch you don't see is the one that knocks you out example.
3. **Verse 23** They appointed elders (mature believers) to oversee and teach the people in the church. The New Testament model is a plurality of elders to lead.
4. **Verses 24-25** They went the word in Perga on their way home.
5. **Verses 26-27** When they went home and they reported what God did through their ministry, the ones who sent them commended them for their work. It's good to be commended for our faithfulness - Lawson and Greg example
6. **Verse 28** They stayed and rested and recharged.

IV. Conclusion - We need to learn a lesson from Paul and see ourselves as living on assignment in a fallen world. Bad things will happen in this life, but God is not the author of bad; Satan is. Satan is the great tribulator and he will often influence people to bring hardship on our lives.

A. Key Takeaways

1. God is Always Good and He doesn't bring sickness and lack on us.
2. God loves the people who hurt us and we must spend time with God so we can get His perspective on the people who are persecuting and/or harming us. We are called to love them with His love!
3. We take time to get away and recharge our spiritual batteries. Paul and Barnabas took time away from the mission field to return to Antioch and be built up by others. We need to let others minister to us.

B. Pray Closing Prayer and Call Up Prayer Team