

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 14 — Through Tribulation Into the Kingdom

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 14 continues Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

Acts 13 ended with persecution in Pisidian Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas were driven from the region.

But they were not defeated.

They moved to Iconium.

Then to Lystra.

Then to Derbe.

And everywhere they went:

They preached the Good News.

Acts 14 gives us a realistic picture of Christian ministry.

There is:

Powerful preaching.

Conversion.

Miracles.

Opposition.

Jealousy.

Violence.

Misunderstanding.

Idolatry.

Persecution.

Church growth.

Leadership development.

Encouragement.

Missionary reporting.

The chapter begins with many people believing.

Then enemies poison the minds of others.

Paul and Barnabas continue speaking boldly.

A plot develops to stone them.

They move to another city.

A man lame from birth is healed.

The crowd responds incorrectly and tries to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods.

The missionaries immediately reject the praise.

They tell the people:

“We are only human like you!”

They call them away from worthless idols and toward:

“The living God.”

Then the crowd that wanted to worship Paul is persuaded by hostile opponents to stone him.

Paul is dragged outside the city and left for dead.

But he gets up.

He goes back into the city.

The next day:

He continues missionary work.

Then Paul and Barnabas do something especially significant.

They return to the very cities where they had suffered persecution.

Why?

To strengthen the believers.

To encourage them.

To establish leadership.

And to teach them:

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

Acts 14 therefore destroys the idea that following Christ guarantees a trouble-free life.

The gospel does not promise believers exemption from hardship.

It promises:

God's presence.

God's grace.

God's kingdom.

God's sustaining power.

Paul and Barnabas eventually return to Antioch, the church that had sent them.

They gather the church and report:

“Everything God had done through them.”

Notice their emphasis.

Not:

Everything we accomplished.

But:

Everything God did.

Acts 14 teaches us:

Bold preaching may produce both belief and opposition.

Miracles must point people toward God rather than human messengers.

Persecution does not cancel the mission.

Believers need strengthening after conversion.

Churches need godly leadership.

Christian mission should be covered by prayer.

And:

The road into the kingdom may include many hardships, but the grace of God is sufficient for the journey.

I. POWERFUL PREACHING IN ICONIUM

Acts 14:1

“In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went together into the Jewish synagogue. They spoke so powerfully that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.”

Paul and Barnabas continue the pattern established in Acts 13.

They enter the synagogue.

They preach.

People believe.

Cross References

Acts 13:14

Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch on the Sabbath and began proclaiming God’s message.

Acts 17:1

Paul later traveled through other cities and entered the synagogue to reason with people from the Scriptures.

Acts 18:4

Paul regularly reasoned in the synagogue, seeking to persuade both Jews and Greeks concerning the truth.

Spiritual Principle

Clear gospel preaching can reach people from very different backgrounds.

Jews believed.

Greeks believed.

The message was the same:

Jesus Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The power of gospel preaching is not in making the message complicated, but in proclaiming Christ clearly and faithfully.

II. UNBELIEF BECOMES ACTIVE OPPOSITION

Acts 14:2

“But some Jews refused to believe, and they stirred up the Gentiles, poisoning their minds against the believers.”

The unbelief does not remain private.

It becomes active opposition.

Cross References

Acts 13:45

When some saw the crowds listening to Paul, jealousy filled them and they began contradicting and insulting him.

Acts 13:50

Opponents stirred up influential people and created persecution against Paul and Barnabas.

1 Thessalonians 2:16

Paul later described opponents who tried to stop gospel preaching from reaching others.

Spiritual Principle

Rejecting truth can eventually become hostility toward those who accept truth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A poisoned mind often begins with a heart unwilling to receive the truth.

III. THEY STAY AND SPEAK BOLDLY

Acts 14:3

“Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed their message of grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.”

Opposition does not immediately drive them away.

They remain.

They continue preaching.

The Message

Luke calls it:

“The message of grace.”

The Lord’s Confirmation

Signs and wonders accompanied the preaching.

Cross References

Mark 16:20

The disciples went out preaching, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message through signs.

Hebrews 2:4

God bore witness to the gospel through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will.

Acts 4:29

The believers prayed for boldness to continue speaking God’s Word even while facing threats.

Spiritual Principle

Opposition is not always a signal to leave immediately. Sometimes faithfulness means remaining and speaking boldly.

IV. THE CITY BECOMES DIVIDED

Acts 14:4

“The city became divided—some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.”

The gospel produces a decision.

