

The Power of the Gospel – Acts 14:8-28

1. Introduction

- **13:1-3** - The church in Syrian Antioch sent Apostles out in mission.
- **13:4-12** – the gospel confronts magic and establishes a Cyprus church.
- **13:13-52** – the gospel comes to Pisidian Antioch - the word spreads through the whole region leading to joy and persecution (13:49-52)
- **14:1-7** – the gospel leads to division in Iconium.

2. 14:8-18 - The Gospel connects with people

- Lystra was a superstitious rural backwater. Ovid told the story of the visit of the gods, Zeus and Hermes, to the town. They were unrecognized in a thousand homes, but received by Philemon and Bauchis. The latter were rewarded and the former were destroyed.
- **14:6-10** – Paul preaches the gospel and heals a lame man.
- **14:11-13** – The people think they are gods and try to worship them.
- **14:14-18** – the response of the Apostles is to preach good news that connects with the experience of their pagan hearers.
- This is an example of “*Apologetics*” – building bridges into the lives of unbelievers so that we can prepare them to hear the good news about Jesus. God has left signposts that point to Him.
 - ⇒ **Look at your hearts (15)** – human beings are idolaters by nature. The heart is “an idol factory” - we all know that we need God and want to find a substitute for Him that we can control. In place of empty and worthless idols the gospel offers the living God.
 - ⇒ **Look at creation (15-17)** – the heavens declare the glory of God, pointing to the Creator clearly, constantly and universally (Psalm 19:1-6). No one can miss this (Romans 1:18-2:16).
 - ⇒ **Look at the rhythms of life (17)** – God is not a “cosmic killjoy”. He has blessed all mankind in his common grace. We should recognize that every blessing comes from his generous heart (James 1:17).
- This is not the gospel, but it prepares the way for the gospel.
- **14:19-20** - The crowd turns ugly, stones Paul and leaves him for dead.

3. 14:21-23 – The Gospel creates churches

- **14:21** - Paul and Barnabas reach Derbe and then return through the cities where churches have been planted, even though it is both longer and more dangerous.
- **14:22-23** they do five things
 - ⇒ Strengthen the souls of the disciples – to make them firm in faith.
 - ⇒ Encourage them to guard the gospel – it is always under attack.
 - ⇒ Warn them about the dangers that lie ahead.
 - ⇒ Appoint elders in every city – healthy leadership is vital.
 - ⇒ Commit them to the grace of God – He will protect His church.
- Planting churches was Paul’s strategy, because churches are God’s strategy. The church is the focal point of His work on earth.

4. 14:24-28 -The gospel crosses barriers

- They return to their sending church in Antioch (13:1-3) and report that God has opened the door to the Gentiles and a number of new churches have come into existence.
- **14:28** - They then have a well-deserved rest – they need it because a new challenge is just around the corner.