

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2



PAUL STONED AT LYSTRA

Scripture Text: Acts 14:19-28

Persecution and tribulation may serve to strengthen the church. Whether it does or not depends on how persons react to it and how they use it. This is portrayed in this week's lesson, of which **Acts 14:22** is the key.

Paul was now getting a taste of the bitter medicine he had spooned out to others in times past. He had been implicated in the stoning of Stephen. Paul was now suffering in behalf of the Gospel he had once persecuted. Once the people at Lystra wanted to worship these missionaries; then they stoned them. They experienced from one extreme to the other. But the power of the Spirit within the Apostles was more than equal to it.

Whether we know it or not, the world is watching our behavior closely. What will our attitude toward life's grueling situations mean to our children, our neighbors, and all those we are in contact with?

MEMORY VERSE: *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

—*Psalm 126:5*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**1 Timothy 3** God's standard for placing men in office.

Tue.—**James 1:12-22** True religion evidenced by conduct.

Wed.—**James 5:7-12** The patience of the saints.

Thu.—**1 Peter 3:8-22** The Christian and persecution.

Fri.—**1 Peter 4:12-19** The Christian and suffering.

Devotional Reading: **1 Peter 4:1-11** Christian in Gospel Day.

Paul Encounters Persecution

Acts 14:19-20 The Jews of Antioch and Iconium followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. Prevented from stoning them in Iconium, they were determined to do it. They **persuaded the people** of Lystra—convinced them the Apostles were a menace. Together they **stoned Paul** and **drew him out** as dead. But God had more work for Paul. **As the disciples stood round . . . he rose up**—Paul recovered. They only supposed him to be dead, and he was probably unconscious. There is no thought of a miracle here. There can be no doubt that as the disciples stood watching their dear brother, they were praying, and God was watching. God raised him up. Paul **came into the city**, stayed overnight, and then with Barnabas went to Derbe where they **preached the gospel**. He did not go to the hospital or take a week to recuperate.

Why Go Back?

Acts 14:21-23 In Derbe they **taught many**. Then they **returned** to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. What drew Paul and Barnabas back where they had been persecuted? It was love for their converts, who were among enemies of Christ. They needed establishing in Christ to continue to live victoriously. It was a shepherd's desire to feed and nourish and safeguard his flock. This is the biblical standard that must motivate all preaching and Sunday school teaching for it to be effective. They exhorted them to continue in the faith, to believe, trust, and

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keep contact with God. Each of us has a duty to encourage, build up, and give spiritual food to others. Many newborn souls fall away because of neglect. If the planted Word is watered and cultivated, it will bear fruit. The devil places **much tribulation** in the way of those entering the Kingdom of God. Do not be turned aside by it.

Paul and Barnabas **ordained . . . elders in every church**. To give the young disciples guidance, the Apostles placed elders, spiritual leaders. They did this not in their own judgment, but **prayed with fasting**, getting God's leading. They did not leave the churches to be humanly ruled, but **commended them to the Lord**. With this, the churches were prepared to go forward.

No technical requirements as to education, sanction of a board, or other human standards were made. Is there a standard? Yes, in **Titus 1:5-9**. All Paul could do was to set elders in place, and only then in cooperation with God. **But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Corinthians 12:18)**. Paul could not MAKE elders. They are not made by election. The one requirement we should abide by is that God shall have given one the spiritual gifts of an elder. Then he can rightly be recognized and set in place to exercise those gifts. We find no set, formal ordination in the New Testament.

The Apostles did not question the reason for their troubles. Jesus said they would come (**John 15:18-21; Acts 9:16**). This world is not as God created it. Man is corrupted by sin. That is the source of tribulation. We need not fret at the enmity of the world. Its favor should cause us alarm (**James 4:4**). We need look for no favor for the Gospel from the world.

Returning to Antioch

Acts 14:24-28 This completed Paul's first missionary journey. By the Antioch church **they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work . . .** This was brotherly cooperation in the action the Spirit directed. It was not rulership or authority of the church over Paul and Barnabas. The Apostles worked in the grace of God, free to follow Him, responsible to Him. The wisdom of this divine plan is seen in that **they fulfilled** their God-given task.

Some Words have been lifted from the Scripture and applied to systems of most formal and restricted ceremonies far removed from the free, Spirit-directed acts of the Apostles. When Paul and Barnabas ordained and confirmed, they were not setting formal patterns to be copied and conformed to. It was not ritual. When they rehearsed God's doings to the Antioch church, they were not making formal report to a governing board. In Christ, they were free from binding, human rules or ceremonies. They acted as the occasion arose and the Spirit led. God deals with the heart, the inner man. Any system that removes the essential action from the inside to the outside of man is robbing it of life.

The church shared in the joy of success as they **gathered . . . together**, and the Apostles rehearsed God's doings. A special cause for praise was the fact that Gentiles also were accepted by God into His church.

Paul and Barnabas had experienced the tears of sowing, but the joy of reaping repaid them abundantly. It repays in our day also. Read the Memory Verse again.

JUST A THOUGHT

The best recipe for success: God-called, God-filled, God-led.