

The Mess of Ministry

Ups and Downs for Paul and Barnabas **The Empowered Church Series - Part 25**

Acts 14:1-28
Aug 19-20, 2023

Introduction

- **Let's hear it for Pastor Cliff & Gabriel running our Youth Takeover service last weekend!!!**
- **What is your impression of how full-time ministry goes?** [playful examples]
 - **What's it like working at a church, in your opinion?** Sounds awesome, right? It's not always...[playful examples]
- **Serving the Lord and Partnering with the Holy Spirit is the coolest thing you could do with your life.** Most people aren't called to full-time ministry. I always say that Christianity is designed for the every person and paid full-time ministry is an anomaly. So, what do you do for ministry? We are all ministers, but in different ways.
 - **Example: Stephen Ministers Opportunity**
 - Our church does CARE very well. **Soul Care** counseling wing is for the **transformation of our minds & hearts**; **Chaplains** are first responders for **immediate desperate needs**, but what if our challenge is more long-term? What if we are struggling through a **divorce**, or losing a **job** made us feel lost, or we **lost someone** we loved, or received a **medical diagnosis**?
 - S.M. **walk alongside someone in difficulty over a period of time** and do what our pastoral team cannot feasibly do.
 - **We need more** of them. **Not just anyone**: passionate love for God, gifted with compassion & mercy. Great **listeners**. Servant hearts and helpers.
 - Accepting **applications** through the end of August – for **Training** class starting in **October**.
 - You'll receive **70 hours of training** to learn how to best support, serve, spiritually encourage, and bless someone who is in a long-term struggle.
 - **Table** in the lobby – or **website** Events page
 - **Whatever ministry you do...The excitement of being on the front line...**
 - **BUT...**

Serving God Isn't ALWAYS EASY

- **We are back in the Empowered Church Series** – which means that I need to catch you up on where we are at. If you are new, don't worry, you'll catch on.
 - **Recap** - Jesus has left the earth physically and handed the ministry over to His followers. They launch this brand new Christian movement, and it explodes in popularity. The center hub moves from a predominantly Jewish group in Jerusalem, to the international city of Antioch in Syria. During prayer the Holy Spirit told the new church leaders that He wanted to send out Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey (which they are in the

midst of). This is **Paul's first OFFICIAL mission trip** and it has highs and lows. The **started on the island of Cyprus and the rest of was in modern-day Turkey.**

- **And that's our focus for today** – the highs and lows of Paul's ministry endeavor and while we learn about him, we can see what it might mean for us.

Lesson

- **Whiplash**

- **Contrasting Outcomes to Paul & Barnabas' Ministry**

- **Acts: 14:1-7** – *“Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, ⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.”*

- **Where's Iconium?** – South Central Turkey (170 miles from capital of Ankara).

Known as that region's most religious city in the ancient world. They are about 90 miles from homebase (Antioch). It's 3,370ft in elevation (high). P&B were following a Roman commercial road (Via Sabaste or Royal Road).¹

- **Traditional Paul Story from Iconium**² – there is a book, not in the Bible, that was written around 150AD (about 100 years after this story really happened), called “the Acts of Paul.” In it, a character who was said to be from Iconium sees Paul walking up the street and he describes him as, *“a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.”* That may or may not be true or even close, but it's ancient and interesting.
- **Why P&B would start in synagogues** – in addition to the original call of Jesus to reach ‘the Jew first and then the Gentile’ this is mostly about practicality. Paul is a super-Jew (highly trained; highly educated) so these are his people. He thrives in this environment. He would get a hearing here, at least initially. It was a good place to start but it rarely went well once he started talking about Christianity.
- **Many believed...BUT** – when are we saved? **Are we saved at the moment of realization or saved at the moment of surrender or saved at the moment of**

¹ “Paul and Barnabas move to a city on a high plateau over the plains, Iconium (v. 1a), sitting at an altitude of 3,370 feet. It was a culturally mixed city. The missionaries are traveling the well-known Roman commercial road known as the Via Sebaste or Royal Road (Witherington 1998: 418).” Darrell Bock, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT

² “It has been argued that Paul's physical appearance left an impression in Iconium that was not soon forgotten—that it is reflected in the description of him preserved in the mid-second-century *Acts of Paul*. There one Onesiphorus, a resident of Iconium, sets out to meet Paul, who is on his way to the city. “And he saw Paul approaching, a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.” It has been felt that a description so vigorous and unconventional must rest on a good local tradition of what Paul looked like. This may be so, but it might well be the product of the writer's lively imagination.” NICNT

commitment? The Parable of the Sower that Jesus taught tells the story of a man who sowed seed by scattering it out. Some landed on stone surface which the birds ate, some on rocky ground where it couldn't have root, some among thorns choked out, then some on good soil that grew. Jesus said the path seeds were taken away by the enemy (excited about the news but doesn't understand = hijacked). The rocky path was those who are excited but no commitment inside and distractions take it away. The thorn seed were those who wanted it but wanted the world more and their faith is unfruitful and dies. But the good soil ones grow because they want it most.

