

Acts 14 - 1st Missionary Journey: Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Perga; Return to Antioch

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1–28:31)

- (1) First missionary journey (13:1–14:28)
 - (D) Iconium (14:1–5)
 - (E) Lystra and Derbe (14:6–21a)
 - (F) Return to Antioch (14:21b–26)
 - (G) Report to the church (14:27–28)

Acts 14

(D) Iconium (14:1–5)

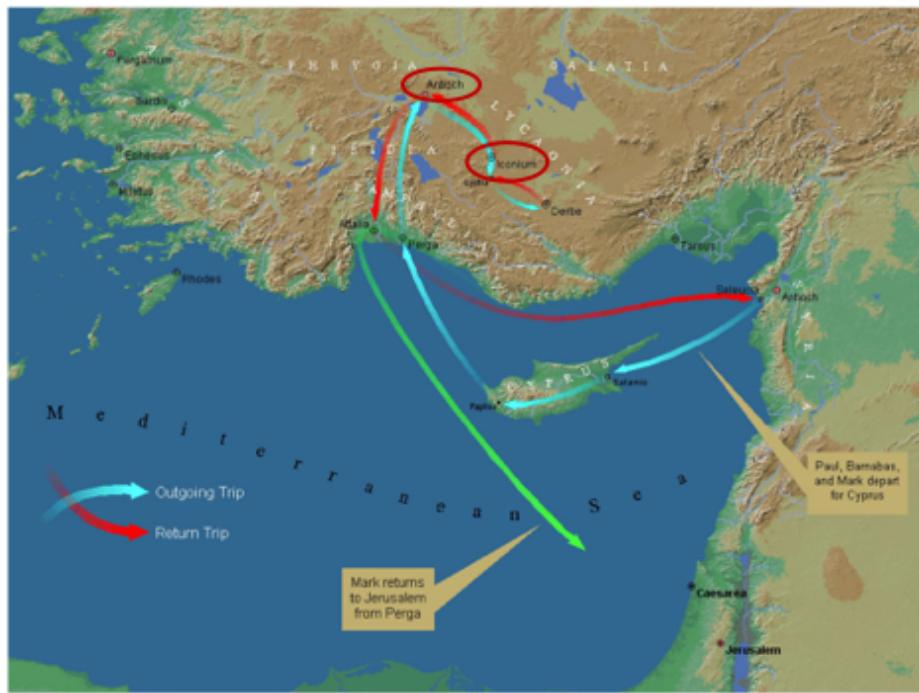
1 In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a way that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of **Greeks**.

1 In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.

1 In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

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.

- Iconium was about 90 miles SE of Pisidian Antioch
- Even though Paul said in 13:46 that he and Barnabas were "turning to the Gentiles," both of them preached the gospel to the Jews first in Iconium, the next city they visited
- "...Greeks" - Gentile proselytes who converted to Judaism and were worshiping in the synagogue



2 But the **unbelieving Jews** stirred up the minds of the **Gentiles** and embittered them against **the brothers**.

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

2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

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

- "...unbelieving Jews" - the NT writers, and Jesus Himself, are not favorable to unbelieving Jews (Cf. Matt 3:9; Rom 2:28-29; 9:6)
- "...the Gentiles" - the unbelieving Jews treated the unbelieving Gentiles somewhat as "useful idiots" against those whom were believing in Christ because of Paul's preaching
- "...the brothers" - the Jews and Greek proselytes who believed in Christ (v1)

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

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

3 They stayed there a considerable time and continued to speak boldly for the Lord, who kept affirming his word of grace and granting signs and wonders to be done by them.

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.

- "...they spent a long time *there*" - why didn't Paul and Barnabas just leave after they evangelized many people and began to be persecuted? Because their mission was not to create believers, it was to create disciples (Cf. Gal 2:19).

- "...testifying to the word of His grace" - Paul's ministry in a nutshell: the only way a sinner can be made right with God and enter into a relationship with Him is through His grace; you can't do it through your own works.

