

**BIG IDEA: We're to be faithful in the midst of opposition/division.****1) INTRO**

• RC Sproul & Steelers, before the glory days of the 70s the 40s & 50s were rough. When they spoke of the Steelers, they'd say SOS – “Same Old Steelers”

- Can utter our own SOS today – “Same Old Story”
- Everywhere apostles go God works saving Jews & Gentiles
- Preach boldly, division & opposition rise up, face hostility, and apostles barely make it out alive, if they do
- We continue to see these themes today
  - This happens when faithful to Gospel
- vv1-20 – we'll face opposition // vv21-28 – we must keep going
  - Sermon theme

**2) DIFFICULTY CONTINUES AT ICONIUM (vv1-7)**

- P&B travelled from Pisidian Antioch to Iconium...Turkey
  - 80 to 90 mi away (~140/145 km away)
  - Agricultural center – orchards & wool
- Synagogue
  - Preached the good news [Gospel – God's promised a Savior]
  - Jews & Greeks come to believe in JC as Lord & Savior
  - Greeks likely God-fearers/devout, like Cornelius in ch 10
- P&B preach the Gospel, people respond/submit to JC, and opposition rises up
  - Unbelieving/disobedient Jews stir up some Gentiles
  - “poison their minds” – GRK “make someone think badly about someone”
- P&B stay in Iconium...so far
  - B/c of the opposition, they stay to help strengthen the believers there
  - They perform signs & wonders – God's working to show their message is true
- Opposition continued to grow & city is divided
  - Some were w/ Jews & some were w/ apostles

- v4 & 14 refer to P&B as apostles
  - There was no question re Peter's apostolic authority
  - But, some challenged Paul's (hard for us to see now)
    - B/c he wasn't converted until after resurr

- Attempt was made to stone P&B
  - Stoning was common means of Jewish execution
  - w/ such growing opposition, P&B leave
  - Make their way to Lystra & Derbe
- BIG IDEA

**3) HEALING AT LYSTRA (vv8-18)**

- First, they go to Lystra, a small Roman colony
  - About 20 mi from Iconium...few Jews here b/c no mention of synagogue
  - Timothy is from Lystra (Paul will recruit Tim to join him on mission in ch. 16)...it's thought that Timothy, his Jewish mother & grandmother came to saving faith perhaps on this journey
- P&B are on in this chapter
- Paul heals crippled man
  - Recalls Jesus' healing & Peter's healing in Acts 3
  - This shows that Paul's a true apostle, like Peter in ch. 3
  - This man's listening to Paul speak & Paul sees his faith
  - Paul commands the man to stand up and he doesn't just stand up...he springs up
  - How many are slow getting up after sitting in same position for a long time? How about getting up in the morning?
    - Especially if you're crippled...but no effort here...springs up/leaps up
- Everyone saw and was amazed
  - Zeus & Hermes
    - Zeus was king of GRK gods, Hermes was messenger
  - Darrel Bock points out two details: the stare and the loud voice (vv9&10) in that they were often used in Greco-Roman stories about the coming of the gods...along w/ fact that Paul was a stranger as gods were said to appear unknown
  - Was local legend that said Zeus & Hermes descended to this region disguised as humans looking for lodging. They asked at

1,000 homes and no one took them in until finally, in a humble cottage of straw & reeds, an elderly couple welcomed them w/ a banquet. In appreciation the gods transformed the cottage into a temple & appointed the couple priest & priestess. Then they sent a flood to destroy the homes of the inhospitable people

- People of Lystra are hoping for similar reward, maybe
- They try to worship P&B
  - The priest of Zeus - oxen and garlands
  - P&B tore their clothes b/c upset at such an accusation (v14)
  - They're only men bringing the message of the good news of JC & that message tells people to turn away from the false gods to the true God
    - They stay faithful to this message
- Paul's sermon here is diff from his sermon in the synagogue in ch. 13
  - Gospel contextualization
  - The pagan listeners need to hear good news too, but in way they might understand better
  - His synagogue sermon focused on the promises to Israel
  - Here, to Greco-Roman hearers, Paul points to *creator* God
    - Created heaven, earth, sea...and everything in them
    - Some apologists – cosmology...order, intricacies
  - Paul also points to God *provider* – rain, fruitful harvests, food
    - As Paul writes of God's general revelation in Romans
- They were faithfully speaking the good news of JC
- May we also be faithful to speaking the truth of the Gospel in ways that people might understand
  - Talk to people...know some about them...street evangelism
  - May we look for opportunities
- Paul just tells the people here in Lystra to turn from idols and to worship the one true God
  - You'd think that the Jews would agree w/ this

#### 4) PAUL STONED (vv19-23)

- But, instead, the Jews come to Lystra from Antioch AND Iconium
  - Hunted him down
  - The Most Dangerous Game

- And, they come together to stone Paul
  - Paul makes note of this in his resume of suffering in 2 Cor 11
  - This was a brutal moment for Paul... not normal to just get up
  - He stood front of angry mob that launched large rocks at him
  - Rocks hit him all over his body, tearing his flesh and knocking him unconscious to the ground
    - To the point where they thought he was dead and dragged him out of city for his corpse to be scavenged
  - But, he wasn't dead...next day got up and went w/ B to Derbe ...60-65 mi away from Lystra
  - His recovery is a miraculous work of God
    - Picture of his perseverance/steadfastness/faithfulness
- In Derbe, P&B continue to preach the gospel of JC
  - Much fruit comes of this...made many disciples
  - God works in saving many as P&B are faithful
- Then they return to Lystra, Iconium, & Antioch
  - All places they faced division & opposition
  - vv21-28 show shift from preaching message of JC to new people to now strengthening believers
  - Encouraging them/us to remain faithful
  - Hard times/persecutions are part of our journey
    - Gospel message too often presented smooth-sailing
  - We're to stay faithful
    - To JC who faithfully went to cross
    - For joy set before him, endured the mocking, beating, having body nailed to cross...taking on wrath of God
    - World hated JC, why do we expect world to like us?
    - Suffering/hard times part of God's plan for his people
    - We'll face opposition when follow God in sinful world
- The message here's appropriate for us too
  - That we stay encouraged to continue in the faith
    - Walk with JC and live for JC
  - We'll face difficulties before the consummation of the kingdom of God
- P&B encourage believers...appoint elders/men recognized for their wisdom & mature, godly character (1 Tim 3, Titus 1)

## 5) SHARED HOW GOD HAD WORKED (vv24-28)

- P&B then pass through towns they ministered to earlier
- Ultimately they “come home” to their commissioning church in Antioch of Syria...what a reunion!
  - They get to tell their sending church all that God has done in saving many Gentiles
  - Can you imagine sitting there hearing their report/stories?
    - I love hearing missionaries’ stories...books as a family
  - They took time sharing/rejoicing in God’s work of salvation
    - They were there a while
  - P&B were faithful

## 6) APP & CLOSING

- This chapter tells us what to expect when we follow JC
  - Division/opposition/attacks will happen
  - May happen in circle of friends, community, neighborhood, in family, in church family
- But, we’re not to be surprised...remember it’s normal
  - We’re not the only ones going through it
- We must keep going...moving ahead in living for JC
  - We’ll feel like giving up sometimes
    - We’re human...it’s natural to feel that way
    - That’s why we need this reminder today
  - We need the encouragement
    - Encourage each other
- Lion King – when Scar was the king
  - As believers, we’re living in a kingdom that’s thrown out its rightful ruler
  - We’re trying to live for the true king, JC, while others don’t
  - But, God will return to rule
  - His kingdom will come
  - We must keep going/be faithful to him