- **Unbelieving Jews** – what does this mean? It means traditionally religious Jews that didn't believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah or Savior.
- **What does it mean to poison the minds of others?**³ – To poison the minds of others is to insert damaging or contrary opinions in their minds. Just like Jesus was initially received with joy in Nazareth, others started saying that He was too local and too normal to be the Messiah and it poisoned the environment. People's minds shifted into the negative and He was resisted. **Do we do this to others? [complete]**
- **They remained a long time...** - I have always appreciated moments of decision and even at times I was able to appreciate evangelists and speakers that would blow into town, set fires of change and blow back out. Unfortunately I was usually the pastor left to put the bad fires out and disciple the good fires. **True discipleship and transformation doesn't happen overnight.** The initial short term hit is used for inspiration, motivation, paradigm shifting, and receptiveness. It's not designed for follow up. But it's in the follow up that we mature and get healthy.
- **The ministry they focused on** – It says that after the initial hit there was a chaotic scene of people who believed, some who didn't, some who were trying to ruin the ministry, some who supported it. So, how were they going to sort it out? What more needed to be done other than just being around for a while as support?
 - **Speaking boldly for the Lord** – This seems to be more CONFRONTING LIES and bringing TRUTH. **You don't need to be bold if everyone is on the same page already.** The focus here is BOLDLY. But what did they BOLDLY say?
 - **Testifying** – sharing their testimony, what they personally experienced and the experiences of those who they trusted.
 - **Teaching** – this is helping to explain what Jesus really meant and what He really did, as opposed to what perhaps they heard He did.

³ "The verb *κακῶν* (*kakoō*) in this context means to make "someone think badly about another" (BDAG 502 §2) or "poison the minds of some persons" (BAGD 398 §2). Some translations adopt this more graphic rendering, to "poison" the minds of the Gentiles (RSV, NIV, NET, NLT ["stirred up distrust"]; Ps. 105:32 LXX [106:32 Eng.]; 1 Pet. 3:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.7.3 §205; 16.8.6 §262). Our translation opts for "led their souls to do evil." The verb is used of acts of oppression in Acts 7:6, 19 and of Herod's wicked acts in 12:1. The term that is often rendered "mind" here is *ψυχῆ* (*psychē*), which can refer to the feelings, emotions, and judgments of a person, so that it matches the idea of how the soul controls the thinking of a person (BAGD 893 §1aγ; BDAG 1099 §2c). In other words, not only did the Jews stir up Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, they so stirred them that they acted out their feelings in persecution." Darrell Bock - Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT

- **God (Jesus) bore witness to the grace of His word** – God backed up what they were saying. They weren't out there on their own. And that's the thing, we aren't ministering on our own and then reporting back to God at the end of the week. We are hand in hand. The Bible says to keep in step with the Spirit. It's a very connected, doing it together, concept. How did He back them up?
- **Granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands** – what a fascinating way to say that. Let's break this down because in the year of power we can't miss this precious instruction.
 - **Granting** – Granting is another word for **ALLOWING**. It means that they were doing something. **They were the active agents to the people, God was the supplier of power to them. The order** is always important to remember.
 - **Signs and Wonders** – what are those and are they synonymous? They are **intertwined** but they are **distinct**. Wonders are the miraculous events, signs are what those events are pointing to. In other words, something supernatural would happen for the purpose of directing their attention to God and what He wanted for them.
 - **Done by their hands** – this means again that they were the active agents doing the works. **It was THEIR hands, not God's hands.** God was empowering their hands, but they had to lay them on someone. God was removing the demons, but they needed to lay their hands on the oppressed. God brought a miracle through the partnership of the minister. And **that's what He does with us today.**
 - **I want you touching more people, Bridgeway.**
- **The people were divided: Jews/Apostles** – Remember that when the New Testament uses the word Jews, it tends to be referring not to the Jewish people at large, but the Jewish leaders who were in charge. The Jewish people generally were very receptive and welcoming to the gospel.
 - **Apostles Title⁴** – notice that Luke uses the term apostle to describe Paul and Barnabas (BOTH), here and in verse 14 below. The term apostle originally meant, 'sent out one' (like messenger or ambassador), but after Jesus initiated the group of 12 disciple into apostles with extra power and authority, it took on a more religious and specific term. So, how are Paul & Barnabas apostles if they didn't walk with Jesus? Because Jesus is still sending people in power and authority. This was the next wave, more of the same.
- **Assassination Attempt** – It says that an attempt was made to harm them and even stone them by **BOTH GENTILES & JEWS** and the leadership of that region.

