

## The Book of Acts - Chapter Fourteen

### V Acts 13:4-14:28 - The Witness in Cyprus and Southern Galatia (continues and concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Fourteen

We left Paul and Barnabas being expelled by jealous Jews from the city of Pisidian Antioch, where they had established a strong church base, with the majority of its members being Gentiles, and were then heading for the city of Iconium.

In Iconium we see the familiar pattern of Paul's journey. They went to the synagogue on the Sabbath to speak to the Jews and God-fearers first; their audience was polarised between those who accepted the message and those who rejected it outright. The former group started to build the church, while the latter tried to destroy it. When a plot to harm them by both Gentiles and Jews was discovered, they moved on to the Lycaonian city of Lystra.

There was no synagogue in Lystra so it appears that they took to the streets to proclaim the Gospel. Paul encountered a man who had been crippled from birth and identified that he had faith to be healed. Paul simply said to him, 'Stand up on your feet', which the man immediately did.

This caused great delight and amazement among the population, but they had misunderstood what had happened and believed Paul and Barnabas to be Hermes and Zeus respectively, who had come down to them in human form. As this was proclaimed in the local language, the apostles did not at first know what was happening but when the local idolatrous priest tried to sacrifice an animal to Paul and Barnabas, they realised what was going on, tore their clothes and identified themselves as mere mortals, proclaiming it was God who created everything and not their idols.

Jews who opposed the faith, had travelled from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, with the express purpose of harming Paul. They incited the crowd against the apostles and, as a result, they stoned Paul and took him outside of the city, believing they had killed him. But Paul miraculously survived and went back into the city that same night before leaving for Derbe the next day.

They preached successfully in Derbe before retracing their steps, checking on the churches they had established and appointing elders to oversee them. This was an extremely courageous thing to do, given the opposition, mistreatment and death threats they had consistently received. They then sailed back to Syria and arrived in Antioch to report to their home church all that had occurred on their journey. They then stayed in Antioch for some time.

## V.c Acts 14:1-7 - In Iconium

Forced to leave Antioch, see notes on Acts 13:49-51, the two missionaries went to Iconium, modern Konya. In Iconium, a great many Jews and Greeks believed, but once again the apostles faced concerted opposition, mainly from the Jews.

<sup>1</sup> At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.

### Acts 14:1

Paul's witness in Iconium followed the pattern in Pisidian Antioch. In order to comply with the Holy Spirit's prompting that God's chosen people should hear the word first, he began his witness in the synagogue: <<I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>> (Romans 1:16), which shows that the God's elect have priority in salvation history. See also notes on Acts 13:5.

They spoke effectively. Paul had a reputation for great oratory skills and a deep understanding of the Gospel, as well as the ways of God through the OT scriptures and the Pharisaic traditions. Here, it indicates that Barnabas was just as gifted, which is not surprising as both men had been filled with the Holy Spirit: <<Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit" >> (Acts 9:17), and: <<News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord>> (Acts 11:22-24).

Jews and Gentiles believed. It seems the Gentiles in view here were proselytes and God-fearers as Paul and Barnabas were teaching in the synagogue. However, Paul will later write: <<and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility>> (Ephesians 2:16), indicating that all are in one body and therefore should come together to be taught, no matter what their background. Such is the church of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. <sup>3</sup> So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.

### Acts 14:2-3

Against the brothers indicates that Jew debated with Jew to turn those who believed away from Paul's Gospel teaching and the message it brought them.

The Jews refused to believe. This is something that those who proclaim the word of God had encountered since the time of Moses: <<But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house>> (Ezekiel 3:7-9). So God strengthens those called to be his disciples and equips them accordingly, so that they can face such adversity and triumph in his name, as Mark's Gospel confirms: <<Then the disciples went out and preached

everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it>> (Mark 16:20).

In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas again faced opposition, so they spent considerable time there.

In spite of strong opposition, they were able, by the power of the Spirit, to speak boldly and to perform signs and wonders, which once again confirmed the truth and authenticity of the Gospel message.

<sup>4</sup> The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.

#### Acts 14:4

The people of the city were divided. This is what Jesus had said would happen: <<Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law>> (Luke 12:51-53). There is always a simple choice to be made: God or Baal, Jesus or Beelzebul?

