



Summary

In Acts 14, we find Paul and Barnabas moving through hostile territory, refusing to stop simply because opposition grows fierce. What strikes us most is how consistent the pattern of resistance against the gospel truly is across time. The same tactics used to poison minds in Iconium, the labeling, the stirring up of crowds, the escalation to violence, are not unique to the ancient world. They reflect a spiritual reality that has never changed. What this passage drives home is that Satan's power, though real, is never a match for the power of God. Every conversion, every moment someone steps from darkness into the light of Christ, is a visible and undeniable demonstration of that truth. The healing of the crippled man at Lystra is not merely a dramatic miracle. It is a declaration. The same God whose power sustains gravity, orchestrates rainfall, and knits together 23,000 miles of blood vessels in the human body is the God who commanded a man lame from birth to rise and leap. Creation itself is a standing testimony to God's power, and that power is available to us personally when we place our faith in Christ. The central challenge this passage puts before us is the same one Jesus posed in Matthew 16: who do we say that He is? Our answer to that question determines everything.





Points

Title: Indestructible Until the Mission Is Complete: God's Power Over Satan in Acts 14

Sermon Summary: Preaching through Acts chapter 14, this sermon traces Paul and Barnabas's missionary journey through Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, using their experiences to demonstrate that God's power is always greater than Satan's. The sermon explores how Satan employs indoctrination, false religion, labels, mob violence, and the temptation of fame to suppress the gospel, while God consistently overcomes each tactic through bold preaching, miraculous signs, and the preservation of his servants. Drawing on Paul's own writings in Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, the pastor argues that every genuine conversion is a visible defeat of Satan and a demonstration of God's creation and recreation power. The sermon calls listeners to recognize that there is no neutral ground in the spiritual war between God's kingdom and Satan's, and that the church of Jesus Christ, built on the confession that he is the Christ, will never be prevailed against.

Key Points:

- - Every genuine conversion is a visible and powerful demonstration that God's power is greater than Satan's power
- - Satan uses indoctrination, name-calling, and the poisoning of minds as primary weapons against the gospel, a tactic unchanged from the first century to the present day
- - Paul and Barnabas's willingness to enter the synagogue first in Iconium shows that the gospel has the power to reach both religious people and pagans
- - The healing of the crippled man in Lystra required nothing less than God's creation power, since the man had never developed the neural connections, muscle strength, or balance required to walk or leap
- - Satan attempted to subvert Paul and Barnabas by having the crowd in Lystra worship them as Zeus and Hermes, turning their greatest miracle into a temptation toward personal fame
- - Paul and Barnabas immediately deflected worship away from themselves and toward the Creator God, using the natural world as evidence of God's existence and power
- - The stoning of Paul in Lystra, from which he either miraculously survived or was raised from the dead, may be the event Paul references in 2 Corinthians 12 when he describes being caught up to the third heaven
- - Paul believed himself to be indestructible until his mission for Christ was complete, and this conviction drove him to return immediately to the very cities where he had been persecuted
- - Jesus declared in Matthew 16 that the gates of Hades, meaning the governing power of Satan, will never prevail against his church
- - There is no spiritual middle ground: Jesus stated plainly that whoever is not with him is against him
- - False religion, including ritualistic and cultural religious practice that denies the need for a savior, is one of Satan's most effective tools because it allows people to feel spiritually satisfied while never being born again
- - Romans 8 establishes two kingdoms and two ways of living, and only those indwelt by the Spirit of God are truly children of God and heirs of eternal life



Scripture Reference:

- - Acts 14:1-28 (primary passage)
- - John 3:19 (on humanity's love of darkness over light)
- - Acts 9:4 (Jesus confronting Saul on the Damascus Road)
- - 1 Peter 5:6-11 (on humility, vigilance, and resisting the devil)
- - Romans 10:17 (faith comes by hearing the word of God)
- - 1 Corinthians 12 (the gift of a word of knowledge)
- - 1 Corinthians 14:33 (God is not the author of confusion)
- - 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 (Paul's catalog of sufferings)
- - 2 Corinthians 12:1-6 (Paul's account of being caught up to the third heaven)
- - Matthew 16 (Peter's confession and Jesus's promise to build his church)
- - Matthew 12:30 (he who is not with me is against me)
- - Romans 8:1-17 (no condemnation for those in Christ; life in the Spirit)

Stories:

