

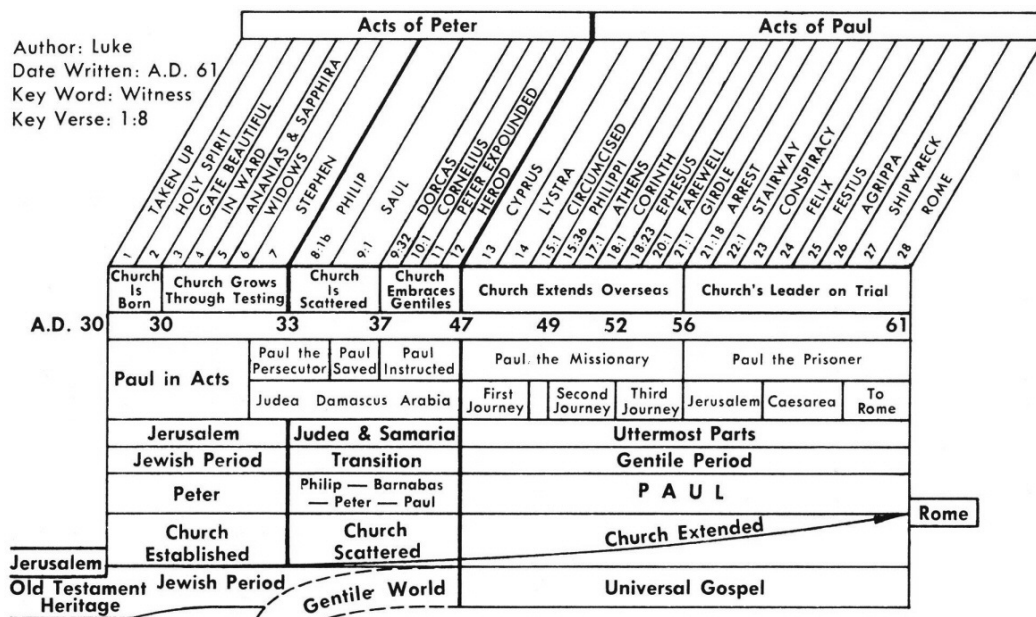
# Acts 14 Commentary

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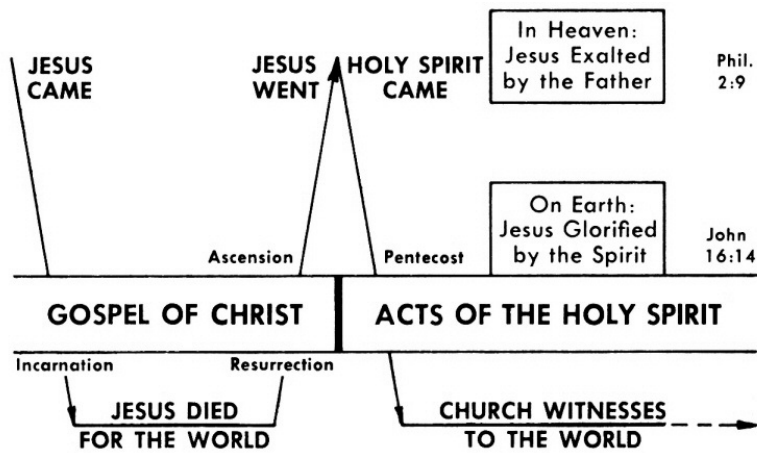
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Click chart to enlarge

Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

## THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Considering the fact that Acts 13 is such a strategic chapter in regard to world evangelism, take a moment and study Irving Jensen's chart at top of the page (click it to enlarge it which is what I have to do at age 72!). Notice the **bold vertical line** (|) at the end of Acts 12 and beginning of Acts 13 which Jensen estimates to be about year 47 (it could be a short time prior). Note the horizontal description of "Church" - **Church Established** in the first 13 years from Acts 1 through Acts 7, then the **Church Scattered** between Acts 8 through Acts 12, which occurred over a period of about 14 years (and remember all dates and times are at best approximations because Luke gives only a few events that allow us to give specific dates, such as the death of Herod in A D 44 in Acts 12:23) and lastly, beginning in Acts 13 (and until the end of this age), the **Church Extended**, this extension being the primarily the fruit of Paul's Three Missionary Journeys which "upset the world!" (Acts 17:6) Now, you have a good grasp of the chronological context of Acts 13. And as they say in the restaurant when your delicious meal is served "Enjoy!" The three missionary journeys are summarized below (this note will be repeated in subsequent chapters). Click links for the maps of each journey.

<a href="#">Paul's First Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 13:4-14:28
<a href="#">Paul's Second Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 15:36-18:22
<a href="#">Paul's Third Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 18:23-21:26

- Maps in table above are from the **Holman Bible Atlas** ([digital book](#); [Hardcover/Paperback version](#)) copyrighted © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, used by permission, all rights reserved. This is one of the best resources for Bible maps as the maps also include helpful short descriptions of the events portrayed on the maps. Please do not download for use on another website. Thank you.
- [Here is a map](#) with all three journeys on one map.

## THE ITINERARY OF PAUL'S THREE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD

1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 13:1-3	1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 15:36-40	1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:23
2. <a href="#">Seleucia</a> Acts 13:4	2. <a href="#">Syria</a> Acts 15:41	2. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 18:23-28
3. <a href="#">Salamis on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:5	3. <a href="#">Cilicia</a> Acts 15:41	3. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 19:1-41
4. <a href="#">Paphos on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:6-12	4. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 16:1	4. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:1
5. <a href="#">Perga in Pamphylia</a> Acts 13:13	5. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 16:1-5	5. <a href="#">Greece</a> Acts 20:2
6. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 13:14-50	6. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 16:6	6. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:3-5
7. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 13:51	7. <a href="#">Mysia</a> Acts 16:7	7. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 20:6
8. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:6-20	8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 16:8-10	8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 20:6-12
9. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 14:20	9. <a href="#">Samothrace</a> Acts 16:11	9. <a href="#">Assos</a> Acts 20:13
10. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:21	10. <a href="#">Neapolis</a> Acts 16:11	10. <a href="#">Mitylene</a> Acts 20:14
11. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 14:21	11. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 16:12	11. <a href="#">Samos</a> Acts 20:15
12. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 14:21	12. <a href="#">Amphipolis</a> Acts 17:1	12. <a href="#">Miletus</a> Acts 20:15-38
13. <a href="#">Pamphylia</a> Acts 14:24	13. <a href="#">Apollonia</a> Acts 17:1	13. <a href="#">Cos</a> Acts 21:1
14. <a href="#">Perga</a> Acts 14:25	14. <a href="#">Thessalonica</a> Acts 17:1-9	14. <a href="#">Rhodes</a> Acts 21:1
15. <a href="#">Attalia</a> Acts 14:25	15. <a href="#">Berea</a> Acts 17:10-14	15. <a href="#">Patara</a> Acts 21:1
16. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 14:26	16. <a href="#">Athens</a> Acts 17:15-34	16. <a href="#">Tyre</a> Acts 21:3-6
	17. <a href="#">Corinth</a> Acts 18:1-17	17. <a href="#">Ptolemais</a> Acts 21:7
	18. <a href="#">Cenchreae</a> Acts 18:18	18. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 21:8-14
	19. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 18:19	
	20. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 18:22	
	21. <a href="#">Jerusalem</a> Acts 18:22	
	22. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:22	

**Charles Swindoll** ([Insights on Acts](#)) points out that "When we study the journeys of Paul in the book of Acts, we're not just reading the travel log of a man; we're observing the redemptive plan of God unfolding as He promised. Through the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, God's mission to reclaim His creation from the death grip of evil would move to its next stage. The plan of this mission was outlined in the Lord's promise at His ascension, where He said,

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...

1. In Jerusalem [Stage 1: Acts 2–7],
2. and in all Judea and Samaria [Stage 2: Acts 8–12],
3. and even to the remotest part of the earth [Stage 3: Acts 13–28]." (Acts 1:8-)

[Greg Herrick's outline](#) of the First Missionary Journey

1. The Holy Spirit Set Paul and Barnabas Apart (Acts 13:1-3)
2. Cyprus and the Proconsul (Acts 13:4-12)
3. Pisidian Antioch: Paul's Sermon & the Reaction (Acts 13:13-52)
4. From Iconium to Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:1-7)
5. Lystra: A Lame Man Healed & the Reaction (Acts 14:8-20a)
6. The Return to and Stay at Antioch (Acts 14:20b-28)

**Acts 14:1** In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. ([NASB95](#))

KJV Acts 14:1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

NET Acts 14:1 The same thing happened in Iconium when Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a large group of both Jews and Greeks believed.

- **In Iconium** Acts 13:51
- **they entered the synagogue of the Jews** Acts 9:20; 13:46; 17:1,2,17; 18:4; 19:8
- **that a** Acts 14:21; 11:21; 13:43,46; 17:4; 18:8
- **Greeks** Acts 14:2; 16:1; 17:12; 18:4; 19:10,17; 20:21; 21:28; Mark 7:26; John 7:35; \*marg;; John 12:20; Romans 1:16; 10:12; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; Galatians 2:3; 3:28; Colossians 3:11

Pisidian Antioch > Iconium > Lystra > Derbe  
 Click to Enlarge

PAUL'S PATTERN: TO THE JEW FIRST	
LOCATION	REFERENCE
1. Damascus	1. Acts 9:20
2. Jerusalem	2. Acts 9:28-29
3. Salamis	3. Acts 13:5
4. Pisidian Antioch	4. Acts 13:14
5. Iconium	5. Acts 14:1
6. Philippi	6. Acts 16:13
7. Thessalonica	7. Acts 17:1-2
8. Berea	8. Acts 17:10
9. Athens	9. Acts 17:16-17
10. Corinth	10. Acts 18:1-4
11. Ephesus	11. Acts 18:19; 19:8
12. Rome	12. Acts 28:17

### A FRESH START IN ICONIUM

So here we see that in spite of the clear declaration of purpose in Acts 13:46, Paul did not indicate he was completely turning away from the Jews but in context was turning away from the "rejecters" in Antioch. (cf Jesus' words in Mt 7:6+. Pr 23:9, Heb 10:29+). And so in Iconium he seeks to make a fresh start with the Gospel of grace.

**Time context** - There is no clear cut consensus, so with that caveat, the First Missionary Journey is estimated as AD 46-47 (some say 47-48)

Note that the old version of the NAS (1977), Young's Literal and the KJV all begin with the word "**And**" which serves to couple or link Acts 13 closely with Acts 14.

**Ray Stedman** has some challenging words for the church in America - We call this series of messages "**The Pattern Setters**" because, in this section of Acts, you find **the pattern for all Christian witness in any age**. If this pattern is followed it will always result in the same reactions that you find recorded in this book. The church is intended to live in the atmosphere and to manifest accomplishments of the book of Acts -- throughout its whole history. If it has not (as it certainly has not at times) it is because the pattern has been neglected. This is why it is so important that we pay careful attention to this pattern. There have been many zealous evangelical organizations, both contemporary and past, which have taken the motto, "The evangelization of the world in our generation." That is a perfectly scriptural goal. The fulfillment of the great commission is to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15KJV). But these organizations ultimately have failed of their goal, not because they were not zealous, eager, committed, and dedicated, nor because there were not tremendous amounts of money made available to back them in their enterprise. They failed because they missed the apostolic method." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**In Iconium** - Context - We are still following the missionaries on their [First Missionary Journey](#), (Acts 13:4-14:28). They have been run out of Antioch and traveled the 80 miles to Iconium on the paved highway, [Via Sebaste](#) ([PICTURE](#) Greek word "Sebaste" = Latin "Augustus"), which was a Roman road that extended from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Paul and Barnabas traveled through rolling countryside, then past the snow-capped peaks of the Sultan mountain range. The strenuous nature of this trip was

obvious. [Robertson](#) points out that "Strictly speaking at this time Lystra and Derbe were cities of Lycaonia-Galatica while Iconium was in Phrygia-Galatica (all three in the Roman Province of Galatia).

**Iconium** was at the meeting place of several Roman roads and on the highway from east to west. "**Iconium** was an agricultural center famous for its wheat fields and orchards of apricots and plums. **Iconium's** ideal location and climate helped establish its place as a major link in the trade routes between Syria, Ephesus, and Rome. And so it was an ideal center for missionary activity and church planting, as several great roads intersected one another here.

Although Iconium was a capital for the Lycaonian district (cf. Acts 14:6, 11), inscriptions indicate that the Phrygian language was also in use there. **John Stott** tells us, "It was still a Greek city when Paul and Barnabas visited it" (Message of Acts, 228). In Scripture we see Paul's pattern was to proclaim the gospel to large, influential cities in a region and then working outward from there.

**Constable** adds that "Iconium was a Greek city-state in the geographic region of Phrygia. "While Rome chose Antioch of Pisidia and Lystra as bastions of its authority in the area, **Iconium** remained largely Greek in temper and somewhat resistant to Roman influence, though Hadrian later made it a Roman colony." "**Iconium**" comes from **eikon**, the Greek word for "**image**." According to Greek mythology, Prometheus and Athena recreated humanity there after a devastating flood by making images of people from mud and breathing life into them (ibid., pp. 431-32). (Longnecker). ([Acts 13 Commentary](#)) (Related - [Greek Mythology and the Gospel of Jesus Christ](#))

So even the name of the city was pagan, a name that speaks of idols (cf use in Ro 1:23, used for image of Antichrist - Rev 14:9, 11, 15:2, 16:2+), and yet God's inherently powerful Gospel light proclaimed by these Spirit empowered missionaries would shine forth brilliantly even to this dark place and would rescue many "from the domain of darkness,(transferring them) to the kingdom of His beloved Son." (Col 1:13+) America is becoming a nation of idolatry and spiritual darkness and yet the Gospel is still the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Ro 1:16+).

**ISBE on Iconium** - In what remains the definitive essay (in [Cities of St. Paul](#)), [Sir William Ramsay](#) likened Iconium to Damascus. The physical setting is similar: Iconium is close to the mountains on a high, fertile plateau that is well watered by large streams. Again, Iconium is not suited to military defense, and it thus became a prosperous city of peace and commerce as well as a center of agriculture. Furthermore, Iconium was on a major trade route (between Ephesus and Syria) and was an important crossroads of the Roman empire, with no less than five roads radiating from it....Iconium lies close to the border between Phrygia and Lycaonia, and thus it has been associated with both regions. So far as topography is concerned, Iconium is naturally suited to be the capital of the region of Lycaonia. Yet the city was regarded in earliest times as Phrygian; its inhabitants were of Phrygian (not Lycaonian) descent, although in later times the educated classes took pride above all in their Hellenism. Archeological evidence verifies the persistence of the Phrygian language. The religion of the area was the native Phrygian Cybele worship, which, however, took on Greek dress in the Hellenistic period. In this period Iconium was governed successively by the Seleucids, Galatians, and the kings of Pontus. This period was followed by the Roman conquest under Mithradates VI. Mark Antony gave Iconium to Polemon of Cilicia and shortly thereafter it came under the rule of Amyntas of Galatia. Iconium was commonly regarded as a city of Lycaonia from 100 B.C. to A.D. 100, despite the existence of references (both before and after this period) to the city as Phrygian.....After becoming a part of the Roman empire, the city retained its Hellenistic character: only in reference to Iconium, of all the cities of Asia Minor, does Acts mention "Hellenes" (Acts 14:1; 16:1, 3). Nearby Lystra and Antioch were utilized as military outposts and were more subject to Romanization. Nevertheless, Iconium was honored by Rome for loyalty, receiving from Claudius the imperial name Claudiconium (ca A.D. 41) and achieving the favored status of a Roman colony from Hadrian (ca A.D. 135). Although Iconium is not mentioned by name, Paul very probably visited the city on his second (Acts 16:6) and third (Acts 18:23) missionary journeys. According to the so-called South Galatian theory, Iconium (with Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe) was one of the churches addressed by Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

**Arnold** - Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were cities in the province of Galatia. The whole area of Galatia was notorious for its impenetrable paganism. The people who settled in Galatia were Gauls, a Celtic tribe from the same stock which inhabited France. They were a warlike people and in 189 B.C. they were made subjects of the Roman Empire. They were fiercely nationalistic and held on to their customs and language. Caesar said of the Gauls, "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted." ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Bock** adds that "Paul and Barnabas move to a city on a high plateau over the plains,**Iconium** (v. 1a), sitting at an altitude of 3,370 feet. It was a culturally mixed city. The missionaries are traveling the well-known Roman commercial road known as the Via Sebaste or Royal Road (Witherington 1998: 418)...Iconium was in the central part of what is now Konya province in Turkey, a rugged, somewhat isolated location on a plateau in the steppes of central Turkey. It was a ruling center in the region (Schnabel 2004: 1111). Strabo (Geogr. 12.6.1) describes the region aptly as cold, bare of trees, with scarcity of water, while the town is well settled. " ([Acts \(Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament\) - Page 241](#)).

**Utley** on **Iconium** - There is a second century non-canonical book known as [The Acts of Paul and Thekla](#), which is reported to be Paul's activities in Iconium. This book possibly contains the only physical descriptions of Paul ever recorded: short, bald, bowlegged, heavy eyebrows, and protruding eyes. It is quite uninspired and yet reflects the impact that the Apostle Paul had in this region of Asia Minor. Most of this area was in the Roman Province of Galatia. **(ED: BE A BEREAN REGARDING ANY EXTRA-BIBLICAL WRITINGS SUCH AS THE ONE TO WHICH UTLEY REFERS! cf 1 Th 5:21-22+)**

**Jack Arnold** writes that "Acts 14 is a chapter which tells us about the patterns which were set up in first century evangelism. These patterns not only include certain methods but also include certain psychological and spiritual patterns which occur when the Gospel is preached. There was always a positive and negative response to the preached Word. Usually there was some kind of persecution from the Jews or Gentiles who were rejecters of Christ. Lastly, there was also the devices of Satan to keep the Gospel from spreading. Satan has a pattern to his opposition and he always strikes when the message of Christ is preached with power and when a person least expects it. Acts 14 is a pattern for all Christian witness in any age. If this pattern is followed today, it will always result in the same reactions that you find recorded in the book of Acts. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Ray Stedman** observes that "In Iconium, though this was a pagan city, a Gentile city, there was a strong colony of Jews who had a synagogue. Paul and Barnabas went right to it because the Jews were already familiar with the Scriptures and they valued the truth about God. So Paul and Barnabas began with the most natural contact that they had. That is the first rule of witnessing: **Start right where you are with your most natural contact.** Start with those who have some degree of knowledge about the Scriptures, or about truth, about life, or with those who have some interest along this line. Or start with that element in a person's life which you perceive is involved with the purposes of God. In other words, there is always a contact which will lead into the area you want to talk about. This is where Paul and Barnabas began, even in this pagan city. When they came into the synagogue they found an immediate response. This is a second mark of the gospel as it is genuinely preached. **There is always an immediate impact.** This was no bland, meaningless gospel; it was a gospel that hit like a ton of bricks. It hit with power and impact. It shook people and jolted them and made them sit up and take notice. Immediately a great crowd believed when they heard Paul and Barnabas...**A third mark of a genuine gospel message is that it will arouse opposition.**" ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**They entered the synagogue of the Jews - They** = Paul and Barnabas. Now think about the context for a moment. What had just occurred in Antioch? They had been thrown out of the Synagogue and [run out to town on a rail](#) as the old saying goes ([note](#))! (Acts 13:50+) And yet the first place they visit in **Iconium** is the **Synagogue**. One would either say they are bold or stupid! Clearly, they were **bold**, Spirit filled men and they were not about to deviate from the divine plan that had already yielded spiritual fruit among the **Jews** in Antioch. (cf Acts 13:43+)

**THOUGHT** - Have you ever known that you would be opposed for speaking faithfully for Christ in a certain situation and yet did so anyway? The type of courage needed for encounters like that comes from the enabling power of the Spirit (Acts 4:29-31). (Merida)

**Tony Merida** - Luke records three stages of the missionaries' visit in Iconium. In stage 1 they minister in the synagogue (v. 1). In stage 2 they minister outside the synagogue (vv. 2-4). In stage 3, in response to physical threats, they flee to the cities of Lycaonia (vv. 5-7). ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

To review, there are at least 5 reasons they would first enter a Jewish synagogue -

(1) The Gospel is "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek." (Ro 1:16+). In Acts 13:46+ the missionaries addressed the Jews stating "**It was necessary** (obligation) that the Word of God be spoken to you first..." Paul's unremitting concern was for his people (read Ro 9:1-5+, Ro 10:1+). In addition, Peter had already established that the inauguration of the coming [Messianic Kingdom](#) was dependent upon Jewish response to the Gospel (Acts 3:19-20+) Jesus Himself had declared to the twelve disciples "'Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but **rather go to the lost** ([apollumi](#) literally "perishing" in perfect tense = their enduring state/status) **sheep of the house of Israel.**" (Mt 10:5-6). Finally, Jesus Himself promised the Jews that "from now on you will not see Me until (implies they will see Him and will cry out - cf Zech 12:10-14+) you say, ("*Baruch ha ba b'shem Adonai,*") 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Mt 23:39).

(2) Gentile proselytes (those Gentiles who had been circumcised, baptized, and offered sacrifices) and God-fearing Gentiles (short of full fledged proselytes) would have been in the synagogue (cf Jesus' call to Paul "to bear My name **before the Gentiles** and kings and the sons of Israel." Acts 9:15+) And in Acts 26:17+ Jesus had told Paul (I am)."rescuing you from the Jewish people and **from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you.**"

(3) The Jews would be the most logical initial contacts because they had knowledge of the OT Scriptures, which the missionaries would use in their "apologetic" presentations (see Paul's first recorded sermon in Acts

13:16-22<sup>±</sup> in which he gives a "Walk Thru the Bible" Jewish style, i.e., with focus on the OT). Paul's "procedure here is exactly as at Damascus, where he proceeded to preach in the synagogues immediately after his conversion (Acts 9:20<sup>±</sup> = "immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."")" (Ramsay)

(4) The Abrahamic Covenant had not been nullified - Ge 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you" (This promise of blessing should motivate us to go to our Jewish friends, etc)

(5) The law of natural affinity - to his own ethnicity, the Jews.

**Stanley Toussaint** has some additional thoughts to consider (there is some repetition) - It was necessary that the apostles go to the Jews first for a number of reasons. First, the coming of the earthly kingdom depended on Israel's response to the coming of Christ (cf. Mt. 23:39; Ro 11:26). Second, only after Israel rejected the Gospel could Paul devote himself to the Gentiles. Third, the message of Jesus is fundamentally Jewish in that the Old Testament, the Messiah, and the promises are all Jewish. (On "the Jew first," cf. Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16.) (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 16](#))

**Synagogue** (4864)(**sunagoge** from **sunágo** = lead together, assemble together) refers to a group of people "going with one another" (**sunago**) literally describes a bringing together and eventually, **sunagoge** came to mean the place where the Jews congregated together. The word was used to designate the buildings other than the Jewish Temple (in Jerusalem) where the Jews also congregated for worship. Historically, the Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the 586 BC destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and served as places of worship and instruction. **Synagogues** should have been (and frequently were) a place of teaching and proclamation of the Gospel (Mt 4:23, 9:35, 12:9, 13:54, Mk 6:2, Lk 4:15, 16, Lk 4:44, 6:6, 13:10, Jn 6:59, 18:20, Acts 9:20 = Paul immediately "began to proclaim Jesus," Acts 13:5 = Paul proclaimed "the word of God," Acts 14:1 = place Paul, et al, spoke and where "a large number of people believed," Acts 17:17, 18:4, 18:19, 19:8 = Paul, et al reasoned with various audiences in synagogues).

**Jack Arnold** - The plan of evangelism for these early Christians was to go to the Jewish synagogue first because these people were already acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures and many Gentile proselytes were receptive to the Gospel. The principle for us today should be to reach Jews first, if possible, and explain the Gospel to people in liberal churches who still have some respect for the written Word of God but who may not be Christian at all. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**THOUGHT** - Notice how the missionaries started with the most natural contact. The principle is that we should witness to those with whom we have natural contacts first -- family, friends, church associations and so forth. (Arnold)

Based on the recorded synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:17-41) Paul most likely gave a similar message climaxing with the Person and work of Jesus the Messiah.

## **THE GOSPEL WAS EFFECTIVE THE MEN WERE AVAILABLE**

**And spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed**- The **large number of people** includes both Jews and Gentiles. The **NIV** translates it "There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed." While that translation is not incorrect, it tends to suggest that the positive response is related to the fact that they were such "**effective**" speakers. The phrase **spoke in such a manner** could also suggest that Paul was so eloquent, confident, and convincing that he persuaded the hearers to believe. While he was undoubtedly a gifted speaker, Paul's "secret" came because he preached under the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the message was "anointed" and empowered by the Spirit. The truth is that the Spirit of God was prospering their proclamation of the powerful Gospel. And as God's living and active Word always does, it produced a division of receivers and rejecters.

**THOUGHT** - You may not be the most "effective" or eloquent speaker, but do not let that deter you from declaring the Gospel (which itself has inherent power - [dunamis](#) - Ro 1:16+) for it is the Spirit Who will give you boldness and Who will open doors of opportunity. Remember that the greatest evangelist of the 19th century D L Moody was untaught and unlettered. In fact one biographer said as result of his preaching "A great spiritual awakening swept the United Kingdom. An **uneducated** and, to British tastes, **somewhat crude and boorish** American led the way." In Moody's natural ability he was not the most eloquent speaker, but empowered by the Spirit and speaking forth the inherently powerful Gospel, God used him like Paul and Barnabas so that "a large number of people believed" both in Britain and the United States. The lesson dear shy brother or sister in Christ is that you may not be oratorically eloquent, but it matters not to God. What

matters to God is not your **ability** but your **availability!** Your job is to be faithful and His is to be fruitful. Are you available? Are you filled with His Spirit and the Word of His Gospel? Then you are ready to speak "in such a manner" as did Paul and Barnabas!

**Iconium** is [modern day Konya](#) and now the major "religious" structure is not a church steeple but a mosque spire, [Konya Aziziye Mosque](#) ([pix](#)). One is reminded of the failure to obey Paul's charge to make disciples in 2 Ti 2:2 and John's warning to the church at Ephesus only one generation after Paul and Timothy had ministered there - Rev 2:4-5+ "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent."

**Larkin** on **large numbers of people believed** - Luke delights in portraying the effectiveness of preaching in quantitative terms (Acts 13:43, Acts 13:44; Acts 14:21) and the church in a growth mode (Acts 2:47; Acts 4:4; Acts 5:14; Acts 6:7; Acts 9:31; Acts 11:21). This is certainly a challenge to church leaders in status quo or declining situations. ([The First Missionary Journey \(13:1-14:28\)](#))

**Jack Andrews** emphasizes that it was not the missionaries' eloquence or convincing manner, but it was God working in and through them. He adds that "Anything Paul and Barnabas could have talked them into the devil could have talked them out of!" Woe that hurts! And I can attest to that principle, for one day (the day before Easter Sunday) I ostensibly led an avowed atheist to accept Jesus Christ (or so I thought). Subsequently he turned down my repeated efforts to seek to disciple him. And only a few months later I heard that he had joined a nudist colony. He also began sending me hateful, anti-God letters out how foolish I as a medical doctor was to believe the myths of the Bible! ([How do I know the Bible is not just mythology?](#)) So much for my great eloquence and salesmanship! God taught me a very needed lesson over 30 years ago and I have never forgotten that when I share the Gospel it is in His power and for His glory! ([Expository Sermons](#))

Paul later emphasizes that it was not his ability writing

And when I came to you, brethren (CORINTH), I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you **in weakness** ([astheneia](#) same word he used in 2 Cor 12:9+, 2 Cor 12:10+) and in fear and in much trembling ([tromos](#) used in Php 2:12+), 4 and **my message** ([logos](#) - in context = the Gospel) **and my preaching** ([kerugma](#)) **were not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but in **demonstration** (apodeixis means the truth and genuineness of the Gospel were proven by the spiritual power which accompanied his preaching) **of the Spirit and of power** ([dunamis](#) - inherent supernatural power - the Spirit Source of power and Gospel is source of power - "double power") 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the **power** ([dunamis](#)) of God. (1 Cor 2:1-5, read the promise in Isaiah 55:10,11)

**Arnold** comments - It is impossible with good rhetoric alone to win men to Christ. There must also be the power and demonstration of the Spirit who breaks through man's blindness, rebellion and corruption so that a person is enabled to believe in Christ. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**THOUGHT** - Note the pattern - Paul's weakness made him the perfect "vessel" through which God could demonstrate His Spirit's power. There is an important principle here - when we are "strong" in our own strength, it is very likely that we will experience much less if any of the power of God's Spirit. It is always good to study and prepare for preaching and teaching, but always with an ultimate reliance not on our efforts but God's supernatural provision. As Paul wrote "**Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves**, BUT our adequacy is from God, Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:5-6+).

**Believed** (4100) ([pisteuo](#) from [pistis](#)) means that Sergius considered **the teaching** to be true and therefore worthy of his trust. Sergius had a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of the Gospel to save him from the guttermost to the uttermost! It appears that in this context [pisteuo](#) speaks of genuine faith that saves their soul from eternal damnation. In other words, in this passage [pisteuo](#) refers to a "heart belief" (saving faith, genuine belief) and not simply an intellectual belief (mental assent, "head" knowledge). We see an example of non-saving intellectual belief in John 8:30 where "many (JEWS) came to believe ([pisteuo](#)) in Him." Jesus goes on to tell them that continuance in His Word will authenticate they are genuine disciples (believers) (Jn 8:31,32). Jesus then plainly tells them (those who had "believed" in Him) "because I speak the truth, **you do not believe** ([pisteuo](#)) Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, **why do you not believe Me?** He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, **because you are not of God.**" (Jn 8:45-47)

**W E Vine** summarizes the belief that saves one's soul as having 3 general components...

(1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth



(2) a personal surrender to the Truth

(3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender (See the relationship of faith and obedience - [obedience of faith](#) or [What is the relationship of faith, works, and security in salvation?](#)) As the reformers said faith alone saves, but the faith that genuinely saves is not alone.

**Both of Jews and of Greeks** - So clearly there were Gentile God fearers (or possibly proselytes) in this synagogue just as they had encountered at Pisidian Antioch.

**Jews** (2453) ([loudaios](#) ultimately derived from Hebrew Yehudi = a member of the tribe of Judah) is an adjective refers to one who belongs to the Jewish race with focus on adherence to Mosaic tradition (Acts 10:28, 22:3, 21:39) and refers to a Jew in respect to race or religion (as opposed to Gentiles). In John's Gospel loudaios was used of those hostile to Jesus, especially the Jewish leaders (Jn 2:18, 5:16ff, 6:41, 7:1, 10:31ff, 19:7). Jews hated the missionary activity of Paul (Acts 9:23, 13:45, 14:19, 20:3, 21:27, 23:12, 25:7).

**Greeks** (1672)([Hellen](#)) means a Greek, one who speaks Greek and practices Greek culture. **BDAG** says "cultured Romans affected interest in things Greek and would therefore recognize themselves under this term" (as in Ro 1:14) Hellen is a Gentile, non-Jew, or as **BDAG** says "in the broader sense, all persons who came under the influence of Greek, as distinguished from Israel's culture" (Ac 11:20; 20:21; 1 Cor 1:24; Gal 3:28) Greeks are also spoken of as Gentile converts to Judaism or Greek proselytes (John 12:20) and 'God-fearers' or people in sympathy with Israel's heritage (Acts 14:1; 17:4; 18:4).

**Friberg** - (1) culturally, a person of Greek language and civilization, Greek (Ro 1.14), opposite foreigner; (2) in a religious sense Gentile, non-Jew, pagan (Jn 7.35), opposite Jew

**Zodhiates** - Distinction should be made, however, between the **Greeks** (Héllēnes) and the **Grecians** (Hellēnistáí [1675](#)). The **Greeks** were the Greeks by birth (Acts 16:1, 3; 18:17), or else Gentiles as opposed to Jews (Rom. 2:9, 10), while the **Grecians** (Hellēnistáí) **were foreign Greek-speaking Jews** as distinct from those in Palestine who were called Hebrews (**ED**: HELLENISTES USED ONLY 3X - Acts 6:1, Acts 9:29, Acts 11:20). The Greeks and Hebrews first met when the Tyrians sold the Jews to the Greeks (Joel 3:6). Greece is noted prophetically in Dan. 8:21 where the history of Alexander and his successors is rapidly sketched. Zech. 9:13 foretells the triumphs of the Maccabees over the Graeco-Syrian Empire, while Isaiah looks forward to the conversion of the Greeks, among other Gentiles, through the instrumentality of Jewish missionaries (Isa. 66:19). After the complete subjection of the Greeks by the Romans, and the absorption into the Roman Empire of the kingdoms which were formed out of the dominions of Alexander, the political connection between the Greeks and the Jews as two independent nations no longer existed. (Borrow [The Complete Word Study Dictionary](#).)

**Hellen** - 26x in 25v - Jn. 7:35; Jn. 12:20; Acts 11:20; Acts 14:1; Acts 16:1; Acts 16:3; Acts 17:4; Acts 18:4; Acts 19:10; Acts 19:17; Acts 20:21; Acts 21:28; Rom. 1:14; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 2:9; Rom. 2:10; Rom. 3:9; Rom. 10:12; 1 Co. 1:22; 1 Co. 1:24; 1 Co. 10:32; 1 Co. 12:13; Gal. 2:3; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11

**Hellen** in the Septuagint - Isa. 9:12; Dan. 8:21; Dan. 10:20; Dan. 11:2; Joel 3:6; Zech. 9:13;

**Acts 14:2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.**

KJV Acts 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

NET Acts 14:2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and **poisoned their minds** against the brothers.

NLT Acts 14:2 Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and **poisoned the minds** of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas.

ESV Acts 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and **poisoned their minds** against the brothers.

CSB Acts 14:2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up and **poisoned the minds** of the Gentiles against the brothers.

NIV Acts 14:2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and **poisoned their minds** against the brothers.

NRS Acts 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and **poisoned their minds** against the

brothers.