Both Paul and Barnabas are referred to as apostles (v.4 and v.14). The Greek word *apostolos* carries the general meaning of 'one who is sent', but it is often used throughout the NT as a more technical term for someone specifically chosen and commissioned by Christ for the proclamation of the Gospel, as in the case of the original 12 apostles, e.g. Matthew 10:2 and 19:28, Mark 3:14, Luke 9:1, Acts 1:2 and 1:15-26. The apostle Paul understood his calling as an apostle (Romans 1:1) to be comparable to the calling of the original Twelve in this technical sense. That is, as one who had seen Christ and who had been specifically chosen and appointed by Christ. This was based on the fact that Paul, on the road to Damascus, had in fact personally seen the risen Christ and had been chosen by Christ (Acts 9:15), and that he had been appointed and sent by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles: <<Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them>> (Acts 26:16-17). See also Paul's defence of his apostolic calling in 1 Corinthians 9:2 and 15:7-9, and Galatians 1:1, 1:12 and 1:16. Commentators differ as to whether the word *apostles* in v.4 and v.14 refers to Paul and Barnabas as being apostles in the same technical sense as the original Twelve, or whether this is intended in the general sense of 'ones who are sent'. In Acts 13:2-3, Paul and Barnabas are 'set apart' by the Holy Spirit and 'sent off' by the church in Antioch, which could indicate that Barnabas has been elevated to true apostolic authority but this cannot be confirmed.

<sup>5</sup> There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. <sup>6</sup> But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country,

#### Acts 14:5-6

There was a plot. When people are against something they seek to eliminate it rather than debate it or live alongside it, especially if they know it is the truth: <<Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright>> (Proverbs 29:10).

They found out about it and fled. As we saw in Damascus, when Paul learned of a death plot against him and managed to escape from the city by being lowered through the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25), God sometimes does not call his people to stand and risk their lives but

rather to escape from the danger that he has revealed to them, in order that their work may continue.

Lystra was 20 miles or 32 km southwest of Iconium, and Derbe another 58 miles or 93 km southeast. Both were in the district of Lycaonia and within the Galatian province. This verse likely implies that Iconium was not a Lycaonian city but rather of Phrygia and/or of the province of Galatia; this claim is supported by inscriptions from Iconium in the Phrygian language.

And to the surrounding country indicates they spoke the word of God in other towns and villages on their way.

<sup>7</sup> where they continued to preach the good news.

#### Acts 14:7

Although they have been expelled from Pisidian Antioch and threatened in Iconium, they remain faithful to their calling to preach the good news of Jesus as the Christ and all that it entails for those who will accept him.

Let us not fear being called divisive, for it is better to swim against the tide by proclaiming the Gospel than to be swept away with it to destruction.

#### V.d Acts 14:8-20 - In Lystra and Derbe

Lystra was populated mainly by Gentiles and had no synagogue. The ministry of Paul and Barnabas there centred around the healing of a lame man and the attempt of the populace to worship them as a result.

Timothy was from Lystra and became a disciple at a young age. His mother and grandmother were also disciples (2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy would not join Paul until the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1). It is not clear at what point Timothy first heard Paul speak, but Paul does write to him as if he had firsthand knowledge of this journey to date: <<You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them>> (2 Timothy 3:10-11), and it may be that he spent some time with Paul and Barnabas at that time.

<sup>8</sup> In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed

#### Acts 14:8-9

Lame from birth. As we all are spiritually, but: <<You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly>> (Romans 5:6).

Saw that he had faith to be healed. Just as Jesus did in the friends who brought their paralytic friend to be healed: <<Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" >> (Matthew 9:2). On this occasion, the Holy Spirit granted Paul the ability to know what was happening in the invisible, spiritual realm, and to have the faith to instruct the man as follows.

<sup>10</sup> and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

## Acts 14:10

Called out shows that the man was healed with a word, but not the word of Paul, for: <<He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave>> (Psalm 107:20). It appears that Paul spoke the command loudly, unlike sorcerers and spiritualists: <<When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritualists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God?>> (Isaiah 8:19a), and: <<I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness>> (Isaiah 45:19a).

Jumped up and began to walk. And the result is: <<Then will the lame leap like a deer>> (Isaiah 35:6a). This outcome is reminiscent of the lame man that Peter and John had encountered in the Temple courts: <<Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God>> (Acts 3:6-8).

