

Book of Acts

Chapter 14

Paul's First Missionary Journey

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GALATIAN COUNTRY

McGee Introduction: Now in chapter 14 Paul and Barnabas face the almost impenetrable paganism of Galatia. I personally believe that the Galatian field was the hardest mission field that Paul ever entered. You need only to read the Epistle to the Galatians to discover that. Galatians was the harshest epistle that Paul wrote. He wrote it to a group of people who had a spiritual bent in the wrong direction. They were constantly going off the track. He visited those churches more than any others.

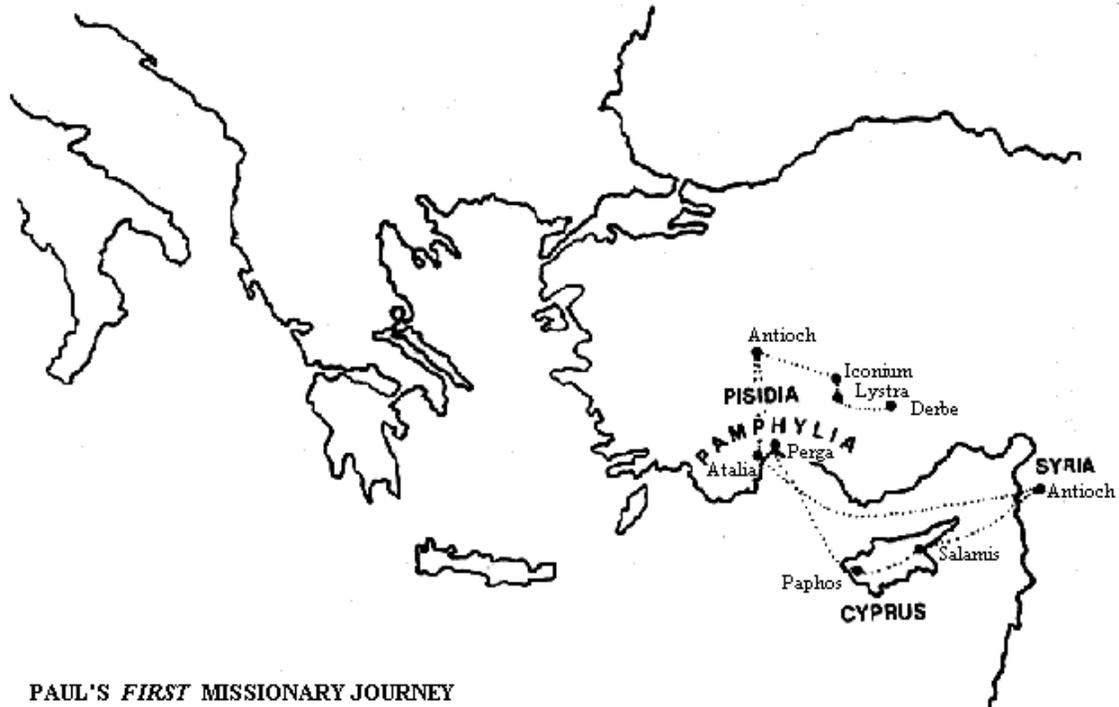
Let me give you this brief background of the Galatian country which Paul is entering on this first missionary journey. The people for whom the province was named were Gauls, a Celtic tribe from the same stock which inhabited France. In the fourth century & they invaded the Roman Empire and sacked Rome. Later they crossed into Greece and captured Delphi in 280 B.C. At the invitation of Nikomedes I, King of Bithynia, they crossed over into Asia Minor to help him in a civil war. They were a warlike people and soon established themselves in Asia Minor. In 189 B.C. they were made subjects of the Roman Empire and became a province. Their boundaries varied, and for many years they retained their customs and language. The churches which Paul established on this first missionary journey were included at one time in the territory of Galatia, so this is the name which Paul would normally give to these churches.

The people were blond orientals. These Gallic Celts had much of the same temperament and characteristics of the majority of the American population, which came out of that same stock in Europe and the British Isles. Caesar had this to say of them: “The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted.” Another writer of that period described them as “frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, fond of show, but extremely inconstant, the fruit of excessive vanity.” Paul wrote them a very harsh letter because they needed that kind of letter. The majority of the people in the United States are like them. That is the reason so many cults and “isms” have begun in this country. We are a fickle people. One day we follow one leader, and the next day we follow someone else. It is amazing to watch the polls of our political candidates. If they make one statement, one slip of the tongue, the entire population shifts from them to someone else. We are a fickle people—very much like the Galatians.¹

All of this should make this section especially interesting to us. Martin Luther used the Epistle to the Galatians for the Reformation because it was written to folk who are like we are.²

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:570). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:571). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



If you follow the journey on a map, you will notice that they crossed over the length of the island of Cyprus, and then sailed to Perga in Pamphylia. Then they traveled up into the country of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These are the cities of Galatia. So they are now in the heartland of Asia Minor.

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.

“A great multitude believed”: Luke gives us fruits only from here on... Spoke with such power and demonstration of the Spirit that many Jews and Gentiles became Christians (1 Cor. 2:1-4).

“Disbelieving (unpersuadable) Jews...”

In Iconium. Acts 13:51. In this place it appears that Timothy became acquainted with Paul and his manner of life, 2 Timothy 3:10,11.

BBC: 1-4. Although Iconium was a wealthy and prosperous town, it was hardly the size of a city like Ephesus or Smyrna. Whereas urban culture in the empire tended to be uniformly Greco-Roman, rural society preserved local language and customs, and a town like Iconium would have its share of both. Traveling teachers would undoubtedly have

drawn more attention in a town like Iconium than in larger cities. Because the native language of Iconium was Phrygian, Paul and Barnabas may address mainly the Greek-speaking upper social strata, or they may speak through interpreters (cf. Acts 14:11, 14); but it is more likely that most of the crowd understands Greek, even if it is not their first language.

Among the deities that the Gentiles of Iconium worshiped, the most prominent was Cybele, the Phrygian mother goddess; Phrygian mystery cults were also common. But inscriptions testify that the Christian faith spread and Iconium later became a major center of Christianity in Asia Minor.³



Barnabas and Paul first visited Barnabas's home region of Cyprus before sailing to the southern region of Asia Minor. When they reached Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Making their way to Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas were driven out of each city by jealous Jewish religious leaders. Later they returned by the same route, strengthening the new churches as they went. From Attalia they set sail for their home in Antioch of Syria.

JNTC: The same thing happened in Iconium as in Pisidian Antioch (see 13:46); it became a pattern. Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba preach in the synagogue, winning Jews and Gentiles to Yeshua. This brings about opposition from unbelieving Jews, who stir up the unbelieving Gentiles. So long as the challenge is nonviolent, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba stay

³ Bible Background Commentary: New Testament

on to meet it, and the Holy Spirit confirms the Word with signs following (v. 3, Mk 16:20). They show themselves brave (v. 3), prudent (vv. 5–6) and singleminded in spreading the Good News (v. 7); while the division among the people of the city proves good for the Gospel (v. 4, Yn 7:43N).⁴

Acts 14:2

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

[**evil affected against the brethren**] Embittered or poisoned the unbelievers against the Christians.

