

Acts 14

The responsibilities of an evangelist

(What can we learn from Paul's adventures in sharing his faith?)

See also theology files #217, #705, #805

Introduction:

- There are a number of responsibilities that go with sharing the Gospel.
- In this passage we have three important areas of concern in the sharing of our faith.
 1. We should speak so as to win people to faith in Christ.
 2. We should be careful to draw attention to Jesus and not ourselves.
 3. We should not stop just because we have had bad experiences.

1. We must be sure that our manner of speech is conducive to faith.

“¹ And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and **spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed**, both of Jews and of Greeks. ² But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren. ³ Therefore they spent a long time {there} speaking boldly {with reliance} upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. ⁴ But the multitude of the city was divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. ⁵ And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe, and the surrounding region; ⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.

- Verse 1 suggests that the apostles' speech was able to persuade some of the listeners to believe. This does not mean that God's sovereign election and work of the Spirit were not important parts of the story but it does tell us that the human element is very, very important and cannot be ignored.

I Pet.3:15 “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

- This text suggests:
 1. Evangelism was grounded in a spoken message.
 2. There are a number of elements that make a spoken message effective.
 - a. Authenticity (sincerity) is a part of “sanctifying Christ as Lord in your hearts.” Note that the next verse (I Pet.3:16) underscores the importance of the testimony of those who share their faith but this comes so as to authenticate the spoken word. I Pet.3:16 “and keep a good conscience so that in the things in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”
 - b. “Gentleness and reverence” are an important part of effective speech.

Four ways to show disrespect to the Gospel message:

Law over Grace	The life of Christ over the cross	Community over individual faith	Sugar coating the Christian life
Failure to preach grace	Failure to preach the cross.	Failure to preach faith repentance.	Failure to preach the cost of discipleship.

Four ways to show disrespect to an audience:

Social coercion	Intellectual insults	Emotional manipulation	Cultural disinterest
Group pressure of rejection or acceptance	Speaking "down to" or failing to anticipate hard questions.	Inappropriate illustrations or stories.	Failing to acknowledge the virtues of another's culture.

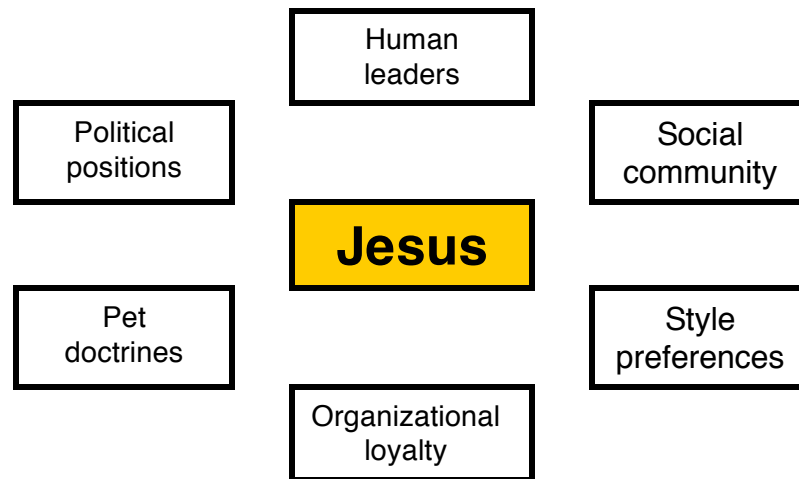
- Notice that Paul's preaching in the following paragraph is not like the sermon of the previous chapter. It expresses his sensitivity to the unique Greek audience that does not have the covenant heritage of the Jews in chapter 13.

2. We must be sure that the attention goes to Christ and not to us.

8 And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he **had faith to be made well**, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and {began} to walk. 11 And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." 12 **And they {began} calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes**, because he was the chief speaker. 13 And the priest of Zeus, whose {temple} was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. 14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order 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*. 16 "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; 17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." 18 And {even} saying these things, they with difficulty restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

- Zeus (to the Romans, Jupiter) was the supreme god of the Greeks. Hermes was his son. There was a legend that these two gods had previously visited this area in human form and were refused hospitality (a thousand times), which resulted in a flood that destroyed the homes of the inhospitable. The crowd did not want to go through such judgment a second time.