— This teaching was unique and different from what anyone at that time had ever heard, and the reason why people were eating it up and demonstrating their hunger for it (Cf. 13:42)

- "...granting that signs and wonders be performed by their hands" - to authenticate the message of grace that Paul preached, God granted that signs and wonders be done through them

— The evangelists spoke, but it was the Lord who affirmed His Word in the hearts of the hearers, and who granted signs and wonders to confirm the message

— Paul later appeals to these "mighty works" performed by the Spirit as evidence that the gospel as he preached it and they received it was fully approved by God (Cf. Gal 3:4-5)

— Only the apostles and their delegates (those under apostolic supervision) were able to perform signs and wonders in the early church (Cf. 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:11-12). These signs and wonders were not being done on the basis of the Mosaic Law, but on the basis of grace through faith.

4 But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, while others, with the apostles.

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

4 But the people of the city were divided. Some were with the Jews, while others were with the apostles.

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

- Truth often brings division (Cf. Matt 10:34-36)

5 And when **an attempt** was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, **to treat them abusively** and to stone them,

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

5 Now when an attempt was made by both gentiles and Jews, along with their authorities, to mistreat and stone them,

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despicably, and to stone them,

- "...an attempt" - *hormē*, to rush with impulse

- "...to treat them abusively" - *hybrizō*, to treat shamefully; to behave outrageously. Same word used in Matt 22:6.

— 2 Tim 3:12: Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

(E) Lystra and Derbe (14:6-21a)

6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of **Lycaonia**, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;

6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;

6 Paul and Barnabas found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian towns of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding territory.

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

- It has been said that "the servant of God is immortal until his work on earth is done." God keeps those alive for whom He has future plans (Cf. Ex 2:15; John 8:58-59)

— God often used persecution to keep the gospel moving. After teaching the disciples Acts 1:8, He didn't tell them how He was going to get the gospel out of Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. The way He did it was through persecution.

— God will often do that in our lives...He will do whatever He needs to do to get us to the next place He wants us in our lives. Sometimes His means for doing so is persecution.

- "...Lycaonia" - an area in south-central Turkey, which included the cities of Lystra and Derbe

7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

7 There they kept talking about the good news.

7 And there they preached the gospel.

- Notice that Paul and Barnabas did not change their message in the next cities because they encountered persecution at the last city. They didn't have a meeting and recalibrate

because the majority of society was rejecting their message and they were coming under persecution.

Paul's Visit to Iconium

- A multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed
- Unbelieving Jews turned Gentiles against him
- They stayed a long time to encourage new converts
- The entire city divided between those who supported and opposed Jesus Christ and His messengers
- The missionaries wisely fled their enemies' murderous plot (Matt 10:16,23)

Ministry in Lystra

8 In **Lystra** a man was sitting whose feet were incapacitated. *He had been* disabled from his mother's womb, and had never walked.

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

8 Now in Lystra there was a man sitting down who couldn't use his feet. He had been crippled from birth and had never walked.

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:

— "...Lystra" - a small rural town off the main trade routes and away from major population centers

— Paul later wrote about the problems he endured in and around Lystra in 2 Tim 3:11, and how no matter what he faced, God always rescued him. The same is true for believers today: God doesn't promise to remove us from persecution (but it would be nice if He did!), but He does promise to be with us in persecution.

— Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had an experience with God *in* the fire, not *outside* of the fire

9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke. *Paul looked at him intently and saw* that he had **faith to be made well**,

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

9 He was listening to Paul as he spoke. Paul watched him closely, and when he saw that he had faith to be healed,

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

- "...looked at him intently and saw" - Paul saw into the man's heart, that he had faith to be healed. Paul saw this because he was an apostle, and had been given supernatural gifts (Cf. 2 Cor 12:12).
- "...faith to be made well" - The man had faith not that God *would* heal him, but that God *could* heal him (Matt 9:28-29; Mark 9:22-24). Not everyone has the faith to be healed.
- In Mark 6:5-6, Jesus could not do any miracle in His hometown, except for a few people, because they lacked faith. They did not believe who He was and didn't believe in the power of God, so they remained sick as a result.

10 and he said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet!" And *the man* leaped up and *began to walk*.

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

10 he said in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" Then the man jumped up and began to walk.

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

- This healing (like Peter's healing of a lame man in 3:7), was immediate. It was not a "process healing" like you see with so-called "faith healers" today.

