



Walking Through the Scripture Together

July 6 - 12, 2008

Acts 14:1-28

Stand Up

Text Acts 14:1-28 (TNIV)

In Iconium

¹ At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. ⁴ The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵ There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. ⁶ But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷ where they continued to preach the gospel.

In Lystra and Derbe

⁸ In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵ "Friends, why are you doing this? We too 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 heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷ Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸ Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

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. ²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Thought

They wanted to kill us in Iconium. We had stayed there long enough to make disciples and enemies both — and both with feelings in the extreme. Saul had that knack: an absolutely fearless little fighter, a heedful of words and a voice like a whip. The farther we traveled, the more I let him do the preaching. Me — I just stood back in amazement. Saul would start in a reasonable tone, as if to say, "Nobody wants to be stupid, do they? Of course not. Nor do we want you to be ignorant..." And he meant it! He meant it! He wasn't sarcastic. He had such a thing to tell them, and such a need to say it soon, to say it fast, that the reasonable tone of his voice would change to urgency. So then his sentences got longer, and the words burst from his mouth like flocks of birds, and the faith of the man was a high wind at the hearts of the people, and some of them gasped in delight, and these are the ones who rose up and flew. But others were insulted, and others afraid of the sacred passions, and those are the ones who came to hate him, and that's what happened in Iconium. Those who believed in his preaching caused those who did not to become suspicious and scared of the changes in their city. "The man's a menace," our enemies said, "ruinous to the very order of things. Why, he turns the whole world upside down!" So they planned to kill us at Iconium. Even the rulers were going to stone us.

But our disciples warned us in advance, and we fled to Lystra, twenty-five miles south on a good Roman road.

Excerpt from Barnabas in *Paul, A Novel* by Walter Wangerin Jr.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lean In

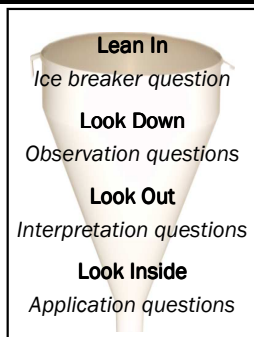
- Share a time when it was really awkward to stand up as a believer as share Jesus life and message. What happened?

Look Down / Look Out

- Why does Paul keep going to the synagogues first? What reception does he find at the synagogue in Iconium? What results did he initially see? How does this compare with his experience in Antioch of Pisidia?
- How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the intense hostility against them? How did God back up their message? Why did this silence the opposition?
- What stands out most prominently as a discipleship lesson for you in Paul's experience — the healing, the near sacrifice, Paul's stoning and miraculous recovery — in Lystra?
- How could the people who had just been ready to worship Paul be so quickly convinced to stone him to death?
- After his miraculous recovery from the stoning, what does Paul do? What message did he have for new believers?

Look Inside

- How regularly do you find yourself really seeing people — seeing what's inside them, sensing faith or a divine touch on their life? What is the key to this ability?
- Which of the following best describes how you feel about your work in ministry and in the church: Worn to a frazzle? Idle? Waiting for an assignment? Productive? Frustrated? Or what?



Family Discussion Guide

Day One Acts 14:1-7

How hard is it for you to stand up and let others know you are a follower of Jesus? How sensitive are you to what others might think and say? What can help us to be more free to simply be who we are and to say what we believe?

Day Two Acts 14:8-13

How often do you really feel "seen" by other people at home or school or work? How often do you find yourself really seeing other people and noticing what is going on in them?

Day Three Acts 14:14-18

How challenging is it for you to tell someone to stop when they are doing something wrong? What's the hardest part about doing this? What are some good ways and some not so good ways to do this?

Day Four Acts 14:19-23

How easy do you think it would have been for you to walk right back into the town where people had tried to kill you? When people wrong you in some way, do you usually (a) want to get even (b) avoid/hide from them (c) pray for them or (d) _____

Day Five Acts 14:24-28

What good things have you seen God doing in your life recently? How can you celebrate what he has done?

Life in Bible Times

The Three Cities of Southern Galatia

The Via Sebaste, the great Roman road from Ephesus to the Euphrates, became two roads at Pisidian Antioch. One went north through mountainous terrain to the Roman colony of Comana about 122 miles away. The other moved southeast across rolling country, past the snow-capped peaks of Sultan Dag, to the important Greek city of Iconium, some eighty miles distant from Antioch, and from there to the Roman colony of Lystra. As Paul and Barnabas left Pisidian Antioch, therefore, they were faced with a choice as to the future direction of their mission. Choosing the southeastern route, they headed off to what would become a ministry to people of three very different types of cities in the southern portion of the Roman province of Galatia.

Iconium, an ancient Phrygian town, had been transformed by the Greeks into a city-state. Situated in the heart of the high and healthy plateau of south-central Asia Minor, it was surrounded by fertile plains and verdant forests, with mountains to its north and east. With Augustus's reorganization of provinces in 25 B.C., Iconium became part of Galatia. But while Rome chose Antioch of Pisidia and Lystra as bastions of its authority in the area, Iconium remained largely Greek in temper and somewhat resistant to Roman influence. Greek was the language of its public documents, and during the NT period it attempted to retain the ethos of the old city-state.

Lystra was an ancient Lycaonian village whose origins are unknown. Caesar Augustus turned it into a Roman colony in 6 B.C., and, by bringing army veterans and their families into it, made it the most eastern of the fortified cities of Galatia. Jews also lived there, but their influence seems to have been minimal. The Via Sebaste joined this city with Iconium some twenty miles away.

Derbe was situated in the southeastern part of the Lycaonian region of Galatia, about sixty miles southeast of Lystra. In 25 B.C. Augustus incorporated it into the province of Galatia, making it a provincial border town on the eastern edge of the southern Galatian plateau. Luke's account of the ministry at Derbe is brief. All he says is that the apostles "preached the good news" there and "won a large number of disciples."

details, details...

They fled to the Lycaonian cities

The province of Galatia was divided by Rome into at least four districts to facilitate Roman administration in the area (Isauria, Phrygia, Pisidia and Lycaonia). Thus to leave one area and venture to the next would hopefully give Paul and Barnabas a fresh start.

The apostles Barnabas and Paul

Repeatedly in this chapter, Paul and Barnabas are grouped together and referred to as "the apostles." This has led to a bit of confusion and controversy over the precise nature of an "apostle" and whether or not we have "apostles" today. In short, to be "one of the twelve" meant to be an eyewitness of the ministry and resurrection of Jesus (see Acts 1:21-22). Jesus promised them "twelve thrones" on which they would "judge the twelve tribes of Israel" (see Matthew 19:28). Outside of Judas, there's no indication that these apostolic seats would be vacated or refilled (note that there's no replacement ceremony indicated for James when he is killed in Acts 12) or that a whole bunch of other seats would be added. Paul, of course, labels himself as an apostle, but distinct from the twelve (see 1Corinthians 15:3-11). Outside of these unique uses of the word, we observe what could be called a "common" use of the word "apostle" — essentially an emissary or missionary (*missionary* is Latin meaning "sent one" just as *apostolos* is Greek meaning "sent one"), implying someone sent and commissioned, but not necessarily with the same standing or authority of the twelve. Confused yet?

He got up and went back into the city

A real "comeback kid." I'm thinking resurrection, or an extensive miraculous healing here. People don't typically survive stonings. And they also don't usually travel the next day. Note that there's no further reported opposition from Paul's enemies. They evidently didn't even try to kill him again for awhile.