



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V28 N29

July 19, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

“Courageous Perseverance of the Faithful”

Acts 14:1-28

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness
I focus on God and his
priorities for my life.

*“But seek first the kingdom
of God and his righteous-
ness, and all these things
will be added to you.”*

Matthew 6:33



Q?

What is Paul's
message to
idolatrous
Gentiles?

Following Jesus as his disciple is demanding; Jesus' “cross” language implies as much (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27). Following Jesus is a pursuit analogous to many other worthy pursuits – e.g. getting an education, raising a family, and advancing in one's career. It is demanding, costly, time consuming and is aborted by giving up. This fact is illustrated by the parable of the Sower and the Soils. The seed that falls on rocky soil germinates but does not produce fruit because those who receive it stop following Jesus, in other words, “fall away” (Mk 4:17), in the face of trouble or persecution. Likewise the seed that falls among thorns germinates but those who receive it stop following Jesus, in other words, are “choked” (v. 19), by “the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things.” Following Jesus as his disciple is demanding. One author puts it this way:

“My central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in. . . .to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.

“What activities did Jesus practice? Such things as solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, intense study and meditation upon God's Word and God's ways, and service to others. Some of these will certainly be even more necessary to us than they were to him, because of our greater or different need. But in a balanced life of such activities, we will be constantly enlivened” (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix). As this author has widely argued: You do not become like Jesus by *trying harder*; you become like him by *training wisely*.

Paul was the *personification* of perseverance,

the *exemplar* of single-mindedness. He did not let trouble or persecution get in the way of his pursuit of Christ. He writes: “Not that I have already attained this – that is, *I have not already been perfected* – but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead *I am single-minded*: Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let those of us who are ‘perfect’ [mature, ESV] embrace this point of view” (NET).

Paul did not abort his pursuit of ministry, namely, his pursuit of Christ, because of what he suffered. Physically, Paul was repeatedly beaten and tortured. He received thirty-nine lashes from Jewish authorities on five separate occasions, was beaten with rods three times, and was once stoned and left for dead (Ac 14:19; cf. 2Co 11:25). His extensive travels exposed him to frequent danger, including three shipwrecks and a night and day spent drifting at sea. He constantly faced threats from bandits, hostile authorities, and unbelieving Jews and Gentiles.

Daily life for Paul was defined by severe deprivation. He regularly endured hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, cold, and a lack of adequate clothing. He worked grueling hours to support himself while preaching the gospel.

Beyond physical pain, Paul carried deep emotional suffering. He experienced intense loneliness, betrayals, and constant imprisonment. He also described the psychological weight of his anxiety for the spiritual health of all the newly established churches.

His example serves to encourage us to not let trouble and persecution, or worldly cares and desires cause us to stop following Jesus as his disciples.

Read Acts 14:1-28

1 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. 5 When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, 6 they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, 7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, 10 said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. 11 And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to 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 garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 15 "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, 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 past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." 18 Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 When 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 that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24 Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, 26 and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. 27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they remained no little time with the disciples.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Jews," "Greeks" in v. 1, "unbelieving Jews," "Gentiles" in v. 2, and "Gentiles," "Jews," and "their rulers" in v. 5.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in vv. 2, 4.
- Box "So" indicating *result* in v. 3.
- Circle "long time" in v. 3.
- Bracket "signs and wonders" in v. 3.
- Circle "apostles" in v. 4.
- **In vv. 8-18**
- Bracket "faith to be made well" in v. 9.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in v. 14.
- Bracket "tore their garments" in v. 14.
- Circle "these vain things" in v. 15.
- Circle "witness" in v. 17.
- **In vv. 19-23**
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in vv. 19, 20.
- Circle "Jews" in v. 19.
- Circle "many disciples" in v. 21.
- Underline "strengthening," "encouraging," and "saying" in v. 22.
- Circle "kingdom of God" in v. 22.
- Underline "appointed" and "committed" in v. 23.
- **In vv. 24-28**
- Bracket "opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" in v. 27.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. At Iconium, preaching the gospel in the synagogue received a mixed response. How so?
2. Why would the apostles remain in Iconium “for a long time” (v. 3; cf. “So”) when the unbelieving Jews were poisoning the minds of people against them?
3. Describe who attempted to mistreat the missionaries and explain why (vv. 4-5).
4. What do you think caused Luke to include the story of the healing of the crippled man in his narrative— what made its *inclusion* necessary?
5. The crowds who saw the miracle misunderstood it. How so?
6. What did the crowds need to believe before they could believe the gospel— what did Paul tell them to do and what does that suggest to you?
7. To what did Paul appeal in order to persuade them to do what he said?
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 20.
9. What did the missionaries do when they revisited the churches they had established?
10. **Discussion.** God has “opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.” Discuss Paul’s message to Gentiles at Lystra and its relationship to our message today.