- In 3:1-11, Peter also healed a lame man from birth. This is the first of at least six correlations between the ministry of Peter and the ministry of Paul in Acts

— By pointing out the correlations between the ministry of Peter and the ministry of Paul, Luke is trying to demonstrate to Theophilus that Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is just as legitimate as Peter's ministry to the Jews

| From Peter to Paul | |
|---|--|
| Peter | Paul |
| Heals a man lame from birth (3:1-11) | Heals a man lame from birth (14:8-18) |
| Heals by shadow (5:15-16) | Heals by handkerchief (19:11-12) |
| Success is a cause of jealousy (5:17) | Success is a cause of jealousy (13:45) |
| Confronts a sorcerer (8:9-24) | Confronts a sorcerer (13:6-11) |
| Raises Dorcas (9:36-41) | Raises Eutychus (20:9-12) |
| Jailed and miraculously freed (12:3-19) | Jailed and miraculously freed (16:25-34) |

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

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

11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us!"

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.

- Lyconia was the "county" or geographical area where Lystra was located. Apparently they had their own language or dialect.

12 And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, since he was the chief speaker.

12 And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

12 They began to call Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes, because he was the main speaker.

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

- The Lyconians did was take what God had done through Paul and attributed it to pagan deities



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 306



"It is interesting to note that archaeologists have uncovered records of dedications to both gods by men with Lycaonian names. Bruce explains: 'Of two inscriptions of Sedasa, near Lystra, dating from c. 250 AD...one records the dedication to Zeus of a statue of Hermes along with a sundial, by men with Lycaonian names, the other mentions "priests of Zeus"...A further indication of the joint worship of Zeus and Hermes in these parts is probably to be found in a stone altar discovered near Lystra...in 1926, dedicated to the "Hearer of Prayers" (presumably Zeus) and Hermes.' These archeological findings prove historically what Luke recorded, namely, that Jupiter and Mercury were the two gods jointly worshipped by the people of Lystra."

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

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

13 The priest of the temple of Zeus, which was just outside the city, brought bulls and garlands to the gates. He and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifices.

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.

- Not only did the pagans of Lystra misidentify Paul and Barnabas as Greek deities, but now they wanted to make sacrifices to them and worship them

- "...garlands" - used by pagans to decorate the animals they intended to sacrifice to the Greek gods while they led them to the place of sacrifice



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 307



"The sudden urge to sacrifice to two human beings who were mistakenly identified as the gods Jupiter and Mercury can be understood from the background of the legend of Baucis and Philemon. This legend was recorded by the Roman historian Ovid. It claims that Jupiter and Mercury, disguised as men, came down into the Phrygian hill country, but no one in that area was willing to provide hospitality to them, except one elderly couple named Baucis and Philemon. The two gods destroyed the local population for its lack of hospitality, before rewarding Baucis and Philemon by making them the priest and priestess of the temple of Jupiter. This legend was prevalent in Lystra, and because the people had just seen a miracle, they felt that the two gods had come again. Not wanting to be destroyed, they were ready to offer sacrifices."

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

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

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting,

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

- Keep in mind that all of this is going on away from Paul and Barnabas, and in a different language (Lycaonian, v12). Once everything that was happening was translated to Paul and Barnabas in Greek, they immediately went out to put a stop to it.

This is the first message from God's servants to a pagan Gentile audience. Thus, Paul and Barnabas do not open up Hebrew Bible and begin reasoning with them from the Scriptures. These people knew nothing of the OT, so Paul and Barnabas begin reasoning with them from the only Bible they had: Creation. This is a lesson for us on how to evangelize unsaved people.

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men, of the same nature as you, **preaching the gospel to you**, to turn from these **useless things** to a living

God, who **MADE** THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM.

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

15 "Men, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings with natures like yours. We are telling you the good news so you'll turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

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:

- Paul refers to himself as a human being, just like them. James says the same thing about Elijah (Cf. James 5:17).

- "...preaching the gospel to you" - Paul didn't just give his testimony, even though he had a great one. He preached the gospel everywhere he went, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16).

- "...turn" - Paul is asking these Lyconians to do exactly what many in Thessalonica did: "turn" from idols to serve a living a true God (1 Thess 1:9)

- "...useless things" - paganism and idolatry is always called out as being "useless," "futile," and "worthless" (Cf. 2 Kings 17:15; Ps 31:6; Is 44:9; 46:1-4; Jer 10:8; 18:15; Rev 9:20-21)

- "...living God" - in contrast to their "worthless" idols, Paul urges them to turn to the living God (Cf. 1 Thess 1:9; Heb 10:31)

— We don't worship a dead God, we worship a Savior who is very much alive and sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

- "...MADE" - He is the Creator of heaven and earth; Paul is not appealing to Scripture to make his case for the gospel...he appeals to the only "Bible" these people had: creation (general revelation).