Cross References

Acts 23:7

Paul’s message later produced division between opposing groups in Jerusalem.

John 7:43

The people became divided because of differing responses to Jesus.

John 9:16

Some rejected Jesus while others questioned how a sinner could perform such signs.

Spiritual Principle

Truth can bring division because people respond differently to Christ.

This does not mean Christians should seek unnecessary conflict.

But genuine gospel truth cannot always be received without forcing a decision.

V. A PLOT TO STONE THE MISSIONARIES

Acts 14:5

“Finally, both Gentiles and Jews, with their leaders, plotted to mistreat and stone them.”

Opposition escalates.

Words become plans for violence.

Cross References

Acts 14:19

Paul was later actually stoned in Lystra and dragged outside the city.

John 10:31

Jesus’ opponents picked up stones intending to kill Him.

Acts 7:58

Stephen was dragged outside the city and stoned.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful ministry may eventually encounter hostility that goes far beyond verbal disagreement.

VI. PAUL AND BARNABAS FLEE

Acts 14:6

“They found out about it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and the surrounding countryside.”

They leave.

This is not cowardice.

It is wisdom.

Cross References

Matthew 10:23

Jesus told His disciples that when persecution came in one town, they could flee to another.

Acts 9:25

Saul himself once escaped Damascus by being lowered through the city wall in a basket.

Acts 8:1

Persecution had previously scattered believers from Jerusalem into other regions.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Courage does not require staying where God has opened another door of escape and ministry.

VII. THEY KEEP PREACHING

Acts 14:7

“There they preached the Good News.”

This sentence summarizes their response to persecution.

They move.

But they do not become silent.

Cross References

Acts 14:21

Paul and Barnabas later preached the gospel in Derbe and made many disciples.

Acts 8:4

Believers scattered by persecution went everywhere preaching the Word.

Mark 16:15

Jesus commanded His followers to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel.

Spiritual Principle

Opposition may change the location of ministry without changing the mission.

VIII. A MAN LAME FROM BIRTH

Acts 14:8

“In Lystra there was a man who had been lame from birth; he had never walked.”

The man’s condition was lifelong.

Cross References

Acts 3:2

A man lame from birth was regularly carried to the temple gate in Jerusalem.

John 5:5

Jesus met a man who had suffered from a disabling condition for many years.

Isaiah 35:6

Isaiah foretold a day when the lame would leap like a deer as God's saving power was revealed.

Spiritual Principle

A lifelong problem is not beyond God's authority.

IX. THE MAN LISTENS

Acts 14:9

"He listened as Paul was speaking. Paul looked straight at him and saw he had faith to be healed."

Notice where the miracle begins.

The man is:

Listening.

Cross References

Mark 5:34

Jesus told the healed woman that her faith had been connected with receiving healing.

Matthew 9:22

Jesus told the woman who touched His garment to take courage because her faith had brought healing.

Acts 3:16

Peter explained that faith in Jesus' name had brought healing to the lame man.

Spiritual Principle

Faith responds to what it hears about God and His power.

X. "STAND ON YOUR FEET!"

Acts 14:10

"Paul called out in a loud voice, 'Stand on your feet!' At once the man jumped up and began to walk."

The healing is immediate.

Cross References

Acts 3:7

Peter took the lame man by the hand, and immediately his feet and ankles became strong.

John 5:8

Jesus told the disabled man, “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.”

Isaiah 35:6

Isaiah foretold that the lame would leap when God’s salvation appeared.

Spiritual Principle

When God genuinely heals, the power belongs to Him rather than to the servant speaking.

XI. THE CROWD MISUNDERSTANDS THE MIRACLE

Acts 14:11

“When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their own language, ‘The gods have come down to us in human form!’”

The miracle is real.

Their interpretation is wrong.

Cross References

Acts 28:6

People later wrongly concluded that Paul was a god after he survived a snakebite.

Acts 8:10

The Samaritans had once wrongly regarded Simon as “the great power of God.”

John 10:33

Jesus’ opponents argued over claims concerning divine identity.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A genuine supernatural event can still be interpreted through a false worldview.

Experience must be corrected by truth.

XII. PAUL AND BARNABAS ARE CALLED GODS

Acts 14:12

“They called Barnabas ‘Zeus,’ and Paul ‘Hermes,’ because he was the chief speaker.”

The crowd interprets the missionaries through Greek mythology.

Cross References

Acts 10:25

Cornelius once fell at Peter’s feet, but Peter refused inappropriate reverence.