- Acts 14:19; 13:45,50; 17:5,13; 18:12; 21:27-30; Mark 15:10,11; 1 Thessalonians 2:15,16

## JEW'S POISON THE MINDS OF GENTILES

**But** - Term of contrast. Belief is contrasted with disbelief. Believing **Jews and Greeks** are contrasted with the attitude and actions of the Jews who did not believe the Gospel. Again we see spiritual opposition, undoubtedly stimulated by Satanic forces in the heavenlies. He and his [minions](#) specialize in "counter-evangelism!" (e.g., see Lk 8:11, 12+) Satan hates genuine preaching of the Gospel and will never let it go unchallenged! The pattern is virtually identical to that seen in Antioch where the positive response to the Gospel ("word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region" - Acts 13:49+) brought about a negative reaction from those who rejected the Gospel ("But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution...." - Acts 13:50)

Ray Stedman notes that " the apostles ran into subtle opposition. No one knows exactly how the enemy is going to strike back. But God moves unexpectedly too. You cannot anticipate the actions of a creative God. **If you are walking in fellowship with God, depending on his Spirit, and expecting him to be active, you never know what is going to happen. You never know what sudden turn of events might open a door before you that you had not known existed, so that there is an opportunity for witness that you never heard of, or could not even have thought of before. This is the great advantage of the method of not trying to plan all the strategy ourselves.** On the other hand, the devil has a limited bag of tricks from which he can operate. Paul says, "We are not ignorant of his devices..." (2 Corinthians 2:11KJV). We know what they are. What we do not know is which one of them he is going to employ on any given occasion." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Jack Arnold** adds that "Persecution is part of preaching the Gospel, and Satan brings this persecution to discourage Christians in their witness. As one studies church history, he finds that the Gospel has always been met with great opposition." ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**The Jews who disbelieved** (NLT "spurned God's message", NIV, NET = "refused to believe") - So it is not the Gentiles who initially opposed the missionaries, but it was the rabid, anti-Gospel Jews. As explained below while the verb for **disbelieved** is also translated disobedient, clearly in this context the sense is that they did not believe the Gospel proclaimed by the missionaries.

As **A T Robertson** explains the verb **apeitheo** means "to be unwilling to be persuaded or to withhold belief and then also to withhold obedience. The two meanings run into one another. To disbelieve the word of God is to disobey God."

**Larkin** on **disbelieved** (apeitheo) - In biblical thought the supreme disobedience is not to believe God's word, in this case the gospel. It is a key term in the Pauline description of the Jewish rejection of the gospel (Rom 11:30-32; 10:21/Isa 65:2; cp Lk 1:17; Acts 19:9; Ro 2:8). ([The First Missionary Journey \(13:1-14:28\)](#))

**Disbelieved** (544) ([apeitheo](#) from **a** = without + **peitho** = persuade) literally describes one who refuses to be persuaded and who **disbelieves** willfully and perversely. While [apeitheo](#) is most often translated "disobedient" examination of two uses make it very clear that disbelief is also the meaning. For example in Hebrews 3:18+ we read "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were **disobedient** (apeitheo)?" Then the writer answers the question declaring that "we see that they were not able to enter because of **unbelief** (apistia)." (Heb 3:19+) Clearly, **disobedient** parallels **unbelief** .

In John 3:36 we read "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who **does not obey** ([apeitheo](#) - [present tense](#)) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Again, we see "**believes**" paralleled with "**does not obey**," Therefore it is clear that [apeitheo](#) speaks of disbelief. Commenting on John 3:36 **Marvin Vincent** writes that "**Disbelief** is regarded in its active manifestation, **disobedience**. The verb [peitho](#) means to persuade, to cause belief, to induce one to do something by persuading, and so runs into the meaning of to obey, properly as the result of persuasion. Obedience, however, includes faith. (Ed Note: See discussion of phrase "**obedience of faith**" at [Romans 1:5](#))."

**Apeitheo** speaks of a stubborn, stiff-necked attitude. It speaks of disbelief manifesting itself in disobedience. It is opposed to [pisteuo](#), the verb translated "believe". **Apeitheo** means not to allow oneself to be persuaded; not to comply with and to refuse or withhold belief (in the truth, but elsewhere in Christ, in the gospel) From the preceding comments, it should not surprise you to discover that in the New Testament the word group translated **disobey, disobedience, etc** ([apeitheo](#) and the related words [apeithes](#), [apeitheia](#) = unwillingness to be persuaded thus unbelieving as in Heb 4:6,11) does not stand in contrast with obedience but in contrast with faith! In sum, what is the essence of disobedience to the Gospel? Clearly it is unbelief, lack of faith, without which no man can be saved (cf Heb 11:6).

**Apeitheo** 14x in 14v in the NT - disbelieved(1), disobedient(10), do not obey(1), obey(2).

Jn 3:36; Acts 14:2; Acts 19:9; Ro 2:8; Ro 10:21; Ro 11:30; Ro 11:31; Ro 15:31; Heb. 3:18; Heb. 11:31; 1 Pe 2:8; 1 Pe 3:1; 1 Pe 3:20; 1 Pe 4:17

## **"ANTI-EVANGELISM" BY THE JEWS**

It is notable that just as genuine belief shows itself to be authentic by subsequent good works, so too disbelief shows itself to be authentic by its evil works. I like the way the old King James describes these "evil works" - those who disbelieved "made their minds evil affected against the brethren"

**Larkin** points out that "As in physics every action spawns an equal and opposite reaction, so in the spiritual realm the proclamation of the truth will always encounter opposition (Lk 8:12)." ([The First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28](#))

**Stirred up the minds of the Gentiles**- More literally they cause their minds to think evil. Unbelief likes company! This reminds one of the [enemy of my enemy is my friend](#) which says that two opposing parties (Jews and those who they normally held to be "Gentile dogs") can work together against a common enemy (Paul, the Gospel, the grace of God and ultimately God Himself!)

**THOUGHT** - "The greater the effectiveness of a ministry, the greater the resistance and opposition" (Tim Keller)

**Stirred up** ("poisoned") (1892)([epegeiro](#) from **epi** = upon + **egeiro** = to raise) literally means to wake up, awaken or arouse but is used only figuratively here and in Acts 13:50 and means to incite, to provoke, to stir up. **Epegeiro** is used widely in the Septuagint where it means to "be aroused against someone" or "rise up or revolt against someone." E.g., "the God of Israel **stirred up** (Lxx - epegeiro) the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them (NORTHERN 10 TRIBES) away into exile." (1 Chr 5:26) This is very likely the events to which Paul refers in 2 Ti 3:11<sub>±</sub> where he describes "persecutions ([diogmos](#)) and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch (Acts 13:50+), at Iconium (the present passage) and at Lystra (see Acts 14:19); what persecutions I endured, and out of them all (ALL) the Lord rescued me! (cf 2 Ti 4:17-18) ."

**ILLUSTRATION** - Almost all poisonous snakes have what we call hematox poison. Hematox poison goes straight to the blood stream and attacks the blood. There is one snake that is different and I believe he is kin to the old serpent Satan. The King Cobra snake has what we call [neurotoxin poison](#). When a King Cobra bites an animal or a person the poison goes to the mind. It poisons the mind and paralyzes the mind. It affects the whole person! Satan used the unbelieving Jews to sting the Gentiles with their venom that poisoned their minds. (Jack Andrews [Expository Sermons](#)).

**Larkin** explains that "Literally they "made their souls evil against," pointing to an assault on the feelings not intellect. (The "soul" is that inward place of feeling that may be influenced by others.)" ([The First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28](#))

**Stedman** - These men (Paul and Barnabas) were not met with the outright, open opposition they had faced in Antioch. Here it is subtle, whispering, deceitful, poisonous propoganda that is spread against them, and it had its effect. Many were turned away. ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Minds** (souls)(5590)([psuche](#) or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. However the discerning reader must understand that **psuche** is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the context. The **TDNT** (Volume IX) says that in the present context **psuche** conveys the sense of "the place of feeling" of "man as influenced by others" citing the influence of "the adversaries" on the Gentiles in Acts 14:2. In a somewhat similar sense in Acts 15:24+ Luke writes "Since we (JERUSALEM COUNCIL) have heard that some of our number (JEWS) to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed ([tarasso](#) = stirred up, troubled, thrown into confusion) you with their words, unsettling (anaskeuazo = unsettling someone's mind, troubling the mind) your souls ([psuche](#))."

**Darrell Bock** on **minds** - The term that is often rendered "mind" here is (psychē), which can refer to the feelings, emotions, and judgments of a person, so that it matches the idea of how the soul controls the thinking of a person (BAGD). In other words, not only did the Jews stir up Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, they so stirred them that they acted out their feelings in persecution. ([Acts \(Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament\) - Page 242](#))

**Gentiles** (1484)([ethnos](#) gives us our word "ethnic") in general refers to a multitude (especially persons) associated with one another, living together, united in kinship, culture or traditions and summed up by the words nation, Gentiles (especially when ethnos is plural), people (much like "people groups" in our modern missionary vernacular).

**And embittered them against the brethren** - The NLT, NRS, NET translate with the vivid description that the Jews "poisoned their (Gentiles) minds against the brothers." While the paraphrased version, the NLT, interprets **the brethren** to be Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:2NLT), the word **brethren** more likely indicates that the Jewish and Gentile **vitriol** was also poured on the new believers. And this may also help understand why the missionaries spent a long time there, for it would have been necessary to instruct the new disciples that now they are "swimming against" the prevailing current of the world system which opposed God and now be their intransigent, diehard, unrelenting, inveterate, tenacious, obstinate, unshakeable enemy! (cf 2 Ti 3:12+)

**Embittered** (2559) (**kakoo** from **kakos** = bad, evil) means to harm or do evil to - physically to mistreat (Acts 7:6) or morally to embitter or poison one's mind causing them to think badly about another (Acts 14:2). This same verb is used in the **Septuagint** of Ex 1:11 which describes Israel's mistreatment in Egypt (which Stephen alluded to in his sermon - Acts 7:6, 19). In Nu 20:15 Moses records "the Egyptians treated us and our fathers badly (**Lxx** = kakoo)." Kakoo is used in Acts 12:1 where "Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them" and in this case the "mistreatment" included killing James

**Kakoo** - 6x - Acts 7:6; Acts 7:19; Acts 12:1; Acts 14:2; Acts 18:10; 1 Pet. 3:13

**Acts 14:3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.**

KJV Acts 14:3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

- **therefore** 18:9-11; 19:10; 1 Corinthians 16:8,9
- **speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord** 13:46; Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:2
- **Who was testifying to the word of His grace** 2:22; 5:32; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:4
- **word of His grace** 20:24,32; Romans 1:16
- **granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands** 4:29,30; 5:12-14; 19:11,12

## RESOLVE IN FACE OF OPPOSITION

Preaching the Gospel arouses persecution which calls for persevering boldness, which necessitates continual dependence on the Holy Spirit! As we read Luke's description, we can envision the tension rising in the city, and to such an "elevated temperature" (so to speak) which would tend to intimidate most missionaries but which had the opposite, seemingly paradoxical effect of inspiring them rather than intimidating them! This time they did not shake the dust off their sandals but stood their ground, standing firmly on the Word of God.

**Larkin** rightly states that "Bold perseverance in the face of hostility is as much an evidence of the power of God as the great numbers who come to Christ (compare Acts 4:8+, Acts 4:13+ - confidence = **parrhesia** - boldness)." ([The First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28](#))

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. The conjunction **therefore** (**oun**) can indicate a response, and in this context (opposition in Acts 14:2) it is a seemingly paradoxical response as the missionaries stay a long time rather than turning tail and running! **Toussaint** suggests "It may indicate that the opposition was an evidence of God's working in the hearts of the people (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8-9), thus leading to further preaching." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

**Stedman** comments on **spent a long time** - "During this time, despite the subtle propaganda poisoning people's minds against the gospel, there was nevertheless a sweeping proclamation of the gospel going forward and many were turning to Christ. And God worked with them, confirming the word with signs and wonders. **That is the fourth element, and it is always present when the true gospel is being preached. There is a baffling quality about it.** Things happen which are beyond the ability of men to produce. It is that baffling element which makes the gospel so attractive and compelling to the world. There is evidence that a supernatural God is at work. Now, it does not always involve physical miracles. It did in those days, and it does in certain places again today. It could in any age, but these physical miracles (as we have often seen) are but parables for us of the spiritual freedom that God intends to give. And that is largely the character of the miracles occurring today -- men and women are set free to be what they never could have been without Jesus Christ. Some of them struggle for years to free themselves from habits, thoughts, and attitudes that are harmful and injurious to them, and are never able to do it. But when they come to Christ he strikes off the shackles, and they are free." ([Counterattack](#))

**THOUGHT** - "That baffling supernatural element must be present in every single Christian. If there is not that quality about you as a Christian, which cannot be explained in terms of your personality, or your background or education, or something else, then you really have nothing more to offer to your neighbors and friends than any other person would have. There must be that mysterious element which makes people scratch their heads and say, "I don't understand him (or her). His attitude and reactions are unaccountable. I don't understand his ability to show love. It's something quite different from what I'm used to." That is God at work." (Stedman [Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**They spent a long time there speaking boldly** [*with reliance*] **upon the Lord** - "**With reliance**" is not in the Greek but is implied. Notice that their **speaking boldly** for a **long time** follows the Jews stirring up the Gentiles (Acts 14:2). This not the "natural" response to opposition. These men were fearless and filled! What Luke is saying is that the missionaries were relying on the promise of Jesus in Lk 24:49+ and Acts 1:8+ that they would receive supernatural power ([dunamis](#) - English "[dynamic](#)") from the Holy Spirit Who now indwelt and filled them! And although Luke does not specifically state that they prayed for boldness, such a prayer would be very in keeping with that practice even as we saw in Acts 4:29+ where they prayed "grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence ([parrhesia](#) - boldness), and the Lord answered in Acts 4:31+ when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness ([parrhesia](#))." ([see below](#) on Paul's prayer request in Eph 6:18, 19, 20+). This is a good pattern for every believer, every day, for then we are "always ready (ESV = "prepared" - [hetoimos](#)) to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Pe 3:15+). **Be ready! Be filled! Be bold!** But don't be shocked when you run into opposition!

[Robertson](#) says a **long time** is "Possibly 6 months," but the truth is that we really do not know how long. However the point is still poignant - faced with opposition, they did not draw back, but "dug in" (like trenches in the WWII that protected the soldiers and allowed them to hold ground in the crucial [Battle of the Bulge](#), Germany's last great offensive attack) and not just for a "short" time! While not quantitated, this was surely several weeks and possible several months as [Robertson](#) suggests. As **Jack Andrews** says "Effective ministry takes time...We are to stay where God wants us as long as God wants us!"

**Long** (2425) ([hikanos](#) from the root **hik-** = "to reach [with the hand]," "to attain", "reaching to", "attaining to"; hence, "adequate") refers to that which reaches or arrives at a certain standard. The primary meaning of **hikanos** is sufficient, and hence comes to be applied to number and quantity and so means **many** or **enough**. In reference to time **hikanos** means **long**. The word **hikanos** is FIRST in the Greek sentence which places emphasis on this word. It is as if Luke wants us not to miss that the missionaries tarried for quite a while. This same word **hikanos** is used in Acts 14:21 to describe "many disciples."

**Arnold** - "Opposition did not stifle their zeal but made them more determined to bear fruit for Christ. They spoke boldly, and as they spoke, they relied on the Lord by faith. Instead of being intimidated, they became more courageous in the face of opposition." ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Tony Merida** observes that "They preached about the grace of Jesus, while they relied on the grace of Jesus. Jesus uses people who depend on him (cf. John 15:5; 2 Cor 12:9-10). These missionaries are giving us a picture of grace-enabled grit that's necessary for enduring hardship in gospel ministry (cf. Eph 6:1; 2 Tim 1:8; 2:1). This boldness and stick-with-it-ness come from the Lord of heaven and earth, who promises to be with us as we make the gospel known (Matt 28:18-20)." ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

[John MacArthur](#) wrote, "**Boldness** is that essential quality without which nothing significant can be accomplished for the gospel." (Of course I agree with Dr MacArthur, but again would emphasize that this "**boldness**" must be supernaturally [endued](#), not naturally pursued.)

**Boldly** (3955) ([parrhesiazomai](#) from [parrhesia](#) = boldness, freedom in speaking with confidence <> **pas** = all + **rhesis** = speech) means literally speaking out every word and conveys the idea of freedom to say all and thus means to speak freely, openly, boldly, fearlessly, without constraint. The Greeks used this word for speaking in a democratic assembly. **Parrhesiazomai** describes the fearless and frank speaking of Paul and Barnabas even in the face of opposition. It is notable that bold speaking characterized Paul from the very inception of his ministry, Luke recording "at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus," (Acts 9:27) and later he was "moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord." (Acts 9:28+)

This is the same word used to describe Paul and Barnabas issuing a strong warning to those in Antioch who reject the Gospel...

Paul and Barnabas **spoke out boldly** and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46+)

**Parrhesiazomai** characterized Paul at Thessalonica where he writes "after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the **boldness** in our God **to speak** to you the Gospel of God amid much opposition." (1 Th 2:2+). **Parrhesiazomai** also described Apollos in Acts 18:26 where "he began to **speak out boldly** in the synagogue (IN

EPHESUS)" and later Paul who entered the synagogue (IN EPHESUS) and continued **speaking out boldly** for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8+)

Given the numerous times we see Paul speaking boldly, it is fascinating that in his epistle to the letter (in AD 62 roughly 14 years after his first visit to Iconium) he asks the saints at Ephesus for prayer for boldness!

Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with **boldness** ([parrhesia](#)) the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may **speak boldly** ([parrhesiazomai](#)), as I ought ([dei](#) = must, am under obligation) to speak. (Eph 6:19-20+)

**THOUGHT** - In Acts 4:31+ the church prayed "and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness." And in Ephesians 6 we see the greatest preacher of the Gospel asking for prayer for boldness to present the Gospel. If Paul felt the need for prayer for boldness, we also should surely confess a similar need. And so if we are somewhat shy about sharing our Savior, perhaps some supplication for Spirit enabled boldness is in order. When was the last time you specifically, expectantly ask God to give you boldness to share the Gospel? John writes "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will (SHARING HIS SON IS SURELY IN HIS WILL), He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (1 Jn 5:14,15+). As James 4:2KJV says "ye have not, because ye ask not." God grant us a desire to ask, for Jesus' sake. Amen

**Who was testifying** - Is this not fascinating? Who was actually doing the speaking, God or the missionaries? The missionaries were speaking boldly and yet Luke says it is as if God Himself was **testifying!** They were functioning in essence as God's "*Gospel mouthpieces*," and so should we beloved! God testified through their (Spirit enabled) **WORK** and His **WORD!** They were ready and able! One is reminded of Paul's words to Timothy that whoever "cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, **useful to the master** of the house, ready ([hetoimazo](#) in perfect tense = in a state of preparedness, ready) for every good ("God") work." (2Ti 2:21ESV+) Are you ready?

**To the word of His grace** - **The word of His grace** is a beautiful description of the the Gospel, which Paul later describes as **"the Gospel of the grace of God."** (Acts 20:24+). Recall that from their home church at Antioch (Syria) "they had been commended to **the grace of God** for the work" which would be accomplished by **the Gospel of the grace of God.**" This plethora of grace reminds us of John's words that "of His (Christ's) fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace.**" (Jn 1:16)

And so the missionaries preached a grace based message. They preached of God's unmerited favor which was manifest as power to convert a sinner, granting them forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt (justification - past tense salvation) and the supernatural power to daily live out the Gospel (progressive sanctification - present tense salvation). It was the word of His grace which undoubtedly upset the Jews who rejected that word in lieu of the word of His Law. And of course the problem was that grace opened the door to the hated Gentiles. Grace was God's unmerited favor, the absolute antithesis of keeping of the Law as a means of meriting God's favor (which of course it never could merit!). It was not the "word of works" but of grace. And so naturally these Jewish Law lovers were [implacable](#) Grace haters! And they hated anyone who proclaimed the Gospel of the grace of Christ. As **Merida** says the "scandalous message of grace enrages self-righteous legalists." (Listen to [Scandal of Grace](#)) Apparently their "toxic" influence continued after the church was founded Iconium (see [Judaizers](#)). Their unrelenting legalistic influence is one of the problems that prompted Paul's epistle to the Galatians (See Swindoll's "[What's the Big Idea](#)"; see also [MacArthur's Intro](#)). It is notable that at the very opening of his epistle to the Galatians Paul alluded to grace, penning words that likely were later read in Iconium...

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by **the grace of Christ**, for a different Gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the **Gospel of Christ.** (Gal 1:6-7+)

**Jack Andrews** comments that "When the gospel is preached He still honors His word, draws men and women, comforts the afflicted, afflicts the comfortable, and saves souls through His word of grace." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Grace** (favor) ([5485](#)) ([charis](#) from from [chairo](#) = to rejoice. English = charity. Beggars need "*charity*" even as sinners need *grace*, for we are all spiritual paupers outside of Christ, but "*God gives where he finds empty hands*"-Augustine [cp Mt 5:3+]) in simple terms is God's unmerited favor and supernatural enablement and empowerment for salvation and for daily sanctification. Grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything. Grace is what every man needs, what none can earn and what God Alone can and does freely give (cf Ro 8:32+ where "freely give" is [charizomai](#) from [charis](#) = a grace gift!). Grace addresses man's sin, while mercy addresses man's misery. **The Gospel of the grace of God** makes men fit for salvation, miraculously making separated strangers

into God's **beloved** sons (1Th 1:4±, 1Jn 3:1±, 1Jn 3:2±, 1Jn 3:3±).

**Testifying** (3140) (**martureo** from **mártus** = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something. English = **martyr**) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. Thus the verb **martureo** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. And how was God "testifying" or giving evidence of the Word of His grace? God was giving evidence of the validity of His word of grace by lives that had been transformed by that grace! Does your changed life bear witness of the Word of His grace?

**Granting** (present tense - continually) **that signs and wonders be done** (present tense - continually) **by their hands** - In context of the proclamation of the Gospel, the signs and wonders from God were their "**credentials**" serving to authenticate their message, and validate that Paul and Barnabas were indeed servants of the living God (cf Acts 15:12+, Gal 3:5+). Men and women were not saved by belief in the **signs and wonders** but by belief in the Gospel. Luke described a similar "barrage" of signs and wonder with Peter and John (Acts 2:43+; Acts 4:29ff+.; Acts 5:12+; cf. Heb. 2:4+). I like the **NET** and **CSB** translations which say "**through their hands**," for this (in my opinion) more accurately pictures the meaning of the preposition **dia**. As wordsmith **Marvin Vincent** observes "the writers (of Scripture) habitually use the preposition **dia** (through) to denote the instrumentality (Ed: serving as a means) through which God works or speaks." These two missionaries were simply "**spiritual conduits**," veritable "vessels of honor" (2Ti 2:21+), **through whom God worked miraculous signs and wonders**.

**John Piper** has an interesting comment noting that "even if **signs and wonders** can't save the soul, they can, if God pleases, shatter the shell of disinterest; they can shatter the shell of cynicism; they can shatter the shell of false religion. Like every other good witness to the word of grace, they can help the fallen heart to fix its gaze on the gospel where the soul-saving, self-authenticating glory of the Lord shines. Therefore the early church longed for God to stretch forth his hand to heal, and that signs and wonders be done in the name of Jesus." ([Are wonders against the Word?](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that "Faith is not *based on* miracles, but faith can be *bolstered by* miracles." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Jack Andrews** agrees commenting "That's exactly what God was doing through Paul and Barnabas. We need the power of God on us to combat the attack of unbelievers! We can expect nothing less when we serve Jesus. We can expect God to work through the power of the gospel message. We can expect opposition through the poisoning of the gentiles minds." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Gangel** writes that "All this took place in Galatia, so we can understand this ministry in light of the Galatian letter. There Paul tells us that these mighty works of the Spirit certified that God approved his gospel (Gal. 3:4-5+)." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 231](#))

**Longnecker** says **signs and wonders** "places the ministry of Paul and Barnabas directly in line with that of Jesus (cf. Acts 2:22+) and the early church (cf. Acts 2:43+; Acts 4:30+; Acts 5:12+; Acts 6:8+; Acts 7:36+) in fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Acts 2:19+)-as it does also in Acts 15:12. Later when writing his Galatian converts (assuming a "South Galatian" origin for the letter), Paul appeals to these mighty works performed by the Spirit as evidence that the gospel as he preached it and they received it was fully approved by God (cf. Galatians 3:4-5+)." (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Donald Grey Barnhouse** has an interesting note on **signs and wonders** - These **signs and wonders** were specially given to the apostles and early Christian church workers because there was no written New Testament as yet. Not a line of the New Testament had been written at this point, and there was no solid authority to which the apostles could point and say, "See, we're preaching truth. You can check it in the Word of God!" There was no completed Word of God. So God enabled the apostles to perform wonders and signs to authenticate their ministry, but these wonders and signs would fade as God's Word came into being.

**Signs** (4592) (**semeion** from **sema** = sign) a sign is something that serves as a pointer to aid perception or insight. In the NT a sign speaks of a token which has behind it a particular message to be conveyed. In other words, in John's Gospel (where semeion is most concentrated) the apostle recorded certain miracles not for the wonder (cf "wonders") they produced, but because of the message they taught (Jn 20:31). A **sign** directs attention away from its unusual nature to the meaning and the significance it points to. It speaks of outward compelling proof of divine authority. In John a sign is generally a "miraculous sign" that points to some deeper spiritual significance in connection with the event (Jn 2:11, 18). Most of the 77 occurrences are found in the Gospels (68/77 with 17 in John's Gospel), Acts and Revelation.

In other words, **signs** are intended to appeal to the understanding and "**wonders**" more to the imagination.

**Semeion** is common in Acts where it is frequently found in the phrase "**signs and wonders**" - (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12) which is interesting as Luke did not use this phrase in his Gospel. **Signs and wonders** occurs only twice in connection with false prophets in the Synoptics (Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22) and once in John (John 4:48). So what is the significance of **signs and wonders**? They can have an eschatological intent, signifying that the new age has dawned (Acts 2:19; cf. Joel 2:28). They are

"proofs" of Jesus' divine authority (Acts 2:22). And most significantly, **signs and wonders** (including healings and exorcisms cf. Acts 8:6,13) were carried out by the apostles (and others, cf. Stephen in Acts 6:8) as they were enabled by God (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12). The men were merely the "vessels" through which God's power was manifest. And the **signs** attested to God's activity among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). It is notable that **wonders** is never used by itself but always with **signs** so the idea seems to be that *"mere marvels have no intrinsic value in themselves except as they point beyond themselves to the divine power behind them and so lead to faith."* (Polhill - New American Commentary, p. 112). Stated another way, the sign serves to draw the attention or focus away from the wonder or marvel and so that one understands the wonders point to God and His power and authority.

**Charles Hodge** adds that "They are called **signs** because they are evidences of the exercise of God's power and proofs of the truth of his declarations, and **miracles** because of the effect which they produce on the minds of men.

**Toussaint** - Paul referred to these miracles to validate the reality of the gospel among the Galatians (Gal. 3:5) (This, of course, assumes the South Galatian view of the term "Galatia" in that epistle.). (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 391](#))

**Wonders** (5059) (**teras**) are similar to signs but appeal to the senses, being recognized as a phenomenon that needs to be explained. Something strange, exceptional, causing the beholder to marvel. **Teras** refers to "something strange", a phenomena which compels one's attention and causes one to "look again" or causes the beholder to marvel. **BDAG** says **teras** is "something that astounds because of transcendent association." **Teras** is derived from the verb **tereo** which means to keep, watch and thus conveys the idea of something which due to its extraordinary character is apt to be observed and kept in the memory. It is a miracle regarded as startling, imposing or amazing.

Someone has said that **signs and wonders** are like the "fingerprints" of God, valuable not so much for what they are as for what they indicate of the grace and power of the Doer. Before the full gospel message was recorded in what we now call the New Testament, God often used signs and wonders to authenticate true preaching and teaching. The ministry of the apostles, especially in the earliest days of the church, was accompanied by authenticating miracles. But it is notable that the word wonders was never used alone. The wonders stirred up awe in the people, but they needed a sign to point them to something (SOMEONE) greater than the wonder itself! In other words, wonders were not an end in themselves, but a divine means to God's intended end so that in combination with signs they pointed to the Source.

God-centered evangelism must be carried out "in the power of the Spirit of God." God's work must be done God's way in God's power or as Zechariah records "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zech 4:6)

That **signs and wonders** do not generate belief is shown in Matthew 8-9 where Jesus performed many acts to confirm Who He was and yet not all were convinced including "the Pharisees (who) were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." (Mt 9:34).

**Larkin** has an excellent summary on **signs and wonders** - Luke's presentation of signs and wonders here gives us criteria for judging claims today. Their true source must be God alone. They must occur at his initiative. Their fruit will not necessarily be an irresistible compulsion, so that all who witness and hear of them will believe. Rather, their true purpose and effect is "establishing the Gospel in its full and genuine authority" (Calvin 1966:3). Far from denigrating the verbal, cognitive appeal of the gospel in favor of the visual, experiential impact of miracle, Luke sees signs and wonders as confirming support to the gospel. These miracles at Iconium place the work of Paul and Barnabas in continuity with the mission of Jesus and "the Twelve" and bear witness to unbelieving Jews that the salvation blessings Israel experienced in the past and hoped for at the end of the age are now not only theirs but also the Gentiles' (Acts 2:22; Acts 5:12; Acts 15:12; Ex 7:3; Ps 135:9; Acts 2:19/Joel 2:30; Gal 3:4-5). ([The First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28](#))

The **Holman Apologetics Commentary** notes that "God often granted signs and wonders in the book of Acts, so why do things not continue in this same way today as Christians attempt to evangelize the world and bear witness in secular Western societies? The intense and consistent nature of signs and wonders in the book of Acts is not normative, but points to the arrival of a new era. A similar feature of clustered miracles happened at earlier points in biblical history, particularly at the time of the Exodus and the time of Elijah and Elisha. God did things with special intensification in those special periods, as a way of initiating new movements or new epochs of his work. The early church era is the exemplar of this approach. God in his sovereignty can choose to work miracles at any time and place, including today, but in the outworking of his plan there is variation in the intensity of these special signs." (Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible)

#### Related Resources:

- [Why do so many people seek after signs and wonders?](#)



- [What was the purpose of the biblical sign gifts?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about demonic/satanic miracles?](#)
- [How can we discern counterfeit miracles?](#)
- [Is cessationism biblical?](#)
- [What is the Latter Rain Movement?](#)
- [Are the miraculous gifts of the Spirit for today?](#)
- [What is the Charismatic movement?](#)
- [God's Purpose for Miracles by John MacArthur](#)

**Acts 14:4 But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.**

KJV Acts 14:4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

- **But the people of the city were divided** Micah 7:6; Matthew 10:34-36; Luke 2:34; 11:21-23; 12:51-53; John 7:43
- **and some sided with the Jews,** Acts 28:24
- **and some with the apostles** Acts 14:14; 13:2; 1 Corinthians 9:5

## THE GOSPEL ALWAYS DIVIDES!

The Gospel is **divisive**! In fact, if we fail to see this effect in at least some of our Gospel presentations, it behooves us to re-think the Gospel we are proclaiming! Jesus is the proverbial "line in the sand," and one can be either for Him or against Him, for He left no option for straddling the fence! In a word Jesus tolerates no "**spiritual mugwumps!**" Or as Jesus Himself warned "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters." (Lk 11:23+, Mt 12:30) This begs a crucial question dear reader - are you with Him or are you playing the fool, acting the part of a "spiritual mugwump?"

**But** - Term of contrast. Clearly their bold speech and the signs and wonders did not impact everyone the same way.

**Stedman** observes that "The fifth and final mark of the gospel given in this section is that of **division**. This is always the case with the gospel. It is like a ferment turned loose in society. It is not intended to bring peace, except to the individual heart. **It is intended to be divisive.**"...the message (Jesus) proclaimed was intended to divide men. And one of the marks of true evangelism is always that those who are being affected by it are divided. They are either for, or against. No neutrality is possible when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. You either accept it, or you reject it. There is no middle ground. If there is a church in a city, and that city is not divided, then there is something wrong with the church, because it is not preaching the gospel as it ought to be preached. There ought to be a clear-cut division as the gospel comes in. ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**The people of the city were divided** - **NET Bible** = "the population of the city was divided." **The people** here refers to the Gentiles. **The Word of His grace** divides the hearers into believers and unbelievers, acceptors and rejectors. There is no neutrality regarding the Gospel. If one claims to be "neutral" they are in essence rejecting the Gospel, for the **Word of His grace** "is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (or "to give an account"). (Heb 4:12, 13+). In short the Gospel proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit exposes our sinful hearts and either heals or hardens. The same Sun (cf "Son") that melts the ice, hardens the clay. To those who believe in the Gospel, they do experience peace (Ro 5:1+), but Jesus warned that the Gospel would be divisive...

"Do you suppose that I came to grant peace ([eirene](#) = literally pictures joining together again of that which had been divided) on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division ([diamerismos](#) - parallel word in Matthew 10:34 is "sword" = pictures this division as a very unfriendly disposition or state of deep-seated ill-will); for from now on five members in one household will be divided ([diamerizo](#)), three against two and two against three. "They will be divided ([diamerizo](#)), father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." (Lk 12:51-53+, cf Mt 10:34-39) (Related - [Why is Christian doctrine so divisive?](#))

**THOUGHT** - One of the patterns in evangelism is that the Gospel always divides those who are affected by it. If an individual Christian or a local church is truly preaching Christ, there will be a division between friends and community. If there is social acceptance of a local church by the world, that Christian church is

not doing its job. ([Arnold](#))

**Divided** (4977)([schizo](#) gives us English [schism](#)) means to split, rend, divide. To separate or cause to separate violently or abruptly. Schizo is used literally of splitting the veil in the Temple from top to bottom (Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45), of tearing Jesus' garments (Jn 19:24), of tearing a net (Jn 21:11). **Schizo** is used figuratively of the heavens opening in Mk 1:10. Here in Acts 14:4 and later in Acts 23:7 **schizo** is used of a division between men or parties ([factions](#)), much like the meaning of our English word [schism](#).

**And some sided with the Jews** - As alluded to above, the designation **some sided with the Jews** indicates these were non-Jews (Gentiles) that the Jews had stirred up.

**And some with the apostles** - This would be those Gentiles who had believed and possibly others who were sympathetic and/or seekers. This is the first time either Paul or Barnabas had been called **apostles**. While Paul claimed to be an apostle on a par with the twelve (Gal. 1:1, 16-18), there is no evidence that Barnabas had seen the risen Christ (which would have been necessary for him to be classified as an apostle in the same sense as the 12 disciples plus Paul).

**Apostles** (652)([apostolos](#) from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish his work. In the ancient world a **apostle** was the personal representatives of the king, functioning as an ambassador with the king's authority and provided with credentials to prove he was the king's envoy.

