

Qualities of a Great Missionary, Part 1

Scripture: Acts 14:1–10

Code: 1747

INTRODUCTION

This lesson could well be entitled, "The Qualities Of A Great Servant Of Christ." A missionary is not necessarily someone serving on foreign soil. The passage deals with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, certainly they exhibit qualities of a great missionary.

A. The Qualifications of the World

Every job has qualifications. It doesn't matter what you are applying for, there are still certain qualifications that need to be met. Whenever you apply for a job, you fill out an application, and then you are interviewed. The questions are asked to determine if you qualify. Some jobs demand rather simple qualifications, other jobs demand rather complex qualifications. For example, the simple job might require physical dexterity and strength, but limited mental capacity, and a limited amount of education. The very complex jobs that are rather scientific demand nearly a mental genius with a graduate degree, or psychological strength, or the capability of administration and leadership. If you meet the qualifications, you're fit for the job. Young men leave college and are immediately hit with all kinds of qualifications from corporations and programs. If someone doesn't qualify for some jobs, it is often recommended that they go into the service and learn a trade so that he will be qualified. Qualifications are very important.

B. The Qualifications of God

If the world is that concerned about having qualified people, the church should be no less concerned. I believe that God demands for those of us who are fit for service, that we endeavor to meet the qualifications. It is God's design to use those people who most closely meet the qualifications for each significant task. As Christians, if we find ourselves asking why it seems that we never really are a part of what God is doing, it may be that we have never endeavored to be qualified.

In the fourteenth chapter of Acts, we are going to see some qualified people. There are a lot of missionaries in the field who aren't qualified, and there are a lot of missionaries who are. We are going to see two who were super-qualified. They manifest qualifications that are basic to effective service for Christ, for both a missionary on foreign soil or for a missionary in a local neighborhood. You could read Acts 14 and never notice one of those qualifications. You say, "Then you're reading them into the text." No, I'm taking them out of the narrative. This chapter is about Paul and Barnabas, who traveled from Iconium, to Lystra, to Derbe, and back again, and then went home. In their travels they were preaching and creating trouble. That is the historic narrative of the passage. But in the flow of that narrative they exhibit eight qualities of effective missionary service. I approach every passage in the same way: I ask, "Lord, show me what is practically applicable to us today from this passage." The thing that came out of these verses were the qualities that made those men so effective. Now this is not a lecture listing the qualities, it is a look at two men who simply exhibited them in the action of their lives. Paul doesn't preach about the eight qualities of being a good missionary, he just exhibits them without a word so we are able to see them in practice. The first quality that makes for effective missionary service or effective Christian witness is...

I. THE MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

First, I want to briefly review what has happened so far in the book of Acts, which, incidentally, is the

record of the expansion of the early church from Jerusalem to Rome. In this book, the church has expanded. As it has expanded, the Lord has begun to reach the Gentile world. He first established a beachhead in the Gentile world in a town called Antioch, a major city in the world located in the land of Syria. A church was established there that had five great leaders, two of whom were Paul and Barnabas. From those five, the Spirit of God said, "...Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them" (Ac. 13:2b). Paul and Barnabas were sent out from that church in Antioch to reach the Gentile world. They began what is classically known as the first missionary journey. They proceeded west and came to the island of Cyprus. From there they proceeded across the Mediterranean Sea to the area known as Galatia. They came to another town called Antioch, and there they preached Christ and created a riot. They were thrown out of the town. But they didn't tuck their tails between their legs and crawl home, they proceeded farther into Asia Minor (Galatia in particular) to a town called Iconium. And as we pick up the narrative in Acts 14:1, they have arrived at Iconium carrying the gospel to the pagan world. As they minister, we see that they are ministering their spiritual gifts.

A. An Explanation of Spiritual Gifts

Every Christian, at the moment of salvation, receives certain spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is not a natural ability; it is not something you exercise in your own strength; it is simply a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers through you to the body of Christ. There are various spiritual gifts listed in both 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. All believers should be aware of their gifts and should be ministering them because that is how God uses them.

B. The Exhibition of Spiritual Gifts

As we look at Paul and Barnabas, we find that they exhibit spiritual gifts. I want to show you the four dominant gifts that they exhibit.

