



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## The Greatest Missionary is Martyred

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**Acts 14:19-22** *“But the Jews from Antioch and Iconium suddenly attacked and having convinced the crowds and having stoned Paul, they were continually dragging him outside the city, supposing him to have been dead. 20) But after the disciples surrounded him, he rose up and entered into the city. And on the next day, he went out with Barnabas to Derbe; 21) Evangelizing that city and having made many disciples, they returned into Lystra and into Iconium and into Antioch; 22) Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that ‘It is necessary for us, through many afflictions, to enter into the kingdom of God.’”*

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*“THEN JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, ‘IF ANYONE DESIRES TO COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME. FOR WHOEVER DESIRES TO SAVE HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT, BUT WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT. FOR WHAT PROFIT IS IT TO A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSES HIS OWN SOUL? OR WHAT WILL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?’” (MATTHEW 16:24-26, MK. 8:34-37, LK. 9:23-25)*

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Why are these Jews so fiercely angry with Paul that they are willing to travel so far to follow him outside their province to kill him? Are these terrorists dragging around what they believe to be Paul’s corpse as a trophy of their violence? Who stops this ghastly procession of terror? Did Paul’s renewed life bring terror to these terrorists? How far did Paul and Barnabas travel to Derbe? What characterized their ministry? Is there both great results from their preaching and a complete lack of opposition in Derbe? Who were the disciples from Derbe and Lystra who later accompanied Paul on his mission team? Why does Paul return to these cities where he was persecuted?

### FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES AND EVENTS:

- FEBRUARY 16: ACTS 14:23-28 *THE DOOR OF FAITH OPENED TO THE GENTILES*
- FEBRUARY 23: ACTS 15:1-5 *SALVATION BY CIRCUMCISION?*

The jealous Jews from Psidia Antioch must have been the original instigators. Seeing that *“almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God”* (Acts 13:44), they had contradicted and blasphemed the message of the Gospel given by Paul. *“Since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles”* (46), Paul said for the first time to these Messiah rejecting Jews. Thus, what made the Gentiles so glad had made these Jews equally mad, particularly when they saw that from their capital, *“the Word of the Lord was being spread throughout all that region”* (49). Furious at seeing their capital turn to Christ, they soon followed Paul to the next closest capital, Iconium, about eighty miles away. When they got to Iconium and discovered that through Paul’s preaching *“a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed”* (14:1), their fury, joined with the murderous Jews in Iconium must have turned to violent rage. Gathering as many as possible, they tracked thirty miles to Lystra. There Barnabas and Paul had just doused fires of idolatry where the local priest had sought to sacrifice to these first missionaries in response to Paul healing the man lame from his birth. Now all these terrorists have to do is to persuade these unbelieving crowds to let them lynch the leader whom they loathed.

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*“I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME.” GALATIANS 2:20*

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### I. RELENTLESS RAGE

### ACTS 14:19

These Jews seem to have caught Paul at the most inopportune time. He has not had much opportunity to preach other than his brief words when they have tried to

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### BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30 AM—PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00 AM—BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR EAST CONFERENCE ROOM

# Virginia

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sacrifice to him. Yet he has, in a few words, led them away from their vain idols to their Creator, “*the living God, who made the heaven, and the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them*” (14:15). Paul has also preached to them the goodness of God in providing “*fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*” (17). Suddenly a whole mob of these Jewish terrorists attack. Because Lystra is a Roman Colony, the people must be persuaded to allow them to stone Paul. The fickle crowds are now turned from worshipping Paul to killing him. They may have even helped these terrorists, who without any trial or hearing, suddenly execute Paul in Jewish style by stoning. Convinced they have killed him, they begin to parade their victim by dragging him through the streets and outside the city. The imperfect tense points to a continual act of dragging Paul to parade his death and enhance their terror. Such is not unusual among terrorists today.

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*“BUT YOU HAVE CAREFULLY FOLLOWED MY DOCTRINE, MANNER OF LIFE, PURPOSE, FAITH, LONGSUFFERING, LOVE, PERSEVERENCE, PERSECUTIONS, AFFLICTIONS, WHICH HAPPENED TO ME AT ANTIOCH, AT ICONIUM, AT LYSTRA—WHAT PERSECUTIONS I ENDURED. AND OUT OF THEM ALL THE LORD DELIVERED ME. YES, AND ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION.”* 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-12

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### II. RESISTANCE & RESURRECTION ACTS 14:20

It is amazing that with so little preaching that there would already be “*disciples*.” It is very probable that even Timothy had witnessed all that had happened and had joined Barnabas with the other believers who seem to have stopped the dragging of Paul by forming a circle around him. Notice that prayer is not mentioned here. Instead there is implied a courageous and firm resistance against the terrorism focused upon Paul. Probably at that point the Jews had sufficiently spent their anger and left him alone rejoicing that they had killed this greatest

missionary evangelist. They couldn’t wait to share the news of Paul’s death by stoning, the punishment for blasphemy, with all the many believers back home. And suddenly they are astounded when the man they have just stoned to death and dragged around, parading their violent murder, comes walking back into the city. The next morning Paul begins his sixty mile journey to Derbe.

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*“VICTORY IS MANIFEST IN HIS RECOVERY, AS INSTANTANEOUS AS THE CRIPPLE’S HEALING, AND IN HIS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.”* WILLIAM LARKIN

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### III. RETURN & REINFORCEMENT ACTS 14:21-22

Paul and Barnabas continue with their singular focus in Derbe of “*evangelizing that city and having made many disciples*.” Finally, there is the blessing of many converts without the mention of persecution. They must have stayed for some time to establish the church in Derbe from which Gaius would come to serve with Paul (20:4). In spite of the danger, Paul and Barnabas knew that the churches needed to be strengthened against such conniving Jews who were willing to do anything to defeat them. So they “*returned into Lystra, and into Iconium and into Antioch*.” Luke only states the facts and allows the reader to admire the courage of these great leaders. Such would also prove false any rumors that Paul was dead. Their care is focused on the disciples as they return to the cities where they have seen so many saved. They strengthen their souls by exhorting them to continue in the faith. Instead of assuring these new believers of their salvation, they exhort them to prove their salvation with the perseverance of a godly life, even in the midst of suffering. In fact the quote in which Paul considered all believers a part, including himself, was “*It is necessary for us, through many afflictions, to enter the kingdom of God*.”

#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Is your leadership characterized by giving the Gospel to others so that you have suffered some persecution?
- 2) Are you willing to take your stand for Christ and His Word and do you stand with those who are persecuted for Him?
- 3) Will you share the Gospel with the lost around you and above you even if it means that you will suffer persecution?