

What Does Faithfulness Look Like?

Acts 14:19-23

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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. - Acts 14:19, ESV

At the end of our last passage, Paul and Barnabas had to restrain the crowds in Lystra from offering sacrifices to them as gods. Now, in this passage, the crowds stone Paul and drag him out of the city, leaving him for dead.

Luke does not clearly tell us whether Paul actually died, so that when he "rose up," he actually came back from the dead, or whether he was merely knocked unconscious by a rock and left for dead. However, most Bible scholars agree that Paul's reference to a man who died and visited heaven in [2 Corinthians 12](#) most likely refers to himself in this incident outside Lystra, where the dead body of the Apostle Paul was dragged and left until the disciples gathered to pray and his life was restored.

Here the Apostle Paul sets a wonderful example of faithfulness for us. In the course of a relatively short period of time, Paul has . . .

- seen significant numbers of converts in Iconium
- faced stiff opposition and personal insults in Iconium
- fled from people plotting violence against him in Iconium
- been used by God to perform a stunning miracle in Lystra
- been hailed as a god in Lystra
- been plotted against by Jews, who turned the crowds of Lystra against him
- been stoned and either killed or nearly killed and left for dead
- been miraculously restored through the prayers of God's people

So, if all of this happened to you on a missions trip, how would you respond? Most of us would probably pack our bags and head for home. This is so much more than we bargained for. What that reaction reveals is that we subconsciously make subtle deals with God, negotiating in our minds how much we're willing to do and to suffer for the sake of Jesus. Clearly, Paul had no such mental reservations or self-interested calculations. He was faithful.

Paul got up and walked back into the city. He re-entered the city where he had been stoned. Then, the next day, he and Barnabas went on to the next town, preaching in Derbe before returning to Lystra and to Iconium. We need to stop and let these brief phrases sink into our hearts:

- "he rose up and entered the city"
- "they returned to Lystra and to Iconium"

In those short phrases are the very demonstrations of Gospel faithfulness. Faithfulness continues in the service of God, unwavering and uncompromising, whatever the opposition. Such faithfulness is only possible as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, but this is the calling of every believer. This is what Jesus meant when He said that we must take up our cross daily and follow Him.

Heavenly Father, empower us today by Your Holy Spirit to serve You with faithfulness, no matter the obstacles or opposition. Give us the strength of conviction, the clarity of understanding and the courage of character to stand for Christ in a world of hostility. In Jesus' name, Amen.