1. The Permanent Edifying Gifts

a. Prophecy This could also be called the gift of preaching. 1) Acts 14:1 -- "And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke...." Here they exercised the gift of preaching, which is a Spirit-given ability to declare the gospel with clarity and power. Not everyone has that gift, but they had it, and they used it. 2) Acts 14:21 -- "And when they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe], and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch." Again they are exercising the gift of preaching (or prophecy). 3) Acts 14:25 -- "And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia." They had the ability given to them by the Spirit of God to proclaim the gospel with power and with effect. That's the gift of preaching. I believe that the gifts come in combinations, so we find that they also had the gift of...

b. Teaching Acts 14:21 says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many...." Verse 22 adds, "Confirming the souls of the disciples...." The only way to confirm someone is to establish them in the doctrine of the Scripture. So they exhibited the gift of preaching and the gift of teaching. Third, they had another gift that I think goes along with spiritual leadership and with the apostles, and that is the gift of...

c. Exhortation It is the gift of exhorting people. Sometimes it's exhibited publicly, sometimes it's exhibited in a one-to-one basis during counseling. It is the ability to encourage someone to pursue a certain course of action. So first they would preach the gospel, then they would teach doctrine, then they would encourage people to follow what they had learned. Those three gifts belonged to those men. Acts 14:22 says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Last, they had another gift called the gift of... d. Administration This gift is the ability to put the pieces together to make things function. Acts 14:23 says "And when they had ordained elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." After they had gone through those cities the first time, they organized the church in each city on their return. That is the gift of administration. Here we have a marvelous insight into what gifts the Holy Spirit granted to the early apostles. He gave them the gifts of

preaching, teaching, exhortation, and administration. Those are leadership gifts. I believe that in the main, although perhaps not exclusively, those are the gifts that pastor-teachers and evangelists still have today. Certainly those gifts are necessary for the teaching-pastor and the evangelist to declare the gospel, to teach doctrine, to encourage people to follow it, and to organize for effective functioning within the body. Those are the gifts of leadership. They were exhibited by the apostles, and, for the most part, I believe they still belong to pastor-teachers and to biblical evangelists.

2. The Temporary Sign Gifts

Now in addition to those permanent edifying gifts (those which still exist today), there were special gifts for use by the apostles which we don't have today.

a. Miracles¹⁾ 2 Corinthians 12:12 -- "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Paul says that the apostles were given the ability to perform signs which created wonder, and the ability to perform mighty deeds. That is the gift of miracles. It was a temporary gift given to them in order to confirm their preaching. If a preacher came to town and preached, how were the people going to know if he was giving the truth? If there were three guys giving three different messages, you would believe the one who raises the dead. You would believe the one who has the wonders accompanying his message because it would show that God was attaching supernatural evidence to his ministry. So God gave the apostles supernatural evidence. You say, "Don't we need that confirmation today?" No, because anybody in any place can determine who speaks the truth by comparing what he says with the Scripture. The Scripture is the confirmation today, whereas miracles were used as confirmation in the days before the Scripture was completed.²⁾ Hebrews 2:3-4 -- "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit..." When the gospel was preached in the early days, there were certain special gifts given to those men in order that they might confirm the believability of their message by supernatural miracles. In the apostolic age, they not only had the permanent edifying, body building gifts, but they had the gifts that were geared to convince unbelievers. The gift of miracles is one that they obviously had. Acts 14:3 says, "...and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Second, they also had the gift of...b. Healing In Acts 14:8 Paul saw a crippled man. In verse 10 Paul told him to get up, and he did. That was a miracle to establish in the minds of the unbelieving people that his message was of God.

C. The Execution of Spiritual Gifts

Exhibiting spiritual gifts is not a question of sitting around and saying, "I wish God would use my gifts," it is a question of functioning with your gifts and letting God move you into critical situations. God doesn't dust off Christians who haven't done anything and put them into critical situations; God uses people who are already busy and actively ministering their gifts. In the flow of the Christian life, you ought to be ministering your gifts. And as you minister your gifts in the flow of your life, the Spirit of God will direct you to the strategic places where you will see those gifts maximized. From the time of Paul's conversion, he began to minister. The chapter that records Paul's conversion also records that he was preaching in Damascus (Ac. 9:20). And he never stopped preaching or teaching. From the very beginning Paul began to minister his gifts. Consequently, when it was time for Barnabas to look for a good man to help him in Antioch, the one man he wanted was the one he knew was already functioning. Barnabas searched all over Tarsus until he found Saul, and then he brought him back to Antioch and made him his co-pastor (Ac. 11:25-26) Why? The Spirit of God is always in the business of collecting people who are already functioning. A missionary once told me that if a person isn't a missionary at home, it's inevitable in ninety-nine out of one hundred times that he will never become one on the field, because where you are geographically has nothing to do with your commitment. They look for people who are already functioning. So when the Holy Spirit wanted a couple of missionaries to go to Cyprus, then on to