— Paul is likely quoting from Ex 20:11, which is repeated in Ex 31:15-17

| General vs. Special Revelation | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | General | Special |
| Examples | Nature, conscience (Rom 1-2) | Incarnation, Scripture, miracles |
| Availability | All | Some |
| Accomplishment | Accountability to search for God (Rom 1) | Salvation (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15) |
| Form | Non-written or non-verbal | Written |
| Quality | Natural | Supernatural, miraculous |

16 In past generations He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;
 16 In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;
 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own ways,
 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.
 - After invoking creation, Paul now invokes God's patience
 — Before God sent His Son into the world to pay for mankind's sin, He was very patient.
 Rom 1:24-32 speaks of this as well, where God says He "gave them over." They didn't want anything to do with God, so He "gave them over" to whatever they wanted to do rather than judge them.
 — You can't get any more wicked than the world was pre-Flood. During that time, God gave the world 120 years to repent (Cf. Gen 6:3). God patiently waited for 120 years for the world to turn before bringing judgment.
 — God is also patient today, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

17 yet **He did not leave Himself without witness**, in that He did good and **gave you rains from heaven** and **fruitful seasons**, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."
 17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."
 17 yet he has not abandoned his witness: he continues to do good, to give you rain from heaven, to give you fruitful seasons, and to fill you with food and your hearts with joy."

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.

— "...He did not leave Himself without witness" - the fact of the matter is that even if a person doesn't have a Bible, they are held responsible for seeking God because God has revealed Himself in other ways (general revelation)

— General revelation (nature/creation, conscience) can't save anyone, but it holds every person accountable to seek truth, to recognize that there is a higher power, and that everything did not just happen by random chance. And as soon as a person begins to seek truth based on general revelation, God will move heaven and earth to get them special revelation so that they can receive the truth and be saved.

— There are two examples in Acts of how God will move heaven and earth to get the gospel to someone who is seeking through general revelation:

- Ethiopian eunuch was seeking truth by reading the prophet Isaiah, but he did not understand what he was reading, or who the text was referring to. God moved heaven and earth to get Philip in front of him to give him the gospel and baptize him (8:26-39).
- Cornelius was a "devout man" who "feared God" and "made many charitable contributions" and "prayed to God continually" yet he was not saved (11:14). But God moved heaven and earth to get Peter to first enter the home of a Gentile (10:9-16), then to give him the gospel (10:34-48).

— God is in the business of disclosing truth. The problem many times is that man does not want to hear the truth, but that doesn't mean that there is not a witness to the truth.

— "...gave you rains from heaven" - to the Lyconians, Zeus was the god who brought the rain. Since they believed that Barnabas was Zeus (Cf. v12), Paul told them that the God who created everything brought the rain, not Zeus (Cf. Ps 103:5; Matt 5:45).

— "...fruitful seasons" - Hermes was the god who brought fruitful seasons. Since they believed that Paul was Hermes (Cf. v12), Paul corrected them and said that it was the God who created everything who brought them fruitful seasons.

— Paul's point is that you don't have these things because you prayed to the right god, you have these things because the One True God loves you, is patient with mankind, and He graciously provides these things that you attribute to non-existent gods so that you will come to know who He is and enter into a relationship with Him.

18 And even by saying these things, *only with* difficulty did they restrain the crowds from offering sacrifices to them.

18 *Even* saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

18 Even by saying this, it was all Paul and Barnabas could do to keep the crowds from offering sacrifices to them.

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

- The crowd was insistent upon offering sacrifices to them in worship, and it was all that Paul and Barnabas could do to "restrain" them from doing so

— Paul and Barnabas went to great lengths to keep the Lyconians from worshiping them and offering sacrifices to them. They wanted to keep the focus on God, for His glory, not for their own.