There were the unique apostles (the 12 plus Paul) who met three specific criteria (1) to have been a witness of the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1), (2) to have been explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:15), and (3) to have the ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

**Larkin** has an lengthy explanation of Luke's use of **apostles** here - This is one of two times in Acts when apostles does not refer to the Twelve (Acts 14:14; compare Lk 11:49). At other points Luke distinguishes Paul and Barnabas from "apostles" (Acts 9:27; Acts 15:2, Acts 15:4, Acts 15:6; Acts 16:4), but here he applies the term to them. What does he mean here? Does Luke differ from Paul in his understanding of Paul's apostolic status? Luke, like Paul, appears to use apostles both in a restricted sense for "the Twelve," chosen by Christ during his earthly ministry and witnesses of his resurrection, and in a broad sense for "missionaries," commissioned messengers of the gospel (compare 2 Cor 8:23; Gal 1:19; Phil 2:25). The latter meaning is intended here (compare Acts 13:1-3). Both Paul and Luke were aware of Paul's apostleship and its extraordinary nature (Acts 26:16; 1 Cor 15:8). They simply chose different ways to present Paul's similarity to and distinctiveness from the Twelve. Paul freely used the term apostle, while Luke in the main reserved it for the Twelve, though he employed cognates to describe Paul's calling (Acts 22:21; Acts 26:17). Paul said he was "untimely born," while Luke described that untimely birth in the context of the ministry of the Twelve and highlighted its distinctiveness by consistently avoiding references to Paul as an apostle. If to plethos tes poleos is employed here as a technical term for an assembly of citizens of a city-state, the division may reflect an official response (Longenecker 1981:433). ([The First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28](#))

**Gotquestions** adds that "Beyond the unique twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, there were also **apostles in a generic sense**. Barnabas is referred to as an "**apostle**" in Acts 13:2 and Acts 14:4. Andronicus and Junias are possibly identified as apostles in Romans 16:7. The same Greek word usually translated "**apostle**" is used to refer to Titus in 2 Corinthians 8:23 (**messengers** [[apostolos](#)] of the churches" and Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25 ("who is also your **messenger** [[apostolos](#)]"). So, there definitely seems to be room for the term apostle being used to refer to someone besides the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Anyone who was "sent" could be called an apostle. (See is [Is God restoring the position of apostle today?](#))

Luke's uses of **apostolos** -

Lk. 6:13; Lk. 9:10; Lk. 11:49; Lk. 17:5; Lk. 22:14; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 13:16; Acts 1:2; Acts 1:26; Acts 2:37; Acts 2:42; Acts 2:43; Acts 4:33; Acts 4:35; Acts 4:36; Acts 4:37; Acts 5:2; Acts 5:12; Acts 5:18; Acts 5:29; Acts 5:40; Acts 6:6; Acts 8:1; Acts 8:14; Acts 8:18; Acts 9:27; Acts 11:1; Acts 14:4; Acts 14:14; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:22; Acts 15:23; Acts 16:4;

**Constable** adds that "The "**apostles**" were Paul and Barnabas. Luke used the word "**apostle**" in a technical sense to describe the **Twelve apostles plus Paul** in Acts. He also used it less frequently in a **non-technical sense** to describe any believer sent out into the world with the salvation message (e.g, Acts 14:14; cf. Ro 16:7; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25). There were only 13 men with the **office of apostleship**, ([What are the biblical qualifications for apostleship?](#)) but there were many others who, with more or less gift, did the work of an apostle. Similarly there were some with the prophetic office, but many more with prophetic ministries. (See John E. Johnson, "[The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity](#)," Bibliotheca Sacra 152:606 April-June 1995):182-200) ([Expository Notes](#))

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**Acts 14:5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,**

KJV Acts 14:5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

- **And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers** Acts 4:25-29; 17:5; Ps 2:1-3; 83:5; 2 Timothy 3:11
- **to mistreat and to stone them** Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28

**UNBELIEF UNCHECKED  
TURNS UGLY!**

Their unbelieving hearts now issue in formation of a [vigilante](#) mob, intent on unjust treatment, even murder, goals which were undoubtedly "catalyzed" by their father the devil who "was a murderer from the beginning." (Jn 8:44). God's men led by His Spirit were in the "gun sites" of men led by unclean spirits! The next time you are attacked for righteous words or actions, remember that behind the human attackers is the enemy of your soul, the devil's henchmen! (cf Ps 143:3) And remember that often Satan has key people in power in his possession and they do his bidding, including even people in the organized church (cf Acts 20:28, 29, 30+)! "Paul and Barnabas were on their hit-list. Have you ever been on someone's hit-list?" (Andrews)

**And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers-** Remember that God is sovereign even over our persecutions. And in this case it follows that God allowed this persecution as a means of moving the missionaries on to their next divine appointment in Lystra.

**Rulers** (officials) ([758](#))([archon](#)) speaks of those exercising authority and probably refers to the rulers of the Jewish synagogue, but does not exclude participation by the city officials (cf Acts 13:50). Some think this suggest three groups aligned against the missionaries - Jews, Gentiles and rulers, but the latter could be the leaders of the Jews and the Gentiles which would in effect be only two groups.

**Attempt** ([3730](#))([horme](#) from [órnumi](#) = to excite, arouse) a rapid or violent motion forwards, onrush, as here in Acts describing the swift and capricious action of a mob who rush with the intent to assault. Gangels says [horme](#) describes "a spontaneous reaction uncontrolled by reason and planning."

In the only other NT use of [horme](#) in James 3:4 it speaks of an inclination of the pilot of a ship who steers it wherever the impulse in him leads. BDAG says the word describes "a psychological state of strong tendency,." [Zodhiates](#) adds that is "Used metaphorically of the mind, impulse, will (Acts 14:5; James 3:4). [Hormé](#) often times has in view motion toward an object with the purpose of propelling and repelling it still further from oneself." (Complete Word Study Dictionary) A secular writing uses [horme](#) to speak of "two pigs making a **rush** into our piece of land," which might help give us a picture of the intent and action of this motley crew (Gentiles, Jews, rulers) in Acts 14:5!

It is worth noting that the related verb [hormao](#) which means to rush violently was used by Luke to describe Jesus casting out demons who "came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd **rushed down** ([hormao](#)) the steep bank into the lake and was drowned." (Luke 8:33+, cf Mt 8:32, Mk 5:13) Does this not give us a "clue" regarding who is behind the mob rushing toward Paul and Barnabas? After hearing Stephen's stinging sermon, the Jews took the same action as they did toward Paul and Barnabas for "they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and **rushed at** ([hormao](#)) him (Stephen) with one impulse," (Acts 7:57) and in that case of course successfully stoned him (Acts 7:58) which is what they sought to do to the missionaries. Luke used [hormao](#) once more in Acts 19:29 recording "The city was filled with the confusion, and **they rushed** ([hormao](#)) with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia."

**THOUGHT** - Once again we see the juxtaposition of the bold proclamation of the Gospel and persistent opposition to the Gospel. It therefore behooves us to continually heed Paul's charge in Ephesians 6:11-12+ to "**Put on** ([aorist imperative](#) = Just do it! It is our urgent need. Each morning "dress for battle!") the full armor of God, so that you will be able ([dunamai](#) in present tense = necessitates continual dependence on the Holy Spirit - Eph 5:18+) to stand firm against the schemes ([methodeia](#) - he knows your weaknesses!) of the devil. For our struggle ([pale](#)) is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

**To mistreat** (insult) ([5195](#))([hubrizo](#) from [húbris](#) = injury, insult, reproach, arrogance, insolence, ill-treatment. Our English word [hubris](#) refers to exaggerated pride or self-confidence) means act with insolence, wantonness, wicked violence, to treat

injuriously. So here in Iconium the Jews and Gentiles acted spitefully toward the missionaries, treating them shamefully, and therefore abusing them. The idea is that these enemies of the Gospel treated the missionaries contemptuously, in an insolent and arrogant way. In short the missionaries received insulting and outrageous treatment especially perpetrated to publicly, openly humiliate them!

**THOUGHT** - Has this ever happened to you when you shared the Gospel?

Later the missionaries would receive the same mistreatment in Philippi, Paul writing to the saints at Thessalonica "after we had already suffered and **been mistreated** (same verb as here in Acts 14 = **hubrizo**) in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition (agon = "fight" in 1 Ti 6:12, 2 Ti 4:7)." (1 Th 2:2+) Now do not lose sight of this important principle = The only way they could speak the Gospel with boldness in the face of much opposition is by being enabled by the Holy Spirit. In short, these missionaries were Spirit filled men. It behooves us to be Spirit empowered men and women when we seek to share the Gospel.

**Hubrizo** is the same verb used to describe the treatment of Jesus for He had foretold His disciples that He would "be handed over to the Gentiles, and (would) be mocked and mistreated (hubrizo) and spit upon." (Lk 18:32) which recalls His warning in Jn 15:20 that "A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also."

**And to stone them** - They moved from words and threats (**hubrizo**) to preparation for taking aggressive action. One of my mentors used to say "Preach the Word and duck!" I guess that's a good way to avoid stones flying at your head! It is almost a certain guarantee that when you proclaim the Gospel faithfully in the power of the Spirit and for the glory of God, you will be vigorously opposed (and as here it often comes from some who call themselves "religious" or "Christian") Sad but true! Paul gave a similar warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus...

"**Be on guard** (**present imperative** - calls for continual guarding) for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore **be on the alert** (**present imperative**), remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.(cf Acts 20:28-31+)

**Constable** - The Gentiles and the Jewish rulers took the initiative in persecuting the evangelists. The attempt to stone them appears to have been an act of mob violence rather than a formal Jewish attempt at execution (cf. Acts 7:58-59). "It would have required a regular Hebrew court to sanction it [a legal stoning], and it would never have been tolerated in a Roman colony." [Note: Foakes-Jackson, p128.] ([Expository Notes](#))

**To stone** ([3036](#)) (**lithoboleo** from **lithos** = a stone + **ballo** = throw) means to pelt with stones, to stone (Mt 21:35) or to stone to death as with Stephen in Acts 7:58, 59+. Undoubtedly this mixed mob had murder of the missionaries on their mind!

## Acts 14:6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region

KJV Acts 14:6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

- **they became aware of it** Acts 9:24; 17:13,14; 23:12-22; 2 Kings 6:8-12
- **and fled** Matthew 10:23
- **Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe**, Acts 14:20,21; 16:1,2; 2 Timothy 3:11

Green = Iconium > Lystra  
Orange = Lystra > Derbe  
Red = Return to Pisidian Antioch  
Click to Enlarge

## ONWARD TO THE GENTILE CITY OF LYSTRA

**They became aware of it** - While believers are called to stand against opposition, sometimes the "will of God" is for us to flee unless God clearly show us we should stand fast. Considering that the opposition was getting ready to stone them, it would seem reasonable that Paul and Barnabas saw a mob coming toward them with stones in their hands! Whatever the specific indicator of

insurrection was, it was clearly and quickly perceived by the missionaries.

**Jack Andrews** comments that in some way "God made known to His servants the plot of the people. He was protecting His servants. It wasn't by accident, happenstance, or luck that Paul and Barnabas found out about the plot to abuse them and stone them. When we face opposition because of our faith in Jesus we will not face opposition without Jesus."

**Became aware of** (4894)([suneidon](#) from **sun** = with + **eido** = to see) which means to see together, to grasp as a whole, to see clearly, to perceive, to become aware of, to take in at a glance. (only other use Acts 12:12+) . **Suneidon** is the word from which [suneidesis](#) or conscience derives.

**Tony Merida** comments that "In this act of relocating, we should notice the combination of prudence and perseverance. The missionaries were brave but not stupid! In fleeing danger, they lived to preach another day. Sometimes the best way to make the gospel known may mean remaining; at other times it may mean relocating. For such matters one must seek the Father, who promises to give his children wisdom when they ask him (Jas 1:5)." ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

Paul alluded to this time of persecution on his second letter to Timothy...

Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at **Antioch** (Acts 13:50+), at **Iconium** (Acts 14:1-4, 5) and at **Lystra** (Acts 14:8ff); what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! (2 Timothy 3:10, 11+)

**Comment** - Note Paul's statement that **out of them all** (THIS WOULD INDICATE EVEN OUT OF ICONIUM) the **Lord rescued** him. This would signify that they left Iconium not so much out of fear but because in some way not stated here in Acts 14 the Lord **rescued them**. The verb for **rescued** is [rhuomai](#) which means to draw or snatch to oneself and invariably refers to a snatching from danger, evil or an enemy. This basic idea is that of bringing someone out of severe and acute danger. The Lord rescued them but the responsibility of the missionaries was to flee town.

**Gangel** points out that "This flight was more than just geographical; it was political in terms of boundary. Paul and Barnabas literally crossed from one political region to another; these verses emphasize that transition." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 232](#))

As **Butler** said "Divine intervention does not eliminate human responsibility."

One is reminded of Jesus' words to His disciples - **Behold**, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16) What was Jesus saying? What is the picture of sheep in the midst of wolves, but a picture of danger and conflict. That was Jesus' promise. And based on that certainty of conflict the disciples were to be shrewd as serpents which were held to be smart, cunning, cautious and in this metaphor symbolized wisdom the disciples were to exhibit. In the present context in Acts 14, the disciples were to be wise as serpents and move on down the line so to speak!

If the Lord had wanted Paul and Barnabas to remain on at Iconium even in face of the danger, he would have told them. We see that is exactly what He did in Acts 18 in a dangerous situation in Corinth when the Jews began to resist Paul and blaspheme. Luke records that "the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "**Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you** ([meta](#) - cf Jesus' promise in Mt 28:20 "I am **with** [[meta](#)] you" and also see [comment below](#)), **and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.**" (Acts 18:9-10).

It is notable that in Acts 13:51+ the missionaries took time to shake the dust off of their feet, but this situation in Iconium was urgent and dangerous, so instead of shaking off the dust, they stirred up the dust as they departed in haste!

**David Jeremiah** wrote, "Leaving Iconium was not **cowardice** on their part but **prudence**. They wouldn't be able to minister anywhere if they were badly injured or killed in a stoning, so they took the path of safety and left before the serious trouble started."

**R. Kent Hughes** adds that "Paul and Barnabas were brave but not foolish. They were born-again, not born yesterday. The Lord protects His children, but He wants us to use common sense. So the missionaries departed." (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**And fled to the cities of Lycaonia** ([Map](#)), **Lystra and Derbe** (see [Map](#)) - They first fled about 24 miles from **Iconium** to **Lystra**. They did not stand fast and tall and try to reason with the crowd coming against them. They did not presume upon God to protect them from the mob. They obeyed the command of Jesus which initially referred to persecution in the land Israel, but in principle would apply to this first missionary journey - "But whenever they persecute you in one city, **flee** ([present imperative](#)) to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes." (Matthew 10:23) **Arnold** adds that "God never wants His people to foolishly throw their lives away when engaged in His service." ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

It is interesting that **Lycaonia** means "land of the wolf" because in the city of Lystra would prove to be the land of the "roaring lion" (1 Pe 5:8+) as the Devil prowled around seeking to devour Paul (devour is [katapino](#) = swallow up ~ to destroy completely)!

**Don Stewart** addresses the supposed error by Luke in his description that the missionaries fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe:

The passage implies that Lystra and Derbe were cities in the district of [Lycaonia \(Map\)](#) but **Iconium** was in a different district. Paul and Barnabas went to the different district because it was safe. Later Roman writers such as Cicero contradicted the passage, asserting that Iconium was also in Lycaonia. For years this was used to show the historical unreliability of Acts. **Ramsay Discovers That Luke Was Not In Error** - In 1910, however, [Sir William Ramsay](#) discovered an inscription declaring that the first century **Iconium** was under the authority of Phrygia from A.D. 37 to A.D. 72. It was only during these years that **Iconium** was not under the authority of Lycaonia. Not only did this discovery confirm the accuracy of the statement in Acts 14:7, it showed that whoever wrote this passage knew what district Iconium was in at that time. That places the author as an eyewitness to the events. Examples such as this can be multiplied. The conclusion is that Acts is found to be a reliable work of history that correctly depicts life in the first century A.D (See Stewart's complete article [Is the Book of Acts Historically Accurate?](#))

**THOUGHT** - Once again the Bible crushed its critics. The Word of Truth is true and tested (Pr 30:5) and is your trustworthy sword of the Spirit in spiritual warfare as you "joust" for the souls of men. Related resource - [Does the Bible contain errors, contradictions, or discrepancies?](#)

**Lystra** was a Roman Colony located about 20 miles south of Iconium according to John Stott was "quiet backwater town." Essentially, Lystra's population consisted of Roman military veterans, a "retirement center" for that vast army. Other Roman colonies were Antioch of Pisidia, Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Roman colonies were located at strategic places in the empire along frequently travelled roads, and **Lystra** was on the [Via Sebaste](#) which ran from Ephesus to Sardis to Antioch in Pisidia to Iconium and Lystra, to Derbe, through the Cilician Gates, to Tarsus, to Antioch in Syria, and then to points east and south. Unlike **Iconium**, which is the modern city of Konya, **Lystra** now lies in ruins, sadly including some ruins of churches.

**Wikipedia** writes that "There is a present-day village called "Klistra" near Gökyurt, a village of the Meram district of Konya province. Ancient ruins can be seen near Klistra, including a church with a big cross marked on the wall, a winery, house-like buildings, and the ruins of a city located over the top of a hill which is locally called "Alusumas", where another ruined church ruin can be seen. According to local people, the less-visible city was constructed over the hill to hide from enemies of ancient Anatolia. This site is still awaiting excavation."

**Swindoll** - Archaeologists have uncovered evidence to suggest that the town venerated Zeus and Hermes as patron gods: "One inscription records the dedication to Zeus on a statue of Hermes. Another records a dedication to 'Zeus before the town.'" ([Insights on Acts](#))

Below are cities Paul and Barnabas visit after leaving Iconium...

1. Lystra Acts 14:6-20
2. Derbe Acts 14:20
3. Lystra Acts 14:21
4. Iconium Acts 14:21
5. Pisidian Antioch Acts 14:21
6. Pamphylia Acts 14:24
7. Perga Acts 14:25
8. Attalia Acts 14:25
9. Antioch Acts 14:26

**And the surrounding region** - Probably smaller towns and villages between Iconium and Lystra. [Robertson](#) says this "was "a high table land, ill-watered, bleak, but suited for sheep pasture" (Page)"

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Jack Andrews gives an illustration of the missionaries knowing when to flee and when to stay - In the 1980's Kenny Rogers's starred in a series of movies called "The Gambler." Those movies depicted life in the 1800's for a Gambler. I don't remember much about the movies, but I always remembered the theme song. Kenny Rogers sang the theme song. Part of that song speaks to the situation with Paul and Barnabas. ([Play the video of this song "The Gambler"](#)) "You've got to know when to hold 'em;

know when to fold 'em; know when to walk away; know when to run. You never count your money when you're setting at the table; there will be time enough for counting when the dealing's done." Paul and Barnabas knew when to walk away and knew when to run! The opposition came to a head and it was time to move on down the road to the next city!

## Acts 14:7 and there they continued to preach the gospel

KJV Acts 14:7 And there they preached the gospel.

- Acts 14:21; 8:4; 11:19; 17:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:2

### PERSECUTION PARADOXICALLY FANNED THEIR ZEAL!

One might think that this first encounter with life threatening might have dampened their enthusiasm for proclamation of the Gospel. Clearly that was not the case. These men were not driven by insanity but by a passion for souls to be saved, a passion empowered by the Holy Spirit. They remind me of missionary Jim Elliot who was martyred in Ecuador and who once said (actually he wrote it down - see following link) "**He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose!**" (See [Jim's original "devotional" note](#)). Jim Elliot was in the "bold mold" of Paul and Barnabas! May their tribe increase! Amen!

As **Larkin** says "The gospel's opponents stirred up and poisoned souls against messengers of the truth, creating division and spawning a bloodthirsty plot of mob violence. The gospel messengers manifested evangelistic effectiveness, persevering boldness, miraculous divine confirmation, tactical prudence and persistence in witness. Whose message should Theophilus and we believe?" (See [Acts - Page 210](#))

**And there** - Is a coordinating conjunction (see below) which links fleeing with preaching, the point being that Paul and Barnabas did not flee to keep from preaching the Gospel, but just the opposite - they fled that they might be able to continue preaching the Gospel. And so they did.

**Kenneth Gangel** observes that "The pilgrim and stranger motif throughout the New Testament begins to take incarnate form in these missionaries, now driven out of the second city on this trip. Rejected disciples who proclaimed a rejected Lord represented the New Testament standard. They stand in refreshing stark contrast to the contemporary prosperity gospel in which Christianity wants to be popular, large, influential, and wealthy. No kingdom politics or civil religion here, just the basic gospel proclaimed wherever people will listen." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 232](#))

**John Phillips** - "Paul might be knocked down, but he was not knocked out. No foe could daunt him, no fear could haunt him. They could throw him out of Pisidian Antioch and chase him out of Iconium, but they could not stop him from preaching... There was no place where Paul was afraid to preach the gospel. He preached the gospel in Athens, the intellectual capital of the world, and was mocked; he preached the gospel in Jerusalem, the religious capital of the world, and was mobbed; he preached the gospel at Rome, the political capital of the world, and was martyred. But he preached the gospel." (Exploring Acts)

**Spurgeon** - However much they are harassed, they keep to their life work: nothing can stop them, not even the fear of a cruel death. Do we in like manner speak of Jesus in every company? If not, we fall short of our duty. Let us amend, and in every place show forth the Saviour's love.

**There they continued to preach the gospel** - They were gospelizing the good news. Remember that "Gospelizing" in secular antiquity included proclaiming (preaching) the good tidings of victories. The missionaries were preaching that Jesus death on the Cross brought victories over sin's penalty and power, over Satan and over death. Luke's description of their continuing to preach the gospel clearly demonstrates that they did not flee Iconium from cowardice, for they continued to be willing to carry out the same activity which got them into trouble in Iconium! In short, opposition did not deter these Spirit filled missionaries but even spurred them on to continue **to preach the Gospel** over and over (see imperfect tense below) to all who would listen. While the Spirit is not mentioned specifically, it is very clear that their boldness in face of the recent threats was not natural but supernatural. These missionaries were filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Toussaint** adds that "The verbal construction they continued to preach the good news emphasizes continuity of action over a period of time." (see [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

As we will discover in Acts 16:1-2 Timothy, one of Paul's favorite disciples, hailed from Lystra and one has to wonder if this is when Timothy was first exposed to Paul, who he would join some 2-3 years later on Paul's second missionary journey.

**Preach the Gospel** (2097) ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means the missionaries kept on announcing (present tense + **continued** is the verb [eimi](#) in the imperfect tense) again and again, over and over, the good news concerning the truth that Christ died as a Substitute for sinners, was resurrected from the dead, and now provides His righteous standing before God to all who repent and turn to Him by faith. It is not surprising that euaggelizo is frequently used in Acts (Acts 5:42; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:25; Acts 8:35; Acts 8:40; Acts 10:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 13:32; Acts 14:7; Acts 14:15; Acts 14:21; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:18). One other point we often forget or minimize is that not only is preaching the Gospel to be carried out to win the lost, but it also includes sharing the entire Gospel message of living for Christ with those who are saved! You may need to read that again! It is a very important truth and below are a few resources to re-enforce the importance of learning to preach the Gospel to yourself!

#### Related Resources:

- [Preaching the Gospel to yourself](#) - Tim Challies
- [Preaching the Gospel to Yourself](#) - Joe Thorn
- [Preach the Gospel to Yourself](#) (3' 42") Video - John Piper

It is also worth noting the last NT use of this verb, when God gives the world one last chance (at midpoint of the 7 year "Tribulation") before He unleashes His final pouring out of wrath on the earth, John recording "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal **gospel to preach** to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; (Rev 14:6+).

**THOUGHT** - Another pattern of evangelism is that God's true ministers never stop preaching the Gospel and they consider it a privilege to suffer for Christ. ([Arnold - Patterns in Evangelism](#))

[Robertson](#) has an interesting note that "We are to think of extensive evangelistic work perhaps with the assistance of disciples from Antioch and Iconium since Paul and Barnabas could not speak Lycaonian."

**Acts 14:8 At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked**

KJV Acts 14:8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

NET Acts 14:8 In Lystra sat a man who could not use his feet, lame from birth, who had never walked.

NIV Acts 14:8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.

- **At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet**, Acts 4:9; John 5:3,7
- **lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked** Acts 3:2; John 5:5; 9:1,2

### MANY SPIRITUALLY "LAME" IN THE CITY OF STRANGE GODS

Before you read about the miracle do not the fact that Paul had already preached the Gospel before he performed the miracle (Acts 14:7). And what was the result? Luke describes a lame man who had faith to be made well (Acts 14:9). Where did that faith come from. Of course his faith was the gift from God, but it was also associated with the proclamation of the Word of God, for Paul teaches in Romans 10:17 that "**faith** comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ**." Paul had been proclaiming the good news of Christ, and faith began to "germinate" in this lame man. And it was followed by a miracle, which would have been like an "exclamation point" authenticating the miracle producing Gospel Paul had already proclaimed!

God's plan for spreading the Gospel was not to be frustrated by lack of a synagogue! As providence would have it **Lystra** "was the home of at least one hopeless cripple...so God used a different thrust, the healing of this helpless cripple, to bring the gospel to these people." (Toussaint [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#)) So God would use this physically lame man as a launching pad to allow his missionaries to present the Gospel and penetrate the hearts of the "spiritually lame" in Lystra, a city of strange gods! If God can work in Lystra, there is hope for America filled with a veritable plethora of "strange gods"!

**Swindoll** comments that "When no synagogue existed, Paul typically went to the **marketplace** ([agora](#)), where Greeks gathered to socialize. This is also where traveling philosophers and entertainers attracted attention." ([Insights on Acts](#))



**Robertson** - Paul and Barnabas had to do open-air preaching and probably had difficulty in being understood by the natives though both Greek and Latin inscriptions were discovered here by Professor Sterrett in 1885.

**Tony Merida** - Lystra was a small country town in Paul's day, a frontier outpost of the Roman Empire. I like to imagine it as the Wild West. The Lystrans were generally uneducated and, it also seems, gullible. Kent Hughes says, "The people were half-barbarous." He adds, "The Romans ruled the land, the Greeks controlled the commerce, and the Jews had little influence" (Acts, 184–85). It was, then, a much different place from Iconium. ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**Gangel** writes that here at **Lystra** "the gospel plunges into raw heathenism, the like of which these missionaries certainly never before saw in such primitive form. Surely their residence in Antioch displayed all the wickedness available anywhere in the civilized world. Still, the difference between Antioch and Lystra could be compared to the difference between a capital city like Lima, Peru, and the jungle tribes living two or three hundred miles inland." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 230](#)).

**Jack Andrews** observes that "**Lystra** was a city of strange gods (cf 1 Cor 8:5, 6). We live in cities of strange gods today. America is full of strange gods. American's bow down to the gods of: Pleasure, power, and possessions; Athletes, actors, and automobiles; Greed, gain, and, guiltless living; Sex, shows, and, science; Money, might, and our military. "

**A. W Tozer** said that "Idolatry is of all sins the most hateful to God because it is in essence a defamation of the divine character. It holds a low opinion of God, and when it advertises that opinion, it is guilty of circulating an evil rumor about the Majesty in the heavens. Thus it slanders the Deity. No wonder God hates it. We should beware of the comfortable habit of assuming that idolatry is found only in heathen lands and that civilized people are free from it. This is an error and results from pride and superficial thinking. The truth is that idolatry is found wherever mankind is found. Whoever entertains an unworthy conception of God is throwing his or her heart wide open to the sin of idolatry. Let that person go on to personalize his or her low mental image of the Deity and pray to it, and he or she has become an idolater—and this is regardless of his or her nominal profession of Christianity. It is vitally important that we think soundly about God. Since He is the foundation of all our religious beliefs, it follows that if we err in our ideas of God, we will go astray on everything else.." (from [The World: Playground or Battleground?](#))

**THOUGHT** - What would Tozer say about this land today?

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the definition of idolatry?](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Idol, Idolatry](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Idolatry](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Idolatry](#)
- [100's of articles on idolatry from Gospel Coalition](#) (opens Google search)
- [Is religious iconography considered idolatry? What is an icon?](#)
- [What are some modern forms of idolatry?](#)
- [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?](#)
- [What is the difference between fornication and adultery?](#) - both are used figuratively to refer to idolatry!
- [What is the true meaning of the second commandment?](#)

**At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked-** (compare Acts 3:1-11) Luke states the sad state of this man. Note that Dr Luke goes into great detail, for he could have simply said the man was **lame**, but to emphasis his hopeless, **dire** state, he adds (1) **no strength in his feet**, (2) **from his mother's womb** and (3) **had never walked**. The lameness was congenital and total. Luke does not tell us where this **lame** man was seated, but it must have been in a public place, such as a public square or marketplace ([agora](#)). It was not at a synagogue because there was none present. If there had been Paul and Barnabas headed straight for the Jewish house of worship. [Halakha](#) holds that communal Jewish worship can be carried out wherever ten Jews (a [minyan](#)) assemble. And so we can deduce that the Jewish population of Lystra was quite small. Barclay quipped that "The further on Paul and Barnabas went, the further they got from civilisation."

**Spurgeon** - This (lame man) represents the impotency of all men in spiritual things till the grace of God puts strength into them. When we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly.

**Robertson** - Paul and Barnabas had to do open-air preaching (**ED**: BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SYNAGOGUE) and probably had difficulty in being understood by the natives though both Greek and Latin inscriptions were discovered here by Professor Sterrett in 1885. The incident narrated here (Acts 14:8–18) shows how they got a real hearing among these rude heathen.

**No strength** (102) ([adunatos](#) from **a** = without + **dunátós** = able or powerful from **dunamai** = to have power by virtue of inherent ability) means impossible, not being able to do or experience something (Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27; Heb. 6:4, 18; 10:4;

11:6). In the present context the idea is one who is impotent and it was commonly used with that sense in the secular medical writings. He had "impossible" feet so to speak, feet that were unable to do anything. The stage was set for God to present the credentials of His missionaries to these heathens.

**THOUGHT** - No strength. Impotent. Impossible. Do these words not describe the spiritual condition of the majority in America today? Claiming their freedom, yet intractably enslaved and in bondage to their harsh Taskmaster "Sin (As their "King")" and powerless to walk uprightly (righteously), unable to resist the temptations of the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#).

Everybody has to serve somebody! Don't be deceived into thinking you are "free" because you can do as you please. True freedom is not the power to do as you please, but the power to do as you should to please your Heavenly Father! And so in the moral/ethical sphere the choices are clear and diametrically opposed - either you obey God the Father, His Son and His Spirit or you obey "The Sin" that is still lurking in the hearts of believers and who holds [unfettered](#) sway in the heart of every non-believer! Who are you going to serve? That is the critical question we should all consider asking ourselves every morning for the rest of our lives! Today, will I obey Jesus, my Lord, enabled by His grace and His indwelling Spirit (cf Ro 8:13<sup>±</sup>) or will I make the bad choice to obey **The Sin** which is continually waging war against my soul, continually enticing my mind and heart seeking to carry me away into some sin? (1 Pe 2:11<sup>±</sup>, James 1:14<sup>±</sup>). Bob Dylan's song "nailed it" - listen to his oldie, but goodie [Gotta Serve Somebody](#) (from his album "Gospel Songs of Bob Dylan!) **Who you gonna serve today?** And remember do not fall into the subtle trap of "keeping a list rules" (we call it legalism which always blunts the effective working of God's grace) but rather yield to the Spirit Who Alone can provide you the **desire** (the "want to" because our old Sin nature does not "want to" obey God) and the **power** (Php 2:13NLT<sup>±</sup>) to work out ([present imperative](#) = not a suggestion but a command you can only keep as you rely on the Spirit's power - cf Eph 5:18<sup>±</sup>, Gal 5:16<sup>±</sup>) your salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12<sup>±</sup>). It is not "Let go and let God," but more accurately "Let God and let's go!"

**Lame** (5560) ([cholus](#) from [chalao](#) = to slacken, loosen) is an adjective describes a physical "disability that involves the imperfect function of the lower limbs" that might range in severity from causing a limp to an inability to walk. It can also describe impaired functioning of the hands. Though most often used in a literal sense of actual physical handicap.

**Never** (3763) ([oudepote](#) from [oude](#) = not even + [poté](#) = ever) means (absolutely and objectively) not even at any time, never at all, neither at any time, never, nothing at any time.

The miraculous healing performed by Peter in Acts 3 was similar to the healing Paul performed in Lystra...

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2 And **aman who had been lame from his mother's womb** was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, **fixed his gaze on him** and said, "Look at us!" 5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 **With a leap he stood upright and began to walk**; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. (COMPARE THIS REACTION WITH THE REACTION OF THE PAGANS WHO SOUGHT TO WORSHIP THE MISSIONARIES AS GODS) 12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? (Acts 3:1-12, THEN PETER SPOKE THE GOSPEL TO THE JEWS WHO KNEW THE OLD TESTAMENT - Acts 3:13-26)

**Toussaint** points out that "In each case the cripple was lame from birth (Acts 3:2; 14:8); both Peter and Paul gazed at the one to be healed (Acts 3:4; 14:9); and both healed men responded by jumping and walking (Acts 3:8; 14:10). This shows Paul was equal to Peter in his apostleship." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

**Neil** agrees with Toussaint commenting that "In opposition to those who would challenge Paul's claim to apostolic authority based on his direct commission from the risen Christ, Luke is concerned to show that his hero shares with the chief Apostle [Peter] the healing power vested in his disciples by the Lord himself

(Jn 14:12) and exemplified in Jesus' own ministry (Lk. 7:22)." (Acts of the Apostles - New Century Commentary)

A second healing of a cripple occurred in Acts 9:33-35

There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. 35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

**Acts 14:9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well,**

KJV Acts 14:9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

- who Acts 14::3:4
- he had Matthew 8:10; 9:22,28,29; 13:58; 15:28; Mark 1:40,41; 2:5,11,12; 9:23,24; Mark 10:52

### **PAUL SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT AND AN ATTENTIVE LAME LISTENER**

The lame man's response is a beautiful illustration of the principle taught by Jesus that

"It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Lk 5:31,32+).

**This man was listening to Paul as he spoke** - Luke does not say the topic, but it is most likely that Paul was speaking about Jesus and the Gospel. Listening (akouo) is in the [imperfect tense](#) indicating Paul would speak and he would hear, again and again. It is notable that the Greek verb for listening (akouo) can denote simply hearing the sound of someone, referring to a purely physical hearing, but it may also (as presumably occurred in this passage) indicates that the one hears with the sense of "understanding" and an even fuller sense of obeying what is heard. What was Paul speaking? Undoubtedly the Gospel. And how should one respond to the Gospel? By hearing with faith that results in obedience. Contrast the reaction of the Jews (those who were "well...righteous" Lk 5:31,32+) in Acts 14:2+ who listened to the words of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:1) and **'disbelieved'** ([apeitheo](#)) which depicts their deliberate disobedience, their "disbelief" being "authenticated" by their subsequent "works" of stirring up and embittering others to the missionaries and their message. The heart response of this lame man was the antithesis of the response of the Jews in Acts 14:2.