Revelation 22:8

John fell before an angel, but the angel immediately refused worship.

Acts 14:11

The crowd had concluded that the gods had come down in human form.

Spiritual Principle

People often interpret new truth through the categories they already possess.

That is why biblical explanation matters.

XIII. THE CROWD PREPARES SACRIFICES

Acts 14:13

“The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the gates, and he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.”

Their misunderstanding becomes worship.

Cross References

Acts 14:18

Paul and Barnabas barely succeeded in stopping the people from sacrificing to them.

Exodus 32:6

Israel once brought offerings before the golden calf and celebrated idolatrous worship.

Judges 2:19

Israel repeatedly turned toward false gods and corrupted worship.

Spiritual Principle

Religious enthusiasm is not enough. Worship must be directed toward the true God.

XIV. PAUL AND BARNABAS REJECT THE WORSHIP

Acts 14:14

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, shouting.”

They are horrified.

Cross References

Acts 10:26

Peter told Cornelius to stand because Peter was only a man.

Matthew 26:65

Tearing one’s garments could express horror or deep distress over perceived blasphemy.

Numbers 14:6

Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in grief when Israel rebelled against God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The true servant of God becomes alarmed when people give him glory that belongs to God.

XV. “WE ARE ONLY HUMAN LIKE YOU”

Acts 14:15

“Friends, why are you doing this? We are only human like you! We are bringing you Good News, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.”

This is Paul’s message to a pagan audience.

He does not begin with Abraham or Moses.

He begins with:

Creation.

Turn From Worthless Things

Idols cannot save.

Turn To the Living God

Biblical repentance has direction.

Away from idols.

Toward God.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 1:9

The Thessalonian believers turned away from idols to serve the living and true God.

Jeremiah 10:3

The practices of the nations concerning idols are worthless because idols are made by human hands.

Acts 17:24

Paul later told the Athenians that the God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Repentance is not merely turning away from something false; it is turning toward the living God.

XVI. GOD ALLOWED THE NATIONS TO GO THEIR OWN WAY

Acts 14:16

“In the past, He allowed all nations to go their own way.”

Paul acknowledges a period of divine patience.

Cross References

Acts 17:30

Paul later said that God had overlooked times of ignorance but now commands all people everywhere to repent.

Romans 1:24

Because people rejected God, He gave them over to follow sinful desires.

Psalm 81:12

God said that He gave rebellious people over to their stubborn hearts so they followed their own plans.

Spiritual Principle

God's patience toward human rebellion should never be mistaken for approval of human rebellion.

XVII. CREATION TESTIFIES TO GOD

Acts 14:17

“Yet He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven, crops in their seasons, and filling your hearts with food and joy.”

Paul appeals to what theologians often call:

General revelation.

Creation and providence testify to God's goodness.

Cross References

Romans 1:19

What can be known about God has been made evident because God has revealed enough through creation to leave humanity responsible.

Psalms 147:8

God covers the sky with clouds, provides rain for the earth, and causes grass to grow.

Matthew 5:45

God causes the sun to rise and sends rain upon both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Spiritual Principle

Ordinary blessings are daily witnesses to the kindness of the Creator.

Rain.

Food.

Harvest.

Joy.

All point beyond themselves.

XVIII. THE CROWD CAN BARELY BE RESTRAINED

Acts 14:18

“Even with these words, they could hardly keep the crowd from sacrificing to them.”

False beliefs can be difficult to correct.

Cross References

Acts 14:13

The priest and crowd had already prepared animals for sacrifice.

Acts 10:26

Peter similarly rejected worship and insisted that he was only human.

Acts 14:14

Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes in distress when they realized what the crowd intended.

Spiritual Principle

Correcting false worship may require persistence because deeply held spiritual error does not disappear immediately.

XIX. THE CROWD TURNS AGAINST PAUL

Acts 14:19

“Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.”

The emotional reversal is dramatic.

Earlier:

They wanted to worship Paul.

Now:

They stone Paul.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:25

Paul later testified that he had been stoned once during his ministry.

2 Timothy 3:11

Paul later reminded Timothy about the persecutions he endured in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

Acts 7:58

Stephen had also been dragged outside a city and stoned.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Crowd approval is unstable; the servant of God must not build identity upon public praise.

The same crowd that applauds today may condemn tomorrow.

XX. PAUL GETS UP

Acts 14:20

“But as the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.”

Paul survives.

Then he does something remarkable:

He goes back into the city.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 12:9

Christ told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, because My power is made perfect in weakness.”

