SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 14

A Door of Faith Through Many Tribulations — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The gospel splits cities, heals the lame, gets mistaken for a new religion, and gets a man stoned — and the man gets up and goes back. The kingdom is entered by a door of faith that God opens, and the road to it runs through many tribulations, so new believers need to be strengthened, warned, shepherded and handed to the Lord.

00 The Text

ACTS 14 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 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.

2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of
the Gentiles and embittered them against the
brethren.

3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking
boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying
to the word of His grace, granting that signs and
wonders be done by their hands.

4 But the people of the city were divided; and some
sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles
and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone
them,

6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of
Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;

7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

8 At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his
feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never
walked.

9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when
he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had
faith to be made well,

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet."
And he leaped up and began to walk.

11 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."

12 And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul,
Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

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.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it,
they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd,
crying out

15 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.

16 “In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

17 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.”

18 Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, ⚠ they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 But while the disciples stood around him, ◷ he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 After they had preached the ⟲ gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

22 ▤ strengthening the souls of the disciples, ▤ encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “☆ Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

23 When they had ▤ appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they △ commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24 They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been △ commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.

27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report △ all things that God had done with them and how △ He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks” — Promise / blessing
- **v2** “embittered them against the brethren” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord” — Command / instruction
- **v3** “the word of His grace” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “the people of the city were divided” — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** “lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked” — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** “he had faith to be made well” — Promise / blessing
- **v10** “Stand upright on your feet” — Command / instruction
- **v10** “he leaped up and began to walk” — Promise / blessing
- **v11** “The gods have become like men and have come down to us” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “they tore their robes” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “We are also men of the same nature as you” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “turn from these vain things to a living God” — Command / instruction
- **v17** “He did not leave Himself without witness” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons” — God — His character & actions
- **v19** “they stoned Paul” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “he got up and entered the city” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “strengthening the souls of the disciples” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “encouraging them to continue in the faith” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “appointed elders for them in every church” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” — God — His character & actions
- **v26** “commended to the grace of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “all things that God had done with them” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “gospel” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v11** “crowd” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

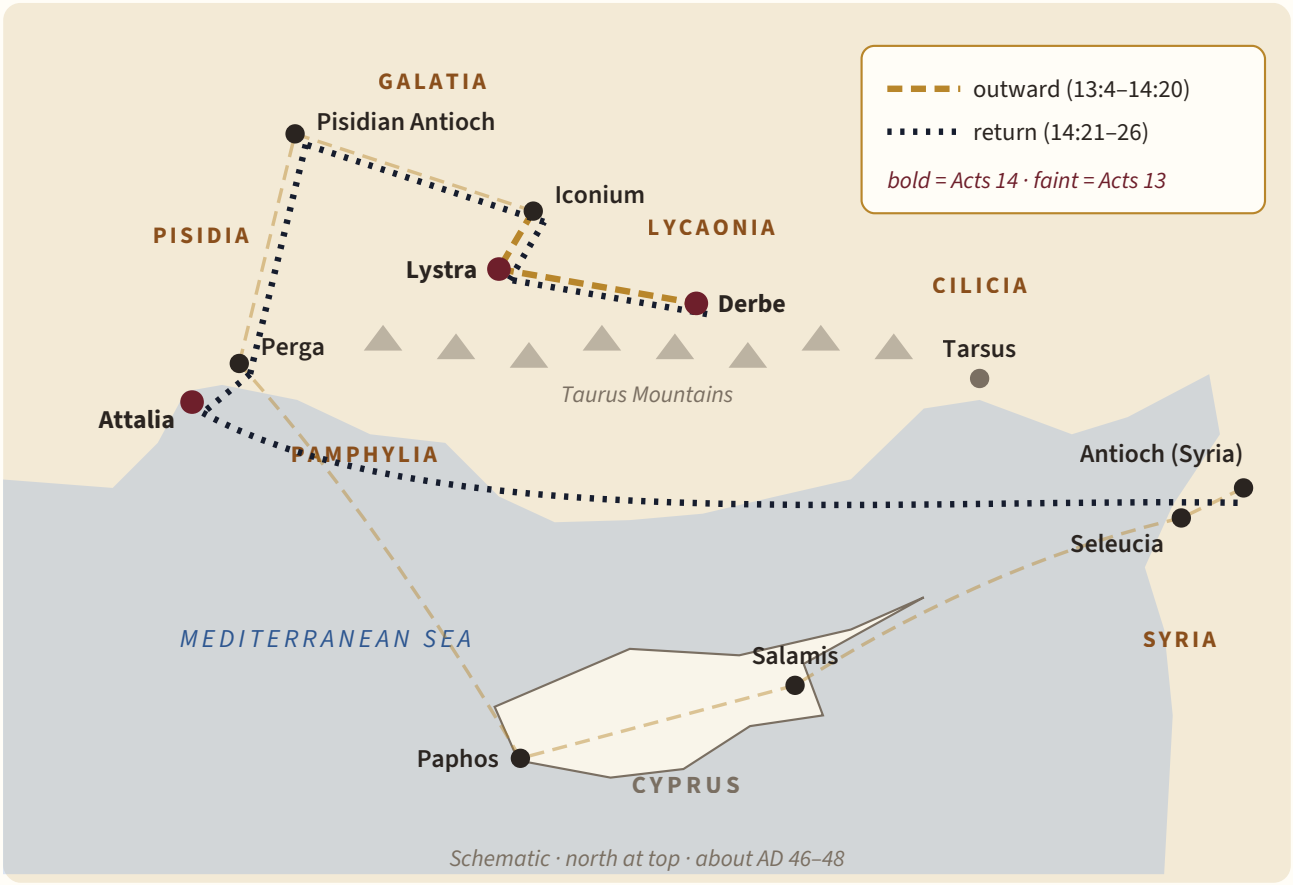
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:3

"Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands."

FIGURE · THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



Acts 14 is the bold part: on from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, then the dark line back through the same cities to Perga, Attalia and home to Antioch in Syria.

Setting. Iconium, after Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Pisidian Antioch (13:51). From there they flee to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia (v6). At Lystra a man lame from birth is healed and the crowd tries to sacrifice to them as Zeus and Hermes (vv8–18); Jews from Antioch and Iconium turn the crowd and Paul is stoned (v19). After Derbe they retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, appoint elders, and sail home from Attalia to Antioch in Syria (vv21–28).

Structure:

- vv1–7 — **a divided city:** the synagogue at Iconium; a large number believe, Jews and Greeks (v1); the disbelieving Jews embitter the Gentiles (v2); a long time, speaking boldly; signs and wonders confirm the word of His grace (v3); the city divided (v4); a plan to stone them; they flee to Lystra and Derbe and keep preaching (vv5–7).
- vv8–10 — **the lame man:** lame from his mother's womb (v8); he listens; Paul fixes his gaze and sees faith to be made well (v9); "Stand upright on your feet" — he leaps and walks (v10).
- vv11–18 — **Zeus and Hermes:** "The gods have become like men" (v11); Barnabas called Zeus, Paul Hermes (v12); the priest of Zeus with oxen and garlands (v13); they tear their robes and rush in (v14); "We are also men" — turn to a living God who made all things (v15); He let the nations go their own ways, yet left a witness — rain, seasons, food and gladness (vv16–17); barely restrained (v18).
- vv19–23 — **many tribulations:** Jews from Antioch and Iconium win the crowds; Paul stoned and dragged out, thought dead (v19); he gets up and enters the city; Derbe (v20); many disciples made; back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch (v21); strengthening, encouraging, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (v22); elders appointed, prayer and fasting, commended to the Lord (v23).
- vv24–28 — **the door of faith:** Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia (vv24–25); sailing to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God (v26); the church gathered; all that God had done; a door of faith to the Gentiles (v27); a long time with the disciples (v28).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Jews" ×6 — vv1 (×2), 2, 4, 5, 19; "Gentiles" ×3 — vv2, 5, 27.
- "city" ×5 — vv4, 13, 19, 20, 21; "crowd(s)" ×5 — vv11, 13, 14, 18, 19.
- "spoke / speaking / speaker / spoken" ×5 — vv1, 3, 9, 12, 25.
- "Paul" ×5 — vv9, 11, 12, 14, 19; "Barnabas" ×3 — vv12, 14, 20.
- "God" ×4 — vv15, 22, 26, 27 (plus "gods" in v11); "Lord" ×2 — vv3, 23.
- "disciples" ×4 — vv20, 21, 22, 28.
- "gospel" ×3 — vv7, 15, 21; "faith" ×3 — vv9, 22, 27; "believed" ×2 — vv1, 23.
- "Lystra" ×3 — vv6, 8, 21; "Iconium" ×3 — vv1, 19, 21; "Antioch" ×3 — vv19, 21, 26; "Derbe" ×2 — vv6, 20.
- "done" ×3 — vv3, 11, 27; "grace" ×2 — vv3, 26; "word" ×2 — vv3, 25.
- "stone(d)" ×2 — vv5, 19; "sacrifice" ×2 — vv13, 18; "Zeus" ×2 — vv12, 13; "men" ×2 — vv11, 15; "long time" ×2 — vv3, 28; "church" ×2 — vv23, 27.