**Spoke** (present tense)([2980](#))([laleo](#)) means to make a sound and then to utter words, in this undoubtedly "gospel words."

**Boice** points out that "The apostles did not go into these cities to do miracles, and then to preach. Rather, it was the other way around: They went to preach; then sometimes there were healings."

**Jack Andrews** comments that "That's a good rule of thumb for preachers! Unbelievers in the crowd will discourage you. Scoffers in the crowd will frustrate you. Preachers need to find those who believe and focus on them and keep preaching the truth!"

**Donald Grey Barnhouse** wrote, "There have been numerous times in my own ministry when, while I was speaking from the pulpit, I have seen a response on some particular face in the audience, and I knew that the Holy Spirit had begun a work of grace in that person. Frequently, after the meeting was over that person would come to me and tell me that at that precise moment he knew—just knew—that Christ had died and risen again for him and that he was truly born again."

**Wiersbe** writes that "The word translated "speak" in Acts 14:9 means ordinary conversation, though it can refer to formal speaking. It is likely that Paul was simply conversing with some of the citizens in the marketplace, telling them about Jesus, and the lame man overheard what he said. The Word produced **faith** (Ro 10:17) and **faith** brought healing. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**When he had fixed his gaze on him** - Paul filled with the Holy Spirit had fixed his gaze on Bar-Jesus (Elymas) the Jewish false prophet in Acts 13:9 and carried out his first miracle of temporarily blinding this man. While Luke does not have the same phrase, there is little doubt that again Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit as he fixed his gaze on the lame man. But this time the "spiritual stare" was for good not for evil!

**He had fixed his gaze** (intently)([816](#))([atenizo](#)) from from **atenes** = strained from **a** = intensifies + **teino** = to stretch, to extend or to

strain) means Paul looked intently, staring at the lame man. Ten of the 14 uses of *Atenizo* are used by Luke in Acts (Acts 1:10; Acts 3:4; Acts 3:12; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:55; Acts 10:4; Acts 11:6; Acts 13:9; Acts 14:9; Acts 23:1) As Gilbrant says "The "fixed stare" often found in contexts with supernatural events (Acts 3:4; 13:9) should not be perceived as some mesmerizing or hypnotizing stare, or some "evil eye." The term captures the seriousness and the single-mindedness of the person involved." Had we been present, Paul's laser like focus on this lame man would have been abundantly obvious.

**And had seen that he had faith to be made well**- The verb **had** (echo) is in the present tense indicating this was not just a momentary manifestation of belief. Paul saw something in the lame man's face and manner showed that he believed he could **be made well**. The verb for **made well** is *sozo* (see below) which is used over 100 times in the NT most often translated as save or saved (over 80 times). *Sozo* refers to spiritual salvation, which is linked to a person's faith as when the penitent prostitute washed Jesus' feet with her tears, He told her "Your faith has saved (*sozo*) you" (Lk 7:50; cf Mk 10:52, Lk 17:19).

**Constable** - As is true of other similar references to a healed person's faith, this man's confidence was in God. He believed God **could** heal him, not that God **would** do so. Confidence that God **would** heal him, in other words, is not what made him whole. It was confidence that God through His servant **could** heal him that constituted his faith (e.g., Matt. 9:28-29; Mark 9:22-24). His faith was a factor in his receiving healing (cf. Mark 6:5-6). (Constable's Notes on the Bible)

**Jack Andrews** says that "This man believed what Paul preached and he believed that Jesus Christ could heal! He's like the woman with the issue of blood (Mt 9:20-21, 22). The man who brought his demon possessed man to Jesus to be healed (cf Mt 17:18-20). The Roman Centurion that asked Jesus just to speak the word and his servant would be healed (Mt 8:5-9, 10). The Syro-Phoenician woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter and said to Jesus even the little dogs eat the crumbs from their master's table (Mt 15:22-27, 28, Mk 7:25-30). Jesus said he had never seen such great faith in all Israel. He's like one of the ten lepers (Lk 17:12-18, 19), the Samaritan, who was healed by Jesus that returned to Jesus and gave Him praise (Lk 17:16)." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Faith** (4102)(*pistis*) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it.

**Swindoll** on *pistis* - This word denotes confidence in the reliability of a person or thing and can describe one's trust in a person's word, a compact or treaty, or a deity (or deities). The term implies both knowledge and action. One may receive knowledge of a certain truth and may even offer verbal agreement, but "trust" or "confidence" is not said to be present until one's behavior reflects that truth. ([Insights on Acts](#))

All of Luke's uses of *pistis* in Acts -

Acts 3:16; Acts 6:5; Acts 6:7; Acts 11:24; Acts 13:8; Acts 14:9; Acts 14:22; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:9; Acts 16:5;  
Acts 17:31; Acts 20:21; Acts 24:24; Acts 26:18

**Made well** (4982)(*sozo* from *sos* = safe, well) which conveys the basic meanings of to rescue, save, liberate, keep from harm, heal, preserve. When used in the context of sickness and disease it meant to heal, cure, restore to health. The Gospels record Jesus healing individuals who had faith (see passages below). One can misinterpret these passages and say they mean that the individual's faith per se saved them, and in so doing actually miss the true object of the faith which was ultimately and fully in God, and not "faith in their faith." Luke used *sozo* in Acts both in the sense of to be made well or whole (healed as in our present passage and earlier in Acts 4:9+) and other times with the meaning to be spiritually made well ("saved" - Acts 2:21 Acts 2:40 Acts 2:47, Acts 4:12, Acts 11:14 Acts 15:1; Acts 15:11; Acts 16:30; Acts 16:31)

**Gotquestions** explains "When Jesus said to certain people, "Your faith has made you well (*sozo*)," He was saying that their faith (their confidence in Him) had been the means of their restoration. The power of Christ was what effected the cure, but **His power was applied in connection with their faith**. (ED: Think of it as if Christ was throwing out a life preserver which in turn had to be *volitionally* grasped by the person to whom it was thrown in order for them to be saved.) Just as the faith of some enabled them to receive healing, so healing was sometimes stymied by a lack of faith (see Mt 13:58). In the same way, salvation comes to a sinner through faith. Everyone who is saved must believe, but it is the power of Christ that saves, **not the power of faith. Faith is only the instrument, not the power itself**. (Read full discussion - [What did Jesus mean when He told people, "Your faith has made you well"](#))

Matthew 9:22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; **your faith has made you well**." At once the woman was made well.

Mark 5:34; And He said to her, "Daughter, **your faith has made you well**; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

Mark 10:52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; **your faith has made you well**." Immediately he regained his sight

and began following Him on the road.

Luke 8:48 And He said to her, "Daughter, **your faith has made you well**; go in peace."

Luke 17:19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; **your faith has made you well**."

Luke 18:42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; **your faith has made you well**."

**Guzik** makes the point that "This certain man without strength in his feet made the important transition from hearing about the work of Jesus to believing that it was for him. Not everyone makes this same transition, but they should. ([Acts 14 Commentary](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Are faith healers for real? Does a faith healer heal with the same power as Jesus?](#)
- [Why doesn't God heal everyone?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about healing?](#)

**Acts 14:10** said with a loud voice, "**Stand upright on your feet.**" And he leaped up and began to walk.

KJV Acts 14:10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

- Stand Acts 3:6-8; 9:33,34; Isaiah 35:6; Luke 7:14; 13:11-13; John 5:8,9; 14:12

## CREDIBLE CREDENTIALS PUT ON DISPLAY

**Credentials** are attestations of qualification, competence, or authority issued to an individual by a third party, in this case by God attesting to the authority and legitimacy of His missionaries.

**Said with a loud voice** (Greek = loud = *megale* and voice = *phone* gives us "**megaphone**") - This would make it quite obvious that it was through Paul that this miracle would transpire. Stedman says that Paul "Suddenly, unquestionably led of the Spirit" spoke as if with a megaphone! ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**MacArthur** - The unhindered flow of the Holy Spirit's power through Paul resulted in a dramatic miracle. Although today's believers do not possess miraculous healing power as Paul did, the principle is instructive—God's power is absolutely necessary if His work is to be accomplished (Eph. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:11). The power "to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20) comes to all believers at salvation. The power of the Holy Spirit is released in believers' lives as they walk moment by moment in obedience to the truth. That enables them to be used as agents through whom no physical healing occurs, but rather the transformation of the soul in salvation and sanctification. Along with power and results in service for Christ comes the temptation of pride. It is often difficult to acknowledge that the results stem from God's power, not human ingenuity and ability. Peter wrote of the centrality of humility in 1 Peter 5:5-6. James echoed those thoughts in James 4:6, 10. Humility is the supreme spiritual virtue because it gives God His rightful place. Paul's understanding of the reality of humility is best seen in his words to the Corinthians in (2 Cor. 12:9-10) ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 49](#))

**Andrews** rightly reminds us that "God's commands are not easy they are impossible without Divine intervention! Have you heard God's command to you to arise up out of your spiritual deadness and dryness and spiritual lameness?" ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Stand up** (**ao**rist imperative = Do it now!)(450)(**anistemi** from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = stand, to cause to stand) means literally to get up, to stand up. Paul had used this very word in his first sermon in Antioch Pisidian to describe the rising up of Jesus (Acts 13:33, 34). In a somewhat paradoxical way the standing up of this lame man set in motion a series of events that got Paul stoned from which he then **got up** (**anistemi**)(Acts 14:20).

Luke's uses of **anistemi** in Acts where it is clearly a "key word"... Acts 1:15; Acts 2:24; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:22; Acts 3:26; Acts 5:6; Acts 5:17; Acts 5:34; Acts 5:36; Acts 5:37; Acts 6:9; Acts 7:18; Acts 7:37; Acts 8:26; Acts 8:27; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:18; Acts 9:34; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:40; Acts 9:41; Acts 10:13; Acts 10:20; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:26; Acts 10:41; Acts 11:7; Acts 11:28; Acts 12:7; Acts 13:16; Acts 13:33; Acts 13:34; Acts 14:10; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:7; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:31; Acts 20:30; Acts 22:10; Acts 22:16; Acts 23:9; Acts 26:16; Acts 26:30

**Upright** (3717)(**ortho** - "orthopedics) means "(1) of direction; literally straight, in a straight line; figuratively, of persevering on a correct course of life toward a goal straight, right (Heb 12.13); (2) literally, of a standing position upright, erect (Acts 14.10)." (Friberg)

**Robertson** adds that "In this sense **Galen** and **Hippocrates** frequently use **orthos** (erect, straight)."

As **Stedman** says "the lame man, though he had never walked in his life, made the effort to obey. He had faith enough to try, and the moment he began to obey, the power to obey was given."

**THOUGHT** - "That is exactly the way the Christian life always works. It does not make any difference whether the problem is physical, emotional, or spiritual; you are going to be held in its bondage until you begin to obey the Word of God about it. When you make the effort to obey, God will set you free. But he will never move until you obey. That is the way faith works. Most people are kept from seeing God at work in their lives because they keep waiting for God to do something, in order for them to believe. No, he has already done all that he is going to do in advance. When you believe what he says, then he will give you the power to be free. This miracle is a mighty parable of the many who have been spiritually lame, unable to take a step toward God, but who have been set free to do so by the gospel. It cracked the city wide open. (ED: AND THOSE KIND OF MIRACULOUS CONVERSIONS STILL HAVE A JAW DROPPING IMPACT ON UNBELIEVERS!) The whole populace immediately took note of Paul and Barnabas in their midst." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**And he leaped up and began to walk** -"He leaped up with a single bound and began to walk" (Robertson) The lame man's healing is instantaneous and complete (cpe Acts 3:7-8+). Clearly this miracle was no farce but was for real in dramatic contrast to modern day [hucksters](#) who sadly pawn themselves off on [hapless](#) souls as [faith healers](#)! Miracles were never done as an end, but they were a means to the end, which is proclamation and acceptance of the Gospel which brings about the far greater miracle of a new creation in Christ!

**John G. Butler** wrote, "This miracle was not like the juggling tricks of heathenism or the phoniness of the healing campaigns of our day, who conceal their trickery to make one believe their claims are real. If God is in it, you can examine it thoroughly and the evidence will be obvious."

**Leaped** (242) ([hallomai](#)) means to leap, leap up, jump, spring, spring up, to gush. "Used of quick movement by living beings like jumping." (Brown). The two literal uses in Acts (Acts 3:8, 14:10) describe men lame from birth who jump up after being healed by one of the apostles (first Peter, then Paul). Jesus applies [hallomai](#) metaphorically to the picture of water bubbling up as from an underground spring. There are 8 uses of [hallomai](#) in the Septuagint with 4 uses referring to the Holy Spirit "leaping upon" individuals (Samson in Jdg 14:6, 19, 15:14 and Saul in 1Sa 10:10)! The use in Isaiah 35:6+ refers to the [Millennium](#) when the lame will leap! Jesus uses [hallomai](#) metaphorically in John 4:14+ to describe "a well of water springing up to eternal life."

As **Merida** says "The man immediately leaps up and walks, a sign of the already/not-yet kingdom." Compare Isa 35:5-6+

Then (WHEN CHRIST RETURNS TO SET UP HIS MESSIANIC KINGDOM) the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then **the lame will leap like a deer**, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah. .

**Began to walk** ([imperfect tense](#)) (4043) ([peripateo](#) from [peri](#) = about, around + [pateo](#) = walk, tread) means literally to walk around (walk around in a complete circuit or full circle), to go here and there walking, to tread all around. The 39 uses in the Gospels always refer to literal, physical walking. Seven of the 8 uses in Acts are also in the literal sense (except Acts 21:21). ([See Spurgeon's comments on what it means to walk](#))

**F F Bruce** says that "That this lame man had faith was made plain by his ready obedience to Paul's command to stand up." (cf discussion of the [Obedience of faith](#))

**J Vernon McGee** points out why God did these miracles through the missionaries - Paul and Barnabas had the gifts of an apostle, the sign gifts. They came into these places without any New Testament with the message of the gospel. What were their credentials? How could they prove their message was from God? The sign gifts were their credentials-they needed them. Today we have the entire Bible, and what people need today is to study this Bible and to learn what it has to say [cf. Acts 17:11]."

**Jack Arnold** - These apostles had the sign gifts as their credentials and they did miracles to prove that their message was from God. As far as I know, there is no one today with any sign gifts. This kind of healing does not take place today; therefore, there are no sign gifts. If men have the sign gifts today, why don't they use them in the hospitals? God heals today in a sovereign way through faith and prayer but it is questionable whether the sign gift of miracles is still in existence. Here, too, is another pattern. When the Gospel is preached, sometimes it is accompanied by other supernatural phenomena which is from God. This does not always involve physical miracles of healing. In fact, physical miracles are rare, but things happen that we can not always explain in human terms. Men and women experience the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. They are able to rid themselves of habits, thoughts and attitudes that were harmful and injurious to them before conversion and which enslaved their personalities. With this release, there is sometimes supernatural phenomena surrounding it. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

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**Acts 14:11** When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."

KJV Acts 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

- **The gods** Acts 8:10; 12:22; 28:6

## **PAGAN PRAISE FOR PAUL AND BARNABAS**

The man in Lystra in whom God worked a miracle, resulted in mayhem in Lystra. It seemed innocent enough at the outside, but because the words were unknown to the missionaries, the intention of the crowd was hidden from them.

**When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language-** Luke's mention of this language is significant as Paul and Barnabas did not speak it and thus would have been unaware of the pagan praise being lavished on them. As Gangel points out "In Lystra we see a significant contrast with Acts 3, where Peter could immediately discern that the Aramaic speakers around him intended to give him and John credit for the healing. None of Paul's Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, or Latin was useful on this unusual occasion." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 233](#))

**What the Bible Teaches** - Note how the heathen religions copy the truth. The Lord Jesus was God manifest in flesh; He came down and took upon Himself flesh and blood; these heathen claimed, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men". In other words, they considered that they were having a visit from the Greek gods Jupiter (or Zeus) and Mercury (or Hermes). (Consider a similar idolatrous statement by the people of Ephesus in Acts 19:35.) (What the Bible teaches – Acts and James)

**The gods have become like men and have come down to us** - The pagan response to the miracle is not to respond to the Gospel but in fact cause them to revert to their idolatrous beliefs which were firmly entrenched. Idols do not come off the throne of one's heart easily, especially if they have been bowed down to and served for many years! The pagans believed in mythological tales which are a counterfeit and say that the gods became men. Satan always counterfeits that which is true and gives glory to God, because he desires the glory due only to God. And so these pagans in Lystra believed Satan's lie of "**counterfeit incarnation**" and failed to believe the truth that Jesus Christ "although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and **being made in the likeness of men** (COMPARE the "[counterfeit](#)" statues of the Greek "gods" who were made in "the likeness of men!"). **Being found in appearance as a man**, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.(Php 2:6-8)

**Stedman** - What a chance for these apostles to take over the city on their own terms! What a subtle attack this flattery was. Sometimes popularity is the weapon Satan employs most successfully of all to ruin the presentation of the gospel. ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION FROM RAY STEDMAN** - I was recently in Hawaii where I again visited the wax museum in Honolulu and saw the diorama depicting the landing of Captain James Cook of the British Navy on the shores of Hawaii, at Kealakekua Bay. He was welcomed as the god, Lono, and he and his men were given anything and everything. Believe me, that means everything they wanted. They were attended day and night. But strangely, though Captain Cook thought this was wonderful and accepted their worship, one day as they were about to launch their boats and return to their ship, a native who was angry with him for some reason grabbed hold of the captain. Without thinking, Captain Cook swung at him and knocked him down. The native retaliated, hitting him on the head with a club, and the Captain groaned. When the natives heard this, one of them cried out, "He groans. He is not a god!" and they fell on him, and killed him. You can see a memorial at the site today. ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

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### **Glory Deflectors**

I will not give My glory to another. —Isaiah 48:11

Acts 14:8-18

Barbara Mertz has a complaint about Egypt's Pharaoh Ramses II. In her book Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs, archaeologist Mertz writes, "One gets so tired of Ramses; his face, his figure, and/or his name are plastered over half the wall surfaces still standing in Egypt—at least it seems that way." Insatiably thirsty for glory, Ramses reveled in Egyptian religion, which taught that the pharaoh was divine.

Contrast Ramses' desire for glory with the attitude of Paul and Barnabas. On one of their missionary journeys, they faced a situation during which they refused to accept vainglory. When a crowd in the idolatrous city of Lystra saw them heal a crippled man, the people exclaimed, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" (Acts 14:11). They immediately prepared animals to sacrifice in honor of Paul and Barnabas. But the two quickly objected, saying, "We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God" (v.15).

We do not rival the apostles in our accomplishments for God, but we all have things we do for Him. It's then that we must be "glory deflectors," making sure God gets all the glory for everything we have done. By Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## Acts 14:12 And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker

KJV Acts 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

- **Zeus** Acts 19:35

### A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Remember that this all began with the miraculous healing. Miracles certainly did not save these persistent pagans! The miracles did however attest to the authenticity of Paul and Barnabas except that for the pagans it was a case of mistaken identity!

As **Jack Andrews** says "What should have sparked true worship of God, sharing of the gospel, salvation of the lost, and glorification of the Lord sadly sparked a frenzied effort at worshiping false gods." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker**- The idolatry of the pagans in Lystra now reaches its zenith in declaring them [Zeus](#) (Jupiter) and [Hermes](#)!

**Wikipedia** - **Zeus** is the [sky](#) and [thunder god](#) in [ancient Greek religion](#), who rules as [king of the gods](#) of [Mount Olympus](#). His name is [cognate](#) with the first element of his Roman equivalent [Jupiter](#).

**Wikipedia** - **Hermes** is the god of trade, heraldry, merchants, commerce, roads, thieves, trickery, sports, travelers, and athletes in Ancient Greek religion and mythology; the son of [Zeus](#) and the [Pleiad Maia](#), he was the second youngest of the [Olympian gods](#) ([Dionysus](#) being the youngest). Hermes was the emissary and messenger of the gods.<sup>[1]</sup> Hermes was also "the divine trickster"<sup>[2]</sup> and "the god of boundaries and the transgression of boundaries, ... the patron of herdsmen, thieves, graves, and heralds."<sup>[3]</sup> He is described as moving freely between the worlds of the mortal and divine, and was the [conductor of souls](#) into the afterlife.<sup>[4]</sup> He was also viewed as the protector and patron of roads and travelers.<sup>[5]</sup>

**John MacArthur** on **calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes** - "The identifications are intriguing. That they identified **Barnabas** with **Zeus** suggests he presented a more distinguished and imposing appearance than Paul. Paul's identification with **Hermes**, the messenger of the gods, is perfectly logical, since he was the **chief speaker**." ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 50](#))

**Arnold** explains that "There is a reason why they thought Paul and Barnabas to be **Hermes** and **Zeus**. There was a tradition in Lystra that **Zeus** and **Hermes** had already come to Lystra in the ancient past. These gods sought to get hospitality from the city but only two Lycaonians, Philemon and Baucis, had been kind to them and entertained them unawares. The gods became angry with Lystra and destroyed it but gave special blessing to Philemon and Baucis. These Lystrians, when they saw the miracle of Paul and Barnabas, thought that **Zeus** and **Hermes** had returned. **Zeus** was the national god of the Greeks. Zeus was the most powerful of all the gods for he was said to give power to all the gods and to hold sway over them. Everything but the Fates were subservient to his will. Therefore, because Barnabas probably had a long beard he was thought to be Zeus. Some commentators have also thought that because Zeus was portrayed as a robust, athletic person that Barnabas also fit this same kind of description. **Hermes** (Mercury) was the chief messenger of the gods and was considered the god of eloquence. Because Paul was small and spoke a lot, he was called Mercury or Hermes. These ignorant, superstitious, rural people actually felt the gods had come down among them in the likeness of men. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Jack Andrews** gives us more detail on what may have prompted the pagans in Lystra to mistake the missionaries as gods - The Lycaonians had a legend that was known amongst their people that Jupiter (Zeus) and Mercury (Hermes) had once come down to



the people disguised as mortals seeking lodging. They went to a thousand homes and no one would take them in. Finally, at a humble cottage of straw and reeds, a poor elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis ([see story on Wikipedia](#)), freely welcomed them and feasted them with what meager means they had ([see picture](#)). In appreciation, the gods transformed the cottage into a temple, making the couple priest and priestess. And when they died, they were immortalized as great oak trees. The inhospitable homes were destroyed! The people of Lystra did not want that to happen again! This time they wanted to make sure they received, welcomed, and worshiped their gods. ([Expository Sermons](#))

**J Vernon McGee - The people at Lystra were looking to Paul and Barnabas.** - The other day I played golf with a very affable, generous, bighearted man. He is an unsaved man, and he told me very candidly that he was chasing around. Mutual friends had asked me to play with him. I attempted to talk with him about the gospel. He knew the facts of the gospel as well as I do. And you know something else? He believed them. He said he believed that Jesus died and rose again, and he believed that if he put his trust in Jesus, He would save him. So I asked him why he didn't do that. Then he began to mention names, names of certain men whose lives just didn't measure up to their profession of faith. So I said to him, "For goodness sake get your eyes off men. In the first century the apostles performed miracles and men got their eyes on the apostles. So it was necessary to get their eyes off the apostles and turn them to the Book which presents the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to get your eyes on the Word of God and learn what God says today. He tells us that the important thing is our personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. All those other men you mention will not even enter into the picture when you stand before the Lord Jesus someday. The only question will be your personal relationship to Jesus Christ as it is revealed in the Word of God. Go to the Word of God." I'll be very frank with you, I didn't really get very far with this man. He did say that I had given him a new approach; he had never heard it that way before. He thought maybe he would try it. I encouraged him again to get his eyes off other Christians, because we all have feet of clay.

**Acts 14:13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds**

KJV Acts 14:13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

- **wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds** Acts 10:25; Daniel 2:46

## **A COUNTERFEIT SACRIFICE**

**The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city** - Temple is added by the translators and seem to be a logical, reasonable interpretation. This temple must have been visible to Paul and Barnabas as they came into Lystra, so they knew their reception and presentation would likely be very different than in the synagogue settings with which they were familiar.

**Brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds**- Man is inherently religious and must worship something. This worship includes the lie of sacrifice to appease or please whatever is worshipped. Again we see Satan's lie seeking (and [sadly successfully](#)) to counterfeit the once for all time sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Heb 10:12, Jn 1:29), the only sacrifice that pleases God (1 Jn 2:2+, Ro 3:25, 26+, cf Eph 5:2+ "a fragrant aroma") and the only sacrifice that takes away a man's sin (1 Jn 3:5+, 1 Jn 1:7+ where "cleanses" = present tense = continually) and gives eternal inner peace to one's restless soul (Ro 5:1+). As Augustine of Hippo (354–430) famously wrote in his Confessions "Our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in You."

**John Phillips** agrees writing that "Man is incurably religious. He must worship something. The deluded but sincere pagans of Lystra represent countless millions of people held enthralled by the chains of false religion. They are zealous, devout, willing to sacrifice, eager to do their religious duty—but lost." (Exploring Acts)

Even in America we make Jesus into a God that fits our desires and wishes, a God who allows us to live the way we desire to live, which is exactly what the false gods do for the heathen! These so-called vain gods established no boundaries and were just as perverted as the people who worshipped them! This is not even "logical" but when men refuse to follow God, they will fall for anything! May the Lord Jesus make us see idolatry for what it is and turn away from all idols! I love the psalmist's prayer (which should frequently be our prayer) in Psalm 119:37

Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity (worthless) and revive me in Your ways.

**Lloyd Ogilvie** wrote, "When Jesus was born there was no room at the inn. But today we not only have room at our inn, but a penthouse suite away from reality. Jesus is V.I.P. to be honored but not believed or followed. In America, He is a custom but not the true Christ; a captured hero of a casual civil religion, but not Lord of our lives."

**Offer sacrifice** (kill, butcher)([2380](#)) see note below [thuo](#)

**Arnold** makes an interesting point that "Satan could not destroy the Gospel through persecution so he tried to destroy the apostles through an ego trip. The most subtle Satanic attack on any Christian worker is when men want to worship the worker rather than the Lord, to put the worker on the pedestal rather than Christ. This really feeds the ego, but Christian workers must never accept this kind of adulation and must resist it with all their might." ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

As **R. Kent Hughes** points out , "These people wanted to know this new God only on their own terms. Paul and Barnabas never got to explain the Incarnation because the people were determined to keep them within the boundaries of their religious presumptions. Today too Christ is often made such a captive of men's presuppositions (what they think He ought to be or what they want Him to be) that they do not really understand Him." (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Wiersbe** comments "How easy it would have been to accept this worship and try to use the honor as a basis for teaching the people the truth, but that is not the way God's true servants minister (2 Cor. 4:1-2; 1 Thes. 2:1-5)" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out**

KJV Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

- **But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it** Acts 14:4; 1 Corinthians 9:5,6
- **they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd** 2 Kings 5:7; 18:37; 19:1,2; Ezra 9:3-5; Jeremiah 36:24; Matthew 26:65

### **DRAMATIC DISGUST AND RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION**

When we catch ourselves backsliding into idolatry we need to take quick action like Paul and Barnabas! Literally they "leaped up" (see below). Idols that are allowed to **stay** can soon become idols that hold **sway** (it rhymes!). We need to heed the commands from Paul and John

Therefore (cf 1 Cor 10:12-13), my beloved, **flee** ([present imperative](#) - keep on fleeing!) from idolatry. (1 Cor 10:14)

Little children, **guard** (aorist imperative - Do it now! Do not delay!) yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21+)

**But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it** - Luke's second use of **apostles** in Acts 14 - [see comments](#) for Acts 14:4 for discussion of what **apostles** means in this context.

**NET Note** - This is one of only two places where Luke calls Paul an apostle, and the description here is shared with Barnabas. This is a nontechnical use here, referring to a commissioned messenger.

**Thomas Constable** writes, "If Satan cannot derail Christian witness with persecution, he will try praise. Too much persecution has destroyed many preachers, and too much praise has ruined many others. One of the problems with miracles is that they often draw more attention to the miracle worker than to God."

**THOUGHT** - One of my memory verses is Pr 27:21, so that this verse can always be pulled out as the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17) when praise comes my way, especially when it is unexpected. The other passage that the Spirit usually pops into my mind is 2 Cor 3:5-6, and that usually puts out the fire in my flesh!

**They tore their robes** - See note below. Their actions show their horror, revulsion and deep distress over the blasphemy being committed (See [Sanhedrin 7.5](#)). See [What did it mean to tear one's clothes in the Bible?](#)

**Kenneth Gangel** quips that on what may have motivated their radical reaction of tearing their clothes - "Memories of Herod's worms surely haunted any first-century public figure who stood in danger of being worshiped instead of God (Acts 12:21-23+)....In Joshua 7:6 tearing clothes demonstrates distress, and in Mark 14:63 it protests perceived blasphemy." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 233](#))

**James Anderson** adds this caution - The Lord's people ought always to remember that they are only servants, possessing nothing

that they did not receive. Everything that detracts from God must be repudiated. He is too great to share His glory with any other. The sole Creator of heaven, earth and sea can have no rivals. Herod may accept worship (Acts 12:22), but the two evangelists could but rend their clothes in indignant protest. (What the Bible teaches – Acts and James)

**Tony Merida** adds that "Ministers today must take note of the missionaries' intense deflection of glory. Herod would have enjoyed such praise, but faithful Christians understand that only God is to be worshiped." ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**Spurgeon** makes an interesting observation - We do not find that they rent their clothes when the people talked of stoning them, but when they spake of worshipping them, they could not bear it; being more concerned for God's honour than their own

**Tore** (1284)([diarresso](#) from [diá](#) =denoting separation + [rhéssō/rhégnumi](#) = to tear, break, rend) means literally to tear through, rend asunder, such as tearing clothing (Mt. 26:65; Mk 14:83, Acts 14:14) The Jews in expressing grief or indignation used to tear their garments from their chest to the waist (a sign of mourning in Ge 37:29, 33, 34; 44:13; Nu 14:6; a sign of distress in Josh. 7:6; 2 Sa 3:31). Toussaint adds that "Usually rips were made four or five inches into the neckline of the garment." (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 392](#))

**Robes** (garments, cloaks) (2440)([himation](#)) describes a garment of any sort, but especially an outer garment and in the plural (ta himatia) for clothes in general. In contrast the Greek word [chitin](#) refers to the garment worn under the outer cloak. The **himation** was something thrown over the inner tunic (chitin) and in secular Greek was sometimes used for the Roman toga.

**Robertson** writes "Like the high priest in Matthew 26:65 as if an act of sacrilege was about to be committed. It was strange conduct for the supposed gods!"

**And rushed out into the crowd**- Fearlessly they leaped out (more literal meaning of this verb - see below) in the midst of the frenzied pagans. Note the irony, that their need to leap up was precipitated by a lame man leaping up (Acts 14:10)! Idolatry necessitates immediate action! As **Andrews** says "This was not done lightly. When we combat idolatry we must be firm in our resolve and steadfast in our convictions! The apostles didn't respond to the idolatry from a distance. They didn't combat the sin from safety. They ran in among the multitude. They got right down where the people were and told them to stop their idolatry!"

**Rushed out** (1601)([ekpedao](#)) literally means to leap out or leap forth and thus depicts them as getting up quickly (into the pagan crowd). **Gilbrant** notes that [ekpedao](#) is a "compound verb—composed of the preposition [ek](#), "out of," and the verb [pēdaō](#), "leap, spring" and is a commonly used term for "starting up or getting up quickly." It is used in the Septuagint of Dan, one of the sons of Jacob (Dt 33:22), in Moses' prophecy concerning the 12 tribes. In the New Testament it is used only once, in Acts 14:14, where Barnabas and Paul ran quickly into the crowd at Lystra to prevent the people from worshipping the servants of God." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Crying out** (present tense)(2896)([krazo](#)) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those onomatopoeic words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the [hoarse cry \(or "croak"\) of the raven](#)

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**Got Questions** - Question: "[What did it mean to tear one's clothes in the Bible?](#)"

**Answer:** The tearing of one's clothes is an ancient tradition among the Jews, and it is associated with mourning, grief, and loss. The first mention of someone tearing his garments is in Genesis. "When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes" (Genesis 37:29). A short time later, "Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days" (Genesis 37:34) when he thought that Joseph had been killed.

Other biblical examples of men who tore their clothes to express pain and sorrow include David, when Saul and Jonathan were killed (2 Samuel 1:11–12); Elisha, when Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:11–12); Job, when he was bereft of all he possessed (Job 1:20); Jephthah, when he learned the result of his rash vow (Judges 11:34–35); Mordecai, when he learned of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews (Esther 4:1); Ahab, when Elijah pronounced a judgment against him (1 Kings 21:27); and Paul and Barnabas, when the people of Lystra began to worship them (Acts 14:14).

Sometimes, the tearing of one's clothes was accompanied by other signs of humility and grief, such as shaving one's head (Job 1:20), throwing dust on oneself (Job 2:12), and wearing sackcloth (2 Samuel 3:31).

There were times when people should have torn their garments but did not. The prophet Jeremiah received the Word of God concerning a soon-coming judgment on Judah. Jeremiah faithfully wrote the prophecy in a scroll and delivered it to King Jehoiakim. The king listened to the first part of the prophecy, but then he took a knife, cut the scroll in pieces, and burned it in a brazier (Jeremiah 36:23). This impious act was met with chilling stoicism from his aides: "The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes" (verse 24). If ever there was a time to tear one's clothes, this was it; but these

men had no fear of God, no remorse, no conviction of sin.

It is interesting that the high priest was not allowed to tear his clothes: "The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not . . . tear his clothes" (Leviticus 21:10). The special nature of the high priestly office dictated a separation from some of the common customs, including that of mourning.

Tearing one's clothes was a public and powerful expression of grief in ancient times. The practice is continued today in the Jewish practice of *keriah*. Today's ritual is less spontaneous and more regulated: the garment is cut by a rabbi at a funeral service, as the bereaved recite words relating to God's sovereignty. One tradition says that the mourner must tear the clothing over the heart—a sign of a broken heart.

More important than outward shows of grief are true sorrow for sin and genuine repentance of the heart. The prophet Joel relayed God's command: "Rend your heart and not your garments" (Joel 2:13). The One who sees the heart requires more than external ritual. And the command came with a promise: "Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity" (Joel 2:13; cf. Psalm 34:18).