Antioch of Pisidia, and then to travel through Galatia, He didn't go to a new group of converts and say, "Now let me have a couple of you who aren't doing anything. You're not on the publicity committee, and you're not working in evangelism. I want to send you to Antioch of Pisidia, which is a tough place." No. He picked two of the busiest men in the Gentile church, Paul and Barnabas, and said, "You're My men." That's the way God operates.

So we find to begin with that effective missionary service demands the ministry of spiritual gifts. If you are not ministering your spiritual gift, then you are not functioning in the way that the Spirit of God designed.

How can you know your gift?

You say, "I don't even know what my spiritual gift is." Then you are even a step further removed from effectiveness. You need to read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, pray, be filled with the Spirit, and then see what the Spirit does through you. People say, "How do I know my gift?" I have even heard of a computer operation that will look at all your qualifications, and then tell you your gifts. That is not the way to find out. If you want to know what your spiritual gift is, just be filled with the Holy Spirit, see what the Holy Spirit does through you, and then you will know what your gift is. Look at it in retrospect.

D. An Exhortation on Spiritual Gifts

The Bible is very strong in urging Christians to minister their gifts. For example:

1. Romans 12:6-8 -- "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." In other words, if you've got a gift, use it.

2. 1 Peter 4:10 -- "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold [multi-colored] grace of God." If you have some gifts, use them. They are not even yours. You are a steward of them, holding them in trust for God. Don't waste them--use them!

Determine your gift and use it--that's the beginning of effective missionary service. Paul and Barnabas were functioning in every capacity. They preached, they taught, they exhorted, and they administrated. The gifts they possessed, they used. And they had been using them all along. In tracing the lives of Paul and Barnabas, we would find that preaching, teaching, exhortation, and administration were already revealed in their lives at least one other time in the book of Acts before chapter 14 (Ac. 13). They were already functioning in the body of Christ. Consequently, the Spirit chose them for the specific task to which He called them in Acts 13:2.

Now there is a second qualification that comes out of the first seven verses, and that is...

II. BOLDNESS (vv. 1-7)

Somebody told me that the thing they had learned the most, appreciated the most, and that had made the most difference in their life was the concept of boldness as contained in the book of Acts. We need to be reminded that boldness is a basic ingredient to the Christian experience. Let's begin by looking at verse 1 and follow the pattern of boldness as revealed by Paul and Barnabas in the city of Iconium.

A. Pursuing the Path (v. 1)

"And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke, that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also the Greeks, believed."

Paul and Barnabas came to Iconium, which was approximately a hundred miles southeast of

Antioch. They had been thrown out of Antioch because the city split wide open. But they didn't go home, they didn't quit, and they didn't lick their wounds and say, "We've got to get a new strategy to reach the Gentiles." They stayed right where they were and continued in pursuit of the path that the Spirit of God had led them on.

1. The Resource of Their Ministry

Verse 1 says, "...they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke, that a great multitude...believed." There is one word in that verse that is very crucial, and it is the word *so*. It says that they "so spoke, that a great multitude...believed." There is speaking, and then there is *so* speaking. You say, "What is *so* speaking? That is speaking that is accomplished in the energy of the Holy Spirit. The only time anyone will believe or have any kind of response at all is when you *so* speak that it can happen. And the only time you have *so* spoken is when you have spoken in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas ministered their gifts. They *so* spoke that results happened. If you try to minister your gift in the flesh, you will speak, period. Then there are the times when you will have *so* spoken in the energy of the Spirit that multitudes will have believed. They *so* spoke that people believed.

