

Acts 14

- I. 14:1-7 In Iconium
- II. 14:8-20 In Lystra
- III. 14:21-28 To Derbe and Back Home

I. 14:1-7 In Iconium

- A. Description of Paul, said to come from Iconium

“And he saw Paul coming, a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well-built [strong], with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace. For sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes he had the countenance of an angel.”

– Acts of Paul and Thecla, Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 8

- B. 14:2 *poisoned their minds* false accusations
- C. 14:3 *Therefore* This is the key word. They stayed because of the opposition.
 - Principle: **Expect Opposition** What did Jesus say?

Matthew 5:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

II. 14:8-20 In Lystra

- A. 14:8 Dr. Luke emphasizes the man's physical condition: 1) without strength in his feet 2) a cripple from his mother's womb 3) who had never walked
- B. 14:9-10 In this case **the man** had faith – and it came as he was listening to Paul. Somehow, Paul was able to see that “he had faith to be healed.”
 - i. Saying this “with a loud voice” took a little faith on Paul's part too!
- C. 14:11-13 The myth behind their actions:

“The Roman poet Ovid told a tall tale about a couple who lived in the region around Lystra. The Greek gods Zeus and Hermes had come to earth disguised as humans. Everywhere they journeyed they were shunned, until they came to the straw hut of two peasants, Philemon and his wife, Bacius. The couple showed them great kindness and hospitality. Afterwards, the two travelers took the couple to the top of a mountain where they saw the surrounding fields sink into a swamp. Because of the snub the gods wiped out the people of the region and rewarded the couple by transforming their hut into a beautiful temple. The couple were made caretakers of the temple and when they died they were transformed into trees and planted at its entrance.

Source: <http://www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/pdf%20files/Acts%2014-15.pdf>

- i. The people didn't want to make the same mistake that the people made in their mythology. If the gods were here again, they were going to treat them with respect!
- D. 14:15 Barnabas and Paul do the best thing they can do by rejecting the worship of these people and pointing them directly to the living God.

Apostles Barnabas and Paul See also *apostles* back in v.4.

- Key Questions:
 - Are there apostles other than the twelve in the Bible?
 - Are there apostles today?

Our New Testament is written in Greek, and the word “apostle” is used in two ways.

- 1) Apostles in the technical sense = the twelve
This distinction remains true right into the book of Revelation and on into eternity:

*Revelation 21:14 (NKJV) Now the wall of the city [New Jerusalem] had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb.*

- 2) Apostles in the functional sense = missionaries

- Our word *missionary* is derived from a Latin word meaning “to send out”.
- Our word *apostle* is derived from a Greek word meaning “to send out”.
- Are there apostles other than the twelve in the Bible?
 - Yes, in the sense of missionaries, but not in the sense of the twelve.
- Are there apostles today?
 - Yes, in the sense of missionaries, but not in the sense of the twelve.
- So why don't we call our missionaries “apostles”?
 - Because that would be confusing. It would sound as if we were comparing them with the twelve apostles in the NT. In Greece they probably do call them “apostles”.

- E. 14:17 *He did not leave Himself without a witness* In the synagogues Paul could use the special revelation of the Scriptures. The Jews knew the Scriptures. Here in the Gentile world, the Scriptures were unknown so Paul moved to the general revelation available in nature:

Romans 1:20 (NKJV) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

- Principle: **Seek the approval of God, not of people.** The crowd goes from wanting to worship Paul as a god to stoning him and leaving him for dead.

- F. 14:19-20 An example of perseverance. Remember this is the first missions trip ever!

- i. Possible explanations for Paul's tenacity:

- a) In his mind he remembered Stephen, his death and the other believers he persecuted.
 - Stephen saw a vision of Christ in heaven as he died.
- b) Perhaps the Lord especially comforted Paul with similar visions at this time:

2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (NKJV) ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul later makes clear that this man was himself. If he received the visions at this time, as many Bible teachers believe, then that would clarify his determination to continue his ministry. Seeing heaven's glory would probably be a good motivator here on earth.

- c) By the way, this was the only time he was ever stoned, but not the last time he suffered physically to fulfill his ministry:

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (NKJV) ²⁴From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

III. 14:21-28 To Derbe and Back Home

A. 14:22 An exhortation to perseverance

- i. *through many tribulations* They no doubt said more, but this is the only thing we know about for sure. Please don't think that becoming a Christian makes life easy.
 - Principle: **Encourage New Believers** New believers needed strengthening and encouragement to persevere. Christ doesn't eliminate our problems, but saves our souls. In the process, He can help us face our problems with His strength.

B. 14:23 Appointing elders: The churches needed local leadership.

- i. The character traits desired in these men are found in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1.
- ii. The word *elders* is plural. These are the guys in the pastor, elder, overseer role. We're not told how exactly they functioned – so we shouldn't assume too much – but the plural tells us that no leader can do the job alone. In each church (or “city” in Titus 1) there were multiple leaders.

C. 14:27 This is the first missions conference ever.