



"Ministry Amid Opposition & Adulation"

Acts 14:1-18

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Intro: "You either die a hero, or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain."

– Bruce Wayne, a.k.a. Batman *(shh... don't tell anybody!)*

Where we've been, where we're headed:

- **(Acts 13:42–52)** Last week we saw how Paul and Barnabas faced both eagerness and sharp opposition in Pisidian Antioch.
- **(Acts 14:1–7)** Today, we'll see Paul and Barnabas move on to Iconium, where preaching the Gospel brings both salvation and intense division.
- **(Acts 14:8–18)** In Lystra, a miraculous healing leads to a dangerous cultural delusion as the crowds try to worship them as gods.

1. Division in Iconium (vv. 1–7)

Acts 14:1-3 – "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. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands."

Acts 14:4-5 – "But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them..."

"The primary function of miracles in the New Testament was not to prove the existence of God, but to authenticate God's true agents of revelation." – R.C. Sproul

Swords: Throughout history, language, and culture, swords have operated as the quintessential symbol of division—both physically and conceptually.

- Hebrews 4:12 – "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
- The Gospel divides because ultimately it separates truth from lies.

Acts 14:6–7 – "...they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel."

Matthew 10:23 – "But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes."

2. Delusion in Lystra (vv. 8–13)

Acts 14:8-10 – "At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he fixed his gaze on him and saw that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he leaped up and began to walk."

Acts 14:11-12 – "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.' And Barnabas, they began to call Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."

Culture will always try to fit God's truth into their own pagan world view!

Acts 14:13 – "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."

"I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." – C.S. Lewis

Romans 1:25 – "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

3. Deflection & Declaration in Response (vv. 14–18)

Acts 14:14-15 – "But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out 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.'"

Acts 14:16-18 – "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; 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. Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them."

Conclusion:

So, if you are in Jesus Christ, you do not need to shrink back in the face of rejection, nor consume the praise of men—instead, point every circumstance to the glory of the living God.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. The Gospel naturally divides truth from lies (Hebrews 4:12). How do you react when speaking biblical truth causes friction or division in your relationships?
2. In verse 3, Paul and Barnabas stayed longer *because* of the opposition, not despite it. What opposition in your life might God be calling you to face with renewed boldness rather than running away?
3. The crowds in Lystra tried to fit God's miraculous work into their own pagan worldview. In what ways does our modern culture try to fit biblical truth into worldly agendas or ideologies?
4. Paul appealed to God's general revelation (rain, seasons, food) when speaking to a non-Jewish audience. How can you use everyday blessings to initiate conversations about God with non-believers?