

Qualities of a Great Missionary, Part 1

Scripture: Acts 14:1-10

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In our Bible study for this Lord's Day, we find ourselves in the 14th chapter of the book of Acts and we invite you to turn with us to the 14th chapter. The Spirit of God has laid upon our hearts this most wonderful passage for today. Really, the whole chapter is taken together in this message and so we'll be taking it, as we often do, in parts but in the 14th chapter, verses 1 through 28, we find what I have entitled "Qualities of a Great Missionary." Now it could well be entitled qualities of a great servant of Christ any place, not necessarily a missionary, whom we assume to be somebody on foreign soil, but since the passage deals with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, certainly these are qualities of a great missionary.

We know that every job has qualifications. It doesn't matter what it is that you're applying for, and you're all very aware of this, there are certain qualifications that need to be met. Whenever you apply for a job, you fill out an application form and you're interviewed and the questions are asked to determine whether you qualify. Some jobs demand rather simple qualifications; other jobs demand rather complex ones. The simple job, for example, requiring physical dexterity and strength, limited mental capacity, the ability to follow orders, a limited amount of education, even these have their qualifications. The very complex jobs that are rather scientific that demand upwards to mental genius and the graduate degrees and psychological strength and capabilities of administration and leadership and so forth, all of the gamut in between, all of these kind of things are really just a matter of qualification. If you fit the qualifications, you're fitting the job.

I remember one time when I was in college, I needed a job and since I enjoyed athletics, I thought it'd be great to get a job with the Parks and Recreation and so I applied but then, of course, the first thing they do is find out whether you can throw a ball or do anything like that and I passed all of the physical qualifications in athletics and then they gave us a mental capacity and aptitude test and I passed that. The third test was a psychological test which I failed and it's never ceased to prey upon my mind that I failed that psychological test. There were five men interviewing me to determine whether I was psychologically capable of handling 50 kids on an elementary playground during the summer. Well, it was amazing. I went to the city hall and went through the whole thing and they didn't pass me. I think it had a little to do with the testimony of Christ that I gave which may have been a little heavy at the time but nevertheless I didn't pass and all of us have been through things like that where for some reason or another we didn't qualify or we did qualify and we had a positive response,

but jobs demand qualification and the world is very qualification conscious.

Young men get out of college and immediately they're hit with all kinds of corporations and all kinds of programs that have a whole list of qualifications and if somebody doesn't qualify for anything, they tell them to go into the service, you know, and maybe they'll teach him a trade or something and he'll come out qualified. Qualifications are very important and, believe me, if the world is that hung up on qualified people, the church can be no less and I believe that God demands out of those of us who are fit for service that we really endeavor to meet the qualifications and I'll say this in a further statement, that it is God's design to use the people who most closely fit the qualifications for the most significant tasks. So if we as Christians ask ourselves why it seems that we never really get in on what God is doing, it may be that we have not endeavored to really be qualified. I believe God wants highly qualified people. If the world needs qualified people to do everything from directing Parks and Recreation to figuring out scientific formulas to send men into space, if the world needs qualified people for all of that, that's very mundane and very transitory and very temporary, believe me, God wants the most qualified to do the things that He has to be done because they are ultimately and eternally significant.

Now as we come to the 14th chapter of Acts, we're going to see some qualified people. There are a lot of missionaries on the field who aren't qualified. There are a lot of missionaries who are. Well, here's a couple who were super qualified. They manifest qualifications that are basic to effective service for Christ, whether they be a missionary on a foreign soil or whether you be the missionary to your house and your neighborhood. These are qualifications that really render service effective. Now there are at least eight of them that I find in the chapter and we'll look at them over the next couple of weeks.

Let me say this at the very beginning. In the 14th chapter, you could read this chapter and never hear of one of those qualifications. You say, "Well, you're reading them into the text." No, I'm taking them out of the narrative. The chapter is about Paul and Barnabas who went from Iconium to Lystra to Derbe, back again and went home and while they were doing it, they were preaching and creating trouble but I'm not about to say that and quit though that is the historic narrative of the passage but, in the flow of that narrative, they exhibit these eight qualities of effective missionary service and the beautiful thing about it is this and I always approach a passage the same way. I always ask the Lord, "Show me, Lord, what in this passage is practically applicable to us today." And the thing that just flew out of these verses to me were these qualities that made these men so effective.

Now notice, this is not a lecture listing the qualities. This is looking at two men who simply exhibited them in the action of their life and that's a lot better, isn't it? This isn't a chapter where Paul preaches eight qualities of being a good missionary. This is a chapter where Paul just exhibits them without saying a word and we can see them just leaping off the page and so here we see them in practice, not just talking about it but doing it. Now let's note these qualities. Quality No.1 that makes for

effective missionary service or makes for effective Christian witness is this: the ministry of spiritual gifts...the ministry of spiritual gifts. Now this is generally revealed throughout the chapter and we'll take it just in a general sense and then we'll get specifically beginning at verse 1 into the flow of the text. But we know that Paul and Barnabas are the missionaries.

Now let me review what's happened. The church has expanded in the Book of Acts and, incidentally the Book of Acts is the record of the expansion of the early church from Jerusalem to Rome, and the church has expanded and, as it has expanded, the Lord has begun to reach the Gentile world. He established a beachhead, first of all, in the Gentile world in a town called Antioch, a great major city in the world, Antioch in the land of Syria. A church was established there that had five great leaders. Two of them were Paul and Barnabas. From those five, the Spirit of God said, "Separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas for the work that I have called them to do," and Paul and Barnabas were sent from that church in Antioch to reach the Gentile world. They began what is classically known as the first missionary journey and they took off to the west and they went to Cyprus, an island. They proceeded across the Mediterranean Sea from Cyprus into the area known as Galatia. Last week, we