

Introduction

- Been seeing the spread of the gospel:
 - from initial declaration of disciples status as "witnesses"
 - through coming of Spirit and his empowering for mission, coming of 3000 to faith at Pentecost
 - God's power challenging human authority and all that the Sanhedrin could do
 - then the spread of that good news of Jesus' death and resurrection out from Jerusalem
 - following scattering surrounding Stephen's martyrdom
 - seeing it lapping at the shores of the Gentile world
 - and now on into planned missionary endeavour, Paul and Barnabas send as missionaries by their home church in Antioch to take the gospel round Cyprus and into Asia minor
 - (map)
- We're going to take a breather from Acts following today!

Taking Root?

- Gospel going round world
 - we get the impression of it spreading like wildfire, like everywhere Paul went thousands of people instantly believed, and he hardly had to do anything
 - though the reality was much more complicated than that!!
- Why doesn't this good news take root?
 - why don't people believe?
 - then, or now?
- Because it is opposed!
 - there is a battle for the truth
 - and the fight is a dirty one!

Weapons of Opposition to the Gospel

- Satan hates God - and opposes all his work!
 - out of spite wants to hurt God in whatever way he can, and spoiling God's rescue plan, encouraging people to snub God's love for them is the ideal way to do that!

Poisoned minds / envy

- v.2

- Jews in Iconium
- Examples of the kinds of poisoning that are prevalent today:
 - "It's wrong", no intelligent person believes that any more - perhaps an element of this in Jews, that these Christians are heretics! - Richard Dawkins, "evangelical" fervour about his writing!
 - You can't claim everyone else is wrong - how arrogant! - Greek philosophers, Roman authorities, multi-cultural world! - "you are accusing me of being wrong!!"
 - I'm fine - I don't need any "crutch"

Misunderstandings

- v.11

- Crowd in Lystra - thinking them Zeus & Hermes
- Examples:
 - eat your God - communion
 - importation of Western culture
 - got to be good to be a Christian!! (we sometimes allow this lie to spread!)

Physical violence

- v.19

- Crowd in Lystra, twisted following their disappointment that Paul & Barnabas were not the gods, stoned them and left them for dead!!
- Graham Staines was a Christian Missionary from Australia who worked with lepers in Orissa. He was burnt alive along with his two sons by a gang of Bajrang Dal supporters on January 22, 1999.
- Christian churches in Pakistan targeted
 - more martyrs for Christ in the 20th century than in all previous centuries added together!
- Windows put in Mission Hall in Motherwell in week before Holiday Club:
 - been fine all year!!
- All of these are used by Satan to oppose the gospel.

Weapons of Protection for the Gospel

- God will not allow the good news to be defeated:

Effective proclamation of the gospel

- v.1,3

- Gives power to proclaim in appropriate ways
 - people still become Christians!
 - 7 new Christians at one camp at Lendrick Muir at Easter
 - couple of folk within the orbit of this congregation over past year

Miraculous signs and wonders

- v.3, 8

- Do still happen!

Physical protection

- v.19,20

- Many stories of God protecting

Steady Discipleship

- v.21-28

- Not so spectacular, but essential to long term health
 - steady discipleship of growing faith
 - teaching in faith, encouragement to keep on
 - call to remain true even in face of hardships (v.22)
 - appointment of good leaders, full of faith
 - prayer & fasting
 - accountability (v.27)
 - time (v.28)

Conclusion

- The message of salvation will not be thwarted
- Opposition will come - in various forms!
- Remain true to our Lord and keep our call to proclaim firmly at the top of our list of our priorities!