Contrasts: Believed ⟷ disbelieved (vv1–2). Sided with the Jews ⟷ sided with the apostles (v4). Never walked ⟷ leaped up (vv8, 10). Gods come down ⟷ men of the same nature (vv11, 15). Vain things ⟷ a living God (v15). Their own ways ⟷ not without witness (vv16–17). Sacrifice to them ⟷ stones for them (vv18–19). Supposed dead ⟷ got up (vv19–20). Many tribulations ⟷ the kingdom of God (v22). What they did ⟷ what God had done (vv26–27).

Shape of the chapter: two cities of preaching and opposition (1–7, 8–20), with a healing and a short sermon to pagans at the centre, then the road home taken slowly (21–28). The first half is outward advance; the second half is shepherding what was planted. It ends where 13:1–3 began — in Antioch with the church that sent them.

Chapter theme (my words): The gospel goes forward through bold preaching, real miracles and real suffering. Crowds swing from worship to stones, but God never leaves Himself without witness, and He keeps the door of faith open. Those who walk through it need to be told the truth: the road into the kingdom runs through many tribulations — and they need elders and the Lord to keep them.

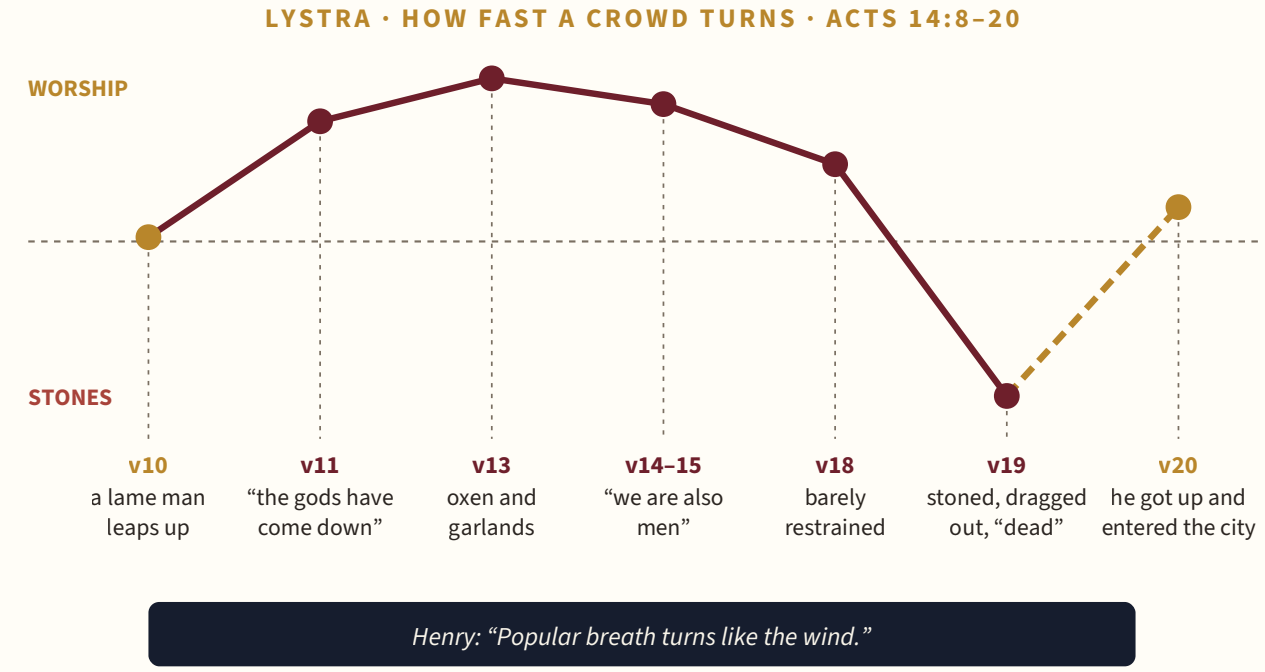
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:17

"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."

FIGURE · HOW FAST A CROWD TURNS



Follow the line from left to right: the same crowd that tried to sacrifice to Paul stoned him a few verses later — and then he got up.

Why did they flee Iconium — isn't that cowardice? No. They stayed "a long time" under opposition (v3), and left only when a plot to stone them came out (vv5–6). Guzik: "They stayed as long as they could … leaving only when it was absolutely necessary." Henry: they "quit the spot," not "the work" — and verse 7 proves it. Jesus told the Twelve the same (Matt 10:16, 23).