Barnes: And made their minds evil affected. Irritated, or exasperated them. Against the brethren. One of the common appellations by which Christians were known.⁵

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.

When they encountered resistance they spent MORE time there. Possibly in Iconium 6 months.

Clarke: Long time therefore abode they—Because they had great success, therefore they continued a long time, gaining many converts, and building up those who had believed, in their most holy faith; notwithstanding the opposition they met with, both from the unbelieving Jews and heathens.⁶

[**boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace**] They had great liberty of speech.

[**granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands**] God confirmed the Word to convince the heathen that He was backing these preachers (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 4:30; Acts 19:11; Romans 15:18-29).

Barnes: Which gave testimony. Bore witness to the truth of their message by working miracles, etc. Comp. Mark 16:20. This was evidently *the Lord Jesus* to whom reference is here made; and it shows that he was still, though bodily absent from them, clothed with power, and still displayed that power in the advancement of his cause. The conversion of

⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

sinners accomplished by him is always a *testimony* as decided as it is cheering to the labours and messages of his servants.

LAN: 3-4 We may wish we could perform a miraculous act that would convince everyone once and for all that Jesus is the Lord. But we see here that even if we could perform a miracle, it wouldn't convince everyone. God gave these men power to do great wonders as confirmation of the message of grace, but people were still divided. Don't spend your time and energy wishing for miracles. Sow your seeds of Good News on the best ground you can find in the best way you can, and leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.⁷

God, Grace—Grace is that unmerited favor of God extended to people. Usually it is thought of as His blessing in redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and the new life of conversion. It is used in v. 26 to describe the blessing of God in keeping and using His servants in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. In both cases the grace of God is intimately bound up with God's intention to bring salvation to lost people.⁸

Miracle, Instruments—While Paul and Barnabas preached, the Lord verified the preaching by giving signs and wonders. Here is one of the clearest statements of explanation for the miracles—not to mystify, but to testify.

Acts 14:4

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

Gospel is intended to be divisive (Mt 10:34).
Apostles? See v. 14.

Clarke: The multitude of the city was divided—The Jews treated the apostles as false teachers, and their miracles as impositions; and many of the people held with them: while the others, who had not hardened their hearts against the truth, felt the force of it; and, being without prejudice, could easily discern the miracles to be the work of God, and therefore held with the apostles.

Barnes: And part held with the Jews. Held to the doctrines of the Jews, in opposition to the apostles. A revival of religion may produce excitement by the bad passions of opposers. The enemies of the truth may form parties, and organize opposition. It is no uncommon thing even now for such parties to be formed; but the fault is not in Christianity. It lies with those who form a party *against* religion, and who confederate themselves, as was done here, to oppose it.

⁷ Life Application Notes

⁸ Disciple's Study Bible Notes

ESV: Both Paul and Barnabas are referred to as **apostles** (vv. 4 and 14). The word (Gk. *apostolos*) carries the general meaning of “one who is sent” but it is often used throughout the NT in a more technical term for someone specifically chosen and commissioned by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel, as in the case of the original 12 apostles (e.g., Matt. 10:2; 19:28; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:1; Acts 1:2, 15–26). The apostle Paul understood his calling as an apostle to be comparable to the calling of the original Twelve in this technical sense, that is, as one who had seen Christ and who had been specifically chosen and appointed by Christ. This was based on the fact that Paul, on the road to Damascus, had in fact personally seen the risen Christ and had been chosen by Christ (9:15), and that he had been appointed by Christ and sent by Christ (26:16–17) to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. (See also Paul's defense of his apostolic calling in 1 Cor. 9:2; 15:7–9; and Gal. 1:1, 12, 16.) Commentators differ as to whether the word “apostles” in Acts 14:4 and 14 refers to Paul and Barnabas as being apostles in the same technical sense as the original Twelve, or whether this is intended in the general sense of “ones who are sent” (cf. 13:2–3, where Paul and Barnabas are “set apart” by the Holy Spirit and “sent . . . off” by the church in Antioch).

Plot against the apostles (14:4-6)

Paul and Barnabas preach effectively in Iconium and God performs miraculous wonders through them. Nonetheless, the population of the city remains divided about them. "Some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles" (14:4). Because of the support Paul and Barnabas receive, it takes a long time for any serious opposition to develop. But eventually the Jews are able to hatch a plot with some of the townsfolk and political leaders of Iconium. Apparently, the Jews intend to gather a mob, beat up Paul and Barnabas, and stone them to death (13:5).

The missionaries are informed of the plot, perhaps by sympathetic Jews who accept the gospel. The apostles leave the city before the plotters can capture them (14:4). Verses 4 and 14 contain the only reference in Acts to Paul being an apostle. This may seem odd in view of the fact that Paul often stresses his apostleship. (See the first verse of many of his letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.)

Apparently, Luke restricts his use of the term "apostle" as a special "office" to the Twelve. They are the ones who were with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry and who are witnesses of his resurrection (1:21-25; 10:39-42). Luke probably thinks of Paul and Barnabas as "apostles" only in a general sense, as special emissaries, envoys, or messengers commissioned by the church at Antioch (13:3-4), and in this sense were apostles, or people "sent out."

Paul himself uses the word *apostle* in a broad sense of a person who is given the responsibility of being a messenger, but who doesn't hold a special office. He says that Epaphroditus, a co-worker, was, "My brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger [Greek, *apostolon*]" (Philippians 2:25).⁹

⁹ <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts14.htm>

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,

An attempt to discredit them and accuse them of sedition so they could be stoned.

Under law, city magistrates could do whatever necessary to quell disturbances; in the case of Paul and Barnabas, the officials could quell the disturbance simply by legally banning them from the city. Thus the plot to kill them goes beyond the law.

BKC: 5-6. When Paul and Barnabas learned of **a plot . . . to mistreat . . . and stone them, they fled to . . . Lystra and Derbe**, cities of Lycaonia. Luke's accuracy as a historian has been vindicated here. Though Iconium was also a **Lycaonian** city its citizens were primarily Phrygian. In location and nature Lystra and Derbe were Lycaonian (cf. "Lycaonian language," v. 11).¹⁰

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:

There might not have been a synagogue at Lystra as they start out right away to preach the gospel.

Lystra: 20 miles to the South.

Derbe: 60 miles to the East of Iconium.

Lycaonia - a wide district of Asia Minor, lying between Phrygia, Cilicia, and Cappadocia.

[ware] Aware. They were informed of the plot to stone them so they fled, not from fear, but to live to continue the work (Matthew 10:23).

[Lystra and Derbe] At Iconium the inhabitants consisted of Greeks, a powerful Jewish colony, Roman officials, and a few natives of the country, but the inhabitants of Lystra and Derbe were mainly rude idolaters who were natives. Hence, the difference in the reception of the apostles in the different places.