2. The Region of the Ministry

a. The City The little old frontier town of Iconium, which officially became a Roman colony under the reign of Emperor Hadrian, was out in the boondocks, some hundred miles from Antioch. It was populated by the usual conglomeration of ex-soldiers, ex-patriots, Jews, Romans, Greeks, Syrian merchants, and some semi-civilized natives who inhabited the area. It was a typical frontier town--a dusty and dirty place and not much bigger than a village. Now Paul usually went to the large cities. He left the evangelization of the villages to the people that became saved in the larger cities. That was the pattern in the New Testament. There were times that he did go to small towns, but usually he would go to the large cities. b. The Synagogue When they came to Iconium, verse 1 says that they went to the synagogue. Here is the same pattern again--Paul goes to the Jews. Why? 1) To Build a Base He loves them; he knows there's a ready-made audience; and he knows they know a little about the Old Testament, so he has a base on which to build. He also knows that if some of the Jews become saved, they can help him to win the Gentiles to Christ. Another reason to go to the synagogue first is... 2) To Open the Synagogue If Paul had gone to the Gentiles first, he would never have made it to the synagogue. If he had evangelized the Gentiles only, the Jews would have written him off and the synagogue never would have opened. So Paul started with the synagogue and moved from there.

3. The Result of the Ministry

Both Paul and Barnabas preached and there were tremendous results--people believed. We have no idea if they continued in the faith and were really saved, we only know that there was an initial reception to the gospel. When it says that they believed, it is no guarantee that they were really saved. We have to wait to see if they continue in the faith. Paul preached Christ, Barnabas preached Christ, and the people believed. That was a great beginning.

The pattern so far in Acts has been to go into the synagogue and have a terrific start. Immediately after that, trouble follows. Now, they weren't overjoyed with this initial response; that's exactly what happened in Antioch. And before everything cooled off, they were thrown out of the town. Just when everything starts to run smoothly is exactly when you can be sure that Satan is busy bringing trouble.

B. Perpetrating the Division (v. 2)

1. The Stirring Strategy (v. 2a)

"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles..."

There were some Jews who didn't buy the message, so they "stirred up the Gentiles...." "Unbelieving Jews" is an interesting phrase in the Greek that literally says, "The Jews, the ones who were disobedient." An unbeliever is disobedient to God, disobedient to God's revelation, and disobedient to God's truth. So those Jews, the ones who were disobedient, did not obey and stirred up the

Gentiles.

2. The Smoldering Situation (v. 2b)

"...and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." The Jews stirred the Gentiles up against the apostles and those who had believed their message. Apparently some were saved because they are called "brethren". So the unsaved Jews started an instigation against the saved who had come to Christ under the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. Now, this opposition was underground and smoldering, just like a geyser bubbling before it explodes. A smoldering bitterness and hatred was growing and a slow polarization of the population of Iconium was taking place.

C. Penetrating the Persecution (v. 3)

1. The Continuance of Paul and Barnabas (v. 3a)

"A long time, therefore, abode they..."

The Lord kept the lid on this boiling pot of bitterness for a long time. In the Greek, the phrase, "A long time" is used elsewhere to speak of time, as much as three years and as little as a month. So somewhere between a month and three years (likely several months) they remained in Iconium. And they continued to preach and teach. They stayed a long time, and the thing continued to smolder.

2. The Commitment to Boldness (v. 3b)

"...speaking boldly in the Lord..."

Notice the word that keys on our point: "boldly". They knew the resentment was brewing; they were well aware of the treacherous nature of the events to come; they knew it was inevitable; yet they were bold in their continuing to preach. The quality that really makes a difference in the Christian's life is the quality of fearlessness--the declaration of the truth in the face of any kind of opposition.

a. Characteristic of Paul Paul didn't know how to live any other way. He had a tremendous commitment to boldness. In 1 Thessalonians 2:2 he says, "But even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel...." He says that even after they had been beaten up and were treated shamefully, they were still bold. Paul could never be daunted, there just wasn't any way to stop him.

The Quality with No Substitute

Boldness is a quality that I think has no substitute. I believe that boldness is a necessity for any effective service. Most of you say, "I think I'll witness to my neighbor." And your neighbor says, "Oh, I don't believe any of that garbage. Don't bother me with that any more." So you freeze up. You become like the Arctic River; frozen over at the mouth. You get a terribly cold feeling; you've just been rejected; and you crawl back home. Or at the job you start talking about Christ, and your foreman tells you to shut up or you'll get fired. As a result, you clam up.