**Acts 14:15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.**

KJV Acts 14:15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

- **Men** Acts 7:26; 16:30; 27:10,21,25
- **why are you doing these things** Acts 10:26; Revelation 19:19; 22:9
- **We are also men** Acts 3:12,13; 12:22,23; Genesis 41:16; Daniel 2:28-30; John 7:18
- **of the same nature as you** James 5:17; Revelation 19:10
- **preach the gospel to you** Acts 17:16-18,29,30; 26:17-20
- **that you should turn from these vain things** Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Samuel 12:21; 1 Kings 16:13,26; Ps 31:6; Isaiah 44:9,10,19,20; Isaiah 45:20; 46:7; Jeremiah 8:19; 10:3-5,8,14,15; 14:22; Amos 2:4; Jonah 2:8; Romans 1:21-23; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:17
- **to a living God** Deuteronomy Acts 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26,36; 2 Kings 19:4,16; Jeremiah 10:10; Daniel 6:26; John 5:26; 1 Th 1:9; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:12
- **Who made heaven and earth** - Acts 4:24; 17:24-28; Genesis 1:1; Ps 33:6; 124:8; 146:5,6; Proverbs 8:23-31; Isaiah 45:18; Jeremiah 10:11; 32:17; Zechariah 12:1; Romans 1:20; Revelation 14:7

## **MEN WE ARE MERE MEN!**

**And saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? - Saying** is in the plural so it is Paul and Barnabas sounding off! They open with an abrupt, but courteous designation "**Men**" to gain their attention. Why are you calling us by names of Greek mythological gods who are not really gods and even seeking to worship us as if we ourselves were gods incarnate? Now Paul begins to speak of God's role as Creator and Sustainer in nature, but we must not forget that he has already preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Acts 14:9. Now he backtracks from that [special revelation](#) and reverts to [natural revelation](#) to meet the pagans in terms they could grasp.

**Tony Merida** on Paul's address **Men** - In other words, he wants them to stop the madness. This reminds us of a similar scene when Cornelius bowed down to Peter in worship. Peter told Cornelius, "Stand up. I myself am also a man" (Acts 10:26+). Here Paul says, "We are people also, just like you" (Acts 14:15). Both men emphasize the insanity of worshiping humans. ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**We are also men of the same nature as you** - Paul is declaring he and Barnabas are not divine, not "gods," but are frail human beings just as those who were seeking to worship them. They were saying they had "like passions" just as those calling them gods had. They were no different.

**Brian Harbour** wrote, "The Lycaonian confession reminds us that all of us are on the same level. There are not some above us who are more important to God or some below us who are less important to God."

**Same nature** ([3663](#))(**homoioopathes** from **homoios** = similar + **pathos** = passion) literally means similar passion and so liable to be affected in the same way. only here and Jas 5:17) This word emphasize common humanity of those mentioned.

**NET Note** adds that "In the immediate context, the contrast is between human and divine nature, and the point is that Paul and Barnabas are mere mortals, not gods."

**Friberg** on **homoioopathes** - (1) of the same (human) nature, similar in experience, as opposed to having superhuman nature (Acts 14.15); (2) with the same feelings, experiencing similar sufferings, as opposed to having supernatural power and exemption from suffering (Jas 5.17)

**Robertson** on **same nature** - It means "of like nature" more exactly and affected by like sensations, not "gods" at all. Their conduct was more serious than the obeisance of Cornelius to Peter (Acts 10:25-26).

**And preach the Gospel to you - Euaggelizo** is in the **plural** so again we see it is both Paul and Barnabas speaking. They do not go into a long **diatribe** about the vanity of idolatry, but they do go for the "spiritual jugular" of the pagans proclaiming the only truth that can men and women free from their enslaving idols and bondage to sin! (cf In Romans 6 Paul says part of the fruit of the Gospel is to free men from being slaves of unrighteousness and make them slaves of righteousness - Ro 6:11-14, 18+)

**Preach the gospel** ([2097](#)) See note on [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) (in Acts 14:7, 15, 21) Paul was continually (present tense) "gospelizing" them. In other words he is saying that they were not gods, but that they only proclaimers of THE good news from THE only God.

**Robertson** comments that "Here we have Paul's message to a pagan audience without the Jewish environment and he makes the same line of argument seen in Acts 17:21-32; Romans 1:18-23. At Antioch in Pisidia we saw Paul's line of approach to Jews and proselytes (Acts 13:16-41).

## **THE GOSPEL IS A CALL TO AN "ABOUT FACE"**

Paul issues a call for these idolaters to repent and turn to the living God, calling them to attention (so to speak) with a "spiritual about face!" **About Face** is a common drill command generally used with a group that is marching, most often in military foot drill. It describes the act of pivoting 180 degrees, especially in a military formation. Does this sound familiar to anything we see in Christian doctrine? Of course it does, for this phrase is a great "word picture" of the call to turn from whatever dead idol we are vainly grasping and to turn and take hold of the living God. In short, it is a call to repent.

**That you should turn from these vain things to a living God** - Paul is calling worship of Zeus and Hermes vain, empty, worthless. One can imagine as he said this he was pointed to some of their statues of these "gods." Notice that inherent in the message of the Gospel is a "turning from" and a "turning to" which is a picture of repentance. Many today say that repentance is not part of the Gospel. They need to read Paul's declaration to these idolaters! As Paul preaches the Gospel, he is calling for them to turn from idolatry and to the true and living God. Idolatry is in effect turning the "**imago dei**" upside down, so to speak!

**Repentance** in Acts - Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 8:22; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:24; Acts 17:30; Acts 19:4; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20

**Turn from** ([1994](#))(**epistrepho** from **epí** = motion toward + **strepho** = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to turn turn around and in a moral sense to convert (Lk 1:16, 17, Lk 22:32). In the Septuagint it describes a return to the Lord ("in the latter days" see Deut 4:30+). The idea is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's mind, and as such it is related to repentance. For example, Peter called on his audience to "**repent** (aorist imperative) and **return** (epistrepho also aorist imperative), so that your sins may be wiped away." (Acts 3:19+) In Acts 9:35+ Luke says "they **turned to** (epistrepho) the Lord" which implies they turned away from something else and **to the Lord**. This is a picture of **repentance** ([metanoia](#)). Here is a video of from a Jewish man who turned to the Lord - [How a Jewish man met Messiah](#). **Epistrepho** is frequently used by Luke in Acts (Acts 3:19; Acts 9:35; Acts 9:40; Acts 11:21; Acts 14:15; Acts 15:19; Acts 15:36; Acts 16:18; Acts 26:18; Acts 26:20; Acts 28:27)

One of the best illustrations of pagans responding to the preaching of the Gospel and turning from idols to God occurred in Thessalonica

"For they themselves report about us (PAUL, SILAS, TIMOTHY - 1 Th 1:1) what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you **turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God** (PRINCIPLE - SERVE GOD

OR SERVE IDOLS! read Jesus' warning Mt 6:24+), and to wait (anameno = THEIR HEARTS NOW CONTINUALLY ANTICIPATED AND LONGED) for (THE RETURN OF) His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who rescues ([rhuomai](#)) us from the wrath to come. (1 Th 1:9-10+)

**Vain** (3152)([mataios](#) from **maten** = groundless, invalid) means empty, devoid of force, lacking in content, nonproductive, useless, dead, fruitless, aimless, of no real or lasting value, all apt descriptions of idols and the practice of idolatry! It is notable that this word denotes the appearance of something as distinct from its essence, and it suggests the "deceptive" quality of something. Is that not exactly what idols do to our heart - deceive us! Indeed, this is God's accusation against Judah in the OT Jeremiah recording "Thus says the LORD, "What injustice did your fathers find in Me, That they went far from Me and **walked after emptiness** (Hebrew = hebel - vanity used of idols; Lxx = [mataios](#)) **and became empty** (Lxx uses related verb [mataioo](#))? (Jer 2:5) God is saying they walked after empty idols! (Worthless is Jeremiah's favorite way of describing idols Jer 8:19, 10:8, 15, 14:22, 16:19, 51:18).

## **PAUL PROCLAIMS GOD IS THE CREATOR**

**Robertson** on **to a living God** - They must go the whole way. Our God is a live God, not a dead statue. Paul is fond of this phrase (2 Cor. 6:16; Romans 9:26).

Now Paul goes on to emphasize the evidence that God is not a dead but **living God** in that He was the very One Who created the Universe. He took a similar approach to the pagans in Corinth declaring "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands." (Acts 17:24+).

**THOUGHT** - Does Paul's approach to the evangelization of the heathen help you understand why the belief in evolution is so deadly? If one does not believe that God created everything, they begin to question if there is even such a person as God. If they question creation and the fall of man, they have no reason to think they need a Redeemer.

**MacArthur** adds that "It is important to realize at this point that nothing has ravaged gospel preaching to the untaught world more than the theory of evolution. Because it poses an explanation of the existence of everything without a Creator or moral lawgiver, people who accept it fail to see any need for God or a first cause. Thus they cut themselves off from all that creation, reason, conscience, and providence are designed to do—namely lead them to God." ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 51](#))

### **Related Resources:**

- [How do beliefs about creation impact the rest of theology?](#)
- [How does creationism vs. evolution impact how a person views the world?](#)
- [What is evolutionism?](#)
- [What are some flaws in the theory of evolution?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about creation vs. evolution?](#)
- [What is theistic evolution?](#)
- [Is the similarity in human/chimp DNA evidence for evolution?](#)
- [Why do many Christians reject the theory of evolution?](#)
- [What was the Scopes Monkey Trial?](#)

**WHO MADE** - Paul says God is the Creator and now he does quote Scripture (even though the pagans would not recognize it as such). As **Robertson** says undoubtedly Paul has Genesis 1:1 in mind as he quotes from Psalm 146:6

Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever

**Swindoll** - The formula "**the heaven and the earth and the sea**" identified three realms of the Greek cosmos. The universe of Greek mythology thought of **earth** as a flat plane with air above, water around, and Hades below. Paul's statement comes from a Hebrew concept of the universe (cf. Acts 4:24; Ps. 146:6). He wanted the pagans to understand that one God made all realms of the universe and created all the creatures therein, but he was still speaking from a foreign worldview. ([Insights on Acts](#))

**MacArthur** explains that "Since they did not know the Old Testament, he appealed to the universal, rational knowledge of the Creator, the first cause in a cause-and-effect world. As he was later to write to the Romans (see Romans 1:18-25 below) Paul later evangelized the pagans on Mars Hill in Athens from the same starting point—the need to explain the ultimate cause for the world and everything in it (cf. Acts 17:22-31+) ([Acts 1-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary Two Volume Set](#))

**Tony Merida** adds "Perhaps you're thinking, I can't use this approach because most people today believe in evolution. They don't

even believe in God. But we must remember that the reality of God's existence is planted inside of every person (Rom 1). When you hear the statement, "Atheists don't believe in God," remember this: God doesn't believe in atheists! When you talk to unbelievers, don't feel you must prove to them the existence of God. Paul presupposes God's existence in his preaching in Lystra. He starts with what is visible in creation and attributes it to God. ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM-** Remember that there was no synagogue in Lystra (at least Luke makes no mention and does not say Paul entered a synagogue as was his typical practice), so this was undoubtedly a predominantly Gentile town. So how does one begin to witness to pagans? But speaking of the Creator and His creation for this is where they have common ground. This is an important truth because it addresses the frequent question/complaint "What about all the people who have never heard of Jesus?" The answer is that God will make sure they hear of Jesus (special revelation) if they respond with open hearts to His natural revelation. No one is saved by natural revelation but everyone receives this evidence that there is a God and all men are without excuse if they reject this knowledge. As an aside years ago Bullinger wrote a book claiming that the gospel was present in the stars, but sadly this is not true and is extremely misleading and deceptive (See [lengthy assessment of this false belief](#)). No, the Gospel is present in the Bible, so the heathen need to hear the Bible. Those heathen who are drawn to the living God by His handiwork in the heavens, will be given exposure to the Gospel as God's Spirit moves missionaries, etc to go to these people. Paul tells us sadly how most of humanity responds to the handiwork of God in the heavenlies in his letter to the Romans...

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress (actively, continually hold down revelation of) the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them (THE CONSCIENCE - cf Ro 2:15+). 20+ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** (BELOVED, THIS APPLIES TO EVERY PERSON EVERY CREATED WHEREVER THEY HAVE LIVED ON PLANET EARTH) 21 For (PAUL EXPLAINS THAT) even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man (LIKE THESE PEOPLE IN LYSTRA WHO WANT TO SACRIFICE TO MEN WHO THEY THINK ARE GODS!) and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a (LITERALLY "THE") lie (GOES BACK TO THE LIE IN THE GARDEN - Ge 3:5+), and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:18-25+)

**THOUGHT** - This is one of the more important passages in chapter 1 of Romans as it helps us understand (and then make a defense concerning) why most of the world is the way it is - godless, immoral, corrupt, etc, etc. And see the "cherry on top" of this sad description in Ro 1:32+! Even though they are deceived by sin (Heb 3:13+), they know they are doing wrong and even APPROVE of doing wrong! Amazing! Only amazing Gospel of grace can rectify this wreck!

**Jack Arnold** - Notice how Paul approached these pagan Gentiles. He did not start with the Bible as he always did with the Jews who believed in special revelation, but he began with [general revelation](#). He started with nature and declared that God created the heavens, earth and all living things. He began where these pagan people were in their understanding. God has revealed Himself, to those who do not have written revelation, in nature. Men have light about God, but what light they do have they suppress and reject because they are sinners by nature. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**THOUGHT** - Another pattern of evangelism is to start with a person where he is. When speaking to non-church people, begin with nature and their relationship to God, then move on to Christ and special revelation. Show them that nature has order, unity and beauty because of a Creator. Everything exists and functions because it is made and controlled by God, who is a living God and this God has revealed Himself in Christ which is special revelation. (Arnold)

**Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible** – We only respond to God if we believe he is there and see ourselves as creatures accountable to a Creator. The more the world loses this link, the harder it is for the gospel to make sense. In the ancient world just about everyone thought of themselves as created beings. The fact that people believe differently today will have to inform our approach to sharing the gospel.

**Related Resources:**

- [What is natural revelation?](#)

- [What is general revelation and special revelation?](#)
- [Why does God allow natural disasters, i.e. earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis?](#)
- [Video - Why Does God Allow Natural Disasters?](#)

Ray Stedman summarizes the three-fold presentation of Paul to the pagans...

Here is the pattern for preaching to a non-religious people. If you want to know how to reach your neighbors who are not interested in the gospel, and who know nothing of Scripture, who have not been to church and are not interested in it, here is the way. The approach is through nature. When Paul went to the Jews, he started with the Scriptures, the truth of God that they already knew. When he went to the Gentiles, he started with nature, the truth of God which they already knew. He points out three things that ought to have been very plain to them if they had been thinking about their contact with nature.

**(1) First he shows that behind creation there is one living God,** not a multitude of relatively powerless, disparate, and divided pagan deities or idols. He appeals to the fact that, if they had really observed nature, they would realize that it is not controlled by a conglomerate of separate powers, all trying to compete with one another, as envisioned in the pagan pantheon. According to the pagan system, everything had a god. There was a god of water, a god of trees, a god of rocks. The processes of the body had gods: there was a god for speech, a god for sex, and a god for life. And these gods, like people, were in competition with one another. Paul is saying, "You haven't really seen nature. You haven't noticed, obviously, that nature is as one; it all ties together, blending and harmonizing beautifully. It all exists and functions together because it has been made by one God, who is a living God. It is sustained and held together. It doesn't decay and fall apart but it is constantly being renewed. So there is one living God." Paul declares to them in no uncertain terms that nature has borne witness to God.

**(2) The second point he makes is that the One Living God permits men free choice, and therefore allows evil.** One of the problems about God faced by anyone in the world today is, "Why is there evil present among men?" This is a constant argument of humanists, and others. They say, "If your God is such a loving God, who loves man, why does he permit suffering? Why does he allow evil, and injustice, and war?" These pagans were quite aware of these arguments. They understood them and argued the same way. Paul is answering by saying, "What you must know is that God, in generations past, allowed all the nations to walk in their own way." In other words, he gave them free will. In order to permit free will, he must allow evil. That is Paul's argument, and it is unanswerable. There are those today who say, "Why doesn't God stop all the wars and injustices?" Well, he could. But if he did, he would take away your freedom of choice, and that is the one thing you don't want to surrender. The greatest dignity of humanity is the power to choose between two possible routes. God has given us that power, and he will not take it away. Paul says that is the reason why he allows evil.

**(3) But third, he says, God will not allow it to go too far.** He does not allow evil to engulf humanity and wipe us off the face of the earth, as human evil would do in a few months' time if it were unrestrained. God has restrained it. And right in the midst of it, despite all the rejection and all the rebellion and the blasphemy and hatred that is poured out against him by these people whom he loves, God has shown his love by giving rain and fruit and harvest and gladness in the family circle and joy and happiness throughout the various moments of life. That is the God whom Paul preached. What a marvelous declaration of the gospel, that God had given all these things and thus had given witness to these people about himself! So the first onslaught of the enemy falls back upon itself. The city is open to the gospel, and Paul is able to proclaim it in power. But soon the devil's evil comes full cycle. ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Acts 14:16 "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;**

KJV Acts 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

- **He permitted all the nations to go their own ways** Acts 17:30; Ps 81:12; 147:20; Hosea 4:17; Romans 1:21-25,28; Ephesians 2:12; 1 Peter 4:3

**THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD  
AND MAN'S FREE WILL**



**Arnold** - Before the gospel message came, God in His sovereignty, permitted all Gentile nations to walk in their own ways and conduct themselves without the restraints and restrictions of written law. They were allowed to follow their own reason, thinking, passion, desires, and systems of religion, but now God is taking the Gospel to all Gentile nations. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways**- Note the juxtaposition of God **permitted** and mankind (all of them) went **their own ways** (their conscious, volitional, willful choice - they were not coerced to go their own way!). Paul clearly teaches the mysterious truth of God's Sovereignty and Man's free will in this passage. It could not be stated much more plainly! And yet we all wrestle with it because of its mysterious nature. These truths are "secret things!" We need to hearken back to Moses' words in Deuteronomy 29:29 "**The secret things belong to the LORD our God**, but the things revealed belong to us (IN CONTEXT THE JEWS, BUT BY APPLICATION TODAY TO ALL OF HIS CHILDREN) and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

**In the generations gone by** is a time phrase and one which came to an abrupt and glorious ending when Jesus stepped into the world as God in the flesh to redeem the world, Jew and Gentile, for "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

**MacArthur** - Although He had revealed Himself in general revelation through reason and conscience, God **in the generations gone by permitted all the nations to go their own ways**. There was a tolerance on God's part toward sinners who did not have the full revelation of His holy will. ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 51](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Ligonier article on Permissive Will](#). - This term can be very misleading.
- [What is the difference between God's sovereign will and God's revealed will?](#)

**Robertson** explains that "Paul here touches God in history as he did just before in creation. God's hand is on the history of all the nations (Gentile and Jew), only with the Gentiles he withdrew the restraints of his grace in large measure (Acts 17:30; Ro 1:24, 26, 28), judgment enough for their sins."

**Stanley Toussaint** explains that "Some interpret Acts 14:16 to mean that God will not judge the heathen who lived before the Apostolic Age. However, verse 16 must be taken with verse 17. Up to the time of the church, God gave no direct revelation to the nations (i.e., Gentiles) so they were responsible only for their reactions to the general revelation discernible in Creation (cf. Acts 17:27, 30+ and Ro 1:18-20). (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 392](#))

**Permitted** ([1439](#))([eao](#)) means to allow or permit someone to do something. It also has the sense of to let alone (Acts 5:38). It means to refrain from bothering or detaining.

All the NT uses - Matt. 24:43; Lk. 4:41; 22:51; Acts 14:16; 16:7; 19:30; 23:32; 27:32,40; 28:4; 1 Co. 10:13

In 1977 Fleetwood Mac immortalized the phrase "go your own way" in a song which could be the godless world's theme [song](#). (Yes I listened to it but I was not born again until 1984! Clearly now I do not approve of their message!).

**Robertson** on **to go their own ways** - This philosophy of history does not mean that God was ignorant or unconcerned. He was biding his time in patience.

**THOUGHT** - Paul is not teaching or advocating deism (which is what men like Ben Franklin believed) - **Deism** is essentially the view that God exists, but that He is not directly involved in the world (**ED**: cf the phrase "**He permitted all the nation to go their own ways**"). Deism pictures God as the great "clockmaker" who created the clock, wound it up, and let it go. A deist believes that God exists and created the world, but does not interfere with His creation. Deists deny the Trinity, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, miracles, and any supernatural act of redemption or salvation. Deism pictures God as uncaring and uninvolved. Thomas Jefferson was a famous deist, referring often in his writings to "Providence." ([See full discussion](#)).

**Albert Barnes** explains the phrase **go their own ways** meant that God allowed them "to conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of religion. God gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers. ([Notes on the New Testament](#))

**Acts 14:17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and**

KJV Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

NET Acts 14:17 yet he did not leave himself without a witness by doing good, by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying you with food and your hearts with joy."

NLT Acts 14:17 but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts."

- **He did not leave Himself without witness** Acts 17:27,28; Ps 19:1-4; Romans 1:19,20
- **in that He did good** Ps 36:5-7; 52:1; 104:24-28; 145:9,15,16; Luke 6:35
- **and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons** Leviticus 26:4; Deut 11:14; 28:12; 1 Kings 18:1; Job 5:10; 37:6; 38:26-28; Ps 65:9-13; 68:9,10; 147:7,8; Isaiah 5:6; Jeremiah 5:24; 14:22; Matthew 5:45; James 5:17,18
- **satisfying your hearts with food and gladness** Dt 8:12-14; Neh 9:25; Isa 22:13; 1 Ti 6:17

## NATURAL REVELATION THE WITNESS OF GOD

**And yet** - A Greek particle (kai) which emphasizes reliability. In this passage Paul refutes the lies inherent in their worship of idols and false gods.

**He did not leave Himself without witness** (Read Ro 1:19,20) - The NLT says that God "**never left them without evidence of Himself and His goodness.**" The **witness** to which Paul refers is God's work and supervision over nature. The God rejecting world has perverted this awesome divine truth so that most people give credit to "Mother Nature" and not to "Father God!" Can you see then how even a short phrase like "Mother Nature" can obscure the truth about Father God and the fact that He is in complete control of the rains and fruitful seasons?

Paul is simply echoing the truth of God's witness in nature as recorded by David, the Spirit inspired writer, in Psalm 19...

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.  
The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
2 Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
3 There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.  
4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,  
5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;  
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.  
6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,  
And its circuit to the other end of them;  
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

**In that** - Paul now expounds on some specific aspects of His divine **witness**.

**Warren W. Wiersbe** wrote, "Paul's message was not based on the Old Testament, because this was a pagan Gentile audience. He started with the witness of God in creation. He made it clear that there is but one God who is the living God, giving God, and the forgiving God." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**He did good** - God did God because He is good, which thankfully is one of His eternal, immutable attributes. And notice He did good, even to those who did evil towards Him.

**He...gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons** - (cf Ps 147:8; Ps 104:13-15; Mt 5:45). "He sends you rain and good crops." (NLT) God's kindness to all men described in this section is a manifestation of what theologians often refer to as "[common grace](#)." He is giving, even to those who do not merit His gifts (which is ALL of us!). Not only is this truth affirmed in the New Testament but also in the Old. Although Paul does not directly quote the OT knowing they are ignorant of those Scriptures, what he does do is speak truth that is clearly alluded to in the OT. The example from Jeremiah is especially poignant...

Jer 14:22 **Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers?** Is it not You, O LORD our God? Therefore we hope in You, For You are the one who has done all these things.

In Leviticus 26:4 God tells Israel "I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit."

In Deut 11:14, 28:12 Moses tells Israel "that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil....The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow."

Ps 147:8 Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who provides rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

Ps 104:13-15 **He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.** 14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, 15 And wine which **makes man's heart glad**, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart.

**Jack Arnold** - God is in control of this world and His moral goodness can be seen everywhere. The kindness and goodness of God should lead men to repentance, for all men are dependent upon Him for their very existence. (**ED**: And God's goodness stands in stark contrast with the harshness of the mythological "gods" the pagans bowed down to and served.) ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Robertson** has an interesting note that gives some cultural context to this passage - This **witness** to God (His doing good, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness) they could receive without the help of the Old Testament revelation (Ro 1:20). **Zeus** was regarded as the god of rain (Jupiter Pluvius) and Paul claims the rain and the fruitful (karpophorous, karpos, and pherō, fruit bearing, old word, here alone in N.T.) seasons as coming from God. Lycaonia was often dry and it would be an appropriate item. "**Mercury**, as the God of merchandise, was also the dispenser of food" (Vincent). Paul does not talk about laws of nature as if they governed themselves, but he sees the living God "behind the drama of the physical world" (Furneaux) (**ED**: YES, "BEHIND" BUT INTIMATELY INVOLVED, NOT LIKE [THE GOD OF DEISM](#)). These simple country people could grasp his ideas as he claims everything for the one true God.

#### Related Resource:

- [What is common grace?](#)
- **Gangel** writes that "**Common grace** is a theological phrase which describes God's bounty poured out on all men and women regardless of their faith or righteousness. In our present passage it describes God's gifts of rain and grain, both of which come into the hands of the saved and the unsaved (Ps. 145:9; Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35). We also see **common grace** in the Spirit's restraint of sin in the world. Without **common grace** Satan's activity would run rampant over a wicked society all too ready to embrace his cause (Gen. 6:3). In a more specific dimension, **common grace** can refer to the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin in the world. In John 16:7-11 Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through **common grace** the Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of unbelievers so they can understand the gospel; through **special grace** the Spirit regenerates the heart and brings the believer to salvation. **Common grace** also explains why unsaved people can be so pleasant and kind, sometimes even more gentle than members of God's family. That is because God's **common grace** curbs the devastating effects of sin in the world so it does not reach its fullest extent. **Osterhaven** offers a useful definition: **Common grace** is understood to be the unmerited favor of God toward all men whereby 1) he restrains sin so that order is maintained, and culture and civil righteousness are promoted; and 2) he gives them rain and fruitful seasons, food and gladness, and other blessings in the measure that seems to him to be good (Osterhaven, 172). (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 240](#))

**Satisfying your hearts with food and gladness** - **Satisfying** is [present tense](#) indicating God's continually fills them with food where satisfying or filling their hearts is an idiomatic way of saying He filled their stomachs. They were satisfied in their heart which transitions to gladness which is more clearly associated with the state of one's "heart." Paul is speaking of food which God provides, but also says God is the source of human **gladness**. The NET version translates it "satisfying you with food and your hearts with joy." Paul is indirectly but clearly saying that it is not the pagan gods who provide them with food and gladness. It is the true and living God. It is interesting that Ps 16:11 (using Greek word for gladness) says joy is found in the presence of the Lord. and yet here we see that in spite of their pagan idolatry, they are still recipients of His clearly unmerited joy.

**Satisfying** (1705)(**empimplemi** from **en** = in + **pimplemi** = to fill) means to make full and in NT used only of food. When a person is filled they are satisfied or satiated.

**Friberg's** summary - (1) active satisfy, fill with something (Lk 1.53); (2) passive be satisfied, have enough of something (Jn 6.12); figuratively enjoy something, have one's fill of (Ro 15.24)

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **empimplēmi** (an alternate form of **empiplāō**) means "to fill quite full." It is based on the root **plē** which means "full." This term is used from Homer on and means "to fill a vessel" so that it can be seen as full (for example, of water). It can also mean "to fill a hungry man full of food" (see Liddell-Scott). In the Septuagint **empimplēmi** usually translates the Hebrew words **mālē'** and **sāvā'** which mean "to fill full." It is used of prophets and skilled craftsmen who are filled with the Spirit (Exodus 28:3; 31:3). Jeremiah 23:24 speaks of God revealing himself in full measure in the world in contrast to the fact that His glory was formerly only revealed in the tabernacle and first and second temples. In the New Testament **empimplēmi** is used chiefly of physical fullness (Luke 1:53), a "satisfied" condition because one has had plenty to eat (Luke 6:25; John 6:12), as does **empiplāō** which is used only in Acts 14:17. It can also imply a sense of to "enjoy something" by having your "fill" (of someone's "company," Romans 15:24). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Empimplemi** - 5x in the NT - enjoyed(1), filled(2), satisfying(1), well-fed(1). - Lk. 1:53; Lk. 6:25; Jn. 6:12; Acts 14:17; Ro 15:24

**Empimplemi** in the **Septuagint** - over 140 uses Gen. 42:25; Exod. 15:9; 28:3,41; 31:3; 35:31,35; Lev. 26:26; Num. 14:21; Deut. 6:11; 8:10,12; 11:15; 14:29; 23:24; 26:12; 27:7; 31:20; 32:15; 33:23; 34:9; Jdg. 17:5,12; Ruth 2:14,18; 1 Sam. 20:3; 2 Ki. 3:25; 2 Chr. 5:13-14; Neh. 9:25; Job 8:21; 9:18; 15:2; 19:22; 20:11; 22:18; 23:4; 33:24; 38:39; 40:13; Ps. 22:26; 63:5; 78:29; 90:14; 91:16; 103:5; 105:40; 107:9; 145:16; 147:14; Prov. 6:30; 8:21; 12:11; 13:25; 18:20; 20:13; 24:4; 27:20; 30:15-16; Eccl. 1:7-8; 4:8; 5:12; 6:3; Isa. 2:6-8; 9:20; 11:3,9; 13:21; 14:21; 21:3; 22:2; 23:18; 27:6; 29:19; 31:4; 33:5; 34:6-7; 44:16; 58:10-11; 65:20; 66:11; Jer. 15:17; 31:13,25; 41:9; 46:10; 50:10; Ezek. 7:19; 11:6; 16:28-29; 24:13; 27:25,33; 28:13; 32:4-6; 35:8; 39:20; Hos. 4:10; 7:6; 13:6; Joel 2:19,26; Amos 4:8; Mic. 3:8; 6:14; Hab. 2:5;

**Robertson** on **gladness** - Cheerfulness should be our normal attitude when we consider God's goodness.

**Gladness** (good cheer)(2167)(**euphrosune** from **eu** = well, good + **phren** = mind) refers to joy, cheerfulness joyfulness, a state of joyful happiness. See the cognate verb **euphraino** which means to rejoice. This word is used only in Acts 2:28 and Acts 14:17 but over 150 times in the Septuagint. And so David writes "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." (Ps 16:11)

**Gilbrant** writes that **euphrosune** is "One of several overlapping terms translated "joy," "cheerfulness," or "gladness," this word focuses on the inward or spiritual basis for such joy. In the New Testament such bases are the order of creation (Acts 14:17) and God's presence (Acts 2:28). In the Septuagint it is used most often to translate **simchāh**, which means "fulness of joy" (e.g., Psalm 16:11, the Old Testament verse quoted in Acts 2:28). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Euphrosune** in the **Septuagint** - Gen. 31:27; Num. 10:10; Deut. 28:47; Jdg. 9:13; 2 Sam. 6:12; 1 Ki. 1:40; 1 Chr. 12:40; 15:16,25; 29:17; 2 Chr. 20:27; 23:18; 29:30; 30:21,23,26; Ezr. 3:12-13; 6:16,22; Neh. 8:12,17; 12:27,43-44; Est. 1:4; 8:12,16-17; 9:17-19,22; 10:3; Job 3:7; 20:5; Ps. 4:7; 16:11; 30:11; 45:15; 51:8; 68:3; 97:11; 100:2; 105:43; 106:5; 137:6; Prov. 10:28; 14:13; 21:15,17; 29:6; 30:32; Eccl. 2:1-2,10,26; 5:20; 7:4; 8:15; 9:7; Cant. 3:11; Isa. 9:3; 12:3; 14:7,11; 16:10; 22:13; 24:8,11; 25:6; 29:19; 32:13-14; 35:7,10; 44:23; 48:20; 49:13; 51:3,11; 52:9; 55:12; 60:15; 61:3,7,10; 65:14,18; 66:5; Jer. 15:16; 16:9; 25:10; 33:9,11; 48:33; Lam. 2:15; Ezek. 35:14; 36:5; Hos. 2:11; Joel 1:5,16; Zeph. 3:17; Zech. 8:19;

Below are all the Psalms that use euphrosune...

Ps 4:7 You have put **gladness** in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.

Ps 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of **joy**; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Ps 30:11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with **gladness**,

Ps 45:15 They will be led forth with **gladness** and rejoicing; They will enter into the King's palace.

Ps 51:8 (David confessing his sin) Make me to hear joy and **gladness**, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

Ps 68:3 But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with **gladness**.

Ps 97:11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And **gladness** for the upright in heart.

Ps 100:2 Serve the LORD with **gladness**; Come before Him with joyful singing.

Ps 105:43 And He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a **joyful** shout.

Ps 106:5 That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the **gladness** of Your nation, That I may glory with Your inheritance.

Ps 137:6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief **joy**.

### Acts 14:18 Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

KJV Acts 14:18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

- **with difficulty they restrained** Genesis 11:6; 19:9; Exodus 32:21-23; Jeremiah 44:16,17; John 6:15

**Jack Arnold** - They did not try to mix Christianity and paganism to get results as some have done in the history of the church. They did not use their popularity to get inroads for the Gospel, for the people, at this point, would have believed anything Paul and Barnabas told them. They stood for the truth, exposed errors, and would not compromise in any way in order to reach people. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Even saying these things** - What things? Paul and Barnabas had given clear testimony that God is their Creator and Provider and not Zeus or Hermes who were both dead "nothings."

**Merida** reminds us that "We have no right or need to edit the gospel, but we do need to understand our audiences. We must begin by establishing a point of contact with people, and then we must lead them to the gospel conflict. Often points of contact can be made by simply observing what all humans see and experience and then working from there. Below are a few of those points of contact to consider as you work toward proclaiming the gospel effectively. Most people share . . . a hunger for love and community, a search for freedom, a need to be rid of guilt and shame, a quest for meaning, a longing for significance, a thirst for satisfaction and joy, an attraction to beauty in creation, and a love for creativity and innovation. Starting with a verbal walk down any of these roads can get us into the storyline of the Bible. The key is to know the Bible and to know people. "Wherever we begin," John Stott says, "we shall end with Jesus Christ, who is himself the good news, and who alone can fulfill all human aspirations" (Message of Acts, 232). ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**With difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them**- These pagans were in bondage to their idolatry and thus felt constrained to offer sacrifice. The NET Note adds that "[Paganism](#) is portrayed as a powerful reality that is hard to reverse."

**THOUGHT** - This is what idolatry does to a person - it enslaves and it deceives. The practical word for all of us is to "**Flee** ([present imperative](#) - continually, with no hesitation or compromise) from idolatry." (1 Cor 10:14)

**Difficulty** (3433)([molis](#) from **molos** = toil, labor pains, drudgery, hardship) means scarcely (barely able), hardly (pertains to being hard to accomplish). In Ro 5:7 **molis** refers to rarity on a scale of occurrences. Luke uses this adverb to describe their difficult ocean voyage in Acts 27:7, 8, 16 where **molis** demonstrates the "toil" of laboring against the storm which eventually caused Paul's shipwreck. **Molis** means barely able to be done and pictures a struggle to attain something worthwhile only after great effort. In 1 Peter 4:18 **molis** suggests the narrow margin for error and danger of complacency by rendering **molis** as "scarcely be saved."

