

Attributes of Christ's Witness (Acts 14)

I. Testifying Boldly Despite Persecution (1-7)

A. The Gospel Will Bring Persecution (1-2)

1. Many Believe The Gospel in Iconium (1)

- a. Many important roads passed through Iconium – it was an influential city
- b. Paul and Barnabas continue their practice of preaching first in the synagogue
- c. Many people (Jew and Greek) believe the gospel

2. Many Incite Hatred Against the Church (2)

- a. The Jews who Rejected the Gospel did all they could to influence the Gentiles
- b. The Jews stirred them up against the apostles
- c. The Jews poisoned their minds against the believers
 - i. Notice that it was against the brethren that evil was spoken of
 - ii. It wasn't just the Apostles or their teaching, but all those who had converted to the faith

B. Paul and Barnabas Testify Boldly in Faith (3)

1. They Speak With Trust in The Lord

- a. Paul and Barnabas remained there a long time
- b. Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly "in the Lord"
- c. Paul and Barnabas trusted in the Lord as they spoke boldly in the face of the division that occurred

2. The Lord Testifies To His Word

- a. Jesus gave testimony unto the word of His grace
- b. Jesus granted signs and wonders to be done in His name
- c. Jesus granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands
- d. Miracles are never an end in themselves, they point to the truthfulness of the message

C. Paul and Barnabas Face Persecution (4-7)

1. The City Was Divided by The Gospel (4)

- a. The gospel always brings division
- b. Light, by nature, does not have fellowship with darkness
- c. Those in darkness do all they can to bring darkness to the light

2. The City Plotted To Kill the Ministers (5)

- a. Those who rejected the gospel (Jew and Gentile) purposed to mistreat and execute the apostles
- b. It is possible here that Luke is speaking of the mistreatment of all the believers

3. The Ministers Depart to Continue the Mission (6)

- a. They knew when leaving was best for the mission

- b. They left a church there. They didn't just abandon the city
 - i. Luke will talk about disciples and elders when Paul and Barnabas return to Iconium so there must have been a church founded during this visit (see v. 21-23)
 - ii. They weren't departing in protest. It was best for the church there if they left

II. Seeking To Glorify God Rather Than Self (8-18)

A. A Lame Man is Healed Through Paul (8-10)

- 1. The Man Was Lame From Birth (8)
 - a. The man sat at the plaza of the city begging for his living
 - b. Remarkable how this story is so similar to Peter and John's healing of the man at the gate called beautiful
- 2. The Man Listened as Paul Preached (9a)
 - a. Paul no doubt preached publically there and was overheard by the man
 - b. For some reason, the man caught Paul's attention and Paul fixed his gaze upon him
- 3. The Man Had Faith to be Saved (9b)
 - a. The text says he had faith "to be saved" (Sothenai) – Paul was granted to see that this man believed – We are not told if this was supernatural or Paul could just see it in his face.
 - b. The word (Sozo) is used to mean salvation and/or physical healing (i.e. being made well)
 - c. Here I think it speaks of salvation, because the man was listening the Paul preach. Paul was not preaching about healing, he was preaching the gospel.
- 4. The Man is Healed Physically (10)
 - a. God moved upon Paul to proclaim the healing
 - b. Paul said in a loud voice – Stand up on your feet
 - c. Immediately the man leapt up and walked
 - d. The healing was meant to verify Paul's Gospel preaching

Question: Was the man healed because of his faith? Is Faith always a pre-requisite to physical healing?

B. The People Try To Exalt The Missionaries (11-15)

- 1. They People thought They Were Gods (11-12)
 - a. The supernatural healing was undeniable – they knew the lame man well
 - b. They assume that these men must be gods
 - i. The Greek Text says Zeus and Hermes (translators substituted Roman gods Jupiter and Mercury in some translations)