Commentary On The Text

After describing how the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas began in chapter 13 of the book of Acts, Luke describes how it ended in chapter 14. How long the journey took is debatable. One author writes: “The chronological references in Acts and the Pauline epistles make it difficult to tell just how long it took Paul and Barnabas to complete the first missionary journey. Commentators estimate that it took them from the better part of *one year to almost two years*. They traveled a minimum of 500 miles by sea plus 700 by land. Beitzel estimated that Paul covered a total of about 1,400 miles on this journey. Mark Wilson’s opinion was that the apostle’s trip from Perga to Derbe and back to Attalia was approximately 654 miles and took many months, and that the total journey from Antioch of Syria and back again was about 935 miles and took a minimum of 1.5 years to complete” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 286, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf, italics added).

Acts 14:1-28 records the travels of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch in Pisidia, a region of Galatia, to Iconium (14:1-7), Lystra (vv. 8-20a), and Derbe (vv. 20b-21a), the eastern extreme of their circuitous journey, followed by their return through the cities they had visited (vv. 21b-23)—apart from those on Cyprus—on to Antioch in Syria (vv. 24-28).

In Iconium, the preaching of the “apostles” enjoyed mixed success—“a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed” (v.1). These Gentiles were likely God-fearers, given their connection to the synagogue, unlike the pagan Gentiles encountered later at Lystra (vv. 11-17) with no such connection. As might be expected, the ministry was opposed by Jews, who stirred up other Gentiles by poisoning their minds against Paul and Barnabas. Nevertheless, the two spent a long time there for the sake of those who were coming to faith. One commentator explains: “Because God was saving many people, the missionaries stayed on in Iconium ‘a long time,’ regardless of opposition that evidently increased gradually. They testified ‘boldly’ (cf. 13:46) and relied on ‘the Lord’ Jesus for their success. The phrase ‘the word of His grace’ describes the gospel message and stresses the prominence of God’s grace in it (cf. 20:24-32). Paul and Barnabas did many miracles (‘signs and wonders’) there, too, thus confirming their message (cf. 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 15:12; Gal. 3:5, 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4)” (Constable, 276). When a schism divided the city into those who sided with the Jews and those who sided with the apostles, the Jews along with their synagogue rulers and the unbelieving Gentiles plotted to mistreat and stone

the missionaries, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra, 20 miles southwest of Iconium, and to Derbe, another 58 miles southeast.

In Lystra, where there was apparently no synagogue, the preaching of Paul and Barnabas was occasioned by the healing of a lame man, who “was crippled from birth and had never walked” (v. 8; cf. 3:1-8). He listened to Paul speaking—Luke does record Paul’s words—and when he recognized that the man believed he could be healed, Paul told him: “Stand upright on your feet,” and Luke described his response: “He sprang up and began walking” (v. 10). The miracle got an *unexpected* and *unwelcomed* reaction from the crowds that saw “what Paul had done” (vv. 11). They tried to pay homage to him and Barnabas. “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” they shouted. According to one writer: “Paul is compared to the god of interpretation, Hermes, and Barnabas, as the leader, is compared to Zeus, chief of the two . . . At first the missionaries do not understand what is being contemplated because the people speak in their local dialect of Lycaonian. The priest of the temple of Zeus is prepared to offer a celebratory and commemorative sacrifice of thanksgiving, parading the oxen, dressed for the offering with garlands, that would have accompanied the crowd to the temple” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 476).

When Paul heard of what was going on, he would have none of it, asking the crowd, “Why are you doing these things?” which amounts to telling them, “Stop doing these things.” God once allowed such pagan practices to go on, but now he expects people to turn from vain idols to the living God. In a nutshell, Paul’s hearers had to believe in the One true Creator God, witnessed to by general revelation provided by nature, before they could believe in Jesus, witnessed to by special revelation provided here by Paul. Unfortunately, but right on cue, whatever gospel progress made in Lystra was undermined by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the crowds to stone Paul. Although left for dead, he survived. A few days earlier, he and Barnabas had been treated better than angels; now they were treated worse than animals.

Before heading home, they enjoyed a successful ministry in Derbe (vv. 20-21), and then on their way home, they revisited the churches they had previously established to strengthen, encourage, and teach them, as well as to appoint elders in each one. Arriving in Antioch, “They declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (v. 27).

Word Studies/Notes

vv. 2, 3, 5 *Jews, Greeks* . . . “The Greeks here are likely God-fearers and/or proselytes, since they respond at the synagogue (Schneider 1982: 150). In contrast stands the reaction of unbelieving Jews” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 469), who “stirred up” “Gentiles,” other than the God-fearers, and “poisoned their minds against the brothers.”

v. 3 *long time* From October A.D. 48 to end of February A.D. 49 (Harold W. Hoehner, “A Chronological Table of the Apostolic Age,” cited by H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 129).

v. 3 *signs and wonders* “Later when writing his Galatian converts (assuming a ‘South Galatian’ origin for the letter), Paul appeals to these mighty works performed by the Spirit as evidence that the gospel as he preached it and they receive it was fully approved by God (cf. Gal 3:4-5)” (Richard N. Longnecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 432).

