

Acts 14:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Analysis

When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many (εὐαγγελισάμενοί τε τὴν πόλιν ἐκείνην καὶ μαθητεύσαντες ἱκανούς)—The verb *mathēteuō* (made disciples) indicates successful gospel work in Derbe despite recent persecution. Then **they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch**—this requires careful attention. Paul intentionally revisited cities where he'd faced violence, strengthening new believers at personal risk.

This return journey demonstrates apostolic priorities: establishing converts mattered more than personal safety. The geographical backtracking through hostile territory reveals Paul's pastoral heart, refusing to abandon new disciples to navigate persecution alone. This pattern of return visits became standard Pauline practice (Acts 15:36, 18:23).

Historical Context

Derbe was the easternmost point of Paul's first missionary journey. Rather than continuing east toward his home region (Tarsus in Cilicia), Paul retraced dangerous steps westward to strengthen infant churches. This decision risked further violence but prioritized discipleship over convenience.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's return to dangerous cities challenge comfort-seeking patterns in modern ministry?
2. What does the distinction between 'preaching' and 'making disciples' teach about gospel work's true completion?

Interlinear Text

Εὐαγγελισάμενοί	τε	τὴν	πόλιν	ἐκείνην	καὶ
when they had preached the gospel	And		city	to that	and
G2097	G5037	G3588	G4172	G1565	G2532
μαθητεύσαντες	ἱκανοὺς	ὑπέστρεψαν	εἰς	τὴν	Λύστραν
had taught	many	they returned again	to		Lystra
G3100	G2425	G5290	G1519	G3588	G3082
καὶ Ἰκόνιον	καὶ Ἀντιόχειαν				
and to Iconium	and Antioch				
G2532	G2430	G2532	G490		

Additional Cross-References

Acts 14:1 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

Acts 14:19 (Parallel theme): And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Acts 13:51 (Parallel theme): But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Acts 14:6 (Parallel theme): They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

Acts 13:14 (Parallel theme): But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

Matthew 28:19 (Parallel theme): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

2 Timothy 3:11 (Parallel theme): Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

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