**Restrained** (2664)([katapauo](#) from **kata** = intensifier + **pauo** = make to cease) means to cause to cease some activity (resulting in a period of rest). In classical Greek **katapauō** carries the meaning of "to stop" or "to put an end to" in relation to all kinds of actions and conditions and that is the sense here in Acts which means to keep under control or to keep in check.

**Offering sacrifice** (2380)(**thuo** gives us English "[thyme](#)") means to kill or slaughter for a sacrifice, to offer bloody and nonbloody offerings (Mt 22:4; Lk 15:23; Jn 10:10; Acts 10:13; 1 Cor 5:7). BDAG - "to make a cultic offering." To take a life in general (Jn 10:10). In Greek literature it could mean kill for food; in this sense also the killing of a rooster by thieves. To sacrifice the passover means to kill the paschal lamb as a species of sacrifice (Mk 14:12; Lk 22:7; 1 Cor. 5:7; Ex. 12:21; Deut. 16:2, 4-6). **Thuo** is used of sacrifices connected with feasting (Ge. 31:54 cf. 1 Sa 9:12, 13). Generally, to offer bloody and nonbloody offerings, and only in a derived sense, to slay. This is the word used to command Peter "**kill and eat**." (Acts 10:13; 11:7).

**Gilbrant** - The New Testament maintains the meaning of **thuō** as "to kill for sacrifice" as well as maintaining its connection with a fellowship meal, though sometimes losing its sacrificial sense. It is used in reference to the marriage feast (Matthew 22:4), the Passover Lamb (see Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7; also 1 Corinthians 5:7 where it is used in reference to Christ), the fatted calf slaughtered for a banquet in honor of the returned prodigal (Luke 15:23,27,30), the now ceremonially clean animals which Peter was commanded to "kill (**thuō**), and eat" (Acts 10:13; 11:7), and the bulls to be sacrificed by the Athenians in honor of the deified Paul

and Barnabas (Acts 14:13,18). Paul employed the pagan sense in 1 Corinthians 10:20, informing the Corinthians that when the Gentiles participated in their idol feasts "they sacrificed unto devils" (Deuteronomy 32:17). Finally, John used it once in reference to the thief who approaches the sheep only "to steal, and to kill (thuō), and to destroy" (John 10:10). The thief steals the sheep to gratify his own appetite, but the good shepherd cares for the sheep's welfare. In **classical Greek literature** thuō means "to offer part of a meal to the gods," especially burnt offerings, for their honor. The link of eating with sacrifice is maintained throughout the history of this word. It eventually includes slaughtering or slaying a victim, even human. **The Septuagint** translates thuō from the Hebrew zāvach and means "to sacrifice," especially animals, in honor of pagan gods (Exodus 22:20; see 2 Kings [LXX 4 Kings] 12:3; 14:4; Isaiah 65:3) or Yahweh (see 1 Chronicles 21:28). The act of killing the animal in sacrificial preparation for the deity is linked with the ceremony in which the participants eat portions of the sacrifice in fellowship with one another and the deity. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Thuo** - 14x in 13v - butchered(1), kill(4), killed(2), offer sacrifice(1), offering sacrifice(1), sacrifice(2), sacrificed(3). Matt. 22:4; Mk. 14:12; Lk. 15:23; Lk. 15:27; Lk. 15:30; Lk. 22:7; Jn. 10:10; Acts 10:13; Acts 11:7; Acts 14:13; Acts 14:18; 1 Co. 5:7; 1 Co. 10:20

**Thuo** in the **Septuagint** - over 130 uses... Gen. 31:54; 46:1; Exod. 3:18; 5:3,8,17; 8:8,25ff; 12:21; 13:15; 20:24; 23:18; 24:5; 32:8; 34:15; Lev. 17:5,7; 19:5-6; 22:29; Num. 22:40; Deut. 12:15,21; 15:21; 16:2,4-6; 17:1; 18:3; 27:7; 32:17; 33:19; Jdg. 2:5; 12:6; 16:23; 1 Sam. 1:3-4,21; 2:13-16,19; 11:15; 15:15,21; 16:2,5; 25:11; 28:24; 1 Ki. 3:3-4; 8:5,62-63; 11:8; 12:32; 13:2; 16:28; 19:21; 2 Ki. 17:36; 1 Chr. 15:26; 29:21; 2 Chr. 5:6; 7:4; 11:16; 15:11; 18:2; 25:14; 28:3,23; 29:22,24; 30:15,17,22; 33:22; 35:1,6,11; Neh. 12:43; Ps. 4:5; 27:6; 50:14; 54:6; 106:37-38; 107:22; 116:17; Prov. 16:7; Isa. 22:13; 66:3; Jer. 1:16; 2:28; 11:19; Ezek. 16:20; 20:28; 39:17,19; Hos. 4:13-14; 8:13; 11:2; 13:2; Jon. 1:16; 2:9; Hab. 1:16; Mal. 1:14

**Robertson** - It had been a harrowing and well-nigh a horrible ordeal, but finally Paul had won. If only nobody else had interposed! However the next verse begins with a "but" marking a "change of direction." Things would soon go from bad to worse, from a failed attempt to sacrifice to Paul, to a successful attempt to stone Paul.

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**William Larkin** has some thoughts about how we should witness based on Paul's approach - Paul's speech models elements that must be included in any strategy of effective witness to adherents of a non-Christian religion.

- (1) We must assume common ground with the person, our humanity. We are both made in the image of God with an ability to reason and evaluate experience.
- (2) We must have a flexibility of approach in presenting the gospel.
- (3) We must be familiar enough with the person's religious beliefs to know what they are substituting for the one true God and his ways.
- (4) We must correct them, but just as important, we must figure out how the gospel is "good news" so we may tell them how to truly fulfill their religious aspirations. (ED: I AM NOT SURE WHAT LARKIN MEANS!)
- (5) Finally, we must witness with urgency, making the person aware of the consequences.

Since we are all accountable before God, our dialogue with non-Christians is not a simple exchange of religious opinions but a discussion of life-and-death issues. (See [Acts - Page 214](#))

**Acts 14:19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.**

KJV Acts 14:19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

- **But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium.** Acts 14:45,50,51; 17:13
- **having won over the crowds** Matthew 27:20-25; Mark 15:11-14
- **they stoned Paul** Acts 7:58; 9:16; 22:20; 2 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Timothy 3:11
- **and dragged him out of the city** Jeremiah 22:19; Hebrews 13:12,13
- **supposing him to be dead** 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:10-12; 11:23

## THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND!

Luke describes an unlikely day when these Jews made friends with the hated idol worshipping Gentiles in order to do away with their even greater hatred for Paul and Barnabas and the grace filled Gospel which they detested!

**But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium** - The length of the journey (probably on foot) show their hate-filled zeal as they were willing to trek first 88 miles from **Antioch to Iconium** and then about 24 miles from **Iconium to Lystra**. The Jews arrive on the scene of a city in mayhem and confusion at the refusal of men they thought were gods adamantly refusing their worship! And how quickly the pendulum swings from desire to sacrifice to the missionaries to the desire to stone them (or at least the chief speaker)!

Apparently some time passed before these instigators arrived in Lystra. We can deduce this time interval from the fact that Paul clearly had some time to make disciples which he and Barnabas addressed on their return trip from Derbe to Lystra (See Acts 14:22)

**Arnold** - Some of these Jews, who dogged Paul 's trail wherever he went, came from as far away as Antioch of Pisidia (100 miles) to harass Paul, stir the crowds against Christianity and stop the Gospel from being presented. Unfortunately, haters of Christianity often display more zeal in destroying the Faith than lovers of Christianity do in protecting the Faith. Bad men will often travel further to do evil than good men will to do good; and wicked men often show more zeal in opposing the Gospel than professed Christians do in advancing it. But this was not the case with Paul. ([Acts 14:21-28 A Real Local Church](#))

**John G. Butler** wrote, "There are always people in society and even in the church who would treat God's servants with great cruelty and persuade others to join them in this cruel treatment."

**Toussaint** points out that "This is the second of five times a crowd was incited because of Paul's ministry (cf. Acts 13:50; 16:19-22; 17:5-8, 13; 19:25-34)." (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 392](#))

**And having won over the crowds** - Not only were they determined, but they were persuasive! And not persuasive with just a few but with many (**the crowds**). Keep in mind these were the same crowds who had hailed Paul and Barnabas as gods. Undoubtedly the missionaries denial of their deity (in a sense a rebuke of the people) contributed to their quick change of heart. Honor turned to hate and a desire to sacrifice to them turned into a desire to stone them (Paul).

**Won over** (persuaded) ([3982](#))(**peitho**) means they convince the pagans by argument, persuading the pagans with their words. These Jews so stirred up the Gentiles that the idolaters became persecutors!

**Jack Andrews** says "They came to persuade the multitudes that the apostles were false teacher's, they were evil workmen, that Christianity was not legitimate." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Arnold** - What fickle people these Lystrians were. What a switch. What a change. One minute they worshipped Paul as a god and the next minute they were stoning him. ([Acts 14:21-28 A Real Local Church](#))

**Wiersbe** adds that "One minute, Paul was a god to be worshiped; the next minute, he was a criminal to be slain!" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** rightly observes that "Their fickleness is reminiscent of the people of Jerusalem who hailed Jesus as the Messiah at the triumphal entry, then a few days later called for His execution." ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 53](#))

One moment they crowd wanted to sacrifice to them, and the next moment they sought to stone them! They were essentially a mob and as Emerson said a mob is "a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason." Another good description would be [herd mentality](#) which describes how people can be influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviors on a largely emotional, rather than rational, basis. When individuals are affected by mob mentality, they may make different decisions than they would have individually."

**Swindoll** notes that "Execution by stoning was a distinctly Eastern, Semitic punishment, rarely heard of in Greek society. Clearly, the people of Lystra acted as a mob, following the lead of the Jewish instigators." ([Insights on Acts](#))

**Robertson** suggests "The Jews are jubilant this time with memories of Paul's escape at Antioch and Iconium. The pagan mob feel that they have settled accounts for their narrow escape from worshipping two Jewish renegade preachers. It was a good day's work for them all. Luke does not say that Paul was actually dead."

**Stedman** observes that "Here is the counterattack of the enemy again, striking back as soon as the power of the gospel is unleashed, to hinder it. This time he falls back on his old reliable -- violence. His spadework has created a climate in which the

people can be persuaded to condone the stoning of their benefactor. This is the only time that Paul was stoned -- not with drugs, but with hard, sharp rocks which cut his body, bruised and crushed him, and left him lying in a crumpled heap on the pavement. His enemies dragged him by his legs outside the city gates and threw him on the rubbish dump, thinking he was dead." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Spurgeon** - This is popularity—a god yesterday, and a criminal to-day; garlands first, stones afterwards. How fickle is man! (It reminds me that even the great Jonathan Edwards was [fired by the very congregation](#) he had preached the great sermon Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God, a message God's Spirit used to send revival.)

**They stoned Paul** - Not only were they determined and persuasive, but they were also murderers! How interesting that the "religious" Jews now formed an alliance with the pagan, idol worshiping Gentiles. This unlikely alliance recalls the ancient proverb that "[The enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)." Note that it was the Jews who inflamed the crowd and it would have most likely been the Jews who would have advocated for stoning even as Stephen had been stoned. Stoning was the punishment they would deem appropriate for a "blasphemer," a crime which they undoubtedly ascribed to Paul. From 2 Cor 11:25 we learn this is the only stoning that Paul experienced. One is enough for any lifetime! One wonders what kind of impact this had on young Timothy who lived in Lystra when this occurred. Obviously it did not deter him from being willing to follow Paul (cf 2 Ti 1:2, et al). And it probably helped Timothy learned what Jesus meant when He told us as His disciples to be willing to "Count the Cost!"

**Hackett** notes that the Jews with two exceptions incited the persecutions which Paul endured. The exceptions were in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40) and Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41).

**Herbert Lockyer** rightly observes "How fickle were the plaudits of the mob as it turned so quickly from praise to persecution at the instigation of the angered Jews from Antioch and Iconium. So rapid was the transition from one extreme to another that those who had been stirred up were willing to stone as an impostor the one they had just worshiped as a god. There was only a step between the deification and destruction of Paul. In this respect, he was following the footsteps of his Master who received the hosannas of the multitudes but who, three days later, heard them cry, "Crucify Him!" (Matthew 21:9; 27:22). As we shall see, Paul encountered a like sudden change at Melita (Acts 28:6)...If Paul and Barnabas were not "gods in the likeness of men," then they must be sorcerers or evil demons. The Jews themselves attributed signs and wonders to Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Matthew 9:34; 12:24). As the blinding, stunning blows fell upon Paul—nothing is said about any persecution of Barnabas—the apostle must have thought of Stephen as he was stoned to death—a death Paul had had a share in. But now, "the martyr expiated the guilt of the persecutor." Paul's stoning was the one instance of such suffering (2 Corinthians 11:25). All he endured here at Lystra "stands out, at the close of his life in the vista of past years with a marvelous distinctness." (2 Timothy 3:11)."

**And dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead** - These men were so evil that they did not even consider a burial for a man they thought dead. On the other hand, if he was not truly dead, failure to bury was a good thing! [Robertson](#) adds "It was a hurried and irregular proceeding, but they were dragging (imperfect active of *surō*, old verb) Paul out now."

One is reminded of Jesus' words to Ananias regarding His call on Paul's life "'Go (ANANIAS), for he (SAUL/PAUL) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him **how much he must suffer for My name's sake**.'"(Acts 9:15-16+).

As Tony Merida reminds us "Every Christian who wishes to follow Jesus faithfully and desires to see people come to know the Savior will have to bear some measure of suffering (Ed: cf 2 Ti 3:12+). It's what I like to call the missions law. We simply won't reach people without sacrifice." ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**Dragged** ([4951](#))([suro](#)) means to draw, pull, draw, drag away, lead by force (against their will), as moving someone or something along by force. E.g. used of disciples " **dragging** the net full of fish" (Jn 21:8); "they began **dragging** Jason and some brethren before the city authorities" (Acts 17:6); of Satan whose "tail **swept away** a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth" (Rev 12.4+) There is a bit of irony in Luke's use of this word, for he had used this same verb to describe Saul himself after Stephen had been stoned! Luke records "Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and **dragging** (*suro* in present tense = continually) off men and women, he would put them in prison." (Acts 8:3+). In Stephen's stoning they hurled ([ekbállō](#)) out of the city before stoning him. (Acts 7:58+).

Luke's use of the verb **supposing** would support that Paul was not actually dead. Recall that Luke is a medical doctor and would have been more precise if Paul had truly been dead. And while Luke was not a first hand witness surely he would have ask him about this episode as they traveled together.

**Supposing** (thinking - present tense) ([3543](#))([nomizo](#) from **nomos** = law, custom) means to think or believe something without being fully settled in mind or opinion. We might suppose something and think that we are absolutely sure about it, but be wrong! For examples - (a) Moses wrongly supposed the Israelites would understand God had sent him to deliver them (b) in Acts 8:20 of Simon's false assumption he could buy the Holy Spirit's power (c) in Acts 16:27 of the Philippian jailer's nearly fatal supposition that



the prisoners had escaped.

To **suppose** means to express a **supposition**, to presume (something) to be true without certain knowledge. To have and hold as customary (from root word *nomos* - custom) as used in Acts 16:13 where the idea is to engage in a customary practice ("where the people customarily prayed").

**John MacArthur** notes that "The predominant New Testament usage of **nomizō** argues that Paul was not dead, and the crowd's supposition was incorrect. Further, if Paul had died and been resurrected, why would Luke insert the word **supposing**? That would undermine the credibility of the miracle, since skeptics could argue that the crowd wrongly assumed that Paul was dead. Nor are miracles, especially resurrections, minimized in Acts. The resurrections of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42) and Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12) are clearly and unambiguously presented as the raising of a dead person to life. If Paul had died and been resurrected, why relate the incident in such a vague, uncertain way? Throughout Acts, miracles are supernatural signs pointing men to the truth. A confusing sign, however, points nowhere. Finally, in 2 Corinthians 12:2, Paul states that his third-heaven experience took place fourteen years before he wrote 2 Corinthians (a.d. 56 or 57). That dates the third-heaven experience at a.d. 42 or 43—an impossibly early date for Paul's stoning at Lystra on the first missionary journey." (ED: See [ESV Timeline](#), [Blueletterbible Timeline](#)) ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 53](#))

On the other hand we have men like **Donald Grey Barnhouse** who asks us to stretch our thinking just a bit further and consider whether Paul might have undergone a near death, out-of-body experience on this very occasion which he describes in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. Barnhouse writes...

Paul there refers to himself in the third person—a **man in Christ**—who went to heaven and **heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter**. This was more than a vision. It was a definite transport into heaven. I'm suggesting that it was at this point in his missionary career, described in Acts 14, that Paul went to heaven. The few moments during which his body laid inert on the ground and his friends stood by helplessly, thinking him dead and wondering what to do about the matter, he may well have left the body and then returned following his experience of 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. (Barnhouse)

**THOUGHT** - Interesting to contemplate. One thing is certain - Paul suffered a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor 12:7-8) early in his ministry and if not on the first missionary journey, it preceded this journey. Here is the point - This "thorn" (whatever it was), was a gift of God to remind Paul all the remaining days of his ministry that it was not Paul's natural power but God's supernatural power (2 Cor 12:9+), that continually energized his ministry. Little wonder that God used him so mightily. We would all do well to meditate on the truths in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 so that we too might grasp that anything we do on this earth which is of eternal value will be done in God's power, not our power! Jesus words to Paul are for us ""My **grace** is sufficient for you, for **power** is perfected in weakness." He states the same principle in John 15:5 declaring ""I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, **he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing**." And Paul "got it" for in 1 Cor 15:10+ he testified that "by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and His **grace** toward me did not prove vain; but I labored ([kopiao](#) = to the point of weariness) even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace** of God with me." Are you are what you are by the grace of God? Are you abiding in the Vine as you minister for the glory of the Vine? Are you willing to truly and continually say that Jesus' "grace is sufficient?" Is the Spirit of Christ the Source of your adequacy (see 2 Cor 3:5, 6+)? And so we see that Paul gives us the "**secret**" for effective, eternity impacting, Christ exalting ministry! Thank You Jesus! Amen.

All of the NT uses of **nomizo**

Matt. 5:17; Matt. 10:34; Matt. 20:10; Lk. 2:44; Lk. 3:23; Acts 7:25; Acts 8:20; Acts 14:19; Acts 16:13; Acts 16:27; Acts 17:29; Acts 21:29; 1 Co. 7:26; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Tim. 6:5

**Habershon** says, "We cannot tell whether Paul was really dead and was raised to life; probably he did not know himself, for it has been thought that he referred to this time when he wrote, 'Whether in the body, or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth.' As his body lay there in the midst of the sorrowing disciples, his spirit probably had been caught up into Paradise, where he heard unspeakable words that he was not permitted to utter."

**THOUGHT** - *God rarely asks Christians to seek physical abuse for the cause of the gospel, but in the providence of God, sometimes such abuse and persecution cannot be avoided.* (Gangel)

**To be dead** ([2348](#))(**thnesko**) is only in the **perfect tense** (describes a permanent state of death) in the NT and refers to literal physical death (Mk 15:44; Lk 8:49; Jn 19:33; Ac 14:19) or to figurative death to refer to the loss of spiritual life or as BDAG says "lose one's relationship w. God" (1 Ti 5:6).

**Gilbrant on thnesko** - This verb appears in classical Greek from the time of Homer (ca. Eighth Century B.C.), meaning "die" in either a literal or figurative sense. Josephus used thnēskō in a literal sense in his account of the last stand of the Jews in the fortress of Masada against the siege of the Roman army (Wars of the Jews 7.8.7). Several examples of its figurative use (e.g. of spiritual death) can be found in the works of Aelius Aristides and Philo (cf. Bauer). In the Septuagint thnēskō is most often used in the literal sense: of Jacob's death (Genesis 50:15); of the death of the Egyptian firstborn sons (Exodus 12:30); of idolatrous Israelites (Numbers 25:9); of animals (Job 39:30); etc. However, there are a few instances of death in connection with spiritual judgment (cf. Proverbs 13:14; Isaiah 14:19; Jeremiah 16:7; 22:10). In the New Testament thnēskō is used only a few times (the word apothnēskō [594] is much more common). As in the Septuagint, thnēskō most often appears in the literal sense: of Jesus' death (Mark 15:44); of the death of the synagogue ruler's daughter (Luke 8:49); of Paul's "supposed" death (Acts 14:19); etc. The only figurative use is at 1 Timothy 5:6 where Paul instructed Timothy on the proper care of widows. In contrast to the widow who devotes herself to prayer (1 Timothy 5:5), the other type of widow who devotes herself to her own pleasure is already "dead" in God's sight (verse 6). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Thnesko** - 9v - dead(7), died(2). - Matt. 2:20; Mk. 15:44; Lk. 7:12; Lk. 8:49; Jn. 11:44; Jn. 19:33; Acts 14:19; Acts 25:19; 1 Tim. 5:6

**Thnesko** in the **Septuagint** - Gen. 50:15; Exod. 4:19; Exod. 12:30; Exod. 14:30; Exod. 21:35; Lev. 11:31; Lev. 11:32; Num. 16:48; Num. 16:49; Num. 19:11; Num. 19:13; Num. 19:18; Num. 25:9; Num. 33:4; Deut. 25:5; Deut. 26:14; Jdg. 3:25; Jdg. 16:30; Jdg. 19:28; Ruth 1:8; Ruth 2:20; Ruth 4:5; Ruth 4:10; 1 Sam. 4:17; 1 Sam. 4:19; 1 Sam. 17:51; 1 Sam. 24:14; 1 Sam. 31:5; 1 Sam. 31:7; 2 Sam. 1:5; 2 Sam. 1:19; 2 Sam. 2:7; 2 Sam. 4:1; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 9:8; 2 Sam. 12:18; 2 Sam. 12:19; 2 Sam. 12:23; 2 Sam. 14:2; 2 Sam. 16:9; 1 Ki. 3:20; 1 Ki. 3:21; 1 Ki. 3:22; 1 Ki. 3:23; 1 Ki. 11:21; 1 Ki. 12:24; 1 Ki. 16:4; 1 Ki. 21:14; 1 Ki. 21:15; 1 Ki. 21:16; 1 Ki. 21:24; 1 Ki. 22:37; 2 Ki. 4:32; 2 Ki. 8:5; 2 Ki. 8:13; 2 Chr. 22:10; Job 39:30; Prov. 13:14; Eccl. 4:2; Isa. 14:19; Jer. 16:7; Jer. 22:10;

**Guzik** writes that "Paul was miraculously preserved here. Some think that he was even actually killed and raised to life again, because stoning was usually reliable form of execution. When Paul later wrote, I bear in my body the marks of Jesus (Galatians 6:17), he may have had in mind the scars from this incident. He certainly later referred to this stoning in 2 Corinthians 11:25.. It has been suggested that the heavenly vision described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 took place at this attack. This is possible, but only conjecture.. It's reasonable to think that Paul remembered Stephen when he was being stoned, and how he had been a part of Stephen's execution (Acts 7:58-8:1). ([Acts 14 Commentary](#))

**Acts 14:20 But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.**

KJV Acts 14:20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

- **But while the disciples stood around him** Acts 20:9-12; 2 Corinthians 1:9,10; 6:9; Revelation 11:7-12
- **entered the city** Acts 12:17; 16:40; 20:1
- **Derbe** Acts 14:6; 16:1

## PAUL'S MIRACULOUS RESTORATION

**But** - This is another of those wonderful and in this case fascinating terms of contrast, recalling that terms of contrast mark a "change of direction," and Oh, what a change of direction in this particular case. From death to life. Certainly from the edge of death to fullness of life. This is nothing short of a "divine" term of contrast!

Toussaint comments "Whether or not Paul was dead is not stated; probably he was unconscious and at death's door (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2-4). At any rate his recovery was so rapid as to be miraculous." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

**While the disciples stood around him** - One can only imagine what they were thinking - were they praying, fretting, etc. Luke does not say. Clearly it was a sign of their love for Paul. And it was not without some risk for what would keep the mob from stoning the whole lot of the Christians?

**Disciples** ([3101](#)) see comment on [mathetes](#).

[Robertson](#) has an interesting thought on who may have been standing around Paul's apparently lifeless body - In that group Timothy may very well have been along with Eunice and Barnabas. Timothy, a lad of about fifteen, would not soon forget that solemn scene (2 Tim. 3:11).

Normally the cuts from stoning (if they healed) would leave scars which may be what Paul is referring to in Galatians (although he could have had scars on his back from being flogged or beaten with rods 2 Cor 11:24-25)...

"From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks [stigma](#) of Jesus." (Gal 6:17)

**Stood around** (encircled) ([2944](#))/[kukloo](#) related to **kuklos** = a ring, a cycle) means they encircled Paul. This verb is the first word in the Greek for emphasis.

Perhaps it was with remembrance of experiences such as those like this one at Lystra that inspired (through the Spirit) Paul to later pen these words...

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 **we are afflicted in every way**, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not despairing; 9 **persecuted**, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed; 10 **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus**, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 **For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** 12 **So death works in us, but life in you.** (2 Cor 4:6-12+)

**Comment** - Indeed Paul was "**struck down**, but not destroyed" - as the saying goes, you can't keep a good (God) man down! What a testimony to the grace and power of God about which Paul wrote later in Second Corinthians...

And He has said to me, "My **grace** is sufficient for you, for **power** is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with **weaknesses**, with **insults**, with **distresses**, with **persecutions**, with **difficulties**, for Christ's sake; for **when I am weak, then I am strong.** (2 Cor 12:9+, 2 Cor 12:10+)

**He got up and entered the city** - Paul was apparently suddenly and completely cured. This clearly was a miraculous healing for no one would arise and walk after being stoned to the point of death. Can you imagine the reaction as he entered the city, which in context is Lystra, the same place in which he was stoned and left for dead! One has to ask why did he enter the very city that had stoned him? Would not his appearance surely indicate a miracle to the pagans (and even the Jewish antagonists)? And would this not give him a perfect platform for proclamation of Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, buried and resurrected on the third day? Paul could point to his "resurrection" as one made possible by the same God Who resurrected His Son Jesus Christ. God indeed causes all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28) Indeed, the fruit of Paul's stoning in Lystra on his first missionary journey is seen in Acts 16 as he enters Lystra again on his second missionary journey. Luke records...

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren (BELIEVERS) who were in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.(Acts 16:1-3)

**Arnold** - Whether Paul was raised from the dead or merely revived, it was a miracle in that there was such a rapid recovery from the effects of the stoning. Notice when Paul revived, he went back into the city of Lystra where he was stoned. This took real courage, but he sensed the protective hand of God. ([Acts 14:1-20 Patterns in Evangelism](#))

**Got up** (arose) ([450](#))/[anistemi](#) from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = stand, to cause to stand) means literally to stand again, to cause to rise (thus "to raise"). Luke used anistemi to describe Tabitha (returning to life) as Peter gave her his hand and "**raised** her up" in Acts 9:41. Paul issued a command for the lame man to "**Stand upright** on your feet." (Acts 14:10). Jesus predicted that after He was killed on "the third day He (would) **rise again.**(anistemi)" (Lk 18:33, also in Lk 24:7, Lk 24:46, Jn 20:9, Acts 2:24, 32, Acts 3:26, Acts 13:33-34, et al). Clearly Paul "woke up" and got up by the power of God.

**The next day he went away** - You gotta love Paul's zeal and determination. Most folks would have said "I need to go back to home base for a little "R&R." But not Paul. He was all about redeeming the time for he knew the days were evil (Eph 5:16+)

As **MacArthur** says "Paul never willingly lost a day, however. Since the door for ministry was temporarily closed at Lystra, he simply

moved on to minister somewhere else. Nothing daunted him, not even being stoned nearly to death." ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 54](#))

It was events such as the stoning at Lystra which enabled Paul to later confidently write one of the most encouraging and most quoted (and on more coffee mugs!) passages in the New Testament. Unfortunately too many saints love the last sentence but miss the truth of how Paul was able to confidently state such an encouraging truth...

Not that I speak from want, for **I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am** 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; **in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens ([endunamoo](#) in present tense) me. (Php 4:11-13+)

**THOUGHT** - Have you learned to be content? It does not come naturally, but is learned supernaturally! Have you learned the secret as you have traversed "through many tribulations" (Acts 14:22)? It is only through the trials and triumphs that you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pe 3:18+) and come to experientially (as the Spirit works out this truth in your heart) know deep down that you can indeed do all things, trials and triumphs, through Jesus Christ, Whose sufficient (2 Cor 12:9+), empowering (2 Ti 2:1+) grace continually strengthens you.

**Related Resource:**

- Christian Contentment

**With Barnabas to Derbe** - Derbe is Lycaonian for "juniper tree". It is about 47 miles south and east from Lystra. This distance reinforces the fact that Paul was miraculously healed for no man stoned almost to death could undertake a 47 mile trek which would take 2-3 days on foot! [Derbe](#) was near the [Cilician Gates](#), which would not be that far removed from Paul's birthplace.

**Acts 14:21 After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,**

KJV Acts 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

- **had made many disciples.** Matthew 28:19
- Acts 1,6,8,19; 13:14,51; 15:36; 16:2; 2 Timothy 3:11

**Red Line** = Return from Derbe > Lystra > Iconium > Pisidian Antioch  
Click to Enlarge

## THE GOSPEL YIELDS MUCH FRUIT IN DERBE

**After they had preached the Gospel to that city** - They "evangelized" the frontier town of Derbe. As was the case with Lystra Luke makes no mention of entrance into a synagogue suggesting that Derbe had a paucity of Jews and a plethora of pagans. No matter, as Paul had just "practiced" how to evangelize pagans in Lystra. Paul knew how to redeem the time! (cf Col 4:5,6+, Eph 5:16+) While he may have begun with a description of God in natural revelation, he clearly moved on to preach the special revelation of the Gospel without which no man is saved.

**Preached the gospel** ([2097](#)) See note on [euaggelizo/evangelizo](#) (3x in Acts 14 - Acts 14:7, 15, 21) First word in the Greek sentence for emphasis.

**And had made many disciples** - Luke does not tell us how **many**. These disciples were "**made**" by the Spirit taking the faithful proclamation of the Gospel by the missionaries and regeneration their sinful hearts as they believed in the Gospel.

There was no apparent opposition or persecution in Derbe recorded by Luke. Similarly Paul does not include Derbe in the places he associates with persecution in 2 Ti 3:11+..

persecutions, and sufferings (NOTE BOTH IN THE PLURAL), such as happened to me at **Antioch**, at **Iconium** and at **Lystra**; (NOTE NO MENTION OF DERBE WHICH WOULD BE THE NEXT TOWN THEY WENT TO IN

ACTS 14) what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!.

**Made disciples** (3100)([matheteuo](#)) is the verb form of **mathetes** and is found 4 times in the NT. Intransitively, the verb means to be the disciple of another, to follow his precepts and instruction, to be a pupil of another implying one is an adherent of the teacher.

A Chinese Proverb is very apropos regarding Jesus call to His disciples to go and make disciples...

Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day; teach him to fish, and he eats for the rest of his life.

**Comment:** This is the very reason I strongly encourage you to learn and practice the discipline of [inductive Bible study](#), for in so doing you will be equipped to "feed yourself" for the rest of your life on earth!

**They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch** - As noted above from Derbe to **Lystra** is about 47 miles. From **Lystra** to **Iconium** is about 24 miles. Then from **Iconium** to **Pisidian Antioch** is about 88 miles. Luke makes this statement with little "fanfare" but it is a clear reflection of the fearlessness and courageous hearts that drove these missionaries to go back through the very towns in which they had been persecuted and even stoned! Undoubtedly the Jews who had opposed the missionaries on their first trip through these cities were still implacably opposed to their Gospel of grace. But in spite of the potential danger to their lives, they reasoned it was far more dangerous to leave the new disciples in these hostile situations and equipped with only a basic understanding of the Gospel. And so they sought to strengthen, encourage, warn and appoint leaders for these [fledgling](#) flocks.

**Larkin** makes an excellent point explaining that while "Paul focused on **church planting** (1 Cor 3:6), the goal of his labors was to "present everyone perfect in Christ" to the Lord at his coming (Col 1:28+; Ro 15:16; 1 Th 2:17-20). So today, **an evangelist or church planter who does not make provision for discipleship is like a farmer who harvests well only to see the crop spoil because it is not properly stored.**" (See [Acts - Page 215](#))

**Returned** (5290)([hupostrepho](#)) from **hupo** = under + **strepho** = to turn, to change) means to turn back from or to return or go back to a location, in this case back-track from whence they had come.

**Wiersbe** remarks "It is difficult to understand how they got back into the cities from which they had been expelled, but the Lord opened the doors." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Stedman** adds "What tremendous evidence of courage! They had been expelled from Antioch of Pisidia, threatened in Iconium, actually stoned in Lystra, but yet, when God raises Paul up, they go right back into those same cities to strengthen the disciples. That kind of courage comes only from trust in the Living God. They were confident that God was going with them, and so back they went, with dauntless courage." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Gangel** writes that "These churches of southern Galatia were the likely recipients of the **epistle to the Galatians** written between the end of the first journey and the Jerusalem Council. When we read Galatians, therefore, we might think about these believers and remember how they came to Christ, enduring opposition from both Jews and Gentiles in the earliest days of their faith." (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts - Page 236](#))

**Robertson** points out that "**Derbe** was the frontier city of the Roman empire. The quickest way to return to Antioch in Syria would have been by the **Cilician Gates** or by the pass over Mt. Taurus by which Paul and Silas will come to **Derbe** in the second tour (Acts 15:41-16:1+), but difficult to travel in winter. But it was necessary to revisit the churches in **Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia** and to see that they were able to withstand persecution (cf Acts 14:22). Paul was a Roman citizen though he had not made use of this privilege as yet for his own protection. Against mob violence it would count for little, but he did not hesitate. Paul had been stoned in Lystra, threatened in Iconium, expelled in Antioch. He shows his wisdom in conserving his work.

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**The Single Starfish** - Walking along a beach one day, a boy saw a man pick up a starfish and throw it back into the water. "Why did you do that, mister?" asked the boy. "Because the tide is going out, and the starfish would be stranded here and dry out. In all likelihood, he would be long dead before the tide comes in again," responded the man. "What difference could it make? Surely there are thousands and thousands of starfish in that ocean. What difference would it make if you throw just one back in the water so it can live?" "It makes a great deal of difference to this one" smiled the man as he walked on down the beach, perhaps to find another starfish.