Now, boldness is meeting the opposition and going through. Nobody ever accomplished anything for God without boldness. When you want to start something for God, you get organized first and then say, "Here I go God. I'm doing this for you." But as soon as you take one step, Satan is there. Now you have a test. If you have boldness, you go right through to victory. Boldness is essential to victory because it is the quality that makes you go through the test when you're being resisted. If you don't have boldness you will never go through, because you will always be resisted. So to say, "I'm a Christian, but I'm not very bold," is to admit that you're hopelessly defeated. If you have the opportunity on your job to share Jesus Christ, and your supervisor says, "Shut up or you'll be fired," in your heart say, "Good," and then continue to declare Jesus Christ. If you are fired for sharing Christ, go to a new job and you will have some new territory for declaring Jesus Christ. And if your neighbor can't stand your testimony, she will move away and a new one will come. Boldness makes for greater opportunity, and it always did in the Book of Acts. They were bold and people got upset. They would be thrown out of places and they would go to new places.

Don't be ashamed. Boldness is basic because there will always be resistance. Boldness is the only capacity that says, "I will not succumb to the resistance." Now that doesn't mean that you should be

a bull in a china closet, stomping all over people's necks and becoming terribly offensive. But it does mean that nobody should be allowed to stop you in a ministry that you believe the Spirit of God has called you to.

b. Conditional in Persecution My favorite word in verse 3 is "therefore" because it is like the word "so" in verse 1. Verse 2 says, "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. A long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly..." (vv. 2- 3a). In other words, when the persecution got hot, therefore, they stayed. Acts 8:3-4 is similar, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and, haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Persecution always has a positive effect. They ran into opposition, so they plowed through to victory. Verse 3 doesn't say, "A long time, in spite of persecution," it says, "A long time because of persecution, they stayed and spoke boldly." Persecution means that the battle is getting hot and somebody is going to win. If there's no fight, there's no winner. So when you are faced with opposition, you have an opportunity for victory. If you plow through, you've won. Therefore, they stayed a long time because it was tough. Paul and Barnabas knew that when things were smoldering, something was happening. So they stuck it out, and they were bold. Boldness is that willingness to go through the persecution. In Acts 4, Peter and John were hauled in front of the Sanhedrin and all the other religious leaders. The leaders said, "There will be no more preaching about this Jesus. We've had it with you" (v. 18). But Peter and John didn't shrivel up. John didn't say, "Don't say anything Peter. We'll do what we want when we get out, let's play it cool." No, Peter says, "We must speak that which we have heard. You decide whether we ought to obey you or God" (vv. 19-20). They couldn't find any reason to punish Peter and John, so they just said, "Don't do it anymore," and sent them away (v. 21). When they went back to the Christians, they said, "We just got persecuted. They told us we couldn't preach anymore." So they all started to pray (vv. 23-24). In verse 29 they prayed, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word." When the prayer meeting was over, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (v. 31). That is boldness--plowing through the opposition--so basic to Christian service. If missionaries were stopped every time there was opposition, they would never accomplish a thing. That is the difference between an effective victorious Christian and one who is saved but just watching things happen. So the opposition was getting worse, and the longer Paul and Barnabas stayed, the tougher it got.

3. The Confirmation of the Lord (v. 3c)

"...who gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

The whole gospel is grace. You say, "How was the Lord giving testimony?" By the miracles. They would preach, and the Lord would give them the power to perform miracles. As a result, people would believe. So the Lord was giving testimony by granting signs (Gk. semeion). A sign points to something. In this case it pointed to the power of God. And God created wonder in the minds of the unbelievers. It was all performed by the apostles. They had been given the gift of miracles by the Lord, as He confirmed the word of grace.

The city began to polarize. The longer Paul and Barnabas stayed, the more it polarized.

D. Polarizing the City (v. 4)

"But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles." Paul and Barnabas hit town and split it right down the middle. They polarized the believers and the unbelievers to the two extremes. The city was a smoldering cauldron about ready to explode. Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me..." (Mt. 12:30). When the claims of Jesus Christ are laid upon men, they polarize men. Jesus said, "...I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mt. 10:34b).