<sup>11</sup> When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" <sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> 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.

## Acts 14:11-13

The gods have come down to us in human form! Since the people were speaking in their native Lycaonian language, Paul and Barnabas were probably unaware of what was transpiring.

They realised the gravity of the situation, however, when the local idolatrous priest began to offer sacrifices. The crowd's acclamation was based on a local myth that the gods Hermes and Zeus had once visited their region in human form.

It seems ironic that Jesus came to earth and produced many miracles; but even though: <<He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him>> (John 1:10-11). Paul and Barnabas were involved in this one miracle and they are pronounced gods. Barnabas, possibly by his appearance and stature, was the chief God Zeus and Paul, as the main spokesman, was Hermes, the personal agent and herald of Zeus.

<sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, 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.

## Acts 14:14-15

They tore their clothes. People would tear their clothes as an emotional expression, such as grief, anger, contrition or even repentance. Contrast the response of Herod in Acts 12:21-23, where he wilfully accepted the praise of the people and lost his life as a result.

Turn from these worthless things. God hates idol worship and had become increasingly intolerant of those who persisted in it after they had heard about him: <<They made me

jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols>> (Deuteronomy 32:21), for: <<Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain?>> (Jeremiah 14:22a), or: <<O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me>> (Hosea 14:8), but, through the Gospel: <<for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God>> (1 Thessalonians 1:9), because: <<We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one>> (1 Corinthians 8:4).

Who made heaven and earth. Since the Lystrans were polytheists, it was necessary to begin with the basic message that God is the creator of all that exists (Genesis Chapter 1).

They were told to turn to a living God from the dead idols that can never help anyone or, in this case, trying to worship sinful, dying men.

<sup>16</sup> In the past, he let all nations go their own way. <sup>17</sup> 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."

#### Acts 14:16-17

In the past. Times had now changed forever. He had allowed Gentiles to go their own way. Although created in his image, they should have at least a firm sense of right and wrong. But now the Gospel is being preached, and Christ is revealed, so that men are without excuse. The veil has been destroyed for all time: <<On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations>> (Isaiah 25:7), <<And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split>> (Matthew 27:50-51).

Rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. Paul told these Gentiles, who had no knowledge of the Jewish scriptures, that their regular harvests, the food they eat every day, and the joy they experience in the ordinary activities of life are all a testimony from God of his existence, wisdom, and goodness. They should not think that these things just happen, for: <<He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous>> (Matthew 5:45b), and: <<You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance. The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing>> (Psalm 65:9-13). Or that they are the work of some local deities, for they are from the one true God: <<who made heaven and earth>> (v.15). The themes of this short speech will be developed in the speech at Mars Hill in Athens, see Acts 17:16-34. These are the two occasions where Paul speaks to Gentiles who worship idols.

God provides not just our basic needs but so much more for our pleasure. Life is for joyful living in the presence of God.

<sup>18</sup> Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

## Acts 14:18-19

The Jews again stirred up opposition, this time they came from Iconium and Antioch, over 100 miles or 161 km by road. This clearly shows the strength of feeling they had against this teaching and the impact it was having on their communities.

The local people were stirred up by this factious, seditious, dangerous people, who had travelled to Lystra from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, for the sole purpose of opposing Paul. Such is the divisive power of the Gospel, that Satan will stir up his people, but in this case it was men of God, to action against Christ. The church must similarly unite in order to prevail.

They stoned Paul. The action was so brutal that they could see no sign of life in Paul. Later, in recounting his sufferings for the Gospel, Paul says: <<Once I was stoned>> (2 Corinthians 11:25b). In his final months of life he will recall this and other incidents from this journey in his last epistle (2 Timothy 3:11).

See how fickle and mutable the minds of carnal worldly people are. One day it is Hosanna, the next it is 'crucify him'; today sacrificed to, tomorrow sacrificed. As Hermes, Paul would have been enshrined, as a man of God he was stoned.

Thinking he was dead. Those who stoned Paul apparently thought they had succeeded in killing him. But as thinking he was dead indicates, thankfully they were mistaken, even though Paul was indeed gravely injured.