What difference does it make if we hand out a gospel tract to a filling station attendant or a bellman at a hotel? What difference could it make if we precisely outlined the gospel in a Sunday school class on a day when we know two unsaved visitors are present? What difference would it make if we sacrifice a bit in order to send missionaries to those hidden peoples of the world we talked about at the beginning of chapter 13? Like the lame man Paul healed at Lystra, it makes a great deal of difference to each one as an individual. People don't trust Christ in huge groups; that became the second and third century way of "making Christians." People

trust Christ one by one and, like the starfish thrown back to the sea, receive opportunity for life by hearing the gospel. (Holman New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."**

KJV Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

NET Acts 14:22 They strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "We must enter the kingdom of God through many persecutions."

NLT Acts 14:22 where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.

- **strengthening the souls of the disciples**, Acts 15:32,41; 18:23; Isaiah 35:3; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4,13; 1 Peter 5:10
- **encouraging them to continue in the faith**, Acts 11:23; 13:43; John 8:31,32; 15:4-6,9,10; Colossians 1:23; Jude 1:3,20,21
- **Through many tribulations** Matthew 10:21,22,38; 16:24; Luke 22:28,29; 24:26; John 12:25,26; 16:1,2,33; Romans 8:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:4; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2:11,12; 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-16; Revelation 2:10; 7:14
- **we must enter the kingdom of God** Matthew 19:24; Mark 9:47; 10:24,25; John 3:5; 2 Peter 1:11

## **EDIFICATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE NEW DISCIPLES**

This verse should be read in close context with the previous verse, especially the phrase **made many disciples**. When Jesus gave us the "Great Command" to **make disciples** (Mt 28:19), He did not mean for us to go out and gain "*professions of faith*," and simply to get more "[notches on our belt](#)" (so to speak)! What Paul and Barnabas teach is that those who by grace through faith have entered God's family and become disciples of Jesus now need to have their faith nurtured to maturity, or to use Luke's phrase their souls need to be strengthened, they need to be encouraged to continue in the faith and they need to be warned that they will encounter tribulations. This is an excellent template for Biblical discipleship!

**David Jeremiah** wrote, "Paul was not seeking converts only, but disciples... And that should be our goal in the church today as well. We are not about baptizing new Christians as if they were notches on the handle of our Gospel gun, statistics to make us look good in the year-end accounting. Instead, we are about seeing lives transformed."

**Ray Stedman** adds that the apostles "did what was essential to the life of the church. They gathered the disciples together and ministered to them. The Christian life is more than merely being converted; it is growing in Christ. It is going on to be what God intended you to be in Christ, which takes certain provisions." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Strengthening the souls of the disciples** - The **disciples** in Pisidian Antioch. Notice the **strengthening** effect was not in their "intellect" as one might receive with simply more Bible knowledge, but it was in their **souls**, their innermost being. Paul did not want them to be smarter sinners, but to be more like their Savior!

**Larkin** on strengthening writes that Paul "wants the new Christians to become "more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief." They have known persecution and will know the pressure of **Judaizers**' attempts to turn them from the "faith way" (Gal 1:6-7; Gal 3:1-3; Gal 6:12-13). (See [Acts - Page 216](#))

**John MacArthur** writes that **strengthening the souls** "should be the goal of every pastor (cf. Eph. 4:11-16+; Col. 4:12-13+), and is done by the teaching of the Word (Acts 20:31-32+; 1 John 2:14+)." ("should be the goal of every pastor ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**William Larkin** writes that "The ruins of ancient religious temples, whether in the Peruvian highlands or the Cambodian jungle, are mute testimony to the assertion "A religious faith is always one generation from extinction." What can guard Christianity from extinction? Paul's example, at the end of the first missionary journey, of strengthening the just-planted churches through confirmation, consolidation and communication shows us the way." (See [Acts - Page 215](#))

**Strengthening** (present tense - continually)(1991)(**episterizo** from **epi** = intensifies + **sterizo** = strengthen, support) means literally to place firmly upon and so to make firm, to prop up, to support, to uphold. In the present passage what is it what the missionaries

would be making firm or strengthening? Surely it would be their faith, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ, which were undoubtedly words the missionaries spoke to the newly "minted" disciples (cf Ro 10:17). The root verb (histemi) means to stand. **BDAG** - "to cause someone to become stronger or more firm in our lit. of believers in connection with their commitment and resolve to remain true, esp. in the face of troubles:" (BDAG)

This verb is used only 3 times in the NT, all in Acts and all in the context of the missionary journeys. The second and third uses are during the second missionary journey. In Acts 15:32+ Luke records that "Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and **strengthened** the brethren with a lengthy message ([logos](#))." In Acts 15:41+ Luke describes Paul "traveling through Syria and Cilicia, **strengthening** (present tense) the churches."

**Souls** (5590)([psuche](#)) describes the point of contact between man's bodily and spiritual nature, the inner life of a person.

**Disciples** (3101)([mathetes](#)) is properly a learner, but more than just a learner as it is also a follower of Christ who learns and grows by being fed the Word and then lives out the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit and then seeks to make disciples.

**Disciples** is used four times to describe the believers encountered on this first missionary journey - Acts 13:52 Acts 14:20 Acts 14:22 Acts 14:28

**Encouraging them to continue in the faith** - By physically re-visiting the cities, Paul and Barnabas were **coming alongside** (the essence of parakaleo - it's difficult to encourage someone if you don't come alongside them!) the disciples. And recall that Barnabas' name meant son of encouragement, making him aptly suited for this important task. And so their souls were strengthened with teaching and supplemented with [exhortation](#) (communication intended to urge or persuade the disciples to take action) to live out the truth they were taught in the power of the Spirit (cf James 1:22-25+) As **John MacArthur** says...

### **"Exhortation is teaching's inseparable companion."**

**Stedman** makes an excellent point about how the apostles would have encouraged the disciples **to continue in the faith** - This is usually **done by an appeal to example**. They went back over the Old Testament record and pointed out how men and women of God had been living by faith for years, and how God had blessed and strengthened them. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a mighty testimony of this sort." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

Paul presents a great pattern for every pastor and disciple maker, writing to the new believers in Thessalonica (who experienced "much tribulation" - 1 Th 1:6+) "you know how we were **exhorting** ([parakaleo](#)) and **encouraging** ([paramutheomai](#)) and **imploring** ([marturomai](#)) each one (EACH AND EVERY ONE) of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy ([axiōs](#)) of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Th 2:11, 12)

**Encouraging** (exhorting, comforting) (present tense - continually)(3870)([parakaleo](#) from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = call) means literally to call one alongside which is a great picture of what was transpiring between the missionaries and the disciples. Here is the point - the essence of the verb parakaleo necessitates that one be "alongside" another in order to encourage, etc. They had not texting or email capability, so it had to be face to face, side by side, which is why they had to backtrack on their journey even in face of the possibility of more violence from the Jewish protagonists.

**Kent Hughes** illustrates the root idea of **parakaleo** "to come alongside and encourage" with the following example - I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child's feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside **encouraging**....[exhortation] is a wonderful gift, and we are to place it at Christ's feet and be willing to be worn out in its use.

**Parakaleo** always conveys the basic idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry.

As **Robertson** says "These recent converts from heathenism (**Ed**: And Judaism) were ill-informed, were persecuted, had broken family and social ties, greatly needed encouragement if they were to hold out."

All of Luke's uses of **parakaleo** in Acts -

Acts 2:40; Acts 8:31; Acts 9:38; Acts 11:23; Acts 13:42; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:32; Acts 16:9; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:39; Acts 16:40; Acts 19:31; Acts 20:1; Acts 20:2; Acts 20:12; Acts 21:12; Acts 24:4; Acts 25:2; Acts 27:33; Acts 27:34; Acts 28:14; Acts 28:20;

**To continue** (present tense - continually)(1696)([emmeno](#) from **en** = in + **meno** = remain) literally means "remain in" and thus to stay in a place over a period of time (the sense in Acts 28:30). Hebrews 8:9 quotes Jeremiah 31:32 and uses emmenō with the negative to indicate a lack of perseverance ("they did not continue" referring to Israel's failure to obey the Mosaic Covenant). In Gal 3:10 Paul

says all who cursed who "do not abide by all the things" in the Mosaic Law, where Paul cites Dt 27:26 to show the impossibility of keeping the Law as a way of salvation. Here in Acts 14:22 the sense is to persevere in the faith even (especially) in the face of tribulations.

**Gilbrant** adds that **emmeno** in classic uses "can also mean "to be true to, to cleave to, to stand by," for example, "articles of government and solemn treaties" (Thucydides; see Bauer). When *emmenō* is used of things (e.g., law; cf. Plato *Leges* 844c), it means "to remain fixed or steadfast." The Septuagint uses **emmenō** to translate a variety of Hebrew words: *chākhâh*, "wait," used mainly of the righteous waiting on the Lord (Isaiah 30:18); *qûm*, "to stand, be valid," used in sayings about abiding by one's word or agreement (Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 19:15), "to endure" (Isaiah 7:7); *pārar*, "to break," where *emmenō* is used to indicate that God's people were not continuing in the covenant." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**TDNT** - "(a) To abide in something," (b) "To keep to something,"...common in legal documents in connection with penal clauses for not fulfilling an agreement." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament - Volume IV) Comment - The Septuagint use in Nu 23:19 conveys this sense where **emmeno** translates the phrase "will He not make it good? (will He not make it happen)?"

**Emmeno** - 4x - abide(1), continue(2), stayed(1). - Acts 14:22; Acts 28:30; Gal. 3:10; Heb. 8:9

**Emmeno** in the **Septuagint** - Num. 23:19; Deut. 19:15; Deut. 27:26; Isa. 7:7; Isa. 8:10; Isa. 28:18; Isa. 30:18 = "He **waits** on high to have compassion on you"; Jer. 31:32; Jer. 44:25; Jer. 44:28; Dan. 6:12; Dan. 12:12 = "How blessed is he who **keeps waiting**..."

The message of the missionaries is PERSEVERE! Continuance in the faith is evidence of authenticity of one's faith. And keep in mind that perseverance ultimately is one of the most sure markers that a person is truly saved. One reason is that we would not persevere without God's Spirit enabling us to persevere, and so our perseverance validates that the Spirit lives within us. God will provide the will and the power for us to persevere, but we still must walk through the fiery trials.

**Adrian Rogers** said, "A faith that falters before the finish was flawed at the first."

**Don Fortner** wrote "Without question, the Word of God teaches the perseverance of the saints. Those who are born of God must and shall persevere. They will continue in the faith of Christ. God's elect both believe and keep on believing. The true believer begins in faith, lives in faith, and dies in faith. True faith never quits (Matt. 10:20; John 8:31; 1 Cor. 15:1; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6, 14). The Word of God is very clear in this matter: Only those who continue in the faith shall enter into glory. This is the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints." (Basic Bible Doctrine)

Jesus spoke a similar truth explaining to those Jews who professed to believe in Him (John 8:30), that their perseverance (continuing in His Word) would be the objective, demonstrable evidence that they were truly disciples, that is, that they were genuinely saved.

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31,32)

**Comment** - Compare Jesus' promise that "it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." (Mt 10:22) The point is the one who perseveres is proven genuine because they have the divine power supplied that enables them to endure to the end. There is no hint that one merits salvation by their endurance.

**Paul** echoes this truth about perseverance proving one's profession is authentic...

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 if indeed you **continue** ([epimeno](#) in the present tense) **in the faith** firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.. (Colossians 1:21-23+)

**Comment** - The "if" marks this as a condition of the first class, i.e., determined as fulfilled.

**John Piper** comments on this passage in Colossians - The completion of our holiness and blamelessness is **contingent**. We will be presented complete **if we continue in the faith**. But it is also **certain** because God is faithful and he will do it (1 Thess. 5:24+). The "**if**" is real. Will you "continue in the faith"? Will you endure to the end? "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 24:13). "In due season we will reap, **if** we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9+). "We are his house, **if** indeed we hold fast our confidence" (Heb. 3:6+).

**ESV Study Bible** adds "The form of this phrase in Greek (using the Gk. particle *ei* and the indicative



mood of the verb epimenō) indicates that Paul fully expects that the Colossian believers will continue in the faith; no doubt is expressed. Mt 10:22

Finally we see a similar statement by Paul in 1 Corinthians that implies that genuine believers will continue in faith.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, **if you hold fast the word** which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (1 Cor 15:1-2)

**Holding fast** does not SAVE a person but is only the evidence that they are a NEW CREATION (they have a new internal motivation, new internal power, new internal direction (cf Ezekiel 36:27+) and if a person does not manifest these qualities they need to soberly meditate on 2 Co13:5+, for if "Christ is in you" you will BE DIFFERENT then before HE WAS IN YOU! If you are not different (note it does not say "perfect") then INDEED you have serious reason to doubt your salvation and you need to cry out to the God of all grace for His gracious gift of repentance (Ro 2:4, 2 Ti 2:25) and faith (Ep 2:8).

**John MacArthur** observes that the **if** "does not imply that the believers are in danger of losing their salvation, but it is a warning against non-saving faith. So a clearer rendering would be, "... *if you hold fast what I preached to you, unless your faith is worthless or unless you believed without effect.*" The Corinthians' holding fast to what Paul had preached was the result of and an evidence of their genuine salvation, just as their salvation and new life were an evidence of the power of Christ's resurrection. ([1 Corinthians MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 399](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Perseverance of the Saints - is it biblical?](#)
- [How can I keep the faith?](#)

**The faith** - To what does this refer? Does it refer to the subjective aspect of faith (our act of believing, their trust or belief in the Gospel) or it refer to the objective aspect of faith (that in which our place is faith, especially the Gospel)? This passage would seem to favor the objective aspect (see [the faith](#)). Of course it does take continuing faith to continue in the faith, so the subjective sense of faith (believing) is obviously related to the objective sense of faith ("the faith").

**Tony Merida on the faith** - The phrase the faith indicates they were in possession of a body of doctrine already developed (cf. Jude 3-4). Paul ensured that these new believers understood the basic biblical doctrines. In establishing these doctrines he not only fortified the church against heresy, but he also encouraged the hearts of believers, reminding the kingdom citizens of the inevitability of facing "many hardships" for holding these beliefs. Later, in his letters, he could expand on the basics. ([Exalting Jesus in Acts](#))

**G Campbell Morgan** - Go back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, get right into the midst of the city, and look around, and you will see temples, idols, shrines, lasciviousness, lust, luxury. That is a description of all cities, ancient and modern. Cities never change. These people were living in the midst of these things. Oh, this lure of the near. How is a man to be victor over the things that can be seen and touched and handled, of which he is quite sure? By faith, which is the assurance of the unseen things. Faith is the venture that steps off the tangible; and in the doing of it, demonstrates to its own soul the reality of the intangible. Paul said to these men as he went back, Do not look at the seen things in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch; continue in the faith. This is the great word that ever needs to be uttered for the establishment of Christian life. ([Acts of the Apostles](#))

**J H Evans** says "The great remedy for this **much affliction** is, not to be looking at the affliction; it is to continue in the faith. Whether we regard faith as the doctrine of Christ (ED: OBJECTIVE), or as continuing in faith (ED: SUBJECTIVE), living not to ourselves, but to God—in either point of view it comes to the same truth; it is the life of faith. Happy is the man who, the more the waters come upon him, the higher he rises. We can honour Christ in nothing more than in the life of faith." ([Tribulation and its Uses](#))

**And saying - Saying** is added by the translators to help the sentence flow.

**Stedman** says that the apostles "enlightened them as to the meaning of tribulation. They said, "You're going to go through trouble, but don't be surprised. That is what will make a real, genuine man or woman out of you. It will make you grow. You need tribulation, so thank God for it." Thus they taught them how to view hardship." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

Disciples are to follow their Master (cf Mk 8:34-36) and be imitators of Him Who said "Was it not necessary (JUST AS TRIBULATIONS ARE NECESSARY OR A "MUST" FOR US) for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26)

**Larkin** writes that "Many hardships are to be expected as a normal, indeed necessary, part of the Christian life. For Luke, they mainly come in the form of persecution (Acts 5:41; 11:19; 20:23). We must endure through them if we would hope to enter the

kingdom of God, experience the full enjoyment of salvation blessings either at death (2 Tim 4:18) or at Christ's return. And today, if authentic Christianity is to be propagated and survive, it will be because we have said no to any "gospel" that promises glory without the suffering, and yes to the way of the cross, which leads to a crown." (See [Acts - Page 216](#))

**Toussaint** comments that "**By warning and by promise**, Paul and Barnabas strengthened (cf. 15:32, 41) and encouraged the believers. Previously Barnabas had encouraged the believers in Antioch of Syria (11:23). The **warning** consisted of a prediction of many hardships and the **promise** was the anticipation of entering the kingdom of God. The latter term certainly describes the eschatological reign of Christ on earth ([Millennium](#))." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

**Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God** - The NLT paraphrases this as "reminding them that we must suffer **many hardships**." The NET translates it "We must enter the kingdom of God through **many persecutions**." Note that in the original Greek the phrase "**many tribulations**" is at the beginning of Paul's exhortation for emphasis. This truth is one that is important for disciples to grasp so that they are not caught "off guard" when the tribulations do come. This passage promises they will come. It also promises they will be "[plenteous](#)!" This is one of God's promises that you probably won't find in a book collection of promises (cf the promise in 2 Ti 3:12+).

Note the preposition **through** (dia) which conveys the thought that although we can expect to enter the **tribulations** and walk **through** them, the preposition **through** indicates that there is an end as we emerge on the other side and finally walk through the door into eternity where "He will wipe away every tear from (our) eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Rev 21:4) Glory! Also don't miss the adjective "**many**" and most saints who have walked with Lord for any length of time can attest to the truth of this adjective! Finally notice the verb **must** which means this is necessary. Tribulations are obligatory, not optional! Oh, how I wish I had been disciplined as young believer with this truth, for in my ignorance I was like a boat on a storm tossed sea, getting hit with one giant wave after another and not understanding that this was an expected element in the "normal" Christian life!

As sure as night, life's troubles come,  
As sure as day, they're past;  
But surer still that endless joy  
When heaven we reach at last.  
—D. De Haan

As **Jack Andrews** clarified "Christians do not go through tribulations **to get to** heaven, but Christians go through tribulations **because they are going to** heaven." We are not saved by our suffering! We are saved because Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died for our sins! We are saved because He rose again and He lived forevermore! Paul was not teaching the new believers that they have to suffer in order to make it to heaven as some so errantly teach. Paul was teaching the new believers that because they had been saved by the Lord Jesus they would in turn suffer because of their faith in Jesus." ([Expository Sermons](#))

**John Phillips** - "How different from so much preaching today, which promises to those who trust Christ material prosperity, good health, and a sunny path through life, and which declares that lack of those things is evidence of lack of faith. Apostolic preaching took it for granted that tribulation and affliction would be the lot in life of those who love the Lord." (Exploring Acts)

**Guzik** observes that "This is for many a forgotten message today. They consider any kind of tribulation completely counter-productive to Christian living, failing to note the significant place suffering has in God's plan." ([Acts 14 Commentary](#))

**Must** ([1163](#))(**dei** from **deo** = to bind or tie objects together, put in prison and also root of **doulos**, bond-servant) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. **Dei** refers to inward constraint which is why it is often translated "**must**". **Dei** describes that which is under the necessity of happening or which must necessarily take place, and conveys a sense of inevitability. In the present context clearly the thought is that TRIBULATIONS were necessary, for they would "steel" the saints to stand firm against Satanic opposition.

**Martin Luther** adds that "Whatever virtues **tribulation** finds us in, it develops more fully. If anyone is carnal, weak, blind, wicked, irascible, haughty, and so forth, tribulation will make him more carnal, weak, blind, wicked and irritable. On the other hand, if one is spiritual, strong, wise, pious, gentle and humble, he will become more spiritual, powerful, wise, pious, gentle and humble."

**Robertson** adds that the **disciples** "needed the right understanding of persecution as we all do. Paul frankly warned these new converts in this heathen environment of the many tribulations through which they must enter the Kingdom of God (the culmination at last) as he did at Ephesus (Acts 20:20) and as Jesus had done (John 16:33). These saints were already converted."

These things I have spoken to you (THE DISCIPLES), so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have **tribulation** ([thlipsis](#)), but **take courage**; ([present imperative](#)) I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

**Suffer hardship** ([aorist imperative](#)) with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Ti 2:3)

**Tribulations** (2347) (**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) originally expressed physical pressure, that which constricts in a narrow place, which rubs together, which "hems in." As used figuratively, **thlipsis** focusing on **internal pressure** that causes one to feel confined, restricted and (ostensibly) without options. **Thlipsis** is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships.

Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was **stenochoria** (see below). **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty.

**John MacArthur** writes that "**Thlipsis** (tribulations) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice... In Scripture the word **thlipsis** is perhaps most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress." ([Romans 1-8 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 281](#))

Figuratively **thlipsis** pictures one being "crushed" by intense pressure, difficult circumstances, suffering or trouble pressing upon them from without. Thus persecution, affliction, distress, opposition or tribulation, all press hard on one's soul. **Thlipsis** does not refer to mild discomfort but to great difficulty. In Scripture the **thlipsis** is most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress and sorrows which "weighs down" a man's spirit like the sorrows and burden his heart. **Thlipsis** then includes the disappointments which can "crush the life" out of the one who is afflicted.

The English word "**tribulation**" is derived from the Latin word **tribulum** (literally a thing with teeth that tears), which was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the corn or grain. The **tribulum** was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff. As believers experience the "tribulum" of tribulations, and depend on God's grace, the trials purify us and rid us of the chaff.

**God has never promised that we would miss the storm,  
but He has promised that we would make the harbor!**

Paul could preach the message that disciples should expect **many tribulations** because he had lived that message as he summarized in 2 Cor 11:23-33

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, **once I was stoned** (LYSTRA), three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? 30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, 33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

The **necessity of tribulations** reminds us of the words in 1 Peter...

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, **if necessary** (THE ARE NECESSARY), you have been distressed by **various trials**, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1 Peter 1:6, 7+)

**Erwin Lutzer** reminds us that "God often puts us in situations that are too much for us so that we will learn that no situation is too much for Him."

**Samuel Rutherford** emphasizes the certainty of trials writing that "You will not get leave to steal quietly to heaven without a conflict and a cross."

The Puritan **Thomas Watson** agreed writing "Though Christ died to take away the curse from us, yet not to take away the cross from us."

**Spurgeon** asked "How can I look to be at home in the enemy's country, joyful while in exile, or comfortable in a wilderness? This is not my rest. This is the place of the furnace and the forge and the hammer."

**Matthew Henry** - These troubles, that lie heavy, never come upon us but when we have need, and never stay any longer than needs must.

**John Newton** describes these trials as like "medicines which our gracious and wise Physician prescribes, because we need them; and He proportions the frequency and weight of them to what the case requires."

**J. Vernon McGee** in his pithy style - I know it is not at all popular to teach that God will prove us and lead us on to maturity through suffering. People would rather be encouraged to think that they are somebody important and that they can do great things on their own. My friend, we are nothing until the Spirit of God begins to move in our hearts and lives. We have nothing to offer to God. He has everything to offer to us. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that the encouraging note that "We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows all that is in store for us in heaven, but we do know that life on earth is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives for they are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Afflictions-Suffering-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations](#)
- [Quotes on affliction](#)

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**ARE YOU IN GOD'S "POUNDER ROOM"?** - The Most High God is in control of all the adverse and difficult circumstances of our lives. You may be going through an adverse experience as you read these notes. Let's call it ,for illustration purposes, a "*STEINWAY EXPERIENCE*" (read on). If you had to name the most famous piano, the one that produced the most beautiful sound in the world which one would you name? Most people would say "Steinway". The Steinway piano has been preferred by keyboard masters such as Rachmaninoff, Horowitz, Cliburn, and Liszt and for good reason. It is a skillfully crafted instrument that produces a phenomenal sound. Steinway pianos are built today the same way they were 140 years ago when Henry Steinway started his business. 200 craftsmen and 12,000 parts are required to produce one of these magnificent instruments. Most crucial is the rim-bending process, where 18 layers of maple are bent around an iron press to create the shape of a Steinway grand. Five coats of lacquer are applied and then hand-rubbed to give the piano its outer glow. The instrument then goes into the "Pounder Room", where each key is pounded 10,000 times to ensure quality and durability. Followers of Jesus Christ, much like the grand Steinway, are being "handcrafted" with all of the steps being watched over and directed by our Most High God, , El Elyon, the One Who is in sovereign control of every detail of this process often referred to as (progressive) "sanctification". We are being pressed and formed and shaped for a divine purpose, that we might "become conformed (molded with an inner and essential and not merely superficial conformity) to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29-[note](#)). We are being polished, sometimes with what seems like excessive "rubbing of affliction", until we "glow." We are then being continually tested in the laboratory of everyday human experience. The process of sanctification is not always pleasant, but we can persevere with hope (absolute assurance of future good), knowing that our lives will increasingly reflect the beauty of holiness to the eternal praise of the Most High God. Amen.

Are you going through a Steinway Piano experience? Is the Most High God bending, shaping, or polishing you right now? Can I trust El Elyon Who is in control of circumstances, demonic spirits, life/death, kings & nations? Knowing the truth about His Name El Elyon can I thank Him even in the painful times?

Remember that He does not allow trials to provoke us or destroy us but to refine us & ultimately make us more like Jesus...Never forget the grand purpose for which He created you – to give Him glory.

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**THE GREATER THE HEAT, THE PURER THE GOLD** - God knew where Job was—in the furnace! But it was a furnace of God's appointment, not because of Job's sin, and God would use Job's affliction to purify him and make him a better man. This is not the only answer to the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" but it is one of the best, and it can bring the sufferer great encouragement. Scripture often uses the image of a furnace to describe God's purifying ministry through suffering (Isa. 48:10; Deut 4:20; Ps. 66:10). The image is also used in 1 Peter 1:6-7 and 4:12 of believers going through persecution. When God puts His own people into the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. He knows how long and how much. We may question why He does it to begin with, or why He doesn't turn down the heat or even turn it off, but our questions are only evidences of unbelief. Job 23:10 is the answer: "He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Gold does not

fear the fire. The furnace can only make the gold purer and brighter. (Pause for Power - Warren Wiersbe)

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**J R Miller - We Grow Best Under Weights** - We learn that it is out of struggles that we must get the nobleness and beauty of character after which we are striving. One of the old Scotch martyrs had on his crest the motto, Sub pondere cresco ("I grow under a weight"). On the crest was a palm tree, with weights depending from its fronds. In spite of the weights the tree was straight as an arrow, lifting its crown of graceful foliage high up in the serene air. It is well known that the palm grows best loaded down with weights. Thus this martyr testified that he, like the beautiful tree of the Orient, grew best in his spiritual life under weights. This is the universal law of spiritual growth. There must be resistance, struggle, conflict, or there can be no development of strength. We are inclined to pity those whose lives are scenes of toil and hardship, but God's angels do not pity them if only they are victorious; for in their overcoming they are climbing daily upward towards the holy heights of sainthood. The beatitudes in the Apocalypse are all for overcomers (**ED: ALL BELIEVERS ARE OVERCOMERS!** - see 1 Jn 5:4-5). Heaven's rewards and crowns lie beyond battle plains. Spiritual life always need opposition. It flourishes most luxuriantly in adverse circumstances. We grow best under weights. We find our richest blessings in the burdens we dread to take up.

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**The Necessity of Tribulation T. Starr King** - It would seem to be a great hardship to a lump of iron ore, if it were conscious, that it should have to be melted, separated from its accretions, beaten together into a bar of pure metal, then heated again and cooled suddenly, exposed in this way in quick succession to the most rapid and intense changes of temperature, and hammered furiously while these terrible processes are going on. "Why can not I be left in peace," it might say, "in my condition as ore? I am contented with that form of life." Yet it is only by such processes that it can be promoted in quality from the sluggish state of raw metal, compounded with alloy, to steel.

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**William Arnot** - In some of the most delicate manufactures of the country, the web in a rude and unsightly state enters a vessel filled with a certain liquid, passes slowly through, and emerges continuously at the opposite side. As it enters the cloth seems all of one colour, and that dim; as it emerges it glitters in a variety of brilliant hues arranged in cunning figures. The liquid is composed of biting acids; and the reason why the fabric is strained through it is that all the deforming and defiling things which have adhered to it in preceding processes may be discharged, and the figures already secretly imprinted may shine out in their beauty. If it were allowed to remain one minute too long in the bath the fabric would be destroyed; but the manufacturer has so tempered the ingredients and timed the passage that while the impurities are thoroughly discharged the fabric comes out uninjured. In wisdom and love the Lord has mingled the ingredients of our tribulation, and determined its duration, so that none of his should be lost, and so that every grace of the Spirit should be brought out in all its beauty.

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#### **Spurgeon - Continue in the faith."— Acts 14:22 Evening Thought**

Perseverance is the badge of true saints. The Christian life is not a beginning only in the ways of God, but also a continuance in the same as long as life lasts. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, dear brother in the Lord, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior." He only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war's trumpet is blown no more. Perseverance is, therefore, the target of all our spiritual enemies. The world does not object to your being a Christian for a time, if she can but tempt you to cease your pilgrimage, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair. The flesh will seek to ensnare you, and to prevent your pressing on to glory. "It is weary work being a pilgrim; come, give it up. Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare." Satan will make many a fierce attack on your perseverance; it will be the mark for all his arrows. He will strive to hinder you in service: he will insinuate that you are doing no good; and that you want rest. He will endeavour to make you weary of suffering, he will whisper, "Curse God, and die." Or he will attack your steadfastness: "What is the good of being so zealous? Be quiet like the rest; sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as the other virgins do." Or he will assail your doctrinal sentiments: "Why do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are removing the old landmarks: fall in with the times." Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armour, and cry mightily unto God, that by his Spirit you may endure to the end.

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#### **Spurgeon - "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." — Acts 14:22 Morning Thought**

God's people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when he chose his people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, he included chastisements amongst the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in Christ's last legacy. So surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by him, so surely are our trials allotted to us: he has ordained their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape

troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the "Father of the faithful." Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honour are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have his presence and sympathy to cheer them, his grace to support them, and his example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "the kingdom," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it.

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**Charles Swindoll** has an interesting thought on the **strengthening the souls of the disciples** and the three Stages of Christian Maturation -

When Paul and Barnabas left an area, they gave the newly established assemblies over to the Lord. They, of course, did this for their own peace of mind. By formally giving the people over to God, they consciously acknowledged their own limitations. This habit accomplished something else just as important. It helped the developing Christians look to God rather than men for their support, comfort, encouragement, and wisdom.

I have discovered that developing Christians go through three very definite stages: first, eyes on people; second, eyes on self; and finally, eyes on the Lord.

The **first stage**, eyes on people, is dangerous. The person who led you to Christ easily becomes your idol, your model. That's unfortunate. Many a pastor is somebody's model or idol. In some cases, he's virtually an object of worship. So, a pastor must remain faithful to help his admirers see that he is just one among a number of people who is being used by God. No one should ever allow others to focus their adoration or worship on any person.

**Second**, eyes on self is what we might call a Christian adolescence, during which we know just enough to be dangerous. Everything is all about us. We're impulsive, experimental, self-reliant, propelled through life with a sense of invincibility. As a result, we rely upon our own strength to overcome difficulties.

It's the minister's job to move Christians safely along to the **third stage**, eyes on the Lord. I appreciate the fact that Paul and Barnabas said to these assemblies, in effect, "Ladies and gentlemen, we turn your ministry over to the Lord. You're accountable to Him. Fix your hope and heart on Him, not on us." If you are a spiritual leader serving in any kind of Christian ministry, do your very best to keep believers' affection on Christ and their eyes heavenward. ([Insights on Acts](#))

**Acts 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

KJV Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

- **they had appointed** Acts 1:22; Mark 3:14; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5
- **elders** Acts 11:30; 15:4,6,23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:1,17-19; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1
- **having prayed with fasting** Acts 14:1-3
- **they commended** Acts 14:26; Acts 20:32; Lk 23:46; 1 Th 3:12,13; 2 Th 2:16,17; 2 Ti 1:12; 1 Pe 5:10

## **ELDERS APPOINTED TO CHURCHES AND COMMENDED TO GOD**

**When they had appointed elders for them in every church** - They refers to Paul and Barnabas who were the "selection committee" but they made their selection in dependence of God (**prayed with fasting**). Clearly the first church was led by elders. Prayer and fasting would indicate that their selection was led by Christ Who is the Head of the Church. And note that no congregation was left out, but **every church** had elders appointed. I have been in Bible believing churches where elders were not appointed and sadly it usually resulted in either a persuasive pastor taking control or a small cliche of "old timers" who wanted to control the church. The results were usually disastrous, but like fungal rot in the core of a tree, the decay and destruction usually took some time to come to rotten fruition.

**THOUGHT** - Does your church have elders? How does your church select elders? Let me encourage you to follow "Acts 14 template" so that you would encourage the "selection committee" and even the body to consider some time of serious prayer and fasting so that you might hear from the Lord regarding His man or men for the position. I fear this is not always the practice when elders are selected and that some are chosen because of their charismatic personalities, their success in business, their prominence as donors, etc. Without going into detail, I can assure you that in 35 years I have seen the latter "method" of selection lead to literally tragic results for the church.

As **Wiersbe** said "The local church is both an organism and an organization, for if an organism is not organized, it will die! Paul and Barnabas ordained spiritual leaders and gave them the responsibility of caring for the flock." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Stedman** points out that the apostles "recognized the spiritual gifts that were present. They noted that the Holy Spirit had equipped men and women for ministry in the church. They appointed elders in every church, with prayer and fasting. Finally they did a third thing: They prayed and committed them to the Lord. Thus, as they moved on, the church was able to grow and expand and preach throughout that whole area, (as we will see when the apostles come back later) because they were solidly grounded." ([Acts 14:1-28 Counterattack](#))

**Appointed** (5500)(**cheirotoneo** from **cheir** = hand + **teino** = to stretch) means to stretch out the hand, thus expressing agreement with a motion, then, I popularly elect by show of hands, to vote by stretching out the hand and then to appoint. There are only 2 uses in the NT - 2 Cor 8:19, Acts 14:23.

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek writings **cheirotoneō** is used to describe how votes were cast in an assembly, i.e., by the raising of a hand or by a show of hands (*Liddell-Scott*). As early as the Fifth Century B.C. the term meant to "select" or "nominate" (Lohse, "cheirotoneō," *Kittel*, 9:437). Later, additional meanings were also implied, such as "electing" or "appointing." The verb does not appear in the Septuagint. It was used, however, in the writings of later church fathers and described the ordination process of bishops and deacons (cf. *Moulton-Milligan*). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Boice** writes that "The apostles had left behind only a tiny core of believers, and these had hardly been taught anything, since the apostles had been there at best for only a few weeks. How could this little group survive? It survived because the work was actually being done by God. The church was His church."

