

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>8</sup> Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, <sup>10</sup> said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. <sup>11</sup> 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!" <sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, <sup>15</sup> "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. <sup>16</sup> In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> 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." <sup>18</sup> Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, <sup>26</sup> and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> And they remained no little time with the disciples.

- Acts 14:8-28 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection

We need to learn from Paul's flexibility. We have no liberty to edit the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. Nor is there ever any need to do so. But we have to begin where people are, to find a point of contact with them. With secularized people today this might be what constitutes authentic humanness, the universal quest for transcendence, the hunger for love and community, the search for freedom, or the longing for personal significance. Wherever we begin, however, we shall end with Jesus Christ, who is himself the good news, and who alone can fulfil all human aspirations.

- John R. W. Stott, *The Spirit, The Church and The World: The Message of Acts* (p. 232)

# Sermon Outline

**The Unstoppable Gospel**  
Acts 14:8-28

*The Acts of the Apostles*  
Jeff Hooker

**The gospel goes forth by the power of the Holy Spirit in spite of...**

- our idolatry (Acts 14:8-18)
- our fickle hearts (Acts 14:18-19)
- our persecution (Acts 14:19-20)

**The gospel goes forth by the power of the Holy Spirit through...**

- our selfless love for our neighbor (Acts 14:21-28)

**Reflection Questions** (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Why?
- In 14:11-13 we see people committing idolatry by crediting a work of God to something else. What works of God do people today attribute to something else?
- "We have fickle hearts." Agree or disagree? Why or why not? What contributes to the fickleness of our hearts? Why are we quick to turn to or away from God?
- Reread the reflection quote from John Stott below. What points of contact could we use for our current culture to help bring the gospel to people? What methods do we hang onto that might be hindering our witness?
- Read 14:21. Put yourself in Paul's shoes. Why do you think he chooses to go back through these cities where he faced hardship and persecution? How would this decision be physically difficult? How would it be emotionally difficult?
- Think of someone who has caused you to suffer (Share if appropriate; hold them in your mind if not). What would it look like for you to selflessly love them? Be specific! Make your application steps provable, probable and practical.