Clarke: They were ware of it—They were informed of the scheme, and of the attempt that was about to be made, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe; they did not leave the province of Lycaonia, but went to other towns and cities. Lystra lay to the south and Derbe to the north of Iconium, according to the general opinion. Strabo, Geogr. lib. xii., tells us expressly, that Iconium was within Lycaonia, Thence are the Lycaonian hills plain, cold, naked, and pastures for wild asses. About these places stands Iconium, a town built in a better soil. Ptolemy also, Tab. Asiae, i. cap. 6, places Iconium in Lycaonia. How

cf. *confer*, compare
v. verse

¹⁰Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:391). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

comes it, then, that St. Luke does not call Iconium a city of Lycaonia, as well as Derbe and Lystra? Pliny, Hist. Nat. lib. v. cap. 27, solves this difficulty, by stating, that there was granted a tetrarchy out of Lycaonia, on that side which borders upon Galatia, consisting of fourteen cities; the most famous of which is Iconium. See Lightfoot.

Barnes: Cities of Lycaonia. Lycaonia was one of the provinces of Asia Minor. It had Galatia north, Pisidia south, Cappadocia east, and Phrygia west. It was formerly within the limits of Phrygia, but was erected into a separate province by Augustus.

BBC: 6-7. Iconium was in Phrygia near the border of Lycaonia, which contained Lystra and Derbe. Some people considered flight undignified, but Jewish teachers preferred it to death, unless flight required denying the law of God.

LAN: Iconium (Acts 14:1), Lystra, and Derbe were three cities Paul visited in the southern part of the region of Galatia. Paul probably wrote a letter to these churches—the letter to the Galatians—because many Jewish Christians were claiming that non-Jewish Christians couldn't be saved unless they followed Jewish laws and customs. Paul's letter refuted this and brought the believers back to a right understanding of faith in Jesus (see Galatians 3:3, 5). Paul may have written his letter soon after leaving the region (see the note on Acts 14:28).

Acts 14:7

And there they preached the gospel.

Clarke: And there they preached the Gospel—

Some MSS. of considerable note add here, and all the people were moved at their preaching, but Paul and Barnabas tarried at Lystra.

Because they didn't get a very good reception in Iconium, they fled to Lystra and Derbe. However, we know that they came back through Iconium so there must have been some believers there.

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 Savior's love.

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:

Barnes: And there sat. There dwelt, Matthew 9:1-6, Acts 18:11. (*Margin.*) The word *sat*, however, indicates his usual posture; his helpless condition. Such persons commonly sat at the wayside, or in some public place, to ask for alms, Mark 10:46.

Barnes: Who never had walked. The miracle, therefore, would be more remarkable, as the man would be well known, and there could be no plea that there was an imposition. As they were persecuted from place to place, and opposed in every manner, it was desirable that a signal miracle should be performed to carry forward and establish the work of the gospel.

BBC: For half a century Lystra had been a Roman colony; its own citizens were accorded privileges as citizens of Rome. It emphasized its local culture and its Roman character alongside Pisidian Antioch and against the Greek cities of the region.

Although some philosophers lectured in halls or served wealthy patrons, most preached their philosophical wares on street corners or in marketplaces; powerful speakers like Dio Chrysostom criticized philosophers like Epictetus who reserved their lectures for the classroom. Like an ancient philosopher, Paul here preaches on the street rather than in a synagogue (perhaps Lystra has none; see Acts 14:19). Paul's approach should not surprise us; his own letters indicate that he shares some of this philosophical ideal (1 Cor. 4:11-13), and he often uses the Cynic-Stoic preaching style in them. What is surprising is not that Paul would occasionally preach this way but that he draws such a vigorous response; perhaps the controversy his opponents create helps him. Secluded philosophers tended toward academic discourse, while those on the streets were ready to denounce the folly of their hearers to secure their attention.

JNTC: A new situation: how to preach to thoroughgoing pagans, Gentiles who are in no sense "God-fearers" (10:2&N)? They acknowledge the miracle of vv. 8–10 but attribute it neither to God, of whom they know nothing, nor to the Adversary, Satan, as did some *P.rushim* with Yeshua (Mt 12:24), but to false gods. Sha'ul's solution is (1) to identify God as the source of blessings they have experienced, (2) to point out that for this reason he is to be worshipped, and (3) to note the passing of the age in which the Gentiles were free to walk in their own ways (see Micah 4:5), implying that now they too must turn to God. Compare 17:22b–31&N.¹¹

Acts 14:9

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

Clarke: That he had faith to be healed—How did this faith come to this poor heathen? Why, by hearing the word of God preached: for it is said, the same heard Paul speak. And it appears that he credited the doctrine he heard, and believed that Jesus could, if he would, make him whole. Besides, he must have heard of the miracles which the apostles had wrought, see Acts 14:3; and this would raise his expectation of receiving a cure.

¹¹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:8). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

[perceiving that he had faith to be healed] He discerned he believed the gospel and had faith to be healed.

Paul Had All Gifts of the Spirit(Dake):

1. Word of wisdom (1 Cor. 2:7; Ephes. 1:8; Col. 1:28; 1 Cor. 12:1,7)
2. Word of knowledge (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Cor. 11:6; 1 Cor. 12:1,7; Ephes. 3:4; 2 Peter 3:18)
3. Faith (1 Cor. 13:2; 2 Cor. 4:13; Galatians 2:20; Ephes. 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:7)
4. Gifts of healing (Acts 14:3,10; Acts 15:12; Acts 19:11; Romans 15:18-29)
5. Working of miracles (Acts 19:11)
6. Prophecy (1 Cor. 13:2; 1 Cor. 14:3; 1 Tim. 1:18; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 6; 2 Peter 3:18)
7. Discerning of spirits (Acts 13:10; Acts 14:9; Acts 16:18; 1 Cor. 13:2)
8. Tongues (1 Cor. 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:18)
9. Interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 14:13-16)¹²

Paul had "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:29)

BBC: 9-11. Local Phrygian legend told of an ancient visitation by Zeus and Hermes to Phrygia. In the story only one couple, Baucis and Philemon, received them graciously; the rest of the population was destroyed in a flood. Knowing some form of the story in their own language, the Lycaonians are not about to make the same mistake ancient Phrygia had made; they want to honor Paul and Barnabas, whom they mistake for gods. People sometimes considered miracle workers as gods.

BKC9-10. Paul's healing of this infirm man closely parallels Peter's healing in chapter 3. In each case the cripple was lame from birth (3:2; 14:8); both Peter and **Paul** gazed at the one **to be healed** (3:4; 14:9); and both healed men responded by jumping and walking (3:8; 14:10). This shows Paul was equal to Peter in his apostleship (cf. *Introduction*).¹³ **seeing that he had faith to be made well.** The Holy Spirit gave Paul the ability somehow to see what was happening in the invisible, spiritual realm.