⁴ "Only here and in v. 14 does Luke use the term "apostles" of any outside the circle of the Twelve. This wider usage, perhaps referring to the two men as commissioned by the church of Antioch (13:3-4), may have been taken over by Luke from a travel document which provided him with the framework for the narrative of chs. 13 and 14. Luke does not give the designation "apostle" to Paul in the special sense in which Paul claimed it for himself. (Paul apparently places Barnabas on a level with himself in Gal. 2:9; 1 Cor. 9:6.)" New International Commentary of New Testament (NICNT), by F. F. Bruce.

Interestingly nothing brings people together like a common enemy. In this case it was wanting to get rid of Christians.

- **They Fled** – **when is it time to flee and when to stand your ground?** There's a lot of fleeing in the ministry of Paul, but yet Paul also stood his ground a lot too. Jesus did the same thing. The prophets did the same thing. Moses and the big dogs did the same thing. So, how do we know? We know by two things: 1.) the leading of the Spirit in the moment (keeping in step with the Spirit); 2.) Discernment through wisdom of the situation. If your specific calling is to be martyred (and some had that calling), you die. If your calling is to reach people and there are more people to reach, then if you can escape, you escape to keep doing your job that God gave you. Clearly if you get caught and God lets you die, that's on Him, not you.
 - **Where's Lystra?**⁵ – about 100 miles from Antioch (where they left from). A Roman colony. This is **18 miles south** from where they were.
 - **Where's Derbe?**⁶ – Eastern Galatia region. Near Cappadocia.
 - **Where's Lycaonia?**⁷ – Luke is referring to the western portion of the Lycaonian region, which was an area in the larger Galatian region.
- **They kept preaching** – whether fleeing or staying they were still preaching. The point was not so much whether they were safe as much as was there and open door. They knew what their calling was, it was to share the gospel, period. They were going to do that to the best of their ability.
- **Is Iconium a win?** – **it's so tough to know whether or not we are doing a good job in ministry.** Bad always seems to be dragged into the good. With every compliment there is a criticism. Growth is never linear or logical so it's hard to track if we are advancing. It's complicated. How do we know if we are successful? **Were we obedient and did we do our best? Great! It's all good. Results are on God.**

- **Aggressive Healing**

- **A Crippled Man is Healed**

- **Acts: 14:8-10** – *“Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking.”*

⁵ “Lystra, like Pisidian Antioch, was made a Roman colony by Augustus in 25 B.C. It served as a base for the more effective suppression of marauders from the Taurus mountains who threatened the Roman peace.”

⁶ “on the eastern frontier of the province of Galatia, “very near to Cappadocia,” says Strabo. Its site has been identified at or near the mound called Kerti Hüyük, about thirteen miles north-northeast of Karaman (the ancient Laranda).⁵⁰ Its name is said to have been derived from the Lycaonian word *delbeia*, meaning “juniper.” Like Iconium, it received the emperor’s name as an honorary prefix, and was known for a time as Claudioderbe.” NICNT

⁷ “The ancient realm of Lycaonia was at this time divided: its western part (called perhaps Galatic Lycaonia) lay within the province of Galatia, to the east of Galatic Phrygia, while its eastern part (Antiochian Lycaonia) belonged to the domain of Antiochus IV, king of Commagene (a client of the Roman state).” NICNT