Paul, as the chief speaker, clearly was their target and was stoned to death, or so they thought, but they need to know that: <<As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head>> (Obadiah 15b).

<sup>20</sup> 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.

## Acts 14:20

The presence of the disciples indicates that, despite the opposition, a nucleus of believers was already established at Lystra, probably including Timothy, for on his next journey we read: <<He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek>> (Acts 16:1).

They gathered around Paul, perhaps at first to mourn him, but then, with some signs of life, to pray for his recovery. Amazingly, and clearly miraculously, he got up and went back into the city, apparently under his own strength.

It may be that he was just unconscious but even so his recovery was miraculous and he was able to walk to Derbe the next morning. It is also noted that he returned to the city that night showing he had no fear of the mob or of death in serving Christ: <<For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain>> (Philippians 1:21). These are not just fine, encouraging words but were, for Paul and many other disciples through history and today, a daily reality.

The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe confirms the miraculous nature of Paul's recovery from the severe damage his body would have received just the previous day.

## V.e Acts 14:21-28 - The return to Antioch in Syria

The apostles then started their return journey, revisiting the towns and churches they had been to on the outward journey. In his exhortation and encouragement to the elders and other key people, Paul reminded them that it was both their duty and in their deepest interest to persevere in the faith, to abide in the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the unique Son of God,

and Saviour of the world. They also needed to know that, as disciples of Christ, they would be persecuted, something Paul would later write about to the Thessalonians: <<We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know>> (1 Thessalonians 3:2-4).

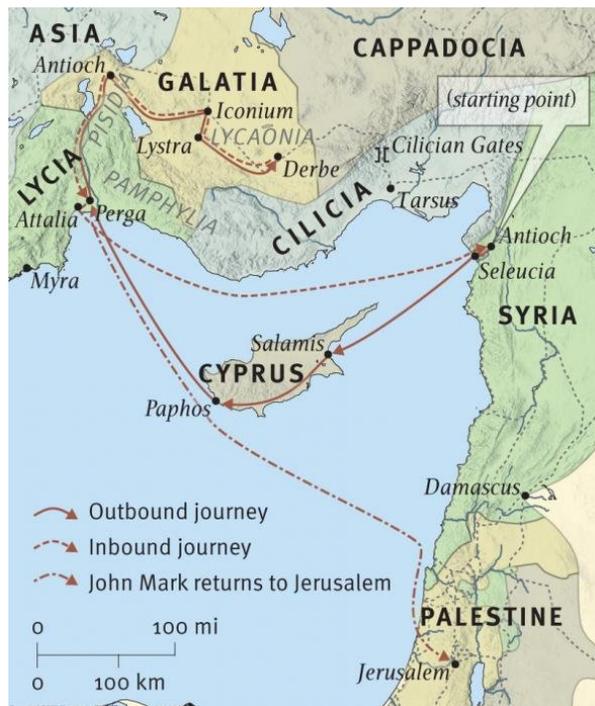
<sup>21</sup> They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

#### Acts 14:21

Derbe, about 58 miles or 93 km southeast of Lystra, marked the farthest point in Paul's first missionary journey. The account is brief, noting only that Paul made a number of converts there.

From that city, i.e. Derbe, Paul could have continued on south to his home city of Tarsus on foot, and from there to their starting point of Syrian Antioch by sea, a much easier journey than backtracking through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. The decision to take this longer route shows the importance Paul attached to maintaining contact with his churches and establishing local elders. It also shows tremendous courage that he would return to the cities from which he had been driven out by such violent opposition.

Debates surround the exact location of ancient Derbe, but many associate it with the unexcavated mound of Kerti Hüyük, since inscriptions mentioning Derbe were found in the area.



The map details the journey undertaken by Paul and Barnabas. John Mark travelled with them throughout their time in Cyprus but left them as soon as they reached Perga on the mainland, to return to Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

#### Acts 14:22

Paul told the Christians of those cities to expect many hardships, which is echoed in his own account of the persecutions there: <<You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions,

sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted>> (2 Timothy 3:10-12). Suffering for the Gospel is not so much an expectation for some people but a requirement: <<Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory>> (Romans 8:17).

Often in Acts new believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, as Barnabas did when he first went to Antioch: <<When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts>> (Acts 11:23), and more recently in Pisidian Antioch: <<When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God>> (Acts 13:43), and the reference to many hardships indicates that the Christian's life is often beset by difficulties.