Acts 9:19

After Saul’s conversion and physical weakness, he regained strength and began serving Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:10

Paul later said that God had delivered him from deadly danger and that his hope remained in God.

Spiritual Principle

God can give strength after an experience that should have ended the mission.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You may be knocked down in ministry without being finished in ministry.

XXI. THEY PREACH IN DERBE AND RETURN

Acts 14:21

“They preached the gospel in Derbe and won many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.”

This is extraordinary.

They return to cities where opposition had been severe.

Cross References

Acts 14:6

Paul and Barnabas had previously fled into the region around Lystra and Derbe.

Acts 16:1

Paul later returned to this area again and met Timothy.

Matthew 28:19

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples among all nations.

Spiritual Principle

Mission does not end when people believe; new believers must be strengthened.

XXII. “THROUGH MANY HARDSHIPS”

Acts 14:22

“Strengthening the believers and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. They said, ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.’”

This verse gives the chapter its title.

Paul does not tell new believers:

“Now that you follow Jesus, life will become easy.”

He says:

“We must go through many hardships.”

Cross References

2 Timothy 3:12

Everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus should expect persecution.

John 16:33

Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Romans 8:17

Believers who share Christ’s inheritance may also share in suffering before sharing in glory.

Important Truth

Hardship does not earn entrance into God’s kingdom.

Salvation is by grace through faith.

The point is:

The path of faithful discipleship in a hostile world includes suffering.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The road to the kingdom is not always comfortable, but the kingdom is worth every hardship along the way.

XXIII. ELDERS ARE APPOINTED

Acts 14:23

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church, with prayer and fasting, committing them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Paul and Barnabas understand that churches need leadership.

Cross References

Titus 1:5

Paul later told Titus to appoint elders in every town according to proper qualifications.

Acts 6:6

Church servants were presented before spiritual leaders, who prayed and laid hands upon them.

1 Timothy 4:14

Timothy’s ministry calling was recognized through prayer and the laying on of hands.

Spiritual Principle

Healthy churches need spiritually qualified leadership.

Prayer and Fasting

Leadership decisions were treated seriously.

Committing Them to the Lord

Ultimately the churches belonged to Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Church leaders are entrusted with people who still belong to the Lord, not to the leaders.

XXIV. THEY TRAVEL THROUGH PISIDIA

Acts 14:24

“After traveling through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.”

The missionary journey begins turning homeward.

Cross References

Acts 13:13

Paul and his companions had earlier arrived in Pamphylia.

Acts 13:14

They had traveled from Perga into Pisidian Antioch.

Acts 15:38

Pamphylia would later be remembered as the region where John Mark had left the mission.

Spiritual Principle

Missionary service includes faithful completion, not merely an enthusiastic beginning.

XXV. THEY PREACH IN PERGA

Acts 14:25

“They preached in Perga, then went down to Attalia.”

Even while returning home:

They preach.

Cross References

Acts 13:13

Paul's missionary team had earlier passed through Perga.

Acts 14:24

They had returned through Pamphylia on the homeward journey.

Acts 13:14

Their earlier route had taken them from Perga toward Pisidian Antioch.

Spiritual Principle

The missionary assignment continues until the journey itself is finished.

XXVI. THEY RETURN TO THE SENDING CHURCH

Acts 14:26

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

They return to the church that sent them.

Cross References

Acts 13:3

The Antioch church had prayed, fasted, laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them out.

Acts 15:40

Paul would later begin another missionary journey after being commended to God's grace.

Acts 13:1

Antioch was the church where Barnabas and Saul had served as teachers and leaders.

Key Phrase

“Entrusted to the grace of God.”

Their survival depended upon grace.

Their ministry depended upon grace.

Their fruit depended upon grace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The grace that sends us is the grace that sustains us and the grace that brings us through the work.

XXVII. THEY REPORT WHAT GOD DID

Acts 14:27

“When they arrived, they gathered the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

This is missionary accountability.

The church sent them.

They return and report.

But notice their focus:

“Everything God had done.”

Cross References

Acts 15:4

Paul and Barnabas later reported to the church what God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Acts 11:18

The Jerusalem believers had already praised God for granting Gentiles repentance leading to life.

1 Corinthians 16:9

Paul later described a great and effective door for ministry that God had opened.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A faithful ministry report should magnify what God accomplished rather than what the servants achieved.

XXVIII. THEY REMAIN WITH THE DISCIPLES

Acts 14:28

“And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.”