Acts 14:10

Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Physical, emotional or spiritually lame: You are held in bondage until you begin to obey the Word of God about it..

[leaped and walked] This is a normal New Testament healing, the kind that Jesus Christ and the early church produced (Matthew 13:58; Acts 3:6-9; Acts 5:16; Acts 6:8; Acts 8:7; Acts 9:18,34; Acts 19:11).

McGee: As we have seen, 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.

¹² Dake Study Bible, Dake's Study Notes

cf. *confer*, compare

¹³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:391). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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. If only we could get people to do that!

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.

The people at Lystra were looking to Paul and Barnabas.¹⁴

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 speech of Lycaonia] This was not the Greek language. What kind it was is not known to us today. "The Lycaonian language" may refer to their local dialect.

[The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men] Regardless of how low heathen rated the divine nature they still held it to be different from that of man. They imagined that many times gods would take the form of man to punish evil or reward good deeds. These natives were no doubt familiar with the legends that Jupiter and Mercury made a visit to an aged couple, Philemon and Baucis, in the neighboring province of Phrygia, and that they were supposed to have come down to visit Lycaon, from whence the Lycaonians derived their name. In the works of Ovid, Homer, Virgil, and other poets there are many such visitations described. These no doubt are corruptions of the many angelic appearances to men recorded in Scripture. Jupiter and Mercury were the gods that were supposed to visit men more than others. Jupiter is pictured as large and aged,

¹⁴McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:571). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

and Mercury as small, young, and eloquent of speech. Paul and Barnabas resembling them, together with the healing, all the more convinced the natives of another visit from the gods.¹⁵

Clarke: Saying, in the speech of Lycaonia—What this language was has puzzled the learned not a little. Calmet thinks it was a corrupt Greek dialect; as Greek was the general language of Asia Minor. Mr. Paul Ernest Jablonski, who has written a dissertation expressly on the subject, thinks it was the same language with that of the Cappadocians, which was mingled with Syriac. That it was no dialect of the Greek must be evident from the circumstance of its being here distinguished from it. We have sufficient proofs from ancient authors that most of these provinces used different languages; and it is correctly remarked, by Dr. Lightfoot, that the Carians, who dwelt much nearer Greece than the Lycaonians, are called by Homer, βαρβαροφωνοι, people of a barbarous or strange language; and Pausanias also called them Barbari. That the language of Pisidia was distinct from the Greek we have already seen, note on Acts 13:15. We have no light to determine this point; and every search after the language of Lycaonia must be, at this distance of time, fruitless.

Barnes: They lifted up their voices. They spoke with astonishment, such as might be expected when it was supposed that the gods had come down.

LAN: 11-12 Zeus and Hermes (also known as Jupiter and Mercury) were two popular gods in the Roman world. People from Lystra claimed that these gods had once visited their city. According to legend, no one offered them hospitality except an old couple, so Zeus and Hermes killed the rest of the people and rewarded the old couple. When the citizens of Lystra saw the miracles of Paul and Barnabas, they assumed that the gods were revisiting them. Remembering the story of what had happened to the previous citizens, they immediately honored Paul and Barnabas and showered them with gifts.

BSB: The word “gods” properly is not capitalized here. In the first century there were relatively few thinking atheists who denounced the idea of deities and religions; rather, almost all peoples espoused one or more of the “gods” and then lived immorally, often justifying immorality in the name of their religion. They identified Barnabas with Jupiter, and Paul with Mercury (v. 12). Very likely this was because Barnabas was Paul’s senior, and probably he was larger physically. Furthermore, the temple of Jupiter was in this city, and the people worshipped Jupiter devotedly. In mythology, Mercury was subordinate to Jupiter and carried messages for him; he was the more eloquent of the two. Paul was the chief speaker, and the name Mercury was appropriate for him. In Greek mythology the names of these two gods were Zeus and Hermes. The apostles’ radical efforts to convince the multitude that they were not gods is comparable to the action of Simon Peter in 10:26, where he verbally restrained Cornelius from bowing to him.¹⁶

¹⁵ Dake Study Bible, Dake’s Study Notes

¹⁶ Believer’s Study Bible Notes

Acts 14:12

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

This area carried the legend that Jupiter and Mercury had descended to this area.

Jupiter (Roman), **Zeus** (Greek): father of the gods, tall and dignified.

Mercury (Roman), **Hermes** (Greek): (winged feet..) Attendant and messenger of Jupiter: spokesman.

[Ovid: legend that temple erected at Lystra in memory that Jupiter and Mercury had descended there long before...]

They called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius—The heathens supposed that Jupiter and Mercury were the gods who most frequently assumed the human form; and Jupiter was accustomed to take Mercury with him on such expeditions. Jupiter was the supreme god of the heathens; and Mercury was by them considered the god of eloquence.

Barnes: And they called Barnabas, Jupiter. Jupiter was represented as the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on Mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Ammon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. His common appellation was, the father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and everything was subservient to his will, except the fates. There is the most abundant proof that he was worshipped in the region of Lycaonia, and throughout Asia Minor. There was, besides, a fable among the inhabitants of Lycaonia that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited that place, and had been received by Philemon. The whole fable is related by Ovid, (Metam. 8, 611, etc.)

BBC: Hermes was the messenger of the Olympian gods who spoke for the more dignified Zeus (though in other stories Zeus was less dignified and out chasing women or occasionally boys for his sexual delights). Like most early Jewish and Christian writers (cf. also Isaiah 46:5-7), Luke is not above making fun of paganism's stupidity.

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.

[**before their city**] In front of the city gate stood a temple of Jupiter and his priest started to make a sacrifice to the apostles. It was customary for the poor and lame to sit near the doors of synagogues and temples to ask alms. Here is perhaps where the man was healed.

Clarke: Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city—There is a meaning here, which ordinary readers will not readily apprehend. Many cities were put under the protection of a particular deity; and the image of that deity placed at the entrance, to signify that he was the guardian and protector. To this St. Luke, every where as accurate as he is circumstantial, refers. Lystra, it appears, was under the guardianship of Jupiter Propulaius,

[garlands] Garlands of flowers were placed on the horns of animals to be sacrificed or on the idols at the place of sacrifice.

McGee: Paul is the leader of the team, the chief speaker, and the people want to make them gods. They bring garlands and sacrifice and are ready to worship them. Fickle! Does it remind you of someone else? In America it is a baseball player one year, then a politician, then a football star, then another politician. By the following year they are all forgotten, and it is someone else new. It is the same way with the preachers. One can preach the Word of God and everyone will acclaim him as a wonderful preacher. Then the next day they are ready to crucify him.¹⁷

Acts 14:14

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

“Tore their clothes” - classic Jewish way of showing grief, or upset.

As an expression of their abhorrence of what they were doing, and of their deep grief that they should thus debase themselves by offering worship to men. Matthew 26:65.