- **A man crippled from birth** – it says 3x's that he was crippled: not use his feet, crippled from birth, never walked. Why the highlights? Why that focus?⁸ Because it was explaining the set up of impossibility. The ancient world was skeptical of miracles like today. Sure, they had much more of a basis for the miraculous and superstitious, but they weren't idiots. Periodically God sets up a miracle to be CLEARLY a miracle (a lot of miracles can be seen as either a miracle or a shocking coincidence of normal means), to demonstrate His power. Luke wanted to capture this as one of those times. This man had never walked. He wouldn't know how to walk if he could.
- **The man listened to Paul** – there was a set-up of faith. The atmosphere around this man and within this man was conducive to miracles. **Is your atmosphere conducive to a miracle?**
- **Paul looked intently at him**⁹ – the last time Paul looked intently at someone he blinded them (Elymas/Bar-Jesus, the bad magician). Make ya nervous. Paul heard something from the Holy Spirit and it directly all his attention on this man for some reason. I don't know how much Paul knew this guy or anything about him. Clearly the guy was in a chair and unable to walk but **why heal this guy?** This is one of my challenges in understanding healing and why I don't care for people saying that God heals all people. That's not true. There were lots of people in this crowd that needed some type of healing, and they weren't healed. This ONE GUY was healed. And he didn't even ask for it. But God wanted to display His glory and save more people, so he was healed.
 - **When miracles are appropriate** – are we supposed to heal everyone, cast out every demon, do every miracle, alleviate all suffering? I don't believe so. I believe that God is working with everyone differently for different outcomes at different times. Therefore **our job is to listen for what's NOW.**
- **Paul saw that he had the faith to be healed**¹⁰ – what does that mean? How can you tell if someone has faith? What did Paul see? How was he sure. It's a HUGE risk, right? What if he's wrong? This is one of those maddening passages for me that say something very stimulating and then don't explain any of it. It seems

⁸ "The genuine and apparently incurable nature of the man's disability is emphasized by repetition: he had, we are told, no strength in his feet; he was a cripple from birth; he had never walked." NICNT

⁹ "The stare (ἀτενίσιας, *atenisas*) and the loud voice (μεγάλη φωνή, *megalē phonē*) were often used in Greco-Roman stories about the coming of the gods (Strelan 2000). These details suggest in part why the crowd reacts as it does. So does the description of Paul as a stranger, as often gods were said to appear unknown. Of course, Luke denies this view about Paul and Barnabas, but the way the story is told places the impression of a supernatural source for their power." Darrel Bock, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament

¹⁰ "While the expression here refers to the recovery of bodily health, yet even in a pagan context "there lies latent in it some undefined and hardly conscious thought of the spiritual and the moral, which made it suit Paul's purpose admirably." In Acts, as in the Gospels, faith is regularly emphasized as a condition of receiving both physical and spiritual healing.²³ That this lame man had faith was made plain by his ready obedience to Paul's command to stand up..." NICNT

"What Paul as a prophet realizes is that the man wants to be healed. The phrase ἔχει πίστιν τοῦ σωθῆναι (*echei pistin tou sōthēnai*) should be rendered "faith necessary for the purpose of saving" (i.e., to be physically delivered, the common non-theological use of the term "salvation"). Here the genitive and the articular infinitive point to purpose (BDF §400.2; Moulton and Turner 1963: 141). What is likely meant here is faith to be delivered from his crippled condition, as the infinitive σωθῆναι points to some form of deliverance (BAGD 798 §1c; BDAG 982 §1c). Paul does not speak directly of spiritual salvation here. The picture of the miracle, however, moves in this more spiritual direction because the scene typifies the signs and wonders Paul and Barnabas have done (v. 3; Jervell 1998: 374; Luke 7:50; 8:12, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42; Acts 4:9–12; 16:31). In addition, the spiritual remarks Paul makes when the crowd reacts to the healing point in this direction (vv. 15–17)." Darrell Bock, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT

that Paul could tell that this man was all in. Whatever was going to happen to him, he was going to KNOW that it was God and give CREDIT to God.

- **What part does faith play in healing?** – we’ve talked about this a bit in prior messages but it’s important to talk about again and again. Faith is being convinced of something true, sometimes despite circumstances to the contrary. It means you really believe something enough to do something about it and act as if it’s real. So there can be two ways that we can understand the role of faith in healing: 1.) Faith in Jesus Christ to go to the right Person for healing = you get healed; 2.) faith in God’s ability and desire to heal you so it becomes true for you. This is more likely in this context of the story but it’s the more problematic of the two options. It seems that we need to have a super intense belief that we WILL be healed when we don’t know if that’s the case. It creates a ‘you are still sick or hurt because you aren’t focusing hard enough’ concept. I hate that. But we have to admit that Jesus talks about faith without doubt, whatever it means. This guy had it.
- **Paul SHOUTS, ‘stand up!’** – what’s with the aggression? Why is he so confident? How risky is this? He’s doubling down on being sure. This is a massively public miracle. Everyone is looking and it’s going to be awesome or embarrassing. But Paul has seen enough healings in his life to know how the Holy Spirit tends to operate through him and he is very confident that if he senses it, he’s going for it. I want to be like this. Not sure why he yells. Jesus yelled at Lazarus to come out of the grave but then again Lazarus was far away in a hole. This guy is in the front row. So, why the yelling? Perhaps Paul was just intense about his sermon and rolled with it. Perhaps it was a command to that which held him down (weakness, or even a spirit possibly) to release. We don’t know.
- **He sprang up and began walking** – again we have the incredible shocking miracle, like Peter & John at the temple gate, of **a man NEVER walking, knowing how to balance!** What the heck? That’s more than just building muscle and bone density, this is rewiring the brain.
 - **Does this happen today?** – Absolutely it does!
- **Bananas**
 - **The Chaotic Aftermath of a Healing**
 - **Acts: 14:11-13** – *“And when the crowds¹¹ saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!”¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.*