After the missionary journey:

They return to Christian community.

Cross References

Acts 15:35

Paul and Barnabas later remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the Word.

Acts 11:26

Barnabas and Saul had previously spent an entire year teaching the believers at Antioch.

Acts 13:1

Antioch remained a major center of teaching, ministry, and missionary activity.

Spiritual Principle

Missionaries need the fellowship, stability, and encouragement of the local church too.

XXIX. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 14

1. Bold Preaching Produces Different Responses

Many believed.

Others opposed.

Principle:

The success of gospel preaching cannot be measured only by universal acceptance.

2. Opposition Must Not Silence the Messenger

Paul and Barnabas stayed and spoke boldly.

Principle:

Faithful ministry requires courage under pressure.

3. Worship Belongs to God Alone

Paul and Barnabas immediately rejected divine honors.

Principle:

God's servant must never accept glory that belongs to the Creator.

4. Public Opinion Is Unstable

The crowd wanted to worship Paul.

Then they stoned him.

Principle:

Build your identity upon God's approval rather than the crowd's applause.

5. Hardship Is Part of Christian Discipleship

Paul taught:

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

Principle:

Suffering does not prove God has abandoned us.

6. Churches Need Strengthening and Leadership

Paul and Barnabas returned to encourage believers and appoint elders.

Principle:

Evangelism must lead into discipleship and healthy church life.

7. God Deserves the Credit

The missionaries reported:

"Everything God had done through them."

Principle:

God uses servants, but God receives the glory.

XXX. THE TWO RESPONSES TO THE GOSPEL

Iconium shows two responses.

Some Believed

Some Refused to Believe

Then opposition intensified.

This pattern appears repeatedly in Acts.

Spiritual Principle

The same gospel can soften one heart and expose the hardness of another.

The difference is not in the message.

The difference is in the response.

XXXI. THE MESSAGE OF GRACE

Acts 14:3 calls the gospel:

“The message of grace.”

Grace means salvation is rooted in God’s kindness rather than our merit.

Grace Forgives

Grace Saves

Grace Sustains

Grace Sends

Grace Strengthens

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel is not a message about how worthy sinners become; it is a message about how gracious God is toward unworthy sinners through Jesus Christ.

XXXII. MIRACLES AND THE WORD

Acts 14 carefully keeps the proper order.

The apostles:

Speak the message of grace.

Then the Lord confirms:

The Word.

Spiritual Principle

Miracles should never become more important than the truth they are meant to confirm.

A miracle without biblical truth can be misunderstood.

Lystra proves this.

The man was truly healed.

But the crowd concluded:

“The gods have come down.”

Therefore signs alone do not guarantee correct theology.

XXXIII. WHEN MIRACLES ARE MISUNDERSTOOD

The Lystra crowd witnesses undeniable power.

But because their worldview is pagan, they interpret it incorrectly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Experience needs Scripture because powerful experiences do not interpret themselves.

A person can:

See something real.

Experience something powerful.

And still reach a false conclusion.

Truth must interpret experience.

XXXIV. “WE ARE ONLY HUMAN”

Paul and Barnabas could have enjoyed the attention.

Instead:

They tore their clothes.

They rushed into the crowd.

They shouted for the people to stop.

Spiritual Principle

The closer a servant walks with God, the less comfortable he should become with receiving glory that belongs to God.

This is a lesson for:

Pastors.

Teachers.

Evangelists.

Authors.

Musicians.

Leaders.

Anyone with influence.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A ministry becomes spiritually dangerous when the audience begins worshiping the messenger more than honoring the Master.

XXXV. TURN FROM WORTHLESS THINGS

Paul describes idols as:

“Worthless things.”

They cannot:

Create.

Save.

Hear.

Forgive.

Give eternal life.

The living God can.

Spiritual Principle

Idolatry exchanges the Creator for something created.

Modern idols may not always look like statues.

They may include:

Money.

Influence.

Success.

Pleasure.

Power.

Identity.

Approval.

Anything taking God's rightful place can become idolatrous.

XXXVI. THE LIVING GOD

Paul's message to pagans centers on:

The living God.

This distinguishes biblical faith from idolatry.

Idols are dead.

God lives.

Idols are made.

God made everything.

Idols depend upon worshipers.

All creation depends upon God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never worship something God created when you can worship the God who created it.

XXXVII. GENERAL REVELATION

Acts 14:17 teaches that God:

"Has not left Himself without testimony."