Concerning Apostles

In Acts 14:4, apostles (Gk. apostolos) is in the plural. There are only two men there--Paul and Barnabas. Paul was an Apostle by title, Barnabas was not. But the plural indicates that Barnabas is also called an apostle. Now we run into a problem. Was Barnabas an Apostle or not? The answer is, in terms of the specific sense of the usage, he was not an Apostle. There were twelve Apostles, with Matthias substituting for Judas, plus Paul. The qualifications of an Apostle were twofold: First, he had to have a personal confrontation with Jesus Christ, which Paul qualified for when He saw Jesus on the road to Damascus. Second, an official Apostle had to have been called by Christ Himself in order to be an Apostle. Barnabas didn't qualify on either count. As far as we know, he had never seen Christ. And nothing in Scripture would indicate that Barnabas was ever called and commissioned by Christ as an Apostle.

You say, "But what does the plural have reference to?" The word apostolos which is translated "apostles" in verse 4 would be better translated "messengers." It is translated that way in Philippians 2:25 where it does mean "messenger." Now the word is sometimes used as an official title, and in other senses it is used to speak of a messenger. It comes from the Greek word apostello. Barnabas is simply included as a messenger, but we might conclude that, in a secondary sense, he was an apostle since he was a sent one of the early church. Some commentators say that he is called an apostle because he is sliding in on the coattails of Paul. But it is best to see this word in its widest possible meaning. Barnabas was a messenger from God.

So the town split. Some attached to Paul and Barnabas and the gospel of Christ, and those who were with the Jews were bitter, hateful, and angry.

E. Persecuting Paul and Barnabas (vv. 5-6)

1. The Fury of the Mob (v. 5)

"And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them"

Finally, the lid blew. The cognate verb of the word "assault" means "to rush" (Ac. 19:29). So they literally rushed them. A big mad mob just took off through town toward Paul and Barnabas. It was a furious mob. It was nothing but a lynching, only with rocks instead of a rope. The whole mob lost its cool and reached the end of its tether. The polarization had finally maximized to the place where tolerance was no longer possible, and they flew into a rage after Paul and Barnabas. In the classic understatement characteristic of the King James Version, verse 5 says that they wanted "to use them despitefully...", which means that they wanted to blast them out of existence. They wanted to bring upon them contempt, injury, and death.

Verse 5 also says that they were going to stone them. That is indicative of the fact that the Jews had perpetrated this assault. The Gentiles didn't stone people; that was a Jewish form of execution in connection with blasphemy. First of all, perhaps the Jews had convinced the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas were guilty of blasphemy against God. Second, perhaps the Jews had also convinced the Gentiles that it was a terrible thing they were doing by splitting up the town and creating problems. So the Gentiles joined in and the big mob came to kill Paul and Barnabas. And it was nothing but a lynching mob that had lost control. There was no law and order. It was wild, uncontrollable mass hysteria. Well Paul and Barnabas were bold, but they weren't stupid.

2. The Flight of Paul and Barnabas (v. 6)

"They were aware of it, and fled into Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about"

You say, "I knew they would chicken out when it really got hot. What happened to their boldness?" Boldness is one thing, stupidity is another. This was obviously the time when the Spirit of God said, "Now it would be wise to go to Lystra." It is fine to be bold, but God wants living bold servants. It was

apparent that they had come to the place where they had no necessity to stay. Their ministry had been completed, the Spirit had accomplished what He wanted. He had the time to accomplish it because God held back the revolution. But He let it go when the ministry had been consummated, so that Paul and Barnabas could leave no sooner than God had designed. So they fled town. In Matthew 10:23 Jesus gave explicit orders: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another...." He even said, "...shake off the dust of your feet" (Mt. 10:14b).

The persecution only resulted in more evangelism. Paul and Barnabas weren't really without courage, they only traveled eighteen miles away and started preaching again.

F. Preaching The Gospel (v. 7)

"And there they preached the gospel."

As soon as they reached Lystra, they started preaching again. Incidentally, they were going in the wrong direction, away from civilization. They were heading out into the dusty provincial market towns of Asia Minor, in barren country far from civilization. And the farther east they went, and the farther the distance from the city of Perga on the coastline, the greater the dangers. Corrupt magistrates, superstitious natives, hostile sorcerers, rebellious Jews, and a lack of Roman law all became worse the farther they progressed into this barren country. But they went because the Spirit sent them. And they went preaching Christ.

Lystra was a Roman colony founded by Augustus. It was part of the region called Lycaonia, in the area known as Galatia. Now there is no mention of a synagogue in the city. But when they reached Lystra, they began to preach. They had fought through the opposition and had victory at Iconium. They were not to be daunted, so they preached when they reached Lystra.