¹¹ “The miraculous cure struck amazement into the crowd of bystanders. These were not the Roman citizens of the colony, whose language (as appears from funerary inscriptions) was Latin, but the native Anatolian population, who still spoke their Lycaonian vernacular. The fact that they called out in Lycaonian on this occasion is mentioned by Luke for two reasons: first, Paul and Barnabas recognized that this language (though they did not understand it) was different from the Phrygian speech which they had heard on the lips of the indigenous population of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium; second, the crowd’s use of Lycaonian explains why Paul and Barnabas did not grasp what was afoot until the preparations to pay them divine honors were well advanced.” NICNT

- **A super public miracle** – it says the CROWDS saw it! That means it was not some small, backroom miracle that everyone had to hear about through the grapevine, second and third hand. This was right out in front of everyone and it was a big group.
- **Bizarre reaction** – they immediately **processed the miracle through their current lens**. They were polytheists that had been trained in Roman and Greek gods, and something supernatural happened, so they **ASSUMED** that it was those gods who did it. This doesn't make them stupid or ignorant. It is natural for them to assume this. **HOWEVER**, it is a **PROBLEM**. Why? Because one of the most important reasons why God tends to do miracles is to draw people to Himself (relationship) AND to bring glory to His name. If they think that someone/something else did it, that **ruins the whole point of a SIGN MIRACLE**.
 - **Why gods? And those gods?**¹² – there was a longstanding myth tradition in Iconium that a long time ago the gods Zeus and Hermes came to earth and weren't recognized or given hospitality, until a peasant couple did it. That couple was honored and everyone else was wiped out.
- **Naming Names**¹³ – it seems odd that they took the time to name the guys. Perhaps it was one of those 'everyone shouting and mob concepts', but they both got names that were the crowds best guesses.
 - **Barnabas = Zeus**¹⁴ – who is Zeus? Zeus is the Greek god of sky & thunder and happens to be the **boss god** (king of gods). He was known as 'father' of gods and assigned to them their roles.
 - **Paul = Hermes**¹⁵ – who is Hermes? Hermes is a Greek god who is the **speaker for gods** and protector of travelers and merchants and the guide of souls. Because Paul was the chief speaker (Peter was the chief speaker of him and John) he was assumed to be Hermes.

¹² "The explanation of their being taken for gods lies in the legendary history of Lycaonia. The people round Lystra told a story that once Zeus and Hermes had come to this earth in disguise. No one in all the land would give them hospitality until at last two old peasants, Philemon and his wife Baucis, took them in. As a result, the whole population except for Philemon and Baucis was wiped out by the gods, and Philemon and Baucis were made the guardians of a splendid temple and were turned into two great trees when they died. So, when Paul healed the crippled man, the people of Lystra were determined not to make the same mistake again. Barnabas must have had a noble presence, so they took him for Zeus, the king of the gods. Hermes was the messenger of the gods; and, since Paul was the speaker, they called him Hermes." William Barclay Bible Commentary. "That Greeks might understand such an event this way is seen in Ovid, *Metam.* 8.611–724, where Jupiter and Mercury visit in the form of the mortals Philemon and Baucis (Schneider 1982: 156).¹ Marshall (1980: 237) also notes an inscription to Zeus and Hermes dated about AD 250, found in the area just outside the city, as well as a stone altar. It would be wrong, however, to view this as simply a literary creation, as it has the feel of a historical event and these details fit the locale, as the archaeology suggests (Marshall 1980: 232–33 against Haenchen 1987: 429–34)." Darrell Bock, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT

