

When Opposition Leads to Opportunity

Acts 14:1-28

God can transform every setback into a setup for His message to advance. Paul and Barnabas faced fierce persecution, yet their ministry expanded. They encountered worship from pagans, yet remained humble. They suffered stoning yet continued preaching. Acts 14 shows **seven scenes** in Paul's missionary journey.

I. THE MISSION (Acts 14:1-7)

LONG TIME - The Greek indicates they stayed *because* of opposition, not in spite of it. The word "therefore" (*oun*) connects their extended stay directly to the opposition they faced.

II. THE MIRACLE (Acts 14:8-10)

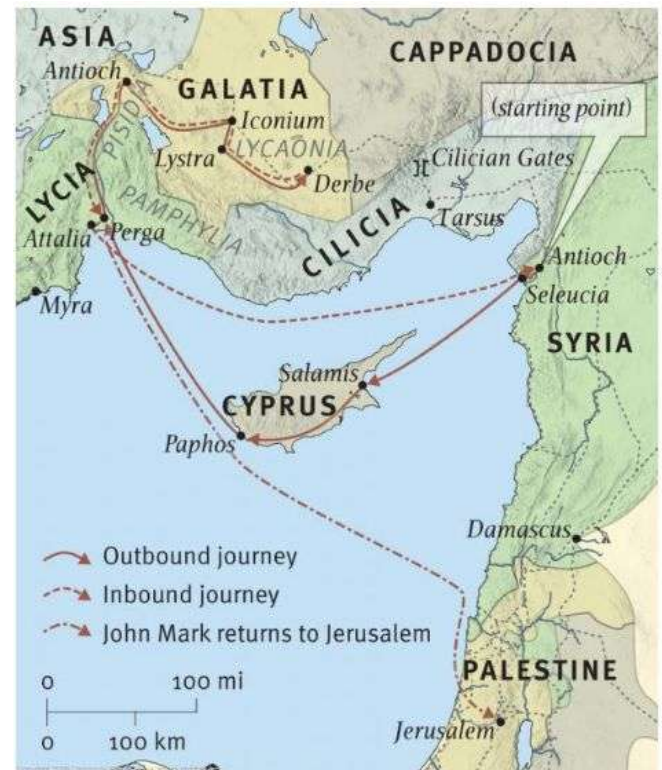
A. The **Frail Condition** (v. 8) - hopeless by human standards

B. The **Faith Connection** (v. 9)

- "The same heard Paul speak"
- Paul "steadfastly beholding him"
- "Perceiving that he had faith to be healed"

C. The **Forceful Command** (v. 10)

- "Said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!'"
- Immediate response: "he leaped and walked"



III. THE MISTAKE (Acts 14:11-18)

John MacArthur writes, "Lystra began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The identifications are intriguing. That they identified Barnabas with Zeus suggests he presented a more distinguished and imposing appearance than Paul. Paul's identification with Hermes, the messenger of the gods, is perfectly logical, since he was the chief speaker. Because the crowds spoke in the Lycaonian language, neither Paul nor Barnabas could comprehend what was going on."¹

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 50.

IV. THE MOB (Acts 14:19)

- "Jews from Antioch and Iconium" - followed them 80+ miles
- "Persuaded the multitudes" - same crowd that wanted to worship them, which demonstrates the fickleness of human nature
- "Stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city" and "supposing him to be dead" - Paul likely died and was resurrected (see 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, where Paul describes being "caught up to the third heaven" - possibly referring to this Lystra experience).

V. THE MINISTRY (Acts 14:20-22)

- **MADE DISCIPLES** - Greek *mathēteuo* - not just "taught" (see Matthew 28:19).
- **CONFIRMING/STRENGTHENING** - Greek *epistērizō* - "to establish firmly" or "add structural support."
- **EXHORTING** - Greek *parakaleō* - "to encourage" or "to come alongside."

VI. THE MENTORING (Acts 14:23)

- **ELDER** - Greek *presbuteros* - "one advanced in wisdom," not necessarily age. In the New Testament, three terms describe the pastoral office: *presbuteros* (elder - spiritual wisdom), *poimēn* (shepherd - feeding and care), and *episkopos* (overseer - supervision and administration).
- **COMMENDED** - Greek *paratithēmi* - "to place alongside" or "to entrust to another's care."

VII. THE MEETING (Acts 14:24-28)

- Sailed back to "Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God"
- **REHEARSED/REPORTED** - They didn't report what *they* had done, but "all that God had done **with** them."

APPLICATIONS FOR TODAY:

1. **STAY WHEN IT'S HARD** - Opposition may be your assignment, not your exit sign. They stayed longer *because* of difficulty, not in spite of it (see 1 Corinthians 16:9).
2. **REFUSE THE PEDESTAL** - Redirect all honor to Jesus. Beware of pride and an entitlement mentality.
3. **PAIR EVANGELISM WITH DISCIPLESHIP** - Use the Great Commission word "*make disciples*" - connect new believers to the local church.
4. **PREPARE SAINTS FOR SUFFERING** - Strengthen and encourage new converts by honestly warning: "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22 NKJV).
5. **APPOINT AND PRAY FOR LEADERS** - Follow Paul's pattern: pray, appoint leaders, and entrust to God's care.
6. **CELEBRATE TESTIMONIES** - Report what God has done. This was the first missionary report in church history.