- - Paul and Barnabas in Iconium: After preaching in the synagogue and seeing a great multitude believe, unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against them. Despite a long period of bold ministry confirmed by signs and wonders, a violent mob formed and the two apostles fled to Lystra.
- - The healing of the crippled man in Lystra: Paul, perceiving by the Spirit that a man crippled from birth had the faith to be healed, commanded him loudly to rise and walk. The man leaped and walked, prompting the crowd to declare Paul and Barnabas to be Hermes and Zeus in human form.
- - The temptation of divine worship in Lystra: The priest of Zeus prepared oxen and garlands for sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, who tore their clothes and ran into the crowd to redirect all praise to the living God who made heaven and earth. The pastor connects this to the mythological story the Lycaonians would have known, in which Zeus and Hermes destroyed a city that failed to welcome them.
- - The stoning of Paul and his return to the city: Jews from Antioch and Iconium traveled to Lystra, persuaded the crowd, and stoned Paul, dragging him outside the city as dead. Paul rose, returned to the city, and the next day departed for Derbe, then retraced his steps through all the cities where he had been persecuted in order to strengthen the new churches.
- - Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12: The pastor presents the possibility that Paul's account of being caught up to the third heaven fourteen years prior to writing corresponds in timing to the stoning at Lystra, suggesting Paul may have died and been raised, or at minimum experienced a supernatural vision during or after the stoning.
- - Rudyard Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King": Referenced as a literary parallel to the temptation Paul and Barnabas faced in Lystra, in which two British soldiers are mistaken for gods by a remote people and are drawn into accepting that worship, with disastrous results.
- - The pastor's own conversion: On December 29, 1993, the pastor prayed to open his heart to God and experienced what he describes as a tangible, physical sense of God's power coming upon his life, an event he credits as the foundation of his entire ministry.



Scripture

EXPLICITLY CITED REFERENCES

- John 3:19
- Acts 9:4
- Acts 13:50
- Acts 14:1-28
- 1 Peter 5:6-11
- Romans 10:17
- 1 Corinthians 12
- 1 Corinthians 14:33
- 2 Corinthians 11:22-33
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- Matthew 16:13-18
- Matthew 12:30
- Romans 8:1-17

ALLUDED TO OR THEMATICALLY REFERENCED

- Isaiah 64:6 — the sermon references the phrase "filthy rags" in the context of human works being insufficient to earn God's favor
- John 14:6 — the sermon references Jesus declaring himself the way, the truth, and the life
- John 3:3-7 — the sermon references Jesus teaching that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven
- Matthew 13 — the sermon alludes to the series of parables Jesus told about the kingdom of God
- Ephesians 2:8-9 — the sermon's repeated emphasis on salvation by grace alone, not by human effort
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 — the sermon alludes to the rapture of the church as the believer's future hope



Quotes

The artificial light of religion is human effort in the attempt to earn God's favor without knowing the true source of God's favor, which we recognize as God's grace and God's grace alone.

Every conversion story demonstrates that fact loudly and clearly. Satan's power is no match for the power of God. Every time someone walks the aisle and comes to the front, or every time you're witnessing to someone and they say, yes, I do want to pray to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in my heart and to be born again, every single time that happens, that is a visible, powerful sign spiritual demonstration that God's power is greater than Satan's power.

Miracles do not produce faith. There's sort of a momentary flash in the pan. It's the word of God that produces faith, and it was Paul's preaching that produced faith in this man's heart, amazingly, to be healed.

Paul rightly came to believe he was indestructible until his mission for Christ was complete.

Satan wants you to think, part of his indoctrination package is that there's some kind of middle ground where you can believe in God and acknowledge that there is evil existing in the world, but you're just gonna continue in this sort of middling existence pertaining to the spiritual realm and spiritual things. Jesus says that's not possible.

All of these religious practices invented by men and you can tell they're invented by men because they deny God's grace and they put it all on man doing something to earn God's favor which cannot be earned because all our works are but filthy rags in the eyes of the Lord.

You're at war with God and you don't even know it because the church won't tell you that. I don't expect the government to tell me that, but I sure expect the church to tell me that, especially when it's right in the Bible.

Satan is just fine with religion. He's the inventor. He's the one behind the world's religion. He's certainly into religious practice that keeps you from the true and living God through your religious activities and your keeping of the sacraments and all those sorts of things that make you feel good about yourself.

Don't worry about changing yourself, he'll change you. He'll transform you. He'll bring about newness of life and power of the Holy Spirit abiding in you, helping you against sin and all unrighteousness and anger and broken relationships and failed marriages and everything that the world wants to throw at you to destroy you.