¹³ "Local legend told of earlier occasions when the gods came down to them in the likeness of human beings—in particular, the two gods known to the Greeks as Zeus (father of gods and men) and Hermes (his son by Maia, and messenger of the gods). We cannot be sure if the crowds used these two names or (since they were speaking Lycaonian) the names of two Anatolian divinities identified with Zeus and Hermes. Ovid tells the story of a pious old couple of the region, Philemon and Baucis, who entertained Jupiter and Mercury (the Roman equivalents of Zeus and Hermes) unawares and were rewarded for their hospitality. In the earlier part of the twentieth century the evidence of epigraphy has effectively supplemented that of classical legend. Of two inscriptions from Sedasa, near Lystra, dating from the middle of the third century, and discovered by W. M. Calder, one records the dedication to Zeus of a statue of Hermes by men with Lycaonian names; the other mentions "priests of Zeus." Another indication of the joint worship of Zeus and Hermes in those parts is preserved by a stone altar discovered in 1926 near Lystra by W. M. Calder and W. H. Buckler, dedicated to the "Hearer of Prayer" (presumably Zeus) and Hermes." NICNT

¹⁴ "Barnabas may have been identified with Zeus because of his more dignified bearing;..." NICNT

¹⁵ "Paul, the more animated of the two, was called Hermes "because he was the leading speaker"—a very similar expression is used of Hermes by the early fourth-century Neoplatonist writer Iamblichus when describing the Egyptian mysteries." NICNT

- **The Zeus temple priest comes with offerings¹⁶** – nearby there was a temple to the false god Zeus and so the priest wanted to honor these guys in case it was a personification of Zeus, or at least get the crowd to believe that it was his team (good for business). I’m not sure of his motivation (pure or not).
 - **It takes a while** – you don’t just have this stuff on hand or prepped. I don’t know how long this all went but dang he had time to either be notified (if he wasn’t initially present), or to go back home to the temple and gather this stuff. Thankfully (for him) his temple was near the gate and he wanted to sacrifice at the gate. He brought oxen to slaughter and garlands (commentary says it was woolen garlands). The crowd was into it and wanted to sacrifice too.
- **C’Mon Seriously!?!**
 - **Paul & Barnabas Try to Instruct the Crowd**
 - **Acts: 14:14-18** – *“But when the apostles¹⁷ Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, 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. ¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” ¹⁸ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.*
 - **P&B hear the news** – initially they were still trying to do ministry and probably didn’t know how much this was getting out of control over at the gate a little ways down the road. They were probably hearing people saying ignorant stuff about them being gods and they were trying to remain focused on doing what they do, but then **someone got their attention let them know how serious this had become.**
 - **They rush to stop it** – the wording indicates that **they were passionate about this getting shut down as soon as possible.** They knew the ramifications of both: 1.) God losing out on praise, worship, and credit; 2.) the danger of men taking God’s credit and not giving glory to Him (e.g. Herod just died for this).
 - **They tore their garments** – what was this about?¹⁸ It was a sign of mourning. It heightens the intensity of what they were saying. It’s a visual display of desperation.
 - **Their attempt to stop it** – they don’t have full control of the crowd nor the authority to shut everything down. They only have words and influence. So what

¹⁶ “led by the priest of Zeus Propolis (Zeus whose temple stood at the city gates, and who therefore would be regarded as the city’s protector...” NICNT

¹⁷ “Here, as in verse 4, the two men are called “apostles”—a designation given to neither of them anywhere else in Acts. The opinion that its use in these two places is taken over by Luke from the source which he followed for this journey is strengthened by the word order “Barnabas and Paul,” in contrast to Luke’s customary “Paul and Barnabas.” NICNT

¹⁸ “The rending of garments among the Jews was a gesture of horror at blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:63).” NICNT

did they say to get through to people? (this ends up being great information for us and training in the theology of healing).

- **Why are you doing this?** – this is a bit rhetorical in one sense...they knew why. But it also was making the crowd stop and think about what they were doing. Why were they doing it? Was it the best idea? Instead of instantly saying, ‘stop it, you idiots!’ they presented a question to shift them off their paradigm. Very smart.
- **We also are men of like nature to you**¹⁹ – this is **CRITICAL INFORMATION** for us to have today, especially in the year of power because it sets the right tone and theology of healing. Just like Peter (and John) said to the temple gate crowd, ‘we are people just like you. This man wasn’t healed by our holiness but by Jesus.’ So, too do Paul (and Barnabas) say the same thing. ‘You guys, we are just regular guys. We aren’t super holy or superheroes. You are looking at us as if we did it. **We didn’t do this, it’s God.** He needs your attention and praise, not us.’ This is key to remember for us today because we tend to think that God will do more miracles through us if we are more perfect and more holy. We think that we need to perform to get the power to do miracles. This and many other Scriptures deny that. I’m not saying that sin can’t block ministry. I’m saying that **doing good things doesn’t give you more power. Also, being broken and normal doesn’t negate God’s power.**
- **We are here with a message that explains all this**²⁰ – instead of listening to us you are going off assumptions. If you were listening, we were actually giving you the good news of God being near to all of us and that we can have a relationship with Him. As a matter of fact we were in the process of explaining that the gods that you serve are not gods at all and you need to turn from the false to the real. The God that we are telling you about is the Creator of all things and the God of all gods.
- **It’s different now**²¹ – in the past, they said, God would let the whole world kind of find their own way. He would give them General Revelation through nature (displays of God that everyone gets to see) so that people could find Him if they were looking for Him. But today, God has drawn even closer in His Son Jesus Christ who came here to this planet to save us from our sins. He even sent His Holy Spirit, who just did this amazing miracle, by the way, to dwell in His people. (I went. Little further than Paul did in the message). His main point was that God is real and present and more powerful and good than the gods they were trying to serve. AND, P&B weren’t gods at all.
- **It barely worked** – It says they scarcely stopped them from offering sacrifices. Like, the wood was set up and the cow was under the knife, and