This is the only example in Acts of a speech to a purely Gentile (pagan) audience. Paul's approach here differs widely from his approach to Jews and adherents of Judaism, who had at least some working knowledge of the Scriptures:

1. He appeals to God-given conscience and reason in every person (Rom 2:12-15)
2. He reveals that God created all things. He points to evidences around them.
3. He speaks of God's grace and kindness to provide for their needs
4. He points out the true God is unlike the idols they worship in vain
5. He calls for repentance—to turn from worship of "no god" (empty things) to worship of the One Living God
6. He warns that God does not allow Gentiles to live by their own ideas without judgment (Rom 1:18-32)

19 But Jews came from **Antioch and Iconium**, and having **won over the crowds**, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking that he was dead.

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

19 But some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds by persuasion. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town, thinking he was dead.

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.

- "...Antioch and Iconium" - these unbelieving Jews traveled about 90 miles, on foot, to protest the gospel spoken of by Paul and Barnabas. They hated the message of grace so much that they were willing to travel a great distance to try to stop it.

- "...won over the crowds" - these unbelieving Jews who traveled into Lystra to stop the spread of the gospel rallied the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. They no doubt viewed Paul's preaching as a cult, a distortion of true Judaism.

— They were evidently able to convince the residents there that, instead of worshipping them as gods, they deserved to die (Cf. 28:4-6; Matt 12:24)

- The unbelieving Jews were able to convince the Gentiles in Lystra against Paul that they attempted to execute him by stoning, then dragged his lifeless body outside the city

— Some believe that Paul actually died from this stoning and experienced resurrection [J.V. McGee]. However, the text only says that the onlookers supposed he was dead (Cf. 2 Cor 11:25). Some also believe that this is when Paul was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-4).

— Paul would later return to Antioch and write a letter (Galatians) to these churches that he planted during his first missionary journey, and he references these sufferings and persecutions that he endured (Cf. Gal 6:17; 2 Tim 3:11).

20 But while the **disciples** stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for **Derbe**.

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

20 But the disciples formed a circle around him, and he got up and went back to town.

The next day, he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

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.

- Miraculously, Paul recovered from the stoning. But unlike most, he didn't question God's will because of the vociferous opposition. He simply got up and walked back into the city to finish his sermon.

- Patience, or perseverance, is something that the Holy Spirit desires to develop in every believer. The Greek word is *hypomonē*, which means the capacity to stand up under completely unfair circumstances. This is available through the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

— 2 Peter 1:5-7 talks about spiritual maturity. How do we know when we're growing in Christ, making progress toward spiritual maturity? We see *hypomonē* displayed in our lives with greater consistency.

- "...disciples" - the many believers who came to faith in Christ in Lystra. It's very probable that one of these "disciples" was Timothy

— On his 2nd missionary journey, Paul came back through Lystra (Cf. 16:1), met Timothy (who was likely saved during Paul's first visit), and he took Timothy with him on his 2nd missionary journey.

- "...Derbe" - about 40 miles SE of Lystra; modern day Kerti Hüyük

Unlike Iconium, Luke reports very few Jews and no synagogue in Lystra. The Gentiles spoke some Greek, but mostly "the speech of Lycaonia," unknown to the missionaries. This is where Paul connected with Timothy and his family (Acts 16:1-3).

(F) Return to Antioch (14:21b-26)

21 And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had **made a good number of disciples**, they returned to **Lystra**, to **Iconium**, and to **Antioch**,

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

21 As they were proclaiming the good news in that city, they discipled a large number of people. Then they went back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

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,

- Even though Paul is persecuted and abused almost everywhere he goes, he soldiers on to the next city and does the same thing again: he preaches the gospel

- "...disciples" - *mathēteuō*, Paul wasn't satisfied with simple conversion, his goal was to make disciples. Paul followed the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), which is to not simply make converts to Christianity, but to also disciple them.

— Many more people became believers and disciples in Derbe (Cf. 20:4), with no record of conflicts or persecution. Also in Derbe, Paul gained a friend, companion, and fellow-helper in Gaius (Cf. Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; 3 John 1). Perhaps Gaius was a convert at this time.

— The shortest, easiest route back home was the imperial highway east then south to Antioch (Syria), but Paul and Barnabas were true shepherds and cared for the new converts they left behind with the wolves in Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch.

— Apparently they did more discipleship than evangelism on this return trip, to the very cities where their lives had been in danger

- "...Lystra" - Paul had a successful ministry in Lystra (v8-20a). He healed a lame man (v8-10). When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they began to worship him and Barnabas (v11-14). Paul corrected their thinking (v15-17), but it didn't work.