It's a miracle of God that a seed germinates. It's a miracle of God that life is created from two distinct and separate cells. It's a miracle of God that a baby is born.





Discussion Questions

The sermon describes how Paul and Barnabas never stopped their mission because Satan told them to -- in what ways do opposition and persecution in your own life serve as indicators that you are moving in the right direction spiritually?

Paul had been a devoted religious man who was unknowingly serving Satan's purposes before his conversion -- how does this challenge the assumption that sincere religious practice is the same thing as genuine faith in Christ?

The crowd in Lystra quickly shifted from wanting to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods to participating in stoning them -- what does this dramatic reversal reveal about the danger of building your ministry or faith on the approval of people rather than on God?

The sermon draws a parallel between the ancient tactic of poisoning minds against the brethren and modern ideological labeling used to shut down conversation -- in what practical ways can believers engage a culture that uses ridicule and labels as weapons without compromising the truth of the gospel?

Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 12 an experience so glorious that he considered it unlawful to attempt to put it into words -- how should the mystery and indescribability of heaven shape the way we talk about eternity and resist sensationalized accounts of near-death experiences?

The sermon suggests that Paul came to believe he was indestructible until his mission for Christ was complete -- how does embracing that kind of God-given purpose change the way a believer responds to fear, suffering, and personal risk?

God's creation -- rain, gravity, the human circulatory system, the atmosphere -- is presented as a continuous witness to his power and existence -- in what ways have you grown numb to these everyday miracles, and how might recovering a sense of wonder strengthen your faith and your witness to others?

The sermon argues that Satan is not only behind paganism but also behind religious systems that keep people busy with ritual and self-effort while preventing them from understanding their need to be born again -- how do you discern the difference between religious activity that leads people to Christ and religious activity that substitutes for him?

Jesus declared in Matthew 16 that the gates of Hades would never prevail against his church, yet the church often appears embattled and retreating in the cultural moment -- how does understanding the gates of Hades as a seat of governance rather than a pursuing force change the posture with which believers engage the world?

The sermon closes with the claim that every genuine conversion is a visible, powerful demonstration that God's power is greater than Satan's power -- how does keeping that reality in view transform the way you think about evangelism, and what would it look like to approach sharing your faith with the same boldness Paul showed in commanding the lame man to rise?



Small Group Guide: Acts 14 -- The Power of God Over Satan's Schemes

Overview

This guide is based on a verse-by-verse study of Acts 14, tracing Paul and Barnabas through Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. The sermon explores how Satan works through indoctrination, false religion, fame, and violence to oppose the gospel -- and how God's power overcomes every one of those tactics. Groups are encouraged to engage honestly with both the biblical text and their own experience.

Before You Meet

Ask group members to read Acts 14 in full before gathering. Encourage them to note any verse that stands out, challenges them, or raises a question.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Satan's power is no match for God's power.** Every genuine conversion is a visible demonstration that God's power exceeds Satan's. The sermon made this point plainly: every time someone comes to faith in Christ, Satan is visibly defeated.
- 2. Satan uses indoctrination to poison minds before the gospel can take root.** In Acts 14:2, unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. This tactic -- shutting down the argument before it begins through labels, ridicule, and social pressure -- is not new. It is a documented and ancient strategy of the enemy.
- 3. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, not by witnessing miracles.** The crippled man in Lystra was healed because he heard Paul preaching and developed faith through that hearing, as Romans 10:17 describes. Signs and wonders confirmed the message but did not produce faith in those whose minds were already poisoned.
- 4. God's creation is a constant, daily witness to his power and existence.** Paul's message to the pagan crowd in Lystra was rooted in creation -- rain, seasons, the sustaining of life. God has never left himself without a witness, even among those who have never heard the gospel preached.
- 5. Satan's tactics against the church will never ultimately succeed.** Jesus declared in Matthew 16 that the gates of Hades would not prevail against his church. Acts 14 is a living demonstration of that promise. Every attempt to silence Paul -- expulsion, poisoned minds, mob violence, stoning -- only spread the gospel further.



