

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

- Last recorded statement of Jesus before His ascension into heaven
- Disciples will be empowered by Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses for Jesus
- The message of salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles, everywhere

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Acts 14 outline

Verses 1-7

- Opposition always fail to impede the spread of gospel.
Often it propel the cause of the spread

Verses 8-18

- A different apologetic to different audience (Jews & Gentile)

Verses 19-28

- God enabled the Apostles to persevere to preach & strengthen the faith of disciples

We read

- Opponents plot to mistreat and stone the apostles at Iconium v5
- Opponents stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city in Lystra v9



- We also read at the end of the passage
- Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. v22
- Paul and Barnabas could just excuse themselves
- “why should we return to the place of hostility”
- “we had already preach the gospel”

Acts 14:1-5

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of **Jews** and **Greeks believed**. ² But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and **poisoned** their minds against the brothers. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the **message of his grace** by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. ⁴ The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵ There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them.

Key points

- **Message of salvation generates 2 responses (acceptance & rejection)**
- **Jews and Gentiles can be found in both camps**
- **Some who rejected the gospel maliciously seeks to distort truth and confuse**
- **The gospel is here called the message of his grace - An emphasis on grace by which both Jews and Gentiles could be saved on an equal basis.**

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How far would opponents of the gospel go to persecute the apostles?

- ***To poison the mind of others***
- ***Unbelieving Jews make an alliance with the Gentiles! Culturally Jews don't talk, eat and sit next to Gentiles, let alone plot!***
- ***To mistreat & stone the apostles***
- ***These opponents were not content to kick Paul out of their own region ; they followed him to Lystra later on in V19 and brought their persecution with them.***

Acts 14:14-17

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵ “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷ Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

Key points

- Lystra is a pagan city where they would not identify with stories of Abraham, Moses and Isaiah.
- Paul did not preach to these pagan worshippers the same way he preached to Jews or those acquainted with OT
- V17 spoke about kindness the pagans had mistakenly attributed to Zeus & idolatry. Paul told them these blessings come from the true God, our Creator. God's kindness to all men (in giving rain and fruitful crops) should be seen as a witness of His love and power. all of creation speaks of God ([Psalm 19](#)). He alone is the giver of all good gifts and the source of all blessing ([James 1:17](#))
- Paul told them the message of the good news and repentance>> turning from idolatry and turn back to God our creator.
- Apostles tore their clothes; out of an instinctively Jewish reaction to blasphemy.

Acts 14:19-23

¹⁹ Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They **stoned** Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was **dead**. ²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and **won** a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² **strengthening** the disciples and **encouraging** them to remain true to the faith.

“We must go through many **hardships** to **enter** the kingdom of God,” they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas **appointed** elders for them in each church and, with **prayer** and **fasting**, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Key points

- These opponents were not content to kick Paul out of their own region ([Acts 14:5-6](#)); travelled miles to follow Paul and brought their persecution with them.
- These dedicated adversaries incited the people of Lystra against Paul and Barnabas, and instigated the stoning of Paul.
- Paul was miraculously preserved here. 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 might have referred to this stoning in [2 Corinthians 11:25](#).
- When Paul was revived, he did not flee the city that stoned him. Instead he immediately went back into it. He continued to preach the gospel in Derbe.

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Key points

So why did Paul invest precious time and energy in going back, over and over?

Because Paul understood that Christ’s mission is about **making disciples—not mere converts—from all nations.**

Acts 14:26-28

²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the **grace of God** for the work they had now completed.

²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and **reported** all that God had done through them and how he had opened a **door of faith to the Gentiles**. ²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Key points

- **God's grace:** He could use the opposition of unbelieving Jews to propel the gospel from one city to another. He used the apostles' escapes (sneaking out of sight and the cities, Acts 9:24-25; 14:6), and even the stoning and misdiagnosed "death" of Paul, outside the gates of Lystra (Acts 14:19-20)
- His **power** enabled the disciples to persevere in the ministry
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When opposition grows, do Christians stay or go?

Verses 1-7

- ² But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.
Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, v3
- But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷ where they continued to preach the gospel v6,7

Christ do not run willfully into the hands of their enemies to be slaughtered (unnecessarily),
and yet they do not abandon their duty out of fear

In other words, we ought to pursue the course of action we think will best serve the cause of the gospel.

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Marks of an evangelist

- **Stay** on boldly for the gospel
- **Fled** for the purpose of the gospel
- **Connect** relevantly to his different audience with the gospel
- **Faithful** to the gospel will inevitably result in hardship
- **Strengthening** disciples of the gospel (encouragement, appointing elders, fasting & prayers)

This letter that Luke is writing, was written first of all to a man by the name of Theophilus and he wants him to know the focus now shifts from 'Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria' to 'the ends of the earth (1:8); from Peter (and the Jerusalem apostles) to Paul; from mission to the Jews to mission to the Gentiles.

How would Theophilus have been encouraged by reading of God's grace and power through Paul's first missionary journey?

How would you be encouraged too?