Rain.

Harvest.

Food.

Joy.

Creation itself bears witness.

Important Doctrinal Truth

General revelation reveals enough about God's existence, power, and goodness to make humanity accountable.

But salvation still requires the gospel of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Creation can tell us that there is a Creator, but the gospel tells us how sinners are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.

XXXVIII. FROM WORSHIP TO STONING

Acts 14 contains one of Scripture's strongest lessons about public approval.

Verse 13:

People want to sacrifice to Paul.

Verse 19:

People stone Paul.

The change happens quickly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Never Build Your Ministry on the Applause of a Crowd”

Crowds are unstable.

God is faithful.

Human approval changes.

God's truth remains.

Principle

If applause becomes your fuel, criticism will become your destruction.

Serve Christ.

XXXIX. PAUL GOES BACK INTO THE CITY

Paul was:

Stoned.

Dragged out.

Left for dead.

Then he:

Got up.

And:

Went back into the city.

That is extraordinary courage.

Spiritual Principle

Courage is sometimes going back toward the place associated with your pain because your mission is greater than your fear.

XL. “WE MUST GO THROUGH MANY HARDSHIPS”

This statement deserves careful attention.

Paul himself had just demonstrated it.

He did not teach hardship theoretically.

He had lived it.

Beaten

Opposed

Threatened

Stoned

Driven Away

Yet he still said:

Remain true to the faith.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A gospel that prepares believers only for blessing and never for suffering leaves them unprepared for biblical Christianity.

XLI. WHAT SUFFERING DOES NOT MEAN

Hardship does not automatically mean:

God has abandoned you.

You are outside God’s will.

Your faith has failed.

Your ministry has failed.

The gospel is powerless.

Paul experienced hardship while doing exactly what God called him to do.

Spiritual Principle

Sometimes suffering appears because you are faithfully walking in God's mission, not because you have left it.

XLII. STRENGTHENING NEW BELIEVERS

Paul and Barnabas do not merely count converts.

They return to:

Strengthen believers.

Why?

Because new believers need:

Teaching.

Encouragement.

Doctrine.

Community.

Leadership.

Preparation for hardship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Great Commission is not fulfilled by making decisions alone; Jesus commanded us to make disciples.

XLIII. ENCOURAGING THEM TO REMAIN TRUE

Acts 14:22 says:

“Encouraging them to remain true to the faith.”

Christian perseverance matters.

Spiritual Principle

The church should not merely help people begin with Christ; it should help them continue with Christ.

XLIV. THE IMPORTANCE OF ELDERS

Paul and Barnabas appoint elders:

“In every church.”

This reveals an early pattern of organized local church leadership.

Elders Were Local

They served particular congregations.

Elders Were Appointed Carefully

Prayer and fasting accompanied the process.

Elders Were Not the Owners of the Church

The believers were committed:

“To the Lord.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Church leadership is stewardship under Christ, never ownership over Christ’s people.

XLV. PRAYER AND FASTING IN LEADERSHIP

Acts 13 begins missionary sending with prayer and fasting.

Acts 14 includes appointment of elders with:

Prayer.

Fasting.

This reveals seriousness.

Spiritual Principle

Major spiritual decisions should be approached with dependence upon God rather than casual human preference.

XLVI. OPENING THE DOOR OF FAITH

Acts 14:27 says God:

“Opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

Paul and Barnabas preached.

But God opened.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The evangelist can preach the gospel, but God must open the heart and the door for saving response.

This protects us from:

Pride when people believe.

Despair when people reject.

The mission ultimately belongs to God.

XLVII. MISSIONARY ACCOUNTABILITY

Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch and report to the church.

They do not function as isolated spiritual celebrities.

They remain connected to the sending church.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical mission includes accountability, fellowship, and reporting back to the believers who prayed and sent.

XLVIII. WHAT DID THEY REPORT?

Not:

How brave we were.

How many miles we traveled.

How much we suffered.

How impressive our ministry was.

Luke says they reported:

“Everything God had done through them.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The best ministry report leaves listeners impressed with God rather than impressed with the minister.

XLIX. WHAT ACTS 14 TEACHES ABOUT COURAGE

Courage appears throughout the chapter.

They Speak Boldly

They Stay Under Opposition

They Flee Wisely

They Reject False Worship Publicly

Paul Survives Stoning

Paul Returns to the City

They Return to Dangerous Regions

Spiritual Principle

Biblical courage is not reckless behavior; it is persistent faithfulness to God's mission regardless of fear.