Just as Jesus did not put the apostles through anything he himself was not prepared to endure, so too the apostles would not expect ordinary disciples to do what they would not. This is a clear message for leaders in churches today.

Just as God had parted the Red Sea for his people to cross on their way to the Promised Land, so too does Christ open a pathway for us through our trials and tribulations, so that we will arrive in the Kingdom of God, if we endure, and the joy and glory at the end will more than make up for any difficulties and hardships endured on the journey: <<But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it>> (Matthew 7:14).

<sup>23</sup> 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.

#### Acts 14:23

Paul's churches followed the synagogue pattern of leadership by elders. It is significant that elders were appointed from the beginning for such young churches. This is confirmed by James 5:14, which dates no later than the early 50's AD: <<Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord>>. The language here indicates a plurality of elders in every church, i.e. a leadership team model rather than that of a single leader. This is indicated also in Acts 11:30, 15:2-6, 15:22-23, 16:4, 20:17 and 21:18, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1 and 5:5.

It is not the role of elders and leaders to make new rules but to ensure the church knows and follows those established by Jesus through his teaching and by his Spirit. They are to commit those to the Lord who are committed to him: <<if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us>> (2 Timothy 2:12).

This idea was not new to the Jews, as elders had been appointed throughout their history. They were a group of senior tribal leaders, entrusted with important decisions. They are mentioned from the time of the sojourn in Egypt through to the NT. Other nations also had them: <<The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said>> (Numbers 22:7), and cities were governed by elders, as we see when Jezebel wrote a letter to some elders: <<So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him>> (1 Kings 21:8). The elders in Israel were instrumental in establishing a king, as it was they who asked Samuel for a king (1 Samuel 8:4), Saul is concerned with their opinion (1 Samuel 15:30), they were leaders in choosing a king after Saul's death (2 Samuel 3:17 and 5:3), and they were in Absalom's council (2 Samuel 17:4). So it is not surprising to see them chosen to lead the fledgling churches.

#### Acts 14:24-28 - Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas summarise God's work among the Gentiles.

<sup>24</sup> After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, <sup>25</sup> and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

<sup>26</sup> From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

#### Acts 14:24-26

Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps south through the regions of Pisidia and Pamphylia to Perga and the port city of Attalia, then sailed back to their sponsoring congregation in Syrian Antioch.

This time they shared the Gospel in Perga, which didn't appear to be the case on their outward journey.

Attalia, modern Antalya, continues to serve as a marina to this day, and the remains of an ancient mausoleum still overlook the harbour.

The image shows the harbour and ancient city walls of modern day Antalya in Turkey.



Everywhere they went, they left a little yeast or they planted a mustard seed; thus the Kingdom of God grew on earth: <<He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough" >> (Matthew 13:31-35).

The reference to having fulfilled the work links up with the Spirit's original commission at Antioch in Acts 13:2. It was probably during this time in Antioch that Paul penned his letter to the Galatians circa AD48.

<sup>27</sup> On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

#### Acts 14:27

Gathered the church together. This may have been just local leaders and senior figures of the church, as Antioch had grown quite significantly, and to gather all its members would have taken quite a large building to house them all.

God had done through them. Luke again confirms that we are just instruments of God and that it is not our own gifts, skills or endeavours that achieve his work.

Opened the door. An expression Paul used elsewhere, see 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12 and Colossians 4:3.

Paul gave an account of two things:

1. That the divine presence of the Holy Spirit was with them throughout their entire missionary journey.
2. Of the fruit of their labours among the Gentiles. Romans 16:25-26 <<Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him>>, shows it is by

our faith that God opens the door to salvation. Nothing can shut that door but a lack of faith does conceal it.

<sup>28</sup> And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

#### Acts 14:28

Stayed there a long time. Timelines for biblical events are often the subject of fierce debate. Paul attended the Jerusalem council which many believe to have been in AD50 but the only real consensus is that it occurred sometime between AD48-52. Some scholars go for the earlier portion to allow Paul's second journey to commence in AD49; others will argue a later time for Paul's journey to be in the early 50's. What really matters from our perspective is that the journey took place, the word of God was spread and many people came to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.