

8. What are some really good things that tend to diminish our affection for Christ?
9. Is it a good thing or a bad thing when God lets us go our own way? Explain your answer.

B. THE CROWD TURNS OH SO QUICKLY (vv, 19-20)

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.

1. What do you make of how quickly the crowds turned on Paul and Barnabas's?
2. How does their experience in Lystra parallel our Lord's experience in Jerusalem?
3. What does Paul and Barnabas's experience in Lystra (and our Lord's experience in Jerusalem) tell us about where we should look for approval?



THE STORY CONTINUES

WORTHLESS THINGS | ACTS 14:1-20

It is easy for us to look around and get a bit judgmental about the silly things people tend to get caught up in. When I see a guy my age with half of his face painted orange, the other half blue, wearing a team jersey, with a giant orange foam finger on his right hand, a cold beer in his left, who acts as if it is the end of the world as we know it every time the ref makes a call against his team, I tend to think, "Wow! Get a life!" But he could point his big foam finger right back in my face and say, "Yeah, but what about you and all your theology books? How come you've read so much theology and your heart is still so small?"

And he would be right. Sometimes the Broncos become bigger than they ought to be, and sometimes our theology becomes bigger than it ought to be. Calvin nailed it when he wrote, "The human heart is a perpetual forge of idols."

The sad truth is that we tend to give our hearts and lives to worthless things.

In Acts 14, Paul offers the gospel to an audience who had never heard the Old Testament story. They had no biblical knowledge to draw upon. Paul tells them who God is and invites them to "Turn from worthless things to the true and living God."

Whether our hearts are captured by really silly things or really, really good things, they will never be fully satisfied until they are fully, completely and finally captured by him.

A MIXED RESPONSE IN ICONIUM (vv. 1-6)

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.

²But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So 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.

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

⁵There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. ⁶But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷where they continued to preach the gospel.

1. Why do you think Paul and Barnabas continued to go to the synagogue even though they often met with opposition?
2. What are some of the heart issues that might have prevented a devout Jew from responding to the gospel?
3. What are some other heart issues that keep us from responding to the gospel?
4. Why do you think these sometimes lead to violent opposition?
5. What happens when we allow the prospect of rejection to keep us from engaging our friends and neighbors with the message of Christ and the gospel?

AN UNWELCOME RESPONSE IN LYSTRA (vv. 20)

A. A MIRACULOUS HEALING (vv. 8-10)

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

1. How does Luke describe this man’s condition?
2. Why do you think he offers so much detail?
3. What do you think Paul saw in the man, that made him aware that he was ready to be healed?

4. Interestingly enough, the word for “to be healed” and also be translated “to be saved.” One speaks of physical wholeness and the other of spiritual wholeness. Why is faith critical to both?
5. Where does our faith come from?
6. How do we nurture it?

B. A BIZARRE CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY (vv. 11-18)

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

¹⁴But 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 the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

¹⁶In the past, he let all nations go their own way.

¹⁷Yet 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.” ¹⁸Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

1. Compare and contrast the crowds response to Paul and Barnabas with Paul and Barnabas’s response to the crowd.
2. How does Paul describe God in this passage?
3. Paul tells the Greeks that God has shown them kindness by providing rain from heaven, crops in their season, plenty of food to eat and filling their hearts with joy. How has God shown his kindness to you?
4. How should we respond to God’s kindness?
5. How do we usually respond to God’s kindness?
6. What happens when we love the things God provides more than we do God himself?
7. What are some of the worthless things that tend to diminish our affection for Christ?