v. 4 *apostles* “Luke’s account here (and 14:14) reflects the story as told from an Antiochene perspective, Paul and Barnabas having been commissioned and sent forth as missionaries (=‘apostles’) of that church (13.3; cf. II Cor. 8.23’ and Phil. 2.25)” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 188).

v. 9 *faith to be made well* Cf. “faith to be healed” (NET, NIV, et al.); “believed he could be healed” (NLV). This man’s confidence was in God. He believed God *could* heal him, not that God *would* necessarily do so . . . Actually, the Greek word translated ‘made well’ is *sozo*, which means ‘saved.’ So while the man may have had faith to be saved spiritually, the context suggests that he probably believed that he could be saved physically” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 279-80, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

v. 14 *tore their garments* “The tearing of clothes is a characteristic Jewish expression of grief (e.g. Gen. 37.29, 34; Josh. 7.6; II Sam. 1.11; Judith 14.16) and of indignation at abuse of God (cf. Matt. 26.65)” (Dunn, 190). “Here the gesture expressed ardent protest and was designed to put a stop to the intended sacrifice” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 315).

v. 15 *these vain things* I.e., “pagan gods.” “The pagan polytheism was vanity, emptiness, worthlessness, idolatrous worship of gods who were nongods (cf. Jer 2:5; Rom 1:21-23). Paul exhorted them to abandon this vain worship and turn to the one true and

living God, the source of all that truly lives. This was the main theme of the sermon – *the living God*” (Polhill, 315).

v. 17 *witness* A reference to *general* or *natural* revelation. “Paul tells these Gentiles who had no knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures that their regular harvest, the **food** they eat every day, and the **gladness** they experience in the ordinary activities of life are all a **witness** from God of his existence, wisdom, and goodness” (ESV Study Bible, note on Ac 14:17). “There was no special revelation for the nations as Paul is giving now, although there were general revelation and care, as Paul notes in verse 17. God gives rain, the seasons, and ‘food for the joys’ of life” (Bock, 478).

v. 19 *Jews* Here Jews refers to Paul’s Jewish opponents, coming from Iconium (14:2, 4-5) and Antioch (13:45, 50) over 100 miles away, who stir up opposition and stone Paul (14:19; cf. 2Co 11:25).

v. 21 *disciples* New believers are called “disciples” here.

v. 22 *kingdom of God* “This reference to the *kingdom of God* clearly refers to its future arrival” (NET Bible, 72sn on Ac 14:22). Christians must persevere through the troubles that come with being disciples before entering the manifestation of God’s kingdom on earth; cf. “It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God” (HCSB).

v. 23 *appointed, committed* Cf. “When they had *appointed* elders for them in the various churches, with prayer and fasting they *entrusted* them to the protection of the Lord in whom they had believed” (NET). The ‘elders (plural) ‘in every church’ (singular) that the apostles ‘appointed’ must have been the more mature Christians in each congregation. Note that each of these churches had more than one leader (cf. 20:17; Phil. 1:1). There may have been more than one local church in each of these towns eventually, but at this early stage of pioneer evangelism there was probably only one church in each town . . . Perhaps some of the elders from the synagogues in these communities who had become Christians became elders in the churches” (Constable, 284).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

The gospel advanced in spite of zealous opposition as Paul and Barnabas took it throughout Galatia and as God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?

2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?

3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

When my kids were young, we invited all their friends to attend Kids Camp. Marco was a buddy who regularly joined us and even participated as a leader when he became an adult. Four years in a row at the beginning of camp, Marco would tell me he was going to zip line. Each year he would leave disappointed, not being able to take that plunge. Then came his sixth-grade year. He sat up on the ledge, palms sweating and heart racing for what felt like an eternity. His group was cheering him on, and camp leaders were praying with and for him. Finally, Marco leaned over and let gravity do the rest. Maybe it's just me, but that's what sharing the Gospel feels like. It takes insane courage, a spark of bravery, and a surrendered spirit to begin a Gospel conversation with a person you might not know that could be antagonistic. Some people have no issues; they just open their mouth and begin to speak. For others, it's like sitting on the ledge of the zip line. They're terrified and trembling, pleading with God for the courage to share the good news. In Acts 14, Paul shares boldly as he travels from town to town, faces dangerous situations and experiences life-threatening bodily harm. He perseveres because he knows the Gospel is worth it; Jesus is worth it. We're not in the same situation Paul is in, but it's still difficult to begin a conversation. This week as a family, pray God will give you insane courage, a spark of bravery and a surrendered spirit to share His good news of salvation through Jesus.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 14:1-28.

1. List the cities Paul and Barnabas traveled to.
2. What happened to Paul in Lystra?
3. What did Paul do the next day?

What Do You Think?

Was it hard for Paul to continue to speak about Jesus after being stoned? Would it be hard for you?

What Do You Do?

Pray for God to give you courage to boldly speak about Jesus this week.

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 19:1

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.