- ii. Paul, who did the speaking, is assumed to be the messenger god (Hermes), and Barnabas, who was elder and distinguished looking, was taken to be Zeus
 - iii. The Poet Ovid, in a work called Metamorphoses wrote about Jupiter and Mercury (Zeus and Hermes) coming as peasants to dwell among the people of Phrygia. Everyone except a poor elderly couple named Philemon and Baucas, shunned the gods. The couple took them in and fed them in their cottage. In response, the gods turned their cottage into a temple and destroyed everyone else
 - iv. This writing may have led to the thinking in Lystra that Paul and Barnabas were gods to be worshiped.
 - c. They spoke in the Lycaonian language, which explains why Paul and Barnabas seem slow to react when the people call them gods – Koine Greek was the universal language of the Roman world
- 2. The People Prepared to Worship Them (13)
 - a. The priest of Zeus (Jupiter) comes out ready to sacrifice to the visiting “gods”
 - b. Now Paul and Barnabas realize what is happening.
 - c. Notice: This makes me wonder just how effective Paul’s message was. If they had understood and received the gospel, they would have never thought these men gods, nor brought sacrifices. Even the best witness has those who misunderstand.
- 3. The Missionaries Denounce the People’s Worship (14-15)
 - a. The apostles tear their clothes in horror as the people pronounce them gods to be worshipped
 - b. The apostles immediately run into the crowd to stop them
 - c. The apostles cry with a loud voice to halt what is about to happen
- C. The Missionaries Refuse To Be Exalted (15b-18)
 - 1. The People Must Turn Away From Their Idols (15b)
 - a. Paul tells them that they are men just like the town’s people
 - b. Paul tells them that the gospel they proclaim is that they should turn from these worthless things
 - i. Now Paul is saying that Zeus, their traditional religion, their sacrifice, and everything they are doing are just vain (“worthless things”)
 - ii. Paul is there to turn them away from all this

2. God Has Proven Himself Gracious To them (16-17)
 - a. Their gods were no gods at all
 - b. The true God created all things and has been gracious in blessing them
 - c. In past times, God suffered the nations to go their own way – yet He alone is still the one who sent the rains, food, and the blessings of life to them
 - d. Creation itself, and the blessings associated with it, are a witness to the reality of the one true God who Paul proclaims – ignorance is not an excuse. (See Rom. 1:18-20)
3. The People Are Reluctant To Stop Their Sacrifice (18)
 - a. Even after all this, the people still want to sacrifice to them
 - b. It is only with difficulty (scarce) that the apostles are able to persuade them not to worship them as gods.

III. Remaining Faithful Through Trial (19-21)

- A. Paul is Stoned And Left For Dead (19)
 1. Jews start coming from Antioch and Iconium to stir the people against the gospel again
 2. Their efforts are successful as the crowds end up stoning Paul and dragging him out of the city, thinking him dead
- B. Paul is Aided By Disciples (20a)
 1. Paul is surrounded by the disciples as he lay in the dirt
 2. What do you think they were doing? Thinking?
- C. Paul Returns to The Places of Persecution (21)
 1. Paul gets up from being stoned and goes right back into the city where he had almost been killed
 2. Paul leaves the next day to preach the gospel in Derbe
 3. After preaching in Derbe, Paul returns to all three cities in which he was persecuted.

IV. Strengthening And Edifying The Brethren (22-23)

- A. Paul and Barnabas Strengthen the Brethren (22)
 1. Confirming the souls – means he was encouraging and strengthening the believers there
 2. Paul was exhorting them to continue in the faith
 3. Paul was warning them that tribulation should be expected for those entering God's kingdom
- B. Paul and Barnabas Appoint Elders (23a)
- C. Paul and Barnabas Commend Them to God (23b)
 1. They leave the churches in the hands of God after prayer and fasting
 2. They have trusted in the Lord and the Lord is trustworthy. The gates of hell can't prevail against the church

V. Bearing Witness To God's Gracious Work (24-28)

- A. They Head Back Home To Antioch (24-26)

1. They preached in a few more cities
 2. They set sail to return to Antioch in Syria, where they set out from
 - a. Notice that it says that is where they were commended to the grace of God for the work
 - b. The work they had accomplished was by God's grace and because of God's grace
- B. They Testified to God's Work Among the Gentiles (27-28)
1. When they arrived they gathered the church together and testified to what God was doing among the Gentiles
 2. God has now opened the door to mass conversions among the Gentiles
 3. Paul and Barnabas once again returned to service and fellowship with their home congregation