Beloved, there is no substitute for the ministering of spiritual gifts and boldness. They are two of the basic ingredients in Acts 14. The third is...

III. DIVINE POWER (vv. 8-10)

An effective Christian servant, an effective missionary experiences the free flow of the power of God. Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you...." Does every Christian have the Holy Spirit? Yes. Does every Christian have power? Yes. Does every Christian exhibit the free flow of that power? No, but Paul and Barnabas did. They had already experienced it in Cyprus (Ac. 13:5-11), and they would again.

A. The Position of the Cripple (vv. 8-9a)

1. His Body (v. 8)

"And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from birth, who never had walked."

Here was a man who was crippled in his feet. "Impotent" means "without strength." He couldn't stand up and he couldn't walk. He had never walked in his entire life--he was congenitally crippled.

Everybody in town knew he couldn't walk. He had probably lived in that town his whole life. If he couldn't walk he would have had a hard time going anywhere else. Transportation wasn't an easy accomplishment in those days.

2. His Heart (v. 9a)

"The same heard Paul speak..."

The word "heard" is in the imperfect tense in the Greek and means he was "continually listening" to Paul's presentation of Christ. God was working on that man's heart. He was crouched somewhere in the market place where Paul was preaching.

B. The Perception of Paul (v. 9b-c)

1. Regarding the Crippled Man (v. 9b)

"...who, steadfastly beholding him..."

The crippled man was listening and Paul was continuing to stare at him. Paul's eyes fastened on this crippled man out of all the people in the crowd. That was unusual, because cripples were very

common in the eastern world. They would stand or sit by the gates. And the Spirit of God drew Paul right to this man. As Paul stared at him, the crippled man was being convicted by the Spirit of God in his heart.

2. Revealing His Faith (v. 9c)

"...and perceiving that he had faith to be healed"

Somehow the Spirit of God revealed to Paul that this crippled man believed. He believed in Jesus Christ, and he believed in the power of Christ for healing. As an Apostle, Paul had the gift of miracles and the gift of healing, and he saw the opportunity to confirm his message in the power of God. Some of the people were saying, "This guy might be right. His message sounds pretty good," while others were saying, "It can't be. How do we know he's from God?"

C. The Power of God (v. 10)

1. Displayed (v. 10)

a. Paul's Command" [Paul] Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet"Paul says that to a man who has never stood upright in his life, and everybody knows it. When Paul said that, he said it with a loud voice because he was used to speaking to big crowds outdoors. So he hollers to the man to stand on his feet. Now that's a test of faith for the crippled man. Most people would say, "Is he kidding? I've been like this all my life."b. The Crippled Man's Cure"And he leaped and walked."He leaped first; walked later. He was so ready, and the Spirit of God had so prepared him and Paul, that when the two of them came together, the man shot right up and started walking. Undoubtedly some of the people said, "I think there may be some truth to Paul." And that is exactly the response that the Spirit of God wanted.

2. Discharged

Right in the middle of his sermon, while he was ministering his spiritual gift, the Spirit of God was able to let the power flow through Paul to accomplish a dynamic miracle. That is just one more illustration of how the flow of the Spirit is free to exercise Himself at any point in the life pattern of the man committed to God. That's the kind of power that makes the difference in the Christian life, not the kind that comes the day after camp or the kind you have when you leave the service thinking that you are dedicated and committed. You are like the man who jumped on his horse and rode off madly in all directions; there is a lot of power but it really isn't harnessed. But Paul lived in such a state that the free flow of the power of God moved through him all the time. In the middle of doing one thing, the power of God does one other thing. Throughout his life Paul exhibited that power.