Which when the apostles. Barnabas is called an apostle because he was sent forth by the church on a particular message, Acts 13:3; comp. Acts 14:26; not because he had been chosen to the peculiar work of the apostleship—to bear witness to the life and resurrection of Christ. Acts 1:22

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:

“Vanities” - expressive name for idols of every sort (Ps 146:6).

[vanities] Greek: *mataios* (GSN-3152), vain things. Only here; 1 Cor. 3:20; 1 Cor. 15:17; Titus 3:9; James 1:26; 1 Peter 1:18.

¹⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:572). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul's 2 points:

- 1) creation = one "living God..."
- 2) free choice = allows evil...

[why do ye these things?] This is question number 46 in the Book of Acts. The next question is in Acts 15:10.

[like passions with you] We are only human beings as you are.

[preach unto you] Five main points of Paul's sermon:

1. Be converted—turn from idols (Acts 14:15).
2. Turn to the living God (Acts 14:15).
3. God created all things (Acts 14:15).
4. God is longsuffering to sinners (Acts 14:16).
5. The providence of God (Acts 14:17).

This was bold preaching in the face of a heathen mob intent on performing superstitious worship which they considered to be a divine and civil necessity. This made the mob an easy prey to the Jews who appeared on the scene at this point and stirred up the people to stone the apostles (Acts 14:19-20).

[living God] Used fifteen times in the Old Testament (Deut. 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26,36; 2 Kings 19:4,16; Psalm 42:2; Psalm 84:2; Isaiah 37:4,17; Jeremiah 10:10; Jeremiah 23:36; Daniel 6:20,26; Hosea 1:10) and 16 times in the New Testament (Matthew 16:16; Matthew 26:63; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; Romans 9:26; 2 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Thes. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Tim. 6:17; Hebrews 3:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:31; Hebrews 12:22; Rev. 7:2). The term "the living Father" is used once (John 6:57). All these passages contrast with lifeless idols.¹⁸

Clarke: That ye should turn from these vanities—That is, from these idols and false gods. How often false gods and idolatry are termed vanity in the Scriptures, no careful reader of the Bible needs to be told. What a bold saying was this in the presence of a heathen mob, intent on performing an act of their superstitious worship, in which they no doubt thought the safety of the state was concerned.

Barnes; Of like passions with you. We are men like yourselves. We have no claim, no pretensions to anything more. The word "passions" here means simply that they had the common feelings and propensities of men; we have the nature of men; the affections of men. It does not mean that they were subject to any improper *passions*, to ill temper, etc., as some have supposed; but that they did not pretend to be gods, We need food and drink; we are exposed to pain and sickness, and death." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "We are *mortal* like yourselves." The expression stands opposed to the proper conception of God, who is not subject to these affections, who is most blessed and immortal. Such a Being only is to be worshipped; and the apostles remonstrated strongly with them on Comp. James 5:17, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are," etc.

¹⁸ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Barnes: **That ye should turn from these vanities.** That you should cease to worship idols. Idols are often called vanities, or vain things, Deuteronomy 32:21, 2 Kings 17:15, 1 Kings 16:13,26; Jeremiah 2:5, 8:19, 10:8, Jonah 2:8. They are called *vanities*, and often a *lie*, or lying vanities, as opposed to the living and true God, because they are *unreal*, because they have no power to help, because confidence in them is vain.

BBC: 15-16. Although using biblical language, Barnabas and Paul preach to these Anatolian farmers in terms they would not need to know the Bible to understand, emphasizing the God who rules nature, who was already recognized by paganism. Jewish people often pointed to pagan philosophical teachings on the supreme god, which Jews felt contradicted the pagan worship of idols. Jews called idols “vain” (futile), in contrast to the “living” God. Jewish people believed that God allowed a lower moral standard for Gentiles, who had only seven laws to keep; but idolatry, like sexual immorality, was not an issue on which God would permit compromise.

LAN: 15-18 Responding to the people of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas reminded them that God never leaves himself “without testimony.” Rain and crops, for example, are evidence of his goodness. Later Paul wrote that this evidence in nature leaves people without an excuse for unbelief (Romans 1:20). When in doubt about God, look around and you will see abundant evidence that he is at work in our world.

BKC: 15-18. This message, evidently preached by both apostles (pl. verb in the Gr.) is another sample sermon. It illustrates how these early preachers approached superstitious heathen. By contrast, the first of Paul’s messages demonstrated how he preached to those well acquainted with the Old Testament (cf. 13:16-41).

After disclaiming their own deity, they urged their hearers **to turn from** their cultic gods **to the** *one* true and **living God**. This God, Creator of all, is therefore supreme over all (cf. 17:24; Rom. 1:19-20). He is recognizable not only from His creating **rain** and **crops** but also by His beneficial providence in giving **food** and **joy**.

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. comments on 17:27, 30 and Rom. 1:18-20).

(2) The stoning of Paul. 14:19-20a. Once again some **Jews** proved to be enemies of the gospel of grace, and turned **the crowd**, which had just tried to make Paul and Barnabas gods, against them so **they stoned Paul**. This is the second of five times a crowd was incited because of Paul’s ministry (cf. 13:50; 16:19-22; 17:5-8, 13; 19:25-34). 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. The

pl. plural
Gr. Greek
cf. *confer*, compare
i.e. *id est*, that is

reference to Paul's stoning (2 Cor. 11:25) undoubtedly had this incident in view (cf. 2 Tim. 3:11).¹⁹

Acts 14:16

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

[times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways] God tolerated past ignorance, but now He demands men to repent (Acts 17:30).

McGee: Paul and Barnabas are not only startled and amazed that these people want to worship them, but they are completely shocked. They rush in among them, shouting, "We are human beings like you are!" You will remember that Peter had to say the same thing to Cornelius when Cornelius bowed down to him to worship him.

Certainly none of us is to bow down to worship any man. A Christian is not to be so obsequious that he gets down to lick the boots of anyone. Unfortunately, even in Christian work, we find some people who want others to bow to them. How tragic that is.²⁰

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.

Rain is very scarce in Lycaonia.

Phrygia was fertile, and Phrygians especially worshiped the mother goddess who was supposed to provide fertility to the earth. Various philosophers, especially Stoics, believed that nature itself testified to the character of the supreme god. Jewish teachers agreed that nature testifies to God's character (this is biblical; cf. Psalm 19:1; Psalm 89:37) and taught that he provides all peoples with health, food and so forth.

ESV: rains . . . and fruitful seasons. Paul tells these Gentiles who had no knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures that their regular harvests, the **food** they eat every day, and the **gladness** they experience in the ordinary activities of life are all a **witness** from God of his existence, wisdom, and goodness. They should not think that these things "just happen" or that they are the work of some local deities, for they are from the one true God "who made the heaven and the earth" (v. 15). The themes of this short speech will be developed in the speech at Mars Hill (17:16–34). These are the two occasions where Paul speaks to Gentiles who worship idols.