6. Believers are indestructible until their mission for Christ is complete. Paul's survival of stoning, whether by miraculous preservation or resurrection, and his immediate return to ministry, reflects a conviction that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by Satan's violence.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before this study, how did you typically think about spiritual opposition in your daily life? Did you think of it in personal terms, cultural terms, or something else?
 2. The sermon opened with the idea that when you have been on Satan's side, you recognize him more readily afterward. Do you find that to be true in your own experience? How has your past helped you identify spiritual deception more clearly?
-

Acts 14:1-7 -- Poisoned Minds and Persistent Preaching

3. The sermon compared the tactic of poisoning minds through labels and ridicule to Saul Alinsky's strategy of picking a target, freezing it, personalizing it, and polarizing it. Where do you see this tactic used against Christians or Christian truth claims today? How should believers respond?
 4. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium for a long time despite growing opposition (Acts 14:3). What does that kind of persistence require? What tends to cause believers to disengage or go quiet when opposition increases?
 5. The sermon noted that signs and wonders do not produce faith in poisoned minds. What does this suggest about the limits of relying on visible demonstrations of God's power in evangelism? What does it tell us about the centrality of preaching?
-

Acts 14:8-18 -- The Healing at Lystra and the Temptation of Fame

6. The crippled man heard Paul speaking, and that hearing produced faith (Romans 10:17). Think about your own coming to faith. What did you hear, and from whom? How central was the spoken or written Word of God to that moment?
7. The crowd in Lystra immediately attributed a miracle of God to Zeus and Hermes. The sermon drew a parallel to how modern culture attributes the works of God to Mother Nature. Where else do you see God's work being credited to something or someone other than God? How do you respond when that happens in



conversation?

8. *Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and ran into the crowd to prevent being worshiped. The sermon described the temptation of fame as a real and dangerous snare for those in ministry. How does the desire for recognition or affirmation affect ordinary believers, not just pastors or public figures? How do we guard against it?*
 9. *Paul's response to the crowd was to point immediately to God as Creator -- the one who sends rain, provides fruitful seasons, and sustains all life. Why is creation such an effective starting point for sharing the gospel with people who have no biblical background? How might you use this approach in your own conversations?*
-

Acts 14:19-28 -- Stoning, Survival, and the Road Back

10. *After being stoned and left for dead, Paul rose up and went back into the city the very next day, then returned through the very cities where he had faced the worst opposition. What does this tell us about Paul's understanding of his calling? What would it look like for you to have that same conviction about your own mission?*
 11. *The sermon referenced 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, where Paul describes being caught up to the third heaven and hearing things too sacred to put into words. He refused to make that experience the centerpiece of his ministry or his identity. What does that restraint teach us about how we handle extraordinary spiritual experiences, whether our own or others'?*
 12. *Paul and Barnabas returned to strengthen the new believers, telling them in Acts 14:22 that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. How does that statement reframe the way we think about suffering and hardship in the Christian life? Is that message being communicated clearly in your church community?*
 13. *The sermon closed with Matthew 16:18, where Jesus declares that the gates of Hades will not prevail against his church. Given everything you read and discussed today, what does that promise mean to you personally? How does it change the way you engage with the cultural and spiritual opposition you face?*
-

Practical Applications

This week, choose one or more of the following:

- ***Identify the witness around you.*** Take a moment each morning this week to notice one aspect of God's creation -- weather, your own body functioning, the food you eat -- and consciously attribute it to God rather than passing over it. Consider sharing what you notice with someone else.



- **Prepare a simple response to a label or accusation.** Think of one label or dismissive claim that is commonly used to shut down Christian conversation in your context. Write out a brief, calm, and truthful response you could use the next time it comes up. Practice it with a trusted friend.
- **Examine your own motivations in ministry.** Whether you serve in a formal ministry role or in everyday relationships, ask yourself honestly: Am I seeking recognition, or am I seeking to make Christ known? Bring that question to God in prayer and ask him to reveal any areas where the desire for affirmation is shaping your behavior.
- **Share the gospel with someone using creation as your starting point.** Identify someone in your life who has no church background or who holds a secular worldview. Look for a natural opening to point to something in creation and ask what they think is behind it. Let the conversation go where the Spirit leads.
- **Memorize Romans 10:17.** The verse describes how faith is produced. Commit it to memory so it is available to you when you are praying for someone, sharing the gospel, or encouraging a new believer.
- **Pray for boldness in the face of opposition.** Set aside time specifically to pray for the boldness Paul and Barnabas demonstrated -- not boldness in your own strength, but the kind that comes from the Holy Spirit and from knowing that God's power is greater than Satan's.

Closing Reflection

The sermon ended with an invitation and a personal testimony. The pastor described December 29, 1993, as the moment everything changed -- a moment he said he would remember for the rest of his life and into eternity.