What are the "signs and wonders" for? The Lord was "testifying to the word of His grace" (v3). The signs were God's signature on the message, not the message itself. Henry: "The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us." Guzik on Lystra: "The miracle itself saved no one."

What faith did the lame man have? "Faith to be made well" — literally "to be saved" (*sōzō*). He had been listening to Paul's gospel (v9). Guzik finds the proof in obedience: he stood when told to stand. Spurgeon applies it to every sinner who hears: "Sinner, stand upright on thy feet." Luke clearly sets this beside Peter's healing in Acts 3: the same Lord works through Paul among Gentiles.

Why did the crowd call them Zeus and Hermes? A local legend of the two gods visiting the region in disguise, told by Guzik. They had missed their gods once; they would not again. Paul was Hermes because he was "the chief speaker" (v12) — Henry: Mercury, "the messenger of the gods." The apostles' torn robes were horror at blasphemy: "more concerned for God's honour than their own" (Henry).

What did Paul preach to pagans who had no Bible? He started with the Creator (v15, echoing Exod 20:11 and Ps 146:6), God's patience with the nations (v16), and His kindness in rain and harvest (v17). This is what we call general revelation: creation and providence tell every man there is a good God (compare Rom 1:20). Henry: "The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God." It is not enough to save — the same speech had to call them to "turn … to a living God" — but it is enough to leave men without excuse. Paul uses the same approach at Athens (17:22–31).

Was Paul dead at Lystra? Luke says the crowd was "supposing him to be dead" (v19), not that he died. Henry: "Though he was not dead, yet he was ill crushed and bruised." Guzik: "Paul was miraculously preserved here," and notes the suggestion (not certain) that 2 Corinthians 12's vision belongs here. Paul later lists "once I was stoned" among his sufferings (2 Cor 11:25).

Is "many tribulations" the Great Tribulation? No. *Thlipsis* here is plural and general — the ordinary pressures of following Christ in a hostile world (John 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12). I hold that the church will be kept from the future seven-year Tribulation (1 Thess 1:10; Rev 3:10), but that is a different subject. Every believer, in every age, walks into the kingdom through troubles. Spurgeon: "Good men must never expect to escape troubles."

Who appointed the elders? Paul and Barnabas are the subject of "appointed" (*cheirotoneō*, originally "to vote by raising the hand"), and readers differ on how much the congregations took part. What is clear: every church got leaders, quickly, with prayer and fasting, and was "commended … to the Lord" (v23). Henry: "It is requisite that every particular church should have one or more such to preside in it."

What is the "door of faith"? God opened it (v27), and the way in is faith — Gentiles coming into God's people by believing in Jesus. Henry: "There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith." That raises the question of Acts 15: must Gentile believers also be circumcised and keep the Law? The Jerusalem council answers no.

Word study (Greek):

- **speaking boldly — *parrēsiazomai* (G3955):** to speak freely and plainly (v3; 9:27–28; 13:46).
- **divided — *schizō* (G4977):** split, torn; NASB "divided" only here and 23:7.
- **made well — *sōzō* (G4982):** save, heal, rescue (v9).
- **leaped — *hallomai* (G242):** only John 4:14; Acts 3:8; 14:10.
- **same nature — *homoiopathēs* (G3663):** of like feelings and weakness; also James 5:17.
- **vain things — *mataios* (G3152):** empty, useless (v15).
- **without witness — *amartyros* (G267):** only here (v17).
- **tribulations — *thlipsis* (G2347):** pressure, affliction; "we must" — *dei* (G1163).
- **appointed — *cheirotoneō* (G5500):** to choose by show of hands; also 2 Cor 8:19.
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245); commended — *paratithēmi* (G3908):** entrusted for safekeeping.
- **door — *thyra* (G2374):** 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Fleeing is not quitting** (vv5–7; Henry).
2. **The Lord confirms the word of His grace** (v3).
3. **The gospel divides** — *schizō* (v4).
4. **Faith stands up on legs that never held weight** (v10; Guzik, Spurgeon).
5. **Peter's miracle, Paul's miracle** (3:8; 14:10).
6. **A miracle saves no one by itself** (Guzik).
7. **God has never left Himself without witness** (v17; Henry).
8. **Crowds turn; God does not** (vv13, 19).
9. **Tribulation is the road, not a detour** (v22; Spurgeon).
10. **God opened the door** (v27; Henry).