— Unbelieving Jews came to Lystra from Antioch and Iconium to convince the crowd that Paul and Barnabas were false teachers (v19a), and they stoned Paul, dragged him outside the city, and left him for dead (v19b). Paul recovered, and went right back into the city.

- "...Iconium" - a large number of Jews believed Paul's message in the synagogue (v1), but the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and embittered them against Paul & Barnabas (v2).

— The people of the city were divided (v4): some sided with the unbelieving Jews, others sided with Paul and Barnabas. There was a conspiracy to stone Paul and Barnabas (v5), but when they became aware of it, they fled the city (v6).

- "...[Pisidian] Antioch" - Paul gave a full sermon in the synagogue (the only record we have of him doing this, 13:16-41). After the sermon, they begged Paul and Barnabas to stick around and preach again on the next Sabbath.

— They did, but when the unbelieving Jews saw the huge crowd eager to hear Paul preach (13:45), they became jealous and began contradicting what Paul was preaching. So Paul

and Barnabas proclaimed that they were turning to (will begin to focus on) the Gentiles (13:46).

- The Gentiles were rejoicing that Paul would begin focusing on them (13:48), many believed and the gospel was proclaimed in many different directions.
- So the point is that Paul goes right back into the places where he encountered (in some cases severe) opposition and persecution. Why would he do such a thing? Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in his life (Cf. 2 Tim 1:7).
- Because Paul is not just interested in conversions, but discipleship, he wants to check-in on these churches he planted to see how they are progressing in their walk with Christ.
- The Great Commission will never be fulfilled, even if the gospel reaches every single person on planet earth. It will never be fulfilled because the Great Commission isn't about hearing/preaching the gospel, it's about discipleship.

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God."

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

22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. "We must endure many hardships," they said, "to get into the kingdom of God."

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.

- A description of Paul's ministry on his return visit to these cities...
- "...strengthening the souls of the disciples" - it's about making believers first, but then not just moving on, but turning those believers into disciples.
- "...encouraging them to continue in the faith" - edification ministry (Cf. 1 Cor 14:3)
- Two things Paul did: "strengthen" these new believers in their faith (disciple them), and "encourage" (exhort/edify) them to continue on to spiritual maturity.
- "...*It is* through many tribulations *that we must enter the kingdom of God*" - we must first go through many tribulations, then we enter the kingdom. This phrase is clearly places the kingdom in a future context, as do nearly all references to the kingdom in the NT (Cf. Matt 6:10; 20:20-21; 26:29; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:24,50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1,18; James 2:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Rev 5:10). The tribulations are present (today), but the kingdom is future.
- Kingdom Now theology tries to argue from this verse that we're in the kingdom now. But that's difficult to do from this verse because Paul's words are clearly in a future context: we must *first* go through many tribulations, *then* we enter the kingdom.

- It's also clear from this verse that people enter the kingdom, the kingdom doesn't enter people
- "tribulations" - *thilipsis*, in the OT prophetic picture of the coming kingdom, a period of terrible tribulation always precedes its establishment on earth
- *Thilipsis* generally has three meanings in Scripture:
 1. It can refer to "tribulation" or "trouble" generally (here; John 16:33; Rom 5:3; 12:12)
 2. It can refer to the entire seven years of Daniel's 70th Week ("the beginning of sorrows") (Jer 30:7-9; Dan 9:24-27; 12:1)
 3. It can refer to the second half of Daniel's 70th Week (Matt 24:21)

The larger towns of Antioch and Iconium seem to have produced more influential churches, but the smaller towns of Lystra and Derbe contributed more young men who became leaders (i.e. Timothy and Gaius). Timothy (Acts 16:1-3) and Gaius (Acts 20:4) were likely converted at this time.

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

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

23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, and with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

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

- "...they had appointed elders" - the third thing Paul oversaw on his return trip through these cities was the appointing of elders (church leadership)

— Although "appointed" [cheirotonesantes] can mean to elect by a vote of raised hands, it doesn't mean that here. These elders were not "elected" by the congregation, but rather they were "appointed," after prayer and fasting, by Paul and Barnabas. This was the very beginning of church hierarchy (Cf. 20:17; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:17,19; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

— Perhaps some of the elders from the synagogues, who became believers, were appointed as elders in the churches. The apostles had earlier appointed elders in the Jerusalem church (11:30).