¹⁹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:392). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:572). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Acts 14:18

And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

BBC: 18-20a. The visitors from Antioch had no legal authority outside their own territory, but they are able to persuade the mob to accomplish what had failed in Iconium (Acts 14:5-6). A mob could change its views quickly (cf. Luke 23:18), especially in a case like this one: when Paul and Barnabas deny the gods, they would be considered impious and hence would appear to fit a different category of ancient paganism: they were not gods after all, but dangerous magicians. (Whereas gods were popularly regarded as generally beneficent, sorcerers were viewed as secretive and usually harmful.) Antioch was nearly a hundred miles from Lystra by road, but it is known that the cities were in contact with each other, considering themselves sister cities. See Acts 7:58 for details on Jewish stoning, but stoning was also the most common form of urban mob violence in the Gentile world. Stones, tiles and cobbles were readily available in ancient streets. When Jewish crowds stoned a transgressor, they sought the transgressor's death; Paul's survival undoubtedly points to divine protection. Normally such executions were performed outside the city, and they may have dragged him out of the city for purity reasons; that he not only survived but could walk afterward must be understood as miraculous.

LAN: 18-19 Only days after the people in Lystra had thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods and wanted to offer sacrifices to them, they stoned Paul and left him for dead. That's human nature. Jesus understood how fickle crowds can be (John 2:24-25). When many people approve of us, we feel good, but that should never cloud our thinking or affect our decisions. We should not live to please the crowd—especially in our spiritual lives. Be like Jesus. Know the nature of the crowd and don't put your trust in it. Put your trust in God alone.

LAN: 18-20 Paul and Barnabas were persistent in their preaching of the Good News, considering the cost to themselves to be nothing in comparison with obedience to Christ. They had just narrowly escaped being stoned in Iconium (Acts 14:1-7), but Jews from Antioch and Iconium tracked Paul down, stoned him, and left him for dead. But Paul got up and went back into the city to preach the Good News. That's true commitment! Being a disciple of Christ calls for total commitment. As Christians, we no longer belong to ourselves but to our Lord, for whom we are called to suffer.

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.

Paul stoned: (20 years later: 2 Cor 11:25.)

[Out of body experience? 2 Cor 12:2-4.]

Bears marks: Gal 6:17.

[persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city] This is a clear demonstration of how fickle people can be.

Clarke: Supposing he had been dead—They did not leave stoning him till they had the fullest evidence that he was dead; and so, most probably, he was.

Barnes: And there came thither certain Jews. Not satisfied with having expelled them from Antioch and Iconium, they still pursued them. Persecutors often exhibit a zeal and perseverance in a bad cause, which it would be well if Christians evinced in a holy cause. Men will often travel farther to do evil than they will to do good; and many men show more zeal in opposing the gospel than professed Christians do in advancing it.

McGee: How amazing this is. Such fickle people! One day they are ready to worship Paul and Barnabas. as gods. The next day they stone Paul to death.

(How like Americans—we follow fads. One time it is the hula hoop. Then it is the miniskirt. We simply follow one fad after another.)

They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city “supposing he had been dead.” Do you think he was dead? I’ll tell you what I think. I think he was dead. Later Paul writes of the experience he had: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:2–4). Who was that man? It was Paul himself. “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12:7). I don’t think that crowd left him there half dead; I think they left him dead. I believe that God raised him from the dead.

Why would God permit this stoning? Galatians 6:7 tells us: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Paul reaped what he had sowed. He had ordered the stoning of Stephen. Maybe someone will object that now he is converted. Yes, but even after conversion we will reap whatsoever we have sown. This is a law of nature as well as a law operating in our lives. We shall reap whatever we sow. Because Saul took part in the stoning of Stephen, years later the same thing happened to him.²¹

JNTC: It is not clear whether the **unbelieving Jews** (see 9:22–23) in fact stoned Sha’ul to death, so that he actually arose from the dead, or only thought he was dead—in which case there is still an implied miracle of healing, for someone apparently dead would not normally be in condition to walk back to town.

²¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:572). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why did he go back? To prove that he could not be intimidated. The next day he did indeed leave, but on his own terms. Compare his similar behavior at 16:35–40.²²

Spurgeon: This is popularity--a god yesterday, and a criminal today; garlands first, stones afterwards. How fickle is man!

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.

Timotheus may have been among them (Re. 16:1-3)

[disciples stood round about him] The disciples no doubt prayed earnestly for Paul to be healed and so he was resurrected from the dead (Acts 14:19-20).

[rose up] Greek: *anistemi* (GSN-450), to stand up, rise again, and is used 111 times; 40 times of resurrection (Matthew 12:41; Matthew 17:9; Matthew 20:19; Mark 8:31; Mark 9:9,31; Mark 10:34; Mark 12:23-26; Luke 9:8,19; Luke 11:32; Luke 16:31; Luke 18:33; Luke 24:7,46; John 6:39-40,44,54; John 11:23-24; John 20:9; Acts 2:24,30,32; Acts 3:26; Acts 10:41; Acts 13:33-34; Acts 14:20; Acts 17:3,31; Romans 14:9; Romans 15:12; Ephes. 5:14; 1 Thes. 4:14,16). This goes far in showing that Paul was dead and resurrected here.

Clarke: The disciples stood round about him—No doubt in earnest prayer, entreating the Author of life that his soul might again return to its battered tenement.

Clarke: He rose up—Miraculously restored, not only to life, but to perfect soundness so that he was able to walk into the city, that his persecutors might see the mighty power of God in his restoration, and the faith of the young converts be confirmed in the truth and goodness of God. It is strange that neither the young converts at Lystra, nor Barnabas, were involved in this persecution! It seems to have had Paul alone for its object; and, when they thought they had despatched him, they did not think of injuring the rest.

McGee: This is miraculous. A man who has been stoned would be brutally wounded. Paul rose up, and the very next day he was able to travel. This is a miracle whether or not he was actually raised from the dead.²³

Spurgeon: The apostles had themselves endured much tribulation, and they very candidly assured the converts that they must expect the same. If we reckon upon a smooth path to heaven we deceive ourselves.

²²Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:19). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:573). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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,

In Derbe, the apostle gains a friend, companion, and fellow-helper: Gaius (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; 3 John 1).

Return via Lystra (20 miles)

Iconium (40 miles) and

Antioch (60 miles)

Rather than the quick (and safe) sea route home..

...confirming, exhorting, organizing...

[**taught**] Greek: *matheteuo* (GSN-3100), make disciples. Here; Matthew 13:52; Matthew 27:57; Matthew 28:19.

[**returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch**] This was Antioch, Syria (Acts 13:4).

Clarke: They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium—Behold the courage of these Christian men! They counted not their lives dear to them, and returned to do their Masters work in the very places in which they had been so grievously persecuted, and where one of them had been apparently stoned to death! The man who knows he is God's ambassador, and that his life depends on his fidelity to his Master, knows he has nothing but his God to fear.

