

# OPENING THE FLOODGATES

We hope this series of studies will issue in the floodgates of heaven being opened afresh! You'll find the background to the series [here](#).

## **No pressure!**

Don't feel a pressure to answer every question in your Community Group! As always there are deliberately 7 (sets of) questions, not with a view to their all being answered necessarily, but simply to provide a set of daily study notes for those who find it helpful to work their way through the passage like that.

## **Priorities!**

Almost certainly there's too much material for the time available when you meet: use what you find most helpful. Key questions for us all as a fellowship this week are probably questions 5 & 6, so do aim to cover at least these in the time that you have: and again please feed back any insights which would seem to be of benefit to us all!

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## **7. *".. how He had opened the door of faith .."*** **(Acts 14.1-28)**

The best summary of this chapter is given by Paul and Barnabas themselves as they report back on the missionary journey they had undertaken at the call of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13.2). As Luke puts it, the chapter narrates *".. all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles"* (Acts 14.27).

This is as clear an instance as any of the Lord 'opening the floodgates'. It's thrilling (and at times somewhat scary!) to read

this record; and it's instructive (and at times challenging) for us to dig into the narrative and learn lessons for ourselves as to how those floodgates of heaven may be opened again in our day.

1. **Read Acts 14.1-28**, asking the Lord to speak to you clearly as you follow the broad sweep of the narrative.

What really encouraged you as you read the chapter? And what really challenged you?

2. **Look at 14.1-7**. When Paul later underlined that it is 'through many hardships' that we 'enter the kingdom of God', he clearly knew what he was talking about!

Compare vv.2-3 with vv.5-6 and consider why, in the face of opposition and hostility, Barnabas and Paul in the first instance *stayed* for 'a considerable time', while later they *fled*.

Does that help you know how to handle opposition? Or just leave you confused! How do you know when to walk away from someone who's clearly antagonistic and when to stick with them and stand up to them with gospel truth?

3. **Consider 14.8-13**. Remember always how the Lord has the 'long view': Lystra was where Timothy hailed from (see Acts 16.1), and he would become one of the leaders in the next generation of the early church.

Read **2 Timothy 3.10-4.5**. From what Paul writes in that passage, how significant in Timothy's growth in faith do you think this remarkable healing and its outcome was?

As Paul looked at the lame man, how could he see in this man "*that he had faith to be healed*"?

The immediate response on the part of the people of Lystra was that they were encountering the presence of deity: if it's no longer we who live but *Christ* who lives in us how might our lives also bring a sense of the divine into the experience of others?

**4. Read 14.14-18.** Barnabas and Paul 'preached' here into a very particular situation in response to the worship the people were ready to direct to the two of them.

In what ways did Barnabas and Paul seek to point the people away from themselves to Jesus?

In the 'celebrity culture' in which we live how can a similar sort of hero-worship be avoided within the church of Jesus Christ?

**5. Read 14.19-22.** The commitment of these men to good 'gospel' work is striking! Notice in these four verses three separate references to '*the disciples*': the challenges and demands of discipleship were never hidden in the preaching of either Jesus or the early church.

What two related concerns did Paul and Barnabas have in going right back into the 'war zone' which was Lystra?

How have these ends been secured for you in your own experience of church life? What more might be done to secure these ends in our fellowship?

Why do you think the order changes from 'Barnabas and Paul' up to v.20, and then thereafter it's always 'Paul and Barnabas'?

**6. Read 14.21-25.** Paul and Barnabas were plainly intent in their mission work on (a) seeing conversions, (b) growing disciples, and (c) planting churches.

Where in these verses do you find references to this three-fold aim which Paul and Barnabas had?

Why was the appointment of 'elders' so crucial to the planting and establishing of churches?

The Transitional Leadership Team is giving particular thought over these months to an appropriate pattern of local leadership, and value our prayers in so doing: what lessons in relation to local leadership might be learned from these verses?

**7. Read 14.26-28.** The idea of a 'one-man' or even here a 'two-man' ministry was entirely alien to the early church: they all shared in the mission.

How does Luke underline for us that this was a 'missionary' venture in which the whole church was involved?

How should that apply in our own context today?

Are there ways we might do more in our own fellowship in terms of reporting to one another "*all that God (has) done*" through the work in which we've been involved?