

# Faith to Persevere

***Key Verses: “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”***

***—Acts 14:21,22,  
New American  
Standard Bible***

***Selected Scripture:  
Acts 14:8-11,19-23***

## **WE MARVEL AT THE GRACE**

of perseverance that God gave to Paul. Our Key Verses record his extraordinary degree of commitment to Christ. The setting of our lesson is Lystra, a prominent city whose citizens were accustomed to worshipping the gods of Rome. While there, Paul and Barnabas became instant celebrities by healing a lame man. As was the case with Peter’s public demonstration of healing recorded shortly after Pentecost, this man was also known to be disabled from his birth.

We read, “At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made

well, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he leaped up and began to walk.”—Acts 14:8-10, *NASB*

The populace exploded with enthusiasm. Paul and Barnabas were proclaimed to be human forms of the gods Hermes and Zeus. The people immediately prepared to

offer sacrifices to them because the temple of Zeus was nearby. When Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their robes, rushed out into the crowd, and with much difficulty restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.—vss. 11-18

The crowd's fickle favor soon turned against Barnabas and Paul. "Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe." (vss. 19,20, *NASB*) The courage and godly resolve of Paul in this instance is a landmark in Christian faith. His example of perseverance in service to God and spreading the Gospel of Christ, even in the face of death, should resonate deeply in the hearts of all who now believe.

After much success in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (vss. 21,22, *NASB*) The brethren of the Early Church knew about Paul's tribulations. When he spoke, it was not of empty platitudes, but of proven principles based on persevering faith.

Paul's experiences flavored many of his writings. One of the most encouraging of these in regard to perseverance is found in his epistle to the Romans. "We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 5:3-5, *NASB*) A lifetime of Christian perseverance will not leave any of us disappointed, because our hope is well founded in the Scriptures. May we, by the grace of God, have faith to persevere to the end of our earthly sojourn. ■