L. WHAT ACTS 14 TEACHES ABOUT PERSEVERANCE

Paul and Barnabas repeatedly continue.

Opposed?

Continue.

Threatened?

Move and continue.

Misunderstood?

Correct and continue.

Stoned?

Get up and continue.

Persecuted?

Return and strengthen believers.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Perseverance means the mission continues after the emotion that began it has faded.

LI. WHAT ACTS 14 TEACHES ABOUT SUCCESS

Modern people may define successful ministry by:

Crowds.

Applause.

Numbers.

Recognition.

Comfort.

Acts 14 gives a different picture.

Successful ministry includes:

Faithful preaching.

People believing.

Opposition.

Suffering.

Discipleship.

Leadership development.

Church strengthening.

Faithfulness under persecution.

Giving God glory.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical success is faithfulness to God, not freedom from difficulty.

LII. FIVE GREAT CHARACTERISTICS OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

1. They Were Bold

They spoke despite opposition.

2. They Were Humble

They refused worship.

3. They Were Resilient

They continued after persecution.

4. They Were Shepherd-Hearted

They returned to strengthen believers.

5. They Were Accountable

They reported back to Antioch.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Effective ministry requires both courage before opponents and humility before God.

LIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What happened when Paul and Barnabas preached in Iconium?

A large number of Jews and Greeks believed.

However, others rejected the gospel and stirred up opposition against the believers.

Question 2

Why did Paul and Barnabas stay in Iconium despite opposition?

They continued speaking boldly because the gospel still had an open opportunity there.

The Lord confirmed the message of grace through signs and wonders.

Question 3

Why did they eventually leave Iconium?

They discovered a serious plot to mistreat and stone them.

They then moved to Lystra and Derbe and continued preaching.

Question 4

Who was healed at Lystra?

A man who had been lame from birth and had never walked.

After listening to Paul, he was healed and immediately stood and walked.

Question 5

How did the crowd misunderstand the healing?

They interpreted it through pagan beliefs and concluded that Barnabas and Paul were gods who had appeared in human form.

They attempted to sacrifice to them.

Question 6

How did Paul and Barnabas respond to being worshiped?

They strongly rejected it.

They tore their clothes, rushed into the crowd, declared themselves ordinary humans, and directed the people toward the living Creator God.

Question 7

What happened to Paul later in Lystra?

Opponents persuaded the crowd to turn against him.

Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead.

But he got up and continued ministry.

Question 8

What did Paul teach new believers about hardship?

He taught:

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

Christian discipleship should therefore not be presented as a promise of an easy life.

Question 9

Why did Paul and Barnabas return to places where they had been persecuted?

They wanted to strengthen the believers, encourage them to remain faithful, and establish elders in the churches.

Question 10

How were elders appointed?

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders with prayer and fasting, committing the believers and leaders to the Lord.

Question 11

What did Paul and Barnabas do when they returned to Antioch?

They gathered the church and reported everything God had done through them, especially how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Question 12

What is the main lesson of Acts 14?

The gospel advances through bold proclamation, humble dependence upon God, perseverance through suffering, careful discipleship, godly leadership, and confidence that God Himself opens the door of faith.

LIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 14 asks several serious questions.

Am I Willing to Speak Boldly When People Disagree?

Paul and Barnabas were.

Do I Know When to Stay and When to Move On?

Both responses can be faithful.

Do I Give God the Glory When He Uses Me?

Paul and Barnabas refused worship.

Am I Too Dependent on Public Approval?

The crowd changed quickly.

Can I Keep Serving After Being Hurt?

Paul did.

Am I Prepared for Hardship?

Paul taught believers to expect it.

Am I Strengthening Others?

Conversion must lead to discipleship.

Do I Take Church Leadership Seriously?

Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted.

When Ministry Succeeds, Do I Say “Look what I did” or “Look what God did”?

The missionaries gave God the credit.

LV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Let Yesterday’s Stones Stop Tomorrow’s Ministry”

Paul had been stoned.

He had been dragged outside the city.

His enemies thought he was dead.

Yet he got up.

The next day:

He went to Derbe.

Later:

He returned to Lystra.

Principle

Pain may become part of your testimony, but it does not have to become the end of your calling.

LVI. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Never Accept Worship for What God Did Through You”

The miracle came through Paul.

But Paul was not the source.

The crowd confused:

The instrument.

With:

The God using the instrument.

Paul immediately corrected them.

