Acts Chapter 14

14:1-7

* We pick up chapter 14 with a very similar event to the end of chapter 13. We are beginning to see a pattern in both Paul and Barnabas’ style of teaching, as well as in the popular reaction to them.
* In Iconium, they chose to stay awhile, despite some negative reactions to them. Many of the Jewish and gentile people they meet with believe in the good news that they are sharing and want to hear more and start their own churches. Eventually the town becomes fairly divided between those who are happy to have them there and those who would like to get rid of them.
* How do we respond to divisions in our church or in our community?

14:8-20

* When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Lystra, they healed a man who had been unable to walk his entire life while they were still teaching in a public place, so it was a very visible miracle.
* We see some of Luke’s humor again in the reactions of the people who saw this. They believe that the Greek gods have come to them and start getting ready for a celebration. They probably put garlands on Paul and Barnabas and it probably took some work for them to convince the people that they were not Zeus and Hermes in the flesh.
* The reaction from the people of Lystra is not that surprising, because they see something amazing and interpret it from their point of view. They aren’t Jewish and don’t have that frame of reference, so they use their own framework to understand what is happening.
* By doing this, they are unwittingly practicing idolatry, which Paul and Barnabas quickly try to steer them away from.
* What are times we might unwittingly practice idolatry? What are some common idols in our culture? What about in our church?
* When Paul and Baranabas are teaching them, they focus on the grace of God who created these people who don’t know God, and has protected them by giving them rain and fruitful seasons.
* How have we experienced God’s grace and care for us, even when it wasn’t directly related to our lives of faith?

14:21-28

* The last portion of this missionary journey involves Paul and Barnabas retracing some of their path to check in on the new churches they’ve planted.
* Because of the time, they probably wouldn’t see these people much after this visit, so they are hoping to set them up well to run on their own.
* The church needs leaders in every area, so Paul and Barnabas work to see the gifts of people in the church, pray over them, and equip them to lead well - they don’t try to run everything on their own.
* How do we select and equip leaders in our own community? How do we evaluate the gifts of others and send them to the best positions?
* The letter to the Galatians may have been written shortly after Paul and Barnabas got back to the church in Antioch, to these churches they had left. They may have had other teachers come in and teach them different things regarding welcoming gentiles, and Paul in Galatians speaks strongly about that.
* Paul again emphasizes the grace of God, both to the churches he starts and the church in Antioch, where he returns. That grace is central to understanding how God is at work among the gentiles.