Barnes: We have here a remarkable instance of the courage of the apostles. In these very places they had been persecuted and stoned, and yet in the face of danger they ventured to return, The welfare of the infant churches they deemed of more consequence than their own safety; and they threw themselves again into the midst of danger, to comfort and strengthen those just converted to God. There are times when ministers should not count their own lives dear to them, Acts 20:24, but when they should fearlessly throw themselves into the midst of danger, confiding only in the protecting care of their God and Saviour.

JNTC: Sha'ul's "follow-up work": (1) strengthening the new disciples, spiritually; (2) urging them to use that strength to hold fast to the faith; (3) giving fair warning of what to expect—troubles but also the Kingdom of God (see Mt 3:2N), so that it's all worth it. Finally, he (4) appointed **elders** (leaders; see 1 Ti 3:1–7&NN, 1 Ke 5:1–4&NN) to guide the young congregations; in order to do this he and Bar-Nabba retraced their steps.²⁴

Evangelism, Follow-Up—Evangelism includes helping people come to Christ and helping them grow spiritually in Him. A new convert is a babe in Christ (Heb 5:12-13).

²⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Converts need to be guided in the Christian maturation process (1 Pe 2:2). Paul did this as he revisited and established the new converts in the churches he founded. Several principles emerge in this context: New converts need to be strengthened. They face temptations to forsake the faith. They need leadership. They need to be involved in the ministry of the church. They need prayer and the fellowship of believers.²⁵

Church Leaders, Elder—In the absence of the apostles, local leaders provided stability and care for a church. In the newly founded churches, Paul and Barnabas appointed converts who had demonstrated spiritual maturity to assume responsibility for the churches they had started. They chose these leaders after prayer and fasting. This reveals that the leading of the Holy Spirit is essential in making such decisions. The early church apostles took initiative in selection of church leaders until the churches became strong enough to select their own leaders under God’s guidance.

ESV: Derbe, about 58 miles (93 km) southeast of Lystra, marked the farthest point in Paul’s first journey. The account is brief, noting only that Paul made a number of converts there. From **that city** (Derbe) Paul could have continued on south to his starting point of Syrian Antioch on foot, a much easier journey than backtracking through **Lystra**, **Iconium**, and Pisidian **Antioch** (see [map](#)). The decision to take this longer route shows the importance Paul attached to maintaining contact with his churches and establishing local elders. It also shows tremendous courage that he would return to the cities from which he had been driven by such violent opposition. Debates surround the exact location of ancient Derbe, but many associate it with the unexcavated mound of Kerti Hüyük since inscriptions mentioning Derbe were found in the area.

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.

[**Confirming**] Greek: *episterizo* (GSN-1991), to give one something to lean on; confirm (Acts 15:32,41; Acts 18:23).

[**continue**] Greek: *emmeno* (GSN-1696), abide in; stand by; continue in (Galatians 3:10; Hebrews 8:9).

Ten Things to Continue In (Dake):

1. Well doing (Romans 2:7)
2. Following the Lord (1 Samuel 12:14)
3. The Word of God (John 8:31)
4. Christ’s love (John 15:9; 1 Tim. 2:15)
5. The grace of God (Acts 13:43)
6. The faith (Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23)
7. God’s goodness (Romans 11:22)

²⁵ Disciple’s Study Bible Notes

8. Prayer (Col. 4:2)
9. Sound doctrines (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:14)
10. The Son and the Father (1 John 2:24)

If we do these things we are blessed and if not, then we are cursed. God cannot lay down the conditions upon which He will bless us, then ignore them and bless if the conditions are not met.

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.

[ordained] Greek: *cheirotoneo* (GSN-5500), chosen. Only here, 2 Cor. 8:19; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15. Not the same as in Acts 13:48. The idea is that of electing people to be elders. This was done by the local church. Here the apostles evidently had charge of the elections. It does not imply the laying on of hands to ordain in the sense we ordain ministers. This perhaps was done after the elections. The Greek word signifies the holding up or stretching out the hand, as approving the choice of one for a particular work.

[elders] Greek: *presbuteros* (GSN-4245), elder. The word "elders" in the Old Testament meant the heads or rulers of the tribes, cities, and nations (see note, [□]Deut. 1:13). In the Gospels and Acts it generally refers to the Sanhedrin (Matthew 15:2; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 21:23; Matthew 26:3; Acts 4:5,8,23). In the early church elders were the ministers and deacons, or preaching elders and business elders of the local churches (Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17,28; Acts 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). All apostles were elders (Acts 11:30; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1), but all elders were not apostles (Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; Acts 16:4). The elders of Acts 20:17, were the overseers of Acts 20:28. The elders of 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5-10; 1 Peter 5:1-2 were preaching elders or bishops. The business elders were deacons (Acts 6). Bishops and deacons are mentioned in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13. See notes, [□]Matthew 20:26-27; note, [□]Acts 20:28. The word *presbuteros* is also used of older men and women (Luke 15:25; John 8:9; Acts 17; Acts 4:22; 1 Tim. 5:2). It is used also of heavenly ranks (Rev. 4:4,10; Rev. 5:6,8,11,14; Rev. 7:11,13; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 19:4). It is found 68 times and is translated "elder" except in John 8:9; Acts 2:17; Acts 4:22.

[had prayed with fasting] This is the way elders were ordained.

[commended them to the Lord] Commended, as in Luke 23:46.

Elders had always governed and judged in towns and villages in the Old Testament (and in much of the rest of the Mediterranean world as well), and the evidence is abundant that this form of rule continued in the New Testament period. Most ancient synagogues had several elders who filled a religious office (acting as councils rather than as individuals).

The title generally called for respect; the Greek East accorded much influence to the *Gerousia*, clubs made up of elders.

The believers were given not only edification but also organization. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church. These elders were not novices in the faith (1 Tim. 3:6); they were probably Jews who came out of the synagogues where they had been steeped in the Scriptures. Thus elders from the synagogues became elders in the churches.²⁶

Acts 14:24

And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

BKC: 24-28. When the apostles returned to **Antioch** (retracing their steps through the provinces of **Pisidia** and **Pamphylia** and preaching in **Perga**; cf. 13:13-14), they gave to the sending church a full report of **all that God had done**. The clause, **how He had opened the 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.

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). The two apostles **had been committed** by the church at Antioch to God’s **grace** (cf. Acts 15:40) and they saw His grace at work (cf. “grace” in 13:43; 14:3).

Probably Paul wrote the Book of Galatians from Antioch shortly after his first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).²⁷

Acts 14:25

And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

Attaleia: seaport on the Gulf of Pamphylia, which drew commerce from Egypt and Syria. Attalia was Pamphylia’s main port on the mouth of the Catarractes.

Clarke: They went down into Attalia—This was a sea-port town in Pamphylia. Thus we find the apostles traveled from Derbe to Lystra; from Lystra to Iconium; from Iconium to Antioch of Pisidia; from Antioch to Perga in Pamphylia; and from Perga to Attalia; and it appears that they traveled over three provinces of Asia Minor, Pamphylia, Lycaonia, and Pisidia.