¹⁹ “Gk. ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ... ἄνθρωποι (for the adjective cf. Jas. 5:17). Luke is far from portraying the missionaries as “divine men” (θεῖοι ἄνθρωποι); cf. Peter in 10:26 (p. 209, 33).” NICNT

²⁰ “Preachers to such audiences would not be expected to insist on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, as they did in addressing synagogue congregations; instead, an appeal to the natural revelation of God the Creator is put in the forefront.” NICNT

²¹ “His works of creation and providence show him to be the living God who supplies the needs of men and women; therefore abandon those gods which are no gods but empty figments of the imagination, and turn to the true God.” NICNT

finally people came to their senses and realized that these guys were cool but they weren't gods.

- **It probably hijacked Paul's sermon** – now we can probably blame him for calling out a healing if it was in the middle of his sermon because it absolutely went unhinged and no one was listening anymore. Maybe he had finished his main message and started doing ministry in healing and called this out. It's not clear. But we do know there was no more listening going on.
- **Rocked**
 - **Paul is Stoned for the Faith**
 - **Acts: 14:19-20** – *“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.”*
 - **BUT** – sure enough, some things were going great (albeit chaotic), but then bad stuff comes in like a counter punch. **I tend to see the Enemy do counterpunches with great ministry advancement.**
 - **Jews came from Antioch and Iconium** – again, it's not regular Jews, it's religious leader Jews who want to shut this ministry down. They tried to kill them before in Iconium, but they got away. They had been hunting them down since they left Antioch. These are tenacious hunters, just like Paul was when he was Saul the Pharisee.
 - **Where's Antioch** – this is their home base in Syria.
 - **Where's Iconium** – this is the city they just left earlier. See above.
 - **The bad guys persuaded/turned the crowd** – Almost as if the pendulum swung too far the other way from thinking they are gods, then the apostles try to bring it to the middle, but then bad guys keep that momentum going and swing it to the opposite side and the crowd turns on them.
 - **They stoned Paul²²** – they threw rocks at him in a relatively organized way to kill him. Did they succeed? That's a debate in theological and bible-nerd circles. I think they did, but others think that they just knocked him out. All I know is that getting hit by rocks until you fall down unconscious is a big deal.
 - **Drug him out of the city** – he was gone or out enough to drag a long way (although they were at the gates still probably).
 - **Supposing that he was dead** – they thought he was dead, or they would have thrown more rocks. They may not have been doctors but they know if someone is dead or not.

²² “The Lystrans, moreover, were probably offended by the missionaries’ refusal to accept divine honours from them: they had been made to look foolish, and felt resentful. Paul, so recently acclaimed as the messenger of the immortals, was the chief target for the violent assault that followed. When, some years later, he recalled the hardships he had endured for the gospel’s sake, he says, “once I was stoned” (2 Cor. 11:25), referring necessarily to this occasion. And when, writing to Christians in the cities which figure in the present narrative, he says, “I bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17), those marks or *stigmata* certainly included the indelible scars left by the stones at Lystra. There is grim irony in the quick reversal of the local attitude to the two visitors!” NICNT