Cross-references: Exod 20:11; Ps 146:6; Matt 10:16, 23; John 4:14; 16:33; Acts 3:1–10; 7:58; 9:27–28; 13:46–52; 15:1–21; 16:1–2; 17:22–31; Rom 1:20; 8:17–18; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; 8:19; 11:25; 12:1–4; Gal 4:13–14; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:11–12; James 5:17; 1 Pet 4:12–13; Rev 3:10.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:22

"strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.""

FIGURE · BACK THE SAME ROAD

BACK THE SAME ROAD · WHAT THEY DID FOR THE NEW CHURCHES · 14:21–23

PREACHED v21	RETURNED v21	STRENGTHENED v22
the gospel in Derbe; made many disciples	to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch — the hard places	the souls of the disciples
ENCOURAGED v22	**TOLD THE TRUTH v22**	**ELDERS v23**
them to continue in the faith	"Through many tribulations we must enter …"	prayed with fasting; commended them to the Lord

They walked back into the cities that had stoned and expelled them — because new believers needed shepherds.

Read the six boxes in order: on the way home Paul and Barnabas did everything a young church needs — and none of it was easy or safe.

Example to follow — Paul and Barnabas going back. After Paul was stoned in Lystra, they went on to Derbe — and then turned around and walked back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (v21), the very cities that had plotted against them, because new believers needed strengthening. The men I serve in recovery and in prison ministry need the same: not one visit, but someone who comes back. This week I will go back to a man I have not followed up with.

Sin to confess — worshiping the messenger. The crowd wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas (v13). I have put men in God's place — a pastor, a sponsor, a strong brother — and I have liked it when men looked up to me more than they should. Paul and Barnabas tore their robes over it. I confess both, and I want to say with them, "We are also men of the same nature as you."

Truth to face — the road runs through tribulations. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (v22). I have sometimes taken trouble as proof that God left me, or told new believers that following Jesus

would make life smooth. It won't. Spurgeon: "Good men must never expect to escape troubles." But Paul got up after the stones (v20), and the Lord rescued him out of them all (2 Tim 3:11).

Command to obey — strengthen, encourage, appoint, commend. Verses 22–23 are my job description with the men God gives me: strengthen their souls, encourage them to keep going in the faith, tell them the truth about hard times, help them find faithful leaders, pray (with fasting), and then hand them to the Lord "in whom they had believed." I cannot hold them up; He can.

Promise to trust — God has not left Himself without witness. Even with men who have never opened a Bible, God has been speaking — rain, food, a little gladness in a hard week (v17). He is already at work before I get there. And He is the One who opens the door of faith (v27).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. They left Iconium when it became dangerous, but kept preaching in the next town (14:5–7). Where do I need wisdom to know the difference between running away and moving on in obedience? (14:5–7; Matt 10:16) *Quit the spot, but not the work (Henry).*
2. The lame man was listening, and Paul saw that he had faith (14:9). What would it look like for me to listen to God's word like that man listened to Paul? (14:8–10) *His ready obedience proved his faith (Guzik).*
3. The crowd wanted to worship the messengers (14:11–13). Where am I tempted to put a person — a pastor, a sponsor, a hero — in God's place, or to want that place for myself? (14:11–15) *More concerned for God's honour than their own (Henry).*
4. Paul says God "did not leave Himself without witness" — rain, food, gladness (14:17). Where have I seen God's kindness this week that I have not thanked Him for? (14:15–17; Ps 146:6) *The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God (Henry).*
5. Paul was stoned, got up, and walked back into the city (14:19–20), then went back to the towns that had hurt him (14:21). What hard place is God sending me back into? (14:19–22; 2 Tim 3:11) *Paul could preach that message because he had lived it (Guzik).*
6. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (14:22). How does it change my troubles to see them as part of the road, not proof that God has left me? (14:22; Rom 8:17–18; 1 Pet 4:12–13) *Chosen in the furnace of affliction (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The living God made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them; He has never left Himself without witness; He gives rain and harvest and fills hearts with food and gladness. He confirms the word of His grace, makes the lame leap, raises up a stoned man to walk back into the city, keeps the churches He plants, and opens a door of faith to the nations.

Prayer. Living God, thank You for Your kindness I take for granted — rain, food, gladness. Keep me from worshiping men or wanting to be worshiped. Give me the boldness to speak with reliance on You, and the faith of that lame man to stand up when You say stand. When the stones come, help me get up and go back. Make me a man who strengthens other men, tells them the truth about the road, and hands them over to You in prayer. Thank You for opening the door of faith to me. Amen.

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