Principle

The more powerfully God uses someone, the more carefully that person must protect God's glory.

LVII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Road Into the Kingdom May Pass Through Tribulation”

Acts 14:22 is not pessimism.

It is preparation.

Jesus Himself said:

“In this world you will have trouble.”

But He also said:

“Take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Principle

The Christian hope is not that suffering never comes; it is that suffering never has the final word.

The kingdom does.

LVIII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“A Church Is Not Finished When People Believe”

Paul and Barnabas returned because believers needed:

Strength.

Encouragement.

Leadership.

Teaching.

Principle

Evangelism without discipleship leaves newborn believers without the nourishment they need to mature.

LIX. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 14 begins with powerful preaching.

It moves into opposition.

Then miracles.

Then idolatrous misunderstanding.

Then persecution.

Then stoning.

Then strengthening.

Then leadership.

Then missionary reporting.

In other words:

Acts 14 is ministry as it really is.

There are moments of great joy.

A large number believe.

A lame man walks.

Many disciples are made.

But there are also moments of severe pain.

Minds are poisoned.

Cities divide.

Plots develop.

Crowds become confused.

Paul is stoned.

Yet throughout the entire chapter:

The mission continues.

That is one of the great lessons.

Paul and Barnabas do not judge God's faithfulness by the absence of hardship.

They judge their responsibility by the clarity of their calling.

God called them to preach.

So they preach.

God opened doors.

They walked through them.

Opposition came.

They remained bold.

Danger became overwhelming.

They moved.

A miracle occurred.

They refused glory.

Paul was stoned.

He got up.

Believers were formed.

They returned to strengthen them.

Churches were established.

They appointed elders.

Then they returned to Antioch and said:

Look what God has done.

Acts 14 also gives us one of the most necessary messages for modern Christianity:

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

This does not mean suffering saves us.

Jesus saves us.

But it does mean that following Jesus in a fallen world will not always be comfortable.

There may be:

Opposition.

Loss.

Pain.

Misunderstanding.

Rejection.

Persecution.

Yet the kingdom remains ahead.

Therefore:

Do not quit because ministry becomes difficult.

Do not assume opposition means you missed God’s will.

Do not worship human leaders.

Do not seek human worship.

Do not measure ministry only by applause.

Do not let wounds determine your future obedience.

Do not merely make converts.

Make disciples.

Strengthen churches.

Develop leaders.

Pray.

Fast.

Depend upon grace.

And when the journey is complete:

Give God all the glory.

The testimony of Acts 14 is not:

Paul and Barnabas were amazing.

It is:

God did great things through willing servants.

And:

God opened the door of faith.

That same God remains worthy of our trust.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the testimony of Paul and Barnabas.

Thank You for showing us that faithful ministry is not always easy.

Give us courage to speak Your Word boldly.

When people believe, keep us humble.

When people oppose, keep us faithful.

When people misunderstand Your work, give us wisdom to explain the truth.

Protect us from accepting praise that belongs only to You.

Keep our hearts from becoming dependent upon crowds, popularity, or human recognition.

Remind us that we are only servants.

You are the living God.

You made heaven and earth.

You give rain.

You give harvest.

You give life.

You give grace.

Thank You for sustaining Paul when he was stoned.

When we are wounded in ministry, help us rise again by Your grace.

When we feel discouraged, remind us that hardship does not mean You have abandoned us.

Strengthen us to remain true to the faith.

Prepare us for tribulation without allowing fear to control us.

Help our churches make disciples, not merely count decisions.

Give us godly elders.

Give us leaders who pray.

Give us leaders who fast.

Give us leaders who understand that Your church belongs to You.

Open doors of faith.

Bring people to Jesus.

Strengthen new believers.

Build healthy churches.

And when You use us:

Keep us from taking the credit.

May we always say:

Look what God has done.

Give us grace to serve faithfully until the work You have given us is complete.

And when hardships come, keep our eyes on Your kingdom.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Strengthening the believers and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. They said, ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.’” — Acts 14:22

Central Truth

God advances the gospel through bold, humble, and persevering servants who refuse human glory, endure hardship, strengthen believers, establish godly leadership, and recognize that every open door of faith is ultimately the work of God's grace.

Acts 14 in One Sentence

Paul and Barnabas boldly preach through opposition, refuse worship after God heals a lame man, survive violent persecution, return to strengthen new believers and appoint elders, and finally report to Antioch that God Himself had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, demonstrating that many hardships cannot stop His kingdom mission.