²⁶Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:392). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
cf. *confer*, compare

²⁷Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:392). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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.

[**Antioch**] End of the first missionary journey.

BBC: 26-28. When they return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas report on their missionary work to the sending church. Although Jewish people in the Diaspora were concerned to propagate a favorable impression of their religion and to gain converts when possible, they do not seem to have engaged in a concerted effort at what we call “missions.” Yet synagogue communities throughout the Diaspora informally remained in contact through travelers who reported news, and reports of large numbers of converts to Judaism would have been considered news when it occurred. The Antiochan church’s commitment probably goes beyond such interest, because the early Christians’ interest in missions was far more central than that of other Jewish sects; Luke-Acts is clear that missions is at the heart of Jesus’ purpose for his church.

JNTC: Luke carefully ties together the end of the journey with its beginning at 13:1–4. Note the model of order for responsible persons entrusted with tasks by a local congregation: (1) they are prompt, (2) they report to the congregation the details of what happened (in this case they also take on themselves the responsibility of assembling the congregation), (3) they give God the glory for it, and (4) they interpret the significance of what happened, emphasizing what is most important—in this case, that **God ... had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**—thus building understanding and therefore unity in pursuit of common goals.²⁸

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.

“All that God had done with them...”

[No numbers: Gentile converts are never counted!?!]

(2:41 and 4:4 = 3000, 5000: Jewish only are numbered.)

Mystery: Fullness of the Gentiles - Rom 11:25.

[**rehearsed all that God had done with them**] A report of three years' missionary work.

²⁸Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:26). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

[he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles] God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, not Peter. No statement is ever made that Peter opened the door of faith to the Jews at Pentecost and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18).

Acts 14:28

And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Long time: 4-5 years; journey 2 years.

[long time with the disciples] Some think about five years.

Paul probably wrote his letter to the Galatians while he was staying in Antioch (A.D. 48 or 49) after completing his first missionary journey. There are several theories as to what part of Galatia Paul was addressing, but most agree that Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were part of that region for whom the letter is intended. Galatians was probably written before the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), because in the letter the question of whether Gentile believers should be required to follow Jewish law was not yet resolved. The council met to solve that problem.

McGee: Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch to give a report of the work because this is the church that had sent them out. They revealed that God had now definitely opened the door of the gospel to Gentiles. When the gospel started out, the churches were comprised entirely of Hebrews. Then they became partially Gentile. And now the gospel is going definitely to the Gentiles. Now the churches in Asia Minor are comprised entirely of Gentiles. Although there may also have been some Jews in these churches, it seems that in most places the Jews rejected the gospel and the Gentiles received it.²⁹

JNTC: Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul spent a year in Antioch (11:26), left (11:30), returned (12:25), left again (13:4) and have now again returned. They leave for the Jerusalem Conference (15:2) and return together (15:22), but they leave Antioch separately (15:36–40). Sha'ul returns once more and spends time there (18:22–23). See also Ga 2:11&N.³⁰

Clarke: And there they abode long time—How long the apostles tarried here we cannot tell; but we hear no more of them till the council of Jerusalem, mentioned in the following chapter, which is generally supposed to have been held in the year 51 of our Lord; and, if the transactions of this chapter took place in A.D. 46, as chronologers think, then there are five whole years of St. Paul's ministry, and that of other apostles, which St. Luke passes by in perfect silence. It is very likely that all this time Paul and Barnabas were employed in extending the work of God through the different provinces contiguous

²⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:573). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 14:28). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

to Antioch; for St. Paul himself tells us that he preached the Gospel so far as Illyria, Romans 15:19, on the side of the Adriatic Gulf: see its situation on the map. Many of the tribulations and perils through which the Apostle Paul passed are not mentioned by St. Luke, particularly those of which he himself speaks, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. He had been five times scourged by the Jews; thrice beaten by the Romans; thrice shipwrecked; a whole night and day in the deep, probably saving his life upon a plank; besides frequent journeyings, and perils from his countrymen, from the heathen, from robbers, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren, etc., etc. Of none of these have we any circumstantial account. Probably most of these happened in the five years which elapsed between the apostles' return to Antioch, and the council of Jerusalem.

1. IN reading the Acts of the Apostles we may have often occasion to remark that in preaching the Gospel they carefully considered the different circumstances of the Jews and the Gentiles, and suited their address accordingly. When speaking to the former, of the necessity of crediting the Gospel, because without it they could not be saved, they took care to support all their assertions by passages drawn from the LAW and the PROPHETS, as every Jew considered those books to be of Divine authority, and from their decision there was no appeal. But, in addressing the Gentiles, who had no revelation, they drew the proof of their doctrine from the visible creation; and demonstrated, by plain reasoning, the absurdity of their idolatrous worship, and called them off from those vanities to the worship of the living and true God, who made and governs all things, and who gave them such proofs of his being, wisdom, and goodness, in the provision made for their comfort and support, that they had only to reflect on the subject in order to be convinced of its truth. And while, in consequence, they saw the absurdity of their own system, they would at once discover the reasonableness of that religion which was now offered to them, in the name and on the authority of that God who had fed and preserved them all their life long, and girded them when they knew him not. The Gentiles felt the force of these reasonings, yielded to the truth, and became steady followers of Christ crucified; while the Jews, with all their light and advantages, hardened their hearts against it, though they had no other arguments than what contradiction and blasphemy could provide! Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them. Do not many, even in the present day, copy their example, revile the truth, take up with the shadow instead of the substance, and rest just as much in the letter of Christianity, as ever the Jews did in the letter of the law? This is a deplorable fact which cannot be successfully controverted.
2. We have already had occasion to note five years of a chasm in the apostolic history. God himself does not choose to have all the labors and sufferings of his servants recorded. Their recompense is in heaven; and it is enough that God knows their work, who alone can reward it. And yet every faithful servant of God will feel that the reward is all of grace, and not of debt; for the amount of their good is just the sum of what God has condescended to do by them. How studious are men to record the smallest transactions of their lives, while much of the life and labors of Jesus Christ and his apostles are written in the sand, and no longer legible to man; or written before the throne, where they are seen only by God and his angels. In many cases, the silence of Scripture is not less instructive than its most pointed communications.

3. We cannot consider the effect produced on the minds of the people of Lystra, without being surprised that a single miracle, wrought instrumentally by men, should excite so much attention and reverence, and that we should be unmoved by the myriads wrought by the immediate hand of GOD.
4. How difficult it is to get men brought to worship God, though they have the highest reasons and most powerful motives for it; and yet how ready are they to offer an incense to man that is due only to God himself! We applaud the apostles for rejecting with horror the sacrifices offered to them: common sense must have taught them this lesson, even independently of their piety. Let us beware that we take not that praise to ourselves which belongs to our Maker. Gross flattery is generally rejected, because a man cannot receive it without being rendered ridiculous; but who rejects even inordinate praise, if it be delicately and artfully prepared!