- The point of this text however is the misplaced focus of worship. It is easy for the attention to go to the messenger rather than the Lord of the message. This may not be the fault of the messenger.
- There are many different “doorways” to Jesus. We must not get stuck in any “doorway.”



For example: The value of worship in some groups is measured principally in terms of its ability to excite the worshiper rather than give glory to God. When the worship style is dictated by what makes a particular subculture feel good or excited, we are stuck in a door. Other issues that are sticky – Conservative politics, home schooling, Denominational loyalty, Socio-economic standards, and secondary doctrines like mode of baptism, etc.

How can we “sanctify Christ as Lord” in our lives? How can we make Jesus the central issue in our lives? (Luke 15)

1. **Recognize** the signs of misalignment - “bitterness”, “fear”, and “feelings of shame.” Trace these feelings back to their core to discover the taproot of our souls.
 2. **Count** the cost of playing God.
 3. **Present** yourself to God as one who is alive from the dead for one purpose – to worship and serve.
 4. **Burn** the idols in your life – the things that have become too important as painkillers, sanctuaries of hope, or dispensers of meaning for your soul.
 5. **Commit** yourself to a process that requires constant and repeated attention.
- Verse 9 places an emphasis on the faith of the person who is healed. This is in keeping with the whole emphasis in this context on the human faith response to the Gospel.

3. We must not be deterred by negative experiences.

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and **having won over the multitudes**, they **stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.** ²⁰ But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² 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."** ²³ And when they had **appointed elders for them in every church**, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ²⁴ And they passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. ²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; ²⁶ and from there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. ²⁷ And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they {began} to report all things that **God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**. ²⁸ And they spent a long time with the disciples."

- Talk about contrast.
 1. In verse 1 it is the Apostles that are persuasive while in verse 19 it is the Jews who are persuasive in convincing the multitude.
 2. The Apostles go from being worshiped to being stoned.
- The appointing of elders (plural) suggests that the leadership structure of the early church consisted of more than one person or bishop. This pattern of a plurality of elders is consistent throughout the NT record. The rise of a single leader in each congregation emerged after the writing of the NT and has continued with the church taking on a more corporate model of operation.
- In spite of the political pressure to excuse the Jewish authorities of direct involvement in obstructing the spread of Christianity, the NT clearly singles out "the Jews" as involved. This does not translate into justification for persecuting or discriminating against Jewish people today.
- When Paul "reported all things that **God had done with them**" what did he have in mind?

Look at Paul's mixed experiences

Preaching so that some believed	Healing the lame man's feet	Being stoned and left for dead
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In what sense are we willing to say that God has worked through us and in us when we have such mixed experiences?

Like Paul, we should tell our life story by seeing God's hand in both the glory and the victories as well as the pain and defeats.

If God gave Paul the power to heal why did he not give him the power to escape stoning?

- Suffering was to be expected in following Christ.

Rom.8:17 "Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Col.1:24 "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

Phil.3 “¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

- Paul’s authority to encourage the early believers to abide through persecution was notarized by his own testimony.

II Tim.3:10-12 “¹⁰ but you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹ persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me! ¹² And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Acts 20:19-21 “¹⁸ . . . You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews, ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jn.16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

- The point of this text is that the path taken to follow Christ will be troublesome.
 1. From where will you find your support? Too often we look for support from man and not God.
 2. Can you abide for the long haul in the face of continued resistance? Too often we are worn down by the lack of popular support.
 3. Do you have the wisdom to know when and how to minister with power? Too often our actions seem to be void of deep insight or wisdom.
 4. Do you have the grace to be gracious in the face of rejection? Too often we become hostile when we are not treated well.
- We must take care not to bring trouble upon ourselves through our own sin.

I Pet. 4 “¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if {anyone suffers} as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.”

Three kinds of suffering

Suffering for being in contact with a fallen world	Suffering for being apart from a fallen world. (obedience)	Suffering for being a part of a fallen world. (disobedience)
The result of living in a broken world	The result of living a holy life in an unholy world	The result of living an unholy life in a world with consequences
flood, famine, etc.	the fear and selfishness of	my own fear and

	others	selfishness
"shipwreck"	"jealousy of the Jews"	"thorn in the flesh"