Close your group time by giving each person an opportunity to briefly answer one of the following:

- If you are a believer, when did faith in Christ become real and personal for you? What did you hear, and how did God meet you?
- If you are still working through these questions, what is the main thing standing between you and a wholehearted commitment to follow Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Ask a group member to close in prayer, thanking God for his creation power, his recreation power in transforming lives, and his promise that the gates of hell will never prevail against his church. Pray for boldness, clarity, and faithfulness for every person in the group in the week ahead.



Daily Devotional

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on Acts 14 and Supporting Scriptures

Day 1: The Light That Cannot Be Extinguished

Reading: John 3:19-21; Acts 14:1-3

Devotional: The world offers many substitutes for true light. Religion without grace, philosophy without God, and moral effort without transformation all promise illumination but deliver only shadow. Paul and Barnabas walked into Iconium knowing the difference between artificial light and the true light of Jesus Christ, because they had lived on both sides of that line. The gospel they proclaimed was not a system of human achievement but a declaration of divine grace. Ask yourself honestly today: are you trusting in the light of your own effort, or have you surrendered to the only light that never fails?

Personal Reflection: What false lights have you relied upon instead of the grace of God?

Practical Application: Identify one area of your life where human effort has replaced genuine trust in God, and surrender it to him in prayer today.

Day 2: Faith Comes by Hearing

Reading: Romans 10:14-17; Acts 14:8-10

Devotional: A man crippled from birth sat in a crowd and heard Paul preach. He had never walked a single step, yet something happened in his heart as the word of God entered his ears. Faith was born. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, saw that faith and called the man to rise. The miracle did not produce the faith. The word produced the faith, and the faith preceded the miracle. This is the consistent pattern of God's work throughout Scripture. The word of God is not merely ancient literature. It is living, active, and capable of producing faith in the most unlikely hearts.

Personal Reflection: When did the word of God last genuinely produce something new in your heart?

Practical Application: Set aside fifteen uninterrupted minutes today to read Scripture slowly, asking God to produce fresh faith through what you read.



Day 3: God's Witness in Creation

Reading: Acts 14:15-17; Romans 1:19-20

Devotional: Paul stood before a pagan crowd and pointed them not to Jewish history but to the sky above their heads and the rain that fed their harvests. He understood that God had never left himself without a witness, even among those who had never heard the name of Abraham. Every sunrise, every heartbeat, every breath drawn in an atmosphere precisely calibrated for human life declares the creative power and personal care of a God who is not distant. Creation is not background scenery. It is testimony. When you step outside today, you are walking through a cathedral God built to announce his own existence.

Personal Reflection: How often do you move through the created world without acknowledging the Creator behind it?

Practical Application: At some point today, stop, look at something in the natural world, and speak a deliberate word of praise to God for his creative power.

Day 4: Indestructible Until the Mission Is Complete

Reading: 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Acts 14:19-21; 1 Peter 5:6-11

Devotional: Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead. The next day he got up and went back in. There is no natural explanation for that kind of resilience. It was not stubbornness or bravado. It was the settled conviction that God's purposes for his life had not yet been fulfilled, and therefore neither stones nor stonings nor shipwrecks nor sleepless nights could end what God had started. Peter reminds us that suffering is not evidence of God's absence but of his refining work. The enemy may bruise you, but he cannot bury what God has called forth. You are held until the work is done.

Personal Reflection: What suffering in your life have you interpreted as abandonment rather than as God's purposeful refining?

Practical Application: Write down one hardship you are currently facing and write beside it a specific promise from Scripture that speaks directly to that difficulty.

Day 5: No Condemnation, No Middle Ground

Reading: Romans 8:1-17; Matthew 12:30; Matthew 16:15-18

Devotional: Jesus drew a line with absolute clarity. There is no neutral territory in the spiritual realm. To be uncommitted is not to be safe. It is to be, by default, on the wrong side. Paul understood this from the inside, having served Satan devoutly while believing he was serving God. The freedom described in Romans 8 is not a passive freedom. It is the active, Spirit-led life of someone who has chosen, deliberately and finally, to be with Christ. The gates of hell will not prevail against his church. That promise is not contingent on the strength of the church but on the identity of its builder. Stand on the rock.



Personal Reflection: Have you fully surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ, or are you still maintaining a portion of neutral ground?

Practical Application: Have a direct conversation with one person this week about what it means to be born again, using your own testimony as the starting point.

