

ACTS

*The
Early
Church*

Acts 14:8-18

In Lystra and Derbe

⁸ In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. ¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. 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.” ¹⁸ Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Review 14:8-18.

- After the attempt to stone them, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Lystra, another city in Lycaonia, where Paul was once again the conduit in a healing. Scripture says the man didn't just get up, he "jumped up."
- The locals were so awed by the miracle that they mistook Paul and Barnabas for Greek gods and quickly tried to honor them as such. Paul and Barnabas were quick to assure them they were just men, and only God is God.
- ❖ What did Paul see in the man that prompted the healing?
- ❖ Why did the people of Lystra call Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes?"
- ❖ What lesson can we learn about spiritual leadership from this incident?
- ❖ According to **14:17**, what earthly witnesses does God provide for all of humanity?
- ❖ In what ways can Christians today fall into the same trap as the people of Lystra?

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.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

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.

Review 14:19-23.

- What a turnabout! First the people of Lystra were desperately trying to treat Paul and Barnabas like gods. Then, a couple of verses later, the same crowds were persuaded by Jews, who had followed Paul and Barnabas from their last preaching engagements at Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, to stone Paul.
- ❖ What does **14:20** say happened when the disciples gathered about him? What do you think that means?
- We don't know whether Paul was killed and raised to life again or just miraculously sustained during this stoning. Some theologians suspect the heavenly vision Paul described in **2 Corinthians 12** took place here.
- In any case, when Paul rose up, he didn't give up and go home. He and Barnabas went to Derbe, then *returned* to Lystra, where he had been stoned. The Holy Spirit had given him immense boldness.
- ❖ After Paul strengthened and encouraged the believers in **14:22**, what did he say?
 - A. God will never ask us to suffer.
 - B. The Christian walk may include a bit of tribulation.
 - C. We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.
- ❖ Does this match your expectation of the Christian life? Explain.

Review 14:19-23.

- ❖ Based on what happened to Paul right before this, what might Paul have looked like physically? What impact do you think that might have had on his listeners?
- It's tempting sometimes to believe the most impactful witness to others would be a life of blessing. Throughout the Gospels, however, we see suffering for the good news often served as a catalyst to others coming to faith.
- Paul and Barnabas not only revisited these high-tension places but remained there long enough to strengthen the churches so they could thrive in their absence and do so with wisdom and discernment.
- They appointed elders, and this is the first time we see mention of this practice in Acts. These elders were local leaders who could serve as shepherds in these local flocks.
- Note that just when Paul and Barnabas were appointed and sent off at the beginning of their journey, these elders were appointed and committed here with both prayer and fasting.

Acts 14:24-28

²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

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.

Review 14:24-28.

- At the end of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned home to their sending church at Syrian Antioch.
- ❖ What did they declare had been opened to the Gentiles?
- ❖ What does this passage reveal about the role of the local church in missions?
- ❖ When you look back on a recent success or completed project (at work, in your family, or in your ministry), do you tend to focus on *your own hard work* or on the “*open door*” God provided?
- ❖ In **14:26**, we see that Paul and Barnabas returned to the specific church where they had been “committed to the grace of God.” Who are the people in your life who have invested their prayers and support into your growth, and do you make it a priority to return to them to share what God is doing?