a. The Experience of God's PowerYou say, "How could I ever experience that kind of power in my life?" It's simply a question of confession. What is the one thing that bottles up the power? Sin. Sin needs to be confessed as soon as it is committed. That will keep the channel clear. If you are harboring sin in your life, you are clogging up the channel. The Christian who is so sensitive to sin that as soon as it's occurring he's confessing, is the one in whom the power flows free.b. The Expression of God's PowerNow you and I can't perform miracles like Paul. We can't heal the lame and raise the dead like the Apostles, but we don't need that kind of confirmation--we have the Word of God. But God does want to express His power through us--in witnessing, in prayer, in our spiritual gifts, and in accomplishing the ministry He has given us. He wants the power to flow free and unrestricted, and that comes only by living in constant harmony with the Holy Spirit and in the moment by moment confession of sin.Paul had power. The crippled man had been in that condition all his life, but following one statement by Paul he leaped and walked. He didn't even need lessons on how to walk. Now that's power. You say, "I wish I had that power." Paul says, "Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). You have that power. Ephesians 3:19 says that we are "filled with all the fullness of God." Just let that power flow.The man of God is effective as he ministers his spiritual gifts with boldness and power.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What does God want from people who are fit for service in any ministry?
2. What do Paul and Barnabas exhibit in the flow of the narrative in Acts 14?
3. What were the crucial roles played by Paul and Barnabas in the development of the early church up to the time they reached Iconium?
4. What does every Christian receive at the moment of salvation?
5. What is a spiritual gift? What responsibility does every Christian have regarding spiritual gifts?
6. What were the four dominant spiritual gifts exhibited by Paul and Barnabas? Explain each one. Why are these four gifts important?
7. What were the special gifts available to the apostles and which do not exist today? Explain. What was the purpose of these gifts? Why is it no longer needed today?
8. Whom does God use in critical situations? Why?
9. How can you determine what your spiritual gift is?
10. What is the beginning of effective missionary service? How do Paul and Barnabas prove their effectiveness?
11. What is the second basic ingredient to the Christian experience that is exhibited by Paul and Barnabas?
12. What was characteristic of the way Paul and Barnabas spoke to the people in Iconium?
13. Why did Paul and Barnabas go to the synagogue first when they arrived in Iconium? What was the initial result of their preaching?
14. How long did God hold back the growing bitterness and resentment that was fostered by the disobedient Jews against Paul and Barnabas? What characterized the ministry of Paul and Barnabas during that time? Explain.
15. Why is boldness a quality that has no substitute in the Christian life? Why is boldness essential to victory?
16. Why does persecution have a positive effect on having victory? Give some examples.
17. How was the Lord giving testimony to what Paul and Barnabas were speaking (Ac. 14:3)?
18. When the claims of Jesus Christ are laid on men, what happens? Why?
19. Was Barnabas an official Apostle? Why or why not? What was Barnabas?
20. Who perpetrated the assault on Paul and Barnabas? How do we know?
21. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the assault? Why? What did they do to prove that they were still bold?
22. Explain how Paul manifests the free flow of the power of God in Acts 14:8-10.
23. What must a Christian do in order to experience the free flow of God's power in his life?

Pondering the Principles

1. Look up the following verses: Matthew 8:14-15; Colossians 1:7-8; 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Timothy 1:16-18. What did each of these individuals have in common? Could someone report that you are a faithful minister? Examine your service to Jesus Christ. Are you being faithful to minister the gifts that God has given you? Is God using you in situations that will give glory to Him and build His Kingdom? If not, maybe you are not ministering as you should. Look up the following verses: Matthew 20:25-28; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11. As a Christian, what is your responsibility? What was the example that Jesus Christ set for all of us to follow? Have you been following that example? What is the ultimate purpose of our ministering to others? Is that your goal? If it isn't, take the time to ask God to show you the changes you need to make in order to be a more faithful minister.
2. What happens when you share your faith in Christ? What do you do when you receive a negative reaction? Do you continue to share your faith with others, or do you stop? How often do you share Christ with your neighbors? How often do you share Christ at work? If you do share Christ on the job,

when do you do it? Do you do it while working, while taking a break, or at lunch? If your boss did tell you to stop sharing Christ, what would you do? Read Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-25. What would be the instance when your boss would be right in asking you not to share Christ? Whom would you be responsible to obey at that point? When would your boss be wrong in asking you not to share Christ? Whom would you be responsible to obey at that point? Pray that God would give you the discernment to know the opportunities He has given you to share your faith. Make the commitment to be bold to do so.

3. Since God desires to express His power through each Christian in witnessing, in prayer, in spiritual gifts, and in accomplishing each ministry, to what extent are you experiencing that power? If you are not experiencing much of God's power, perhaps you have bottled up His power by restricting it through sin. Spend this time in self-examination. Confess any sin that you have been harboring. Determine in your heart to repent of that sin. Ask God to help you to be sensitive to your sin so you can keep the channel of God's power clear.

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