- "...prayed with fasting" - how did Jesus select the 12 apostles? Out of everyone who was available, how did Jesus end up with the 12 He chose? Luke 6:12-13 says that He went off to the mountain to pray, and spent the whole night there in prayer to God. The next day, He called His disciples to Him, chose 12 of them, and named them as apostles.

- "...in whom they had believed" - these were believers who were appointed as elders

24 They passed through Pisidia and came into **Pamphylia**.

24 They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

24 Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

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

- "...Pamphylia" - the region around Perga, where Paul and Barnabas originally docked upon their arrival (Cf. 13:13)

25 When they had spoken the word in **Perga**, they went down to **Attalia**.

25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

25 They spoke the word in Perga and went down to Attalia.

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

- "...Perga" - Paul and Barnabas had arrived in Perga (13:13) but doesn't say they ministered there, just that they passed through (13:14). So now, on their return trip, they preached the gospel to the people in Perga.

— It was from this point (Perga) that John Mark separated from Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem (13:13)

- "...Attalia" - the seaport of Perga, to the west; at or near present day Antalya

26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been **entrusted to the grace of God** for the work that they had accomplished.

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

26 From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been entrusted to the grace of God for the work they had completed.

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

- Paul's first missionary journey lasted 2-1/2 years. They traveled at least 500 miles by sea, plus another 700 miles by land. It is estimated they covered a total of about 1,400 miles on this journey.

- They returned to Antioch because that was their home church, who had commissioned them and prayed for them and anointed them for this journey

- "...entrusted to the grace of God" - Paul's first missionary journey was a work of God's grace from start to finish. They were launched out of Antioch by God's grace, they traveled through all of these areas by God's grace, and it was by God's grace that they returned safely to Antioch 2-1/2 years later.

(G) Report to the church (14:27-28)

27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, **they began to report all the things that God had done** with them and how **He had opened a door of faith** to the Gentiles.

27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

27 When they arrived, they called the church together and told them everything that God had done with them and how he had opened a door so that gentiles would believe.

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.

– "...they *began* to report" - *anangellō*, literally means "to tell a long story"

— Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the church in Antioch for their mission trip, so when they returned, they provided a report on what God did with them.

— It's important for missionaries to be accountable to a body of Christ. Paul and Barnabas here are reporting their "return on investment" of what God did with them during their 2-1/2 year mission trip.

– "...all the things that God had done" - no numbers? Gentile converts are never counted!? In 2:41, 3,000 were saved); in 4:4, 5,000 were saved. In Acts, only Jewish converts are numbered. Does this have something to do with the "fullness of the Gentiles" (Cf. Rom 11:25)?

– "...He had opened a door" - Paul often talks about how he waited on God to "open doors" (provide opportunities for ministry) throughout his epistles (which hadn't even been written yet):

1 Cor 16:9: for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

2 Cor 2:12: Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,

Col 4:3: praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

– "...of faith" - Paul didn't preach a gospel of works

28 And they spent **alongtime** with the disciples.

28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

28 Then they spent a long time with the disciples.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

– "...a long time" - an estimated 4-5 years

- Luke is using here a figure of speech called a *litotes* (see note on 12:18). The Greek of what Luke is saying here is literally "they stayed there not a little time."
- It was probably during this time that Paul wrote Galatians to instruct these new believers. This is likely because he doesn't mention the Jerusalem Council meeting (Acts 15) in that epistle, which he almost certainly would have had he written Galatians after that council meeting.
- Galatians was the first of Paul's inspired epistles. This would have been in 48-49 AD.

| Paul's Ministry Chronology | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|
| # OF BOOKS | JOURNEY | ACTS | DATE | BOOKS |
| 1 | 1 | 13–14 | 48-49 AD | Galatians |
| 2 | 2 | 15:36–18:22 | 50-52 AD | 1&2 Thess |
| 3 | 3 | 18:23–21:17 | 53-57 AD | 1&2 Cor, Romans |
| 4 | 4 | 28:16-31 | 60-62 AD | Eph, Col, Phlm, Phil |
| 2 | Between Imprisonments | Post Acts | 62-66 AD | 1 Tim, Titus |
| 1 | 2 nd Imprisonment | Post Acts | 67 | 2 Tim |