- **The disciples gathered about him** – what does this mean? I picture them gathering in protection and in prayer. I think they were interceding for him and not just watching him. Would God answer their prayers? Would He heal their leader?
- **He rose up and entered the city²³** – what the heck? I’m not going back inside. I don’t care what time it is or what just happened, I want to go to another city, this one’s stupid. But he miraculously got up, brushed off, and went back into the city. Bold move. Maybe he left his baseball hat.
- **The next day he went to Derbe with Barnabas** – two things hit me here: 1.) I love that he proverbially said, ‘clearly the door has closed here for ministry, I need to move on.’ 2.) There’s no way that I’m going to work the day after I get stoned to death. I’m taking at least a week off.
 - **The power of resilience** – **too many of us get knocked down and stay down for far too long.** Satan got in a terrible punch (abuse, trauma, PTSD, panic disorder, clinical depression) but we have not taken advantage of the miracle of God’s healing, and we have stayed down when we should have rose up in His power and moved on.
 - **The untrustworthiness of man’s estimation** – notice that PEOPLE said that they were gods and then PEOPLE said that they should be killed as bogus. So, which is it? **Are they gods or trash? Neither** is correct. **People are not trustworthy to talk about our identity or our value.** Mankind doesn’t know the whole story or the big picture, only God does. Mankind didn’t create us, God created us and knows us intimately and what we were made for. **Only God gets to tell us who we are.**
- **The Blessing of Faithfulness**
 - **Paul & Barnabas Finish the Job**
 - **Acts: 14:21-28** – *“When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ²⁴Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, ²⁶and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. ²⁷And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they remained no little time with the disciples.”*
 - **The preached in Derbe too (staying alive isn’t enough)** – They went right back to work and finished the job. It’s not like the bad guys wouldn’t be able to reach

²³ “Luke’s description of Paul’s suddenly standing up and going back into the city after being dragged out and left for dead by the roadside has a flavor of miracle about it. The additional statement in the Western text that it was evening when he reentered Lystra is very probably true.”
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them or try to finish what they started. But perhaps they had the mindset that simply trying to stay alive is not a valid purpose to live for. Perhaps they figured that either they did something meaningful for the Lord or there was no point, so why not just keep going.

- **Went to Derbe** – that’s 60 miles away southeast.
- **They made MANY disciples there** – instead of it crushing ministry it only breathed life into their ministry. Their testimony only increased. Instead of seeing your past as something that hinders ministry, put it in the Lord’s hands and watch Him use it for traction and increase.
- **The trip back home** – they went back through Lystra, Iconium, back home to Antioch (for descriptions of those locations see above).
 - **Strengthening souls of the disciples** – how did they do that? Probably through **faith-building ENCOURAGEMENT**.
 - **Encouraging them to continue in the faith** – it says they explained that the road to heaven is going to be paved with persecution and challenges (“*through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God*”). **That didn’t mean they did anything wrong, it was part of the process. When we have a head’s up of what to expect we aren’t thrown as much.**
 - **Setting up local leadership** – after they started a new ministry in a city, they would make sure that some infrastructure and leadership was in place to keep it strong. This is **intentional strategy**. It’s wise.
 - **Appointed elders in every church** – every church needed lay pastors or paid pastors to guide them. Paul had high expectations and standards for who he would put in leadership.
 - **They committed them to the Lord through prayer and fasting** – **they didn’t take selecting or appointing leadership lightly**. They would thoroughly test the people and seek the Lord with all their heart before putting them in place. If your leadership is immature, weak, or bad, it’s only a matter of time before someone gets hurt and the church comes crashing down.
 - **Went to Pisidia. Where is that?** – the southernmost territory of the Galatian province.
 - **Went to Pamphylia. Where is that?** – a region. Still in modern-day southern Turkey but more south on the coast. Interestingly, the name Pamphylia means ‘mixed tribes or races.’
 - **Went to Perga. Where is that?** – Perge is a city in Pamphylia. Relatively on the southern coast to the Mediterranean sea. It was a very wealthy Roman city at this time and extremely beautiful.
 - **Went down to Attalia.²⁴ Where is that?** – a seaport to get on a boat. Modern Antalya, the principal seaport of Pamphylia.

²⁴ “modern Antalya), the principal seaport of Pamphylia, at the mouth of the Cataractes (modern Düden-su). Attalia derived its name from its founder, Attalus II, king of Pergamum; he built and fortified it about 158 B.C. The Roman general Pompey used it as a base of operations in his campaign against the pirates in 67 B.C.” NICNT

- **Back home to Antioch – that missionary journey last at least a year perhaps more.**
 - **They shared the testimony and stories of the missionary journey – our ministry stories are not just for us.** Everyone’s faith needs building up not just ours. **Share your stories** with one another!
 - **They stayed there a long time** – this was time to recoup and restore. It became home.
 - **The Power of Having a Home Base** – How wonderful that they had somewhere to return to. **Every Christian needs a home church.** If you don’t have one and you can hear my voice, you are not only out of line, but you are setting yourself up for failure. I know that you DO ministry, but you still need community to keep you healthy.

Conclusion

- **Ministry is messy but wow, it’s awesome!**
- **Who needs a miracle today?**