**Jack Andrews** comments that "Church ought to seek the Lord diligently with prayer and fasting before calling on a new pastor! Churches can get in a great mess and get out of the will of God if they do not call a God called heaven sent servant of God!" ([Expository Sermons](#))

**Elders** (4245)(**presbuteros** the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. This word does not necessarily refer to physical age, but of spiritual maturity. It speaks of spiritual leadership and is interchangeable with pastor, shepherd. (Cf 1 Th 5:12; 1 Ti 5:17; Heb 13:17; 1 Pe 5:1-3).

**Church** (1577)(**ekklesia** from **ek** = out + **klesis** = a calling, verb = **kaleo** = to call) literally means called out and as commonly used in the Greco-Roman vernacular referred to citizens who were *called out* from their homes to be publicly assembled or gathered to discuss or carry out affairs of state. **Wuest** writes that "The word **assembly** is a good one-word translation of **ekklesia**."

#### Related Resource:

- [Questions about the Church](#)
- [What is the biblical pattern of church leadership?](#)
- [What are the duties of an elder in the church?](#)
- [What does it mean to be above reproach / blameless?](#)

**Having prayed** (**proseuchomai**) **with fasting** - As **Robertson** says this "was a serious matter, this formal setting apart of these "elders" in the churches. So it was done in a public meeting with prayer and fasting."

Beginning and ending with **prayer and fasting** - It is notable that this great missionary enterprise had begun with prayer and fasting by the church in Acts 13:3+ and now at the end of their journey the missionaries take the same approach of prayer and fasting to guide their appointment of leaders of the missionary church plants! If it is as if the "bookends" of the first missionary journey in the history of the church were bookends of prayer and fasting. Is this not a wonderful Biblical model for the modern church!

**Fasting** (3521)(**nesteria** from verb **nesteuo** = to fast) describes fasting, fast, abstinence from eating, generally for want of food (2 Co 6:5; 11:27). The Pharisees practiced private fastings of the Jews (Mt 17:21; Luke 2:37) which they felt earned great merit with

God, in striking contrast to the fasting of Anna which was an act of worship of her great God. (cf. Luke 18:12; Isa 58:3ff.; Da. 9:3). In longer fasting the religious hypocrites abstained only from better kinds of food. **Prayer** is linked with **fasting** in Luke 2:37 and in Acts 14:23, the former as an act of worship and the latter in the context of making an important church decision. In Acts 27:9 **nesteria** was used of the Day of Atonement, which fell in September or October, a time of year when it navigation was considered dangerous.

**F F Bruce** comments that "It has more than once been pointed out that more recent missionary policy would have thought it dangerously idealistic to recognize converts of only a few weeks' standing as leaders in their churches; perhaps Paul and Barnabas were more conscious of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the believing communities." (NIBC-Acts)

**They commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed** - The missionaries could strengthen the saints and chose leaders, but ultimately they can only trust in God's power and provision to keep these infant missionary outposts spiritually healthy! The idea is that these new church plants were placed in the hands of the Lord for His care and His protection.

**Commended** (3908)(**paratithemi** from **para** = beside + **tithemi** = place) literally means to place something beside or before someone. It was "Old and solemn word, to entrust, to deposit as in a bank." (**Robertson**) It was used in Greek meaning to give someone something in trust and so to "deposit" with another. It is used with this sense in 2 Ti 2:2 where Paul declares "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** (**paratithemi**) to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (See similar uses of the related noun **paratheke** in 1 Ti 6:20; 2 Ti 1:12, 2 Ti 1:14)

Four times **paratithemi** was used to commit or commend someone or something to God for safekeeping. In the most famous use in his last words on the Cross Jesus "crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I **COMMIT** (**paratithemi**) MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last." (Lk 23:46) In his last meeting with the Ephesian elders, Paul encouraged them with the words "now I **commend** (**paratithemi**) you to God and to the word of His grace (NOTE THE ORDER - God then His Word - always a good pattern!), which is able (has the power) to build you up (God and His Word) and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32+) **THOUGHT** - That would make a great prayer to pray for the leaders of your church! Peter encouraged the suffering saints writing that "those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust (**paratithemi**) their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." (1 Pe 4:19)

**Swindoll** adds that "The word translated **commended** means "placed before." Literally, it's used in the sense of serving food. Greek writers use the term figuratively of teaching when a teacher sets before students a new concept to learn or evaluate. The literal and figurative senses come together when something is entrusted to the care of another, which is the meaning here. The apostles entrusted the people to the care of God. Of course, Paul and Barnabas formally commended the disciples to God for their own peace of mind and not to signify a spiritual change. Nothing in heaven changed. The Lord didn't say, "Okay, thanks for getting these churches started. I'll take it from here." He had been taking care of these people since before the beginning of time! ([Insights on Acts](#))

**Had believed** (4100)(**pisteuo**) means these elders had trusted in and committed wholeheartedly to Jesus, relying on His sacrifice to save them eternally and His power provided by His Spirit to sanctify them daily. The perfect tense speaks of their enduring faith.

## Acts 14:24 They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

KJV Acts 14:24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

- Pisidia Pisidia was a province of Asia Minor, situated between Phrygia on the north and west, Lycaonia on the east, and Pamphylia on the south. Acts 13:13,14; 15:38

**They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia** (see map below) (See another map of the Province of Pisidia) - **Pisidia** was located north of **Lycia** (see red area in map). **Into Pamphylia** reflects Luke's accurate geographical designations, as **Pamphylia** was south of **Pisidia** and located on the coast. The town of **Perga** was located in **Pamphylia**.

**Wikipedia** on **Pisidia** - During the Roman period Pisidia was **colonized** with veterans of its **legions** to maintain control. For the colonists, who came from poorer parts of **Italy**, agriculture must have been the area's main attraction. Under **Augustus**, eight such colonies were established in Pisidia, and Antioch and **Sagalassos** became the most important cities. The province was gradually Latinised. Latin remained the formal language of the area until the end of the 3rd century.

**Wikipedia** on **Pamphylia** - between **Lycia** and **Cilicia**, extending from the Mediterranean to **Mount Taurus** (modern-day **Antalya province, Turkey**). It was bounded on the north by **Pisidia** and was therefore a



country of small extent, having a coast-line of only about 120 km (75 miles) with a breadth of about 50 km (30 miles).

**Passed through** (1330)(**dierchomai** from **dia** = through + **erchomai** = come, go) means to go through, to pass through, to move through an area. In Acts 13:5 Luke used it of the missionaries having "gone through the whole island." Luke does not describe the return trek from Pisidia Antioch to Perga, but this was a dangerous, rugged trip with haunts in the mountains for robbers. Clearly God protected His men on mission from hard or even death on this dangerous journey. I fear that too often I take God's watch-care and hand of protection over myself and my family for granted, but I have numerous stories from the my two youngest children's lives when they were actively using illegal drugs. That they came through this time (almost 20 years for each one) relatively unscathed can only be credited to the protective hand of God, the same One Who protected His missionaries.

### Acts 14:25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

KJV Acts 14:25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:.

Green = Return from Pisidian Antioch > Perga  
Red = From Perga > Attalia > Antioch (Syria)  
Click to Enlarge

## THE GOSPEL FINALLY GOES TO PERGA

When they had spoken the Word in **Perga** - Barnabas, Saul and John Mark had arrived in **Perga** after sailing from **Paphos** the capital city of Cyprus on the western side of the island. Luke does not tell us Paul preached at that time (Acts 13:13-14+). On this second visits **they** (apparently both missionaries) spoke **the Word** which in context is "shorthand" for the Gospel. How long they remained in Perga is not stated, but clearly long enough to proclaim the Gospel, which was their missionary goal.

It is worth noting that there are archaeological remains of a **stadium in Perga** (see picture; [Roman theater](#) - see [pictures of several ruins at Perga](#)), and perhaps Paul spoke there (like a modern day "Billy Graham Crusade"), but of course this is speculation.

**Wikipedia** on **Perga** - Perga was an ancient and important city of Pamphylia, between the rivers **Catarrhactes** and **Cestrus** (Turkish Aksu Çayı)...Perge gained renown for the worship of **Artemis**, whose temple stood on a hill outside the town, and in whose honour annual festivals were celebrated.<sup>[6]</sup> The coins of Perge represent both the goddess and her temple....As the Cestrus silted up over the late Roman era, Perga declined as a secular city.<sup>[8]</sup> In the first half of the 4th century, during the reign of **Constantine the Great** (324-337), Perga became an important centre of Christianity, which soon became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The city retained its status as a Christian centre in the 5th and 6th centuries.

**Spoken** (2980)(**laleo**) is the Greek verb meaning to make a sound and then to utter words. **NLT** and **NIV** translate it "preached the word" but **laleo** is more literally "spoken" and not the usual verb for preach (**kerusso** or **euaggelizo**). This is the fourth time in this chapter, the subject of preaching is mentioned as this was their divine assignment, and they faithfully continued in it, always seeking to make the most of their opportunity regardless of their opposition.

**THOUGHT** - Are you making the most of the opportunities the Lord presents to you each day. Later Paul would say to the saints at Colossae "**Conduct** (**present imperative**) yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most (**exagorazo** in the **present tense**) of the opportunity (**kairos**). Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." (Col 4:5-6+) That is a good word for all us!

**Kenneth Wuest** adds that "**Laleo** (was) used originally just of sounds like the chatter of birds, the prattling of children, (but was also used) of the most serious kind of speech. It takes note of the sound and the manner of speaking. **Wuest** adds that in this verse **laleo** is used to emphasize "not the matter, but the fact of speech. The crowd was not interested in what the man was saying, but in the fact that he was able to express himself articulately." (**ibid**)

**Robertson** says that **laleo** contrasts with the other NT word for speak (**lego**) in that **laleo** is "rather an onomatopoetic word (laleo > la-la) with some emphasis on the sound and manner of speaking. The word is common in the vernacular papyri examples of social intercourse." (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**The Word** (**logos**) as noted above, in this context is a reference to the Gospel. And so we see this great chapter begin and end with

the Word, the Word of His grace (Acts 14:3), and it goes without saying that it was a fruit filled chapter, with many believers, both Jewish and Gentile, and a special "present" for Paul of the young man named Timothy who he would attach to his party 2-3 years later on the second missionary journey.

**They went down to Attalia** - **Went down** is used because **Attalia** is on the coast, at a lower elevation than **Perga** which is about 9-12 miles inland to the north and west of this seaport. **Attalia** was also in the province of Pamphylia and today is the seaport town of [Antalya](#).

**Acts 14:26 From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.**

KJV Acts 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

NET Acts 14:26 From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

NLT Acts 14:26 Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed.

- **From there they sailed to Antioch** Acts 11:19,26; 13:1; 15:22,30; Gal 2:11
- **from which they had been commended** Acts 14:23; 13:1-3; 15:40; 20:32; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 3 John 1:6-8
- **for the work that they had accomplished** Romans 15:19; Colossians 1:25,28; 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:2,5-8

## THE LAST LAP HOME FROM THE WAR!

**From there** - From **Attalia** ([Antalya](#))

**They sailed to Antioch** - The began on the water and end on the water. To **Antioch** in Syria. About 320 miles hugging the southern coast of modern Turkey but not going back through Cyprus, which is interesting, as Paul used these re-tracing trips for spiritual strengthening and for the appointment of elders. God apparently had another plan in His mind for strengthening the churches in Cyprus (Read Acts 15:39+). This voyage probably took about 3-4 days ([See speed of ancient ships](#)).

[Robertson](#) writes that "They had been gone some eighteen months."

[Swindoll](#) writes "In the 1940s, virtually everyone in America knew the name Norman Rockwell. The illustrations he drew for the Saturday Evening Post reflected the best of the American spirit during some of the nation's most trying years. The words "heartwarming" and "nostalgic" come to mind when you see his work. For the May 26, 1945, issue, he released one of his most endearing illustrations: "**Homecoming G.I.**" (ED: CLICK PICTURE ABOVE TO ENLARGE) In this iconic scene, a soldier wearing faded green army fatigues stands in front of a brick tenement as excited family members and friends pour into the alley to welcome their hero home from the war. Everyone can find themselves somewhere in that painting: The weary returning soldier. The exuberant parents. The elated siblings. The joyous neighbors. The shy girlfriend-in-waiting. A lot of emotion accompanies the return of a traveler after a long time away from home, especially if that journey involved trials and hardship, conflicts and struggle. Paul and Barnabas had left their homes in Syrian Antioch more than a year earlier to engage in an unusual kind of warfare. They battled supernatural forces on Cyprus and encountered spiritual enemies in the synagogues of Pisidia and Lycaonia. Paul's brush with death in Lystra may have left him with injuries that would affect him for the rest of his life; each scar would have reminded him and his associates that they had been to battle and would likely face the enemy again. Without a doubt, morale improved for Paul, Barnabas, and their team when their itinerary carried them ever closer to home. Still, they had a long way to go and a great deal to accomplish along the way. ([Insights on Acts](#))

**From which they had been commended to the grace of God**- Luke uses "**commend**" in Acts 14:23 but here the verb is [paradidomi](#) ([see more detailed study below](#)) which means to hand over to the power of another. It conveys the sense that the church at Antioch had in effect handed Paul and Barnabas over to power of God, indeed to the enabling power of His Spirit and grace. In Acts 15:40+ Luke uses the same verb [paradidomi](#) in almost an identical context recording that "Paul chose Silas and left, **being committed** by the brethren to the grace of the Lord." So there Luke says they are given over to the power of grace just as he says

in this passage.

**Robertson** on **commended** - High and serious thoughts filled the hearts of these first returned missionaries as they neared home. The grace of God had been with them. They had fulfilled (eplērōsan) the work to which they had been set apart by the Holy Spirit with the prayers of the Antioch church. They now had a wondrous story to tell.

**The grace of God** expresses the Source of the Grace, God Himself, "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:1+) Who reigns as sovereign on "the throne of grace" (He 4:16+), and Who Alone "gives grace and glory" (Ps 84:11 **Spurgeon**) All the uses of the phrase **the grace of God** -

Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 20:24; Ro 5:15+; 1Co 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2Co 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal. 2:21; Col 1:6+; Titus 2:11+; Heb 2:9+; He 12:15+; 1 Pe 5:12+

**Grace** (favor) (5485) see preceding discussion of **charis**. (To God's grace at work read Acts 11:23+; Acts 13:43+; Acts 14:3+ Acts 20:24+)

**A SHORT EXCURSUS ON PRACTICAL GRACE** - One of the most familiar short definitions of **grace** is God's unmerited favor. Unfortunately, the practical, everyday, working definition of grace in the lives of many believers goes little beyond this basic simple definition. Many believers fall woefully short of experiencing the riches of God's grace in their everyday life as C H Spurgeon wrote "There are many who are barely Christians and have scarcely enough grace to float them into heaven, the keel of their vessel grating on the gravel all the way."

Too many of us (yours truly included far too often!) are like the story of the poor European family who saved for years to buy tickets to sail to America. Once at sea, they carefully rationed the cheese and bread they had brought for the journey. After 3 days, the boy complained to his father, "I hate cheese sandwiches. If I don't eat anything else before we get to America, I'm going to die." Giving the boy his last nickel, the father told him to go to the ship's galley and buy an ice-cream cone. When the boy returned a long time later with a wide smile, his worried dad asked, "Where were you?" "In the galley, eating three ice-cream cones and a steak dinner!" "All that for a nickel?" "Oh, no, the food is free," the boy replied. "It comes with the ticket." Indeed, Amazing Grace, not cheap, but free, sufficient to save a wretch like me, the first day, and then every day for the rest (pun intended) of my life!

And so we need to amplify the simple definition of grace as unmerited favor by stating that grace is the unmerited favor of God shown to man primarily in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, Who is now the believer's new life (Via His indwelling, enabling Spirit) and new Source of strength for this supernatural life (cp 2Co 5:17-note). This truth about the "Christ life" (which I think is synonymous with the "grace life") is one many believers do not seem to grasp and so they live a bit like spiritual "yo-yo's", attempting to live the **supernatural** Christian life in their own natural strength instead of in Christ's rich, boundless supply of grace (cp Jn 1:14, 16, 17, 2Co 8:9). **Christian** - take "a" and place it at the beginning of the word = **"A Christ in"**! Does your life reflect this truth, beloved? May the Lord grant us this most precious grace and may we be every one of us led of the Spirit of God to seek Him Who alone can open "the well-stored granaries of grace" [CHS].

**Commended** (**perfect tense** - lasting effect)(3860)(**paradidomi** from **para** = alongside, to side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another (in a bad sense - Matt. 10:4; Matt. 10:17; Matt. 10:19; Matt. 10:21; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 17:22, etc) or in a good sense as in the present passage (cf Mt 11:27, 1 Pe 2:23).

**THOUGHT** - The sense in this passage is that Paul and Barnabas were given over to the power of the grace of God! Could one be entrusted to anything better in this fallen world? I do not think so. This would make a good prayer for parents to "entrust their spouse and children to the grace of God." Amen!

**Larkin** - As Everett F. Harrison observes, the missionaries have carried out their task to the **'full limits of possibility'** (1986:238; compare Ro 15:19; Col 4:17). What they report to the gathered church is *all that God had done through them*—better, "for them" (see Acts 15:4). The phrasing emphasizes their awareness of God's presence and His saving work throughout the mission (Acts 11:21; Acts 15:4; cp 1 Cor 3:9). (See [Acts - Page 218](#))

**For the work that they had accomplished** - Could it be any clearer how they were able to accomplish **the work** for which they were sent out? This is truly amazing grace! God's Spirit sent them out and God's grace enabled them to complete **the work** to which they had been called! Recall that at the beginning of this missionary journey Luke recorded that "while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul **for the work to which I have called them**" (Acts

13:2+).

**THOUGHT** - If you are blood bought and heaven bound, the Spirit of the Living God has set you apart for the **good works** in Christ Jesus which He has prepared for you since eternity past ("beforehand") to walk in in eternity present (Eph 2:10+). Perhaps you need to fast and pray about what these good works are in your (one) life, so that when your "missionary journey" is completed you too can confidently, joyfully say that by the **grace of God** (enabling you to abide in the Vine - John 15:5) you have **fully accomplished** the works for which God's Spirit "set you apart" and "sent you out!" And on that final judgment day, when you come to appear face to face with the Righteous Judge Christ Jesus at the Bema Seat (2 Cor 5:10+), you will hear "Well done, good and faithful servant, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" (Mt 25:23).

**They had accomplished** (completed, fulfilled) (4137)([pleroo](#)) in some context refers to being filled with the Spirit (Acts 13:52, Eph 5:18), but in the present context means that the missionaries had successfully brought to completion that which they had sent out from Antioch Syria to do (Acts 13:3). We see a similar idea of fully completing the ministry God had given Paul and Archippus (see below).

Romans 15:19+ in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I **have fully preached** ([pleroo](#)) the gospel of Christ.

Colossians 4:17+ Say to Archippus, "**Take heed** ([present imperative](#)) to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you **may fulfill** ([pleroo](#)) it."

**THOUGHT** - This sense of pleroo with the idea of accomplishing, completing or fulfilling one's ministry begs the question, beloved, when all is said and done, will it be written of you that you accomplished the ministry (good works - cf Eph 2:10+) which you received from the Lord. No guilt intended. Only grace. But it does bear sober reflection, for our lives are short compared to eternity!

Meditate on these passages that deal with the length of our days on earth - Job 7:6, 7 Job 9:25, 26 Job 14:1, 2 Ps 37:2 Ps 39:5, 6 Ps 90:4-6, 9, 10 Ps 102:3, 11, Ps 103:15,16 Ps 144:4 Isa 38:12,13 Isa 40:6,7 Jas 1:10, 11, 4:14, 1Pe 1:24, 2 Ki 19:26 and finally Eph 5:16+

- [Play this video Redeem the Time](#) and that one doesn't pluck at the strings of your heart listen to Robin Mark's [When It's All Been Said and Done](#)
- And if you are still not convicted watch [Francis Chan's rope illustration](#) which will boggle your mind if you've never seen it!
- And if need a little extra motivation read Redeem the Time.

**Acts 14:27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.**

KJV Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

- **When they had arrived** Acts 15:4-6; 21:20-22; 1 Corinthians 5:4; 11:18; 14:23
- **They began to report** Acts 15:4,12; 21:19; Romans 15:18; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 15:10
- **He had opened a door of faith** Acts 11:18; John 9:10; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3; Revelation 3:7,8

## **FIRST MISSIONARY CONFERENCE ON THE THINGS GOD HAD DONE**

**When they had arrived and gathered the church together** - The first missionary meeting of the new church. Today we often say the missionaries come home on [furlough](#).

**David Jeremiah** summed up writing "The first missionary journey is documented in Acts 13-14, a journey by ship and on foot that covered 1,400 miles on land and sea over the course of one year." (But see Toussaint's comment below)

**Stanley Toussaint** says "Thus ends the first missionary journey which lasted between one and two years and in which Paul and Barnabas traversed more than 700 miles by land and 500 miles by sea. But more than that, it demolished the wall between Jews and

Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:14-16)...Probably Paul wrote the Book of Galatians from Antioch shortly after his first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)." (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Page 393](#))

**Gathered together** (4863)(**sunago** from **sun** = with + **ago** = to lead) means literally to lead together. All of Luke's uses of **sunago** in Acts - Acts 4:5; Acts 4:26; Acts 4:27; Acts 4:31; Acts 11:26; Acts 13:44; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:30; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:8;

**John MacArthur** on **began to report** - They kept all their accomplishments in the proper perspective, noting that God had done all those things through them and that He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. They saw themselves as instruments through whom God had accomplished His purposes; and all the glory went to Him. That is an essential perspective for a servant of the Lord." (See [Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 56](#))

**John Phillips** had a good word on the role of Barnabas writing "What Paul left out Barnabas filled in.

**Wiersbe** said "The amazing thing is that Paul and his associates did all of this without the modern means of transportation and communication that we possess today. Dr. Bob Pierce used to say to us in Youth For Christ, "Others have done so much with so little, while we have done so little with so much!" The wasted wealth of American believers alone, if invested in world evangelization, might lead to the salvation of millions of lost people." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

*Commended to the grace of God for His work,  
Now communicating on how the grace of God worked!*

**They began to report all things that God had done with them** - Don't you love Luke's description! Not all the things Paul and Barnabas had done, but all that God's Spirit had done **with them**. Luke uses an interesting expression "**with them**," which implies it was a "joint effort" in one sense, but ultimately it was God initiated (Acts 13:2), God empowered (Acts 14:26) and God glorifying. God's sovereignty was working with their humanity. So we have the mysterious juxtaposition of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. They were 100% responsible for carrying out the work to which He had called them, but it was God Who provided the grace to carry out the work and it was this grace on which they were 100% dependent. See the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100).

It is notable that when Jesus gave the "Great Commission" He promised "I, I am **with you** always, even to the end of the age." (Mt 28:20) The phrase **with you** is the same preposition (**meta** - with) which Luke uses to describe God "**with (meta) them**." (see also [preceding comment on "with you"](#)) Jesus had been with the missionaries every step of the journey and His Spirit had continually enabled them! Supernatural work always requires reliance upon a supernatural Source!

Spurgeon once said "O preacher, if you are about to stand up to see **what you can do**, it will be your wisdom to sit down speedily. But if you stand up to prove **what your almighty Lord and Master can do through you**, then infinite possibilities lie around you!" (The Soul Winner)

**Announce** (imperfect tense - again and again - see note below)(312)(**anaggello/anangelo** from **aná** = up to, again, back {like our English prefix "**re-**"= again thus "**re**-port" or "**re**-hearse" = to say again} + **aggéllō** = tell, declare related to **ággelos** = messenger) means to bring back word and later to announce, to report. **Anaggello** in this context means they carried back good tidings, providing information undoubtedly with considerable detail (see Acts 14:27, 15:4). As in this case most 14 NT uses of **anaggello** report or announce something that has to do with God, including His works and/or purposes.

**Williams** explains Luke's use of the imperfect tense - "In saying that the missionaries reported these things, Luke has used the verb in the imperfect. This may mean that the report was repeated as the two met with different groups scattered throughout the city. But the word church is in the singular. There may have been a number of groups meeting separately, but there was only one church."

**Simon Kistemaker** has another thought on the imperfect tense writing that "Luke employs the imperfect tense of the verb 'reported' to indicate that the story Paul and Barnabas had to tell was too lengthy for one sitting. Moreover, he adds that the apostles tell about all their work. Repeatedly, then, they meet with the believers and relate in detail the inroads that the gospel made among the Jews and Gentiles."

**Vincent** adds that **anaggello** means "*to bring the tidings up to (ana) or back to him who receives them*"

**Jack Andrews** rightly says that the church needs "to hear from our missionaries, pray for our missionaries, and let our missionaries hear from us. Illustration: When Warren Wiersbe was a pastor he once had a church officer say to him, "I don't care how much money you want for missions, I'll give it; but just don't make me listen to missionaries speak!" Warren Wiersbe said, "I felt sorry for him that his spiritual temperature was so low that he could not listen to reports of what God was doing in the difficult comers of the harvest fields." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Does your church regularly allow returning missionaries to share their great adventure about their

great God and His great Gospel? Today one could even share by live feed with Skype. If your church is not doing this, then you are truly missing out on some of the most exciting, stimulating, encouraging, challenging and convicting gifts that God gives to His church, for in them you get to see first hand things occurring that only God's Spirit could accomplish! Just imagine if Paul and Barnabas had returned and the pulpit committee told them "We really don't have a time slot for you in our regular service!" If you would like just a sample of what you might be missing let me encourage you to take about 24 minutes to watch for one of the most fascinating Gospel encounters I have ever heard as you follow missionaries from New Tribes Mission taking the Gospel deep into the jungles of Papua, New Guinea. The video is entitled "[Ee-Taow: The Mouk Story](#)." ("Ee-Taow" means "It is true!" "It is good!") If you have already seen it, you know it is time well spent. If you have never seen it, you are in for a treat, as you watch the light of the Gospel penetrate into one of the darkest places of paganism in the world! If you are thinking "It's just another missionary video," then just look at a few of the comments from those who have watched it! I challenge you to watch it without tearing up! May our Father by His Holy Spirit use this moving true story of redemption to stir your heart to become seek to become more involved in some way in reaching the millions of souls who are still lost for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## **GOD WAS NOW SAVING GENTILES!**

God opened the door on this first journey and it is still wide open to Jews and Gentiles alike. Have you walked through the open door God has placed before you in you city, your job, your school, etc?

**Toussaint** points out that "**how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**, is most important: (a) It shows the Gospel had gone to Gentiles. (b) It was a "by-faith" message and not by works of the Law. (c) God did it, for He opened the door. (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Acts and Epistles - Page 17](#))

**And how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**- Opened...door is a metaphor that speaks of what is possible or what was a feasible opportunity. Notice again the juxtaposition of God's sovereignty and Man's responsibility. God opened the doors which only He could open, but the missionaries walked through the doors (so to speak) taking the Gospel of grace in which the Gentiles placed their faith.

One is reminded of Jesus' words to the church at Philadelphia...

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, **who opens and no one will shut**, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: I know your deeds. Behold, I **have put before you an open door** which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.(Rev 3:7-8+)

Paul used this same metaphor of a "**door**" in requesting prayer for an open door to present the Gospel, a request which is somewhat ironic as Paul is in prison!

Praying at the same time for us as well, **that God will open up to us a door** for the word (Gospel), so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ (Gospel), for which (Gospel) I have also been imprisoned (Colossians 4:3+)

**Robertson** comments that "Three times in Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3) he employed the metaphor of **door**," perhaps a reminiscence of the very language of Paul here. This work in Galatia gained a large place in Paul's heart (Galatians 4:14-15). The Gentiles now, it was plain, could enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22) through the **door** of faith, not by law or by circumcision or by heathen philosophy or mythology."

**Larkin** on God **had opened a door** - Finally, it was God who **opened the door of faith to the Gentiles**. This image captures what the first missionary journey was all about (Read Acts 9:15-16+; Acts 13:1-3+). God did swing wide open to the Gentiles the door of faith, giving access to salvation by faith (Lk 13:24-25; Acts 13:38-39; 13:12, 43, 46-48; 14:1, 23). The church will survive to the next generation when it maintains this kind of fruitful communication between the just-planted church and the sending church. (See [Acts - Page 218](#))

**Opened** (455)(**anoigo** from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, or to give access to. Figuratively speaking God's Spirit opened the hearts of the Gentiles to receive and believe the Gospel seed sown by the missionaries. In a similar use Luke records that Paul was sent as Jesus' witness to **Gentiles** "to **open** their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God (REPENT AND BELIEVE), that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18+). The derivative verb **dianoigo** is used by Luke in Acts 16 to describe

another **Gentile** conversion recording that "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." (Acts 16:14+)

Luke's uses of **anoigo** in Acts - Acts 5:19; Acts 5:23; Acts 8:32; Acts 8:35; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:40; Acts 10:11; Acts 10:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 12:14; Acts 12:16; Acts 14:27; Acts 16:26; Acts 16:27; Acts 18:14; Acts 26:18;

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it.

**Gentiles** (1484)(**ethnos**) gives us our word "ethnic") in general refers to a multitude (especially persons) associated with one another, living together, united in kinship, culture or traditions and summed up by the words nation, Gentiles (especially when ethnos is plural),

**Guzik** sums up the fact that "The trip was a great success, though not without great obstacles: The difficulty of travel itself, the confrontation with Elymas on Cyprus, the quitting of John Mark, being driven out of the cities of Antioch and Iconium, the temptation to receive adoration, and being stoned in Lystra. Yet Paul and Barnabas would not be deterred from the work God had them to do.. It can and should be asked of each follower of Jesus, "What will it take for you to back down from doing God's will? What kind of temptation or obstacle or opposition will do it?" Nothing stopped Jesus from doing God's will on our behalf; as we look to Him, we won't be stopped either. Paul later expressed this drive in a letter to a congregation (Php 3:12, 13,14)." ([Acts 14 Commentary](#))

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## Respond And Report

Read: Luke 9:1-10

When they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them. —Acts 14:27

During a Sunday night service, a man described a week-long mission trip from which he and a half-dozen others had just returned. There was a vibrancy in his voice as he told why they went to a needy area in another state, how many yards of concrete they mixed and poured for a church sidewalk, and how their lives were changed in the process. I was moved and encouraged as he reported what God had done in and through all those who went.

I see this same pattern of respond-and-report in Jesus' training of His disciples. In Luke 9 we read, "He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (vv.1-2). They responded by obeying His call (v.6), then returned to report what they had done (v.10). I believe Jesus enjoyed those gospel team reports as the disciples brought encouragement to Him and to each other.

We can follow that same pattern today as we first respond to God's call to serve and to witness, whether it is close to home or far away. When we report the results of His work to others, the joy is multiplied.

So, what are we waiting for?

### THINKING IT OVER

How have I been encouraged by the reports of those who have served God faithfully? How have I had opportunity to respond and report?

Your response to God's Call is not complete until you report God's work.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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Acts 13	Acts 14
A Miracle of Judgment (Acts 13:6-10)	A Miracle of Healing (Acts 14:8-10)
Result of Miracle: Proconsul Believed	Result of Miracle: People Wanted to Worship the Preachers
An Address to Jews	An Address to Idolaters
The God of this People, Israel	He Left not Himself without Witness

The Jews were Filled with Envy	The Jews Came and Persuaded Multitude
The Jews Stirred up the Women	--
	Note: Stoning Contemplated (Acts 14:5), Stoning Practised (Acts 14:19)
A Light to the Gentiles ((Acts 13:47)	Door of Faith Opened to Gentiles (Acts 14:27)

## Acts 14:28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

KJV Acts 14:28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

- Acts 11:26; 15:35

### A TIME TO REST, RENEW, TEACH AND TRAIN

**And they spent a long time** - This is the second time Luke has used the phrase a long time in this chapter (Acts 14:3), and as with the previous use we cannot give a definite length of time, but given the fact that the missionaries had much to report, this is undoubtedly many weeks, and probably many months.

**Robertson** muses that "It was a happy time of fellowship. The experiment entered upon by the church of Antioch was now a pronounced success. It was at the direct command of the Holy Spirit, but they had prayed for the absent missionaries and rejoiced at their signal success. There is no sign of jealousy on the part of Barnabas when Paul returns as the chief hero of the expedition. A new corner has been turned in the history of Christianity. There is a new centre of Christian activity. What will Jerusalem think of the new developments at Antioch? Paul and Barnabas made no report to Jerusalem."

**John MacArthur** sums up the first missionary journey noting that Paul and Barnabas "saw themselves as instruments through whom God had accomplished His purposes; and all the glory went to Him. That is an essential perspective for a servant of the Lord. Through their Spirit-giftedness, boldness, power, humility, persistence, caring, commitment, and reverence for God, Paul and Barnabas had been used to accomplish much for the kingdom. Those qualities still mark those who walk the path to effective Christian service. ([Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 57](#))

**Spent** (1304) (**diatribo** from **dia** = through or intensifier + **tribo** = to wear, to spend; English **diatribe** = an abusive speech) literally means to rub away, to consume by rubbing. In the NT spoken only of TIME meaning to spend or pass time in a place, to stay, remain, tarry (Jn 3:22 = Jesus "was spending time with" His disciples, Acts 15:35 = "Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch").

All the NT uses of **diatribo** - spending(1), spending time(2), spent(3), stayed(2), staying(1). Jn. 3:22; Acts 12:19; Acts 14:3; Acts 14:28; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:12; Acts 20:6; Acts 25:6; Acts 25:14

**With the disciples** - To reiterate, the believers at the great church at Antioch were not "super saints" but were simply believers. If you are a believer, you are a disciple. Do not let anyone tell you a disciple is a special group, because that simply cannot be defended from Scripture.

**Disciples** (3101) (**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher.

All of Luke's uses of **mathetes** in Acts -

Acts 6:1; Acts 6:2; Acts 6:7; Acts 9:1; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:19; Acts 9:25; Acts 9:26; Acts 9:38; Acts 11:26; Acts 11:29; Acts 13:52; Acts 14:20; Acts 14:22; Acts 14:28; Acts 15:10; Acts 16:1; Acts 18:23; Acts 18:27; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:9; Acts 19:30; Acts 20:1; Acts 20:30; Acts 21:4; Acts 21:16

So half way through the Acts the gospel has spread from Palestine where the story all began, to one of the islands of the sea and into parts of Asia Minor. Little did even Paul know that the next step was to be over the sea into Europe.



**Related Resources:**

- [What is the difference between a Christian and a disciple?](#)
- [What is the difference between a disciple and apostle?](#)
- [What is Christian discipleship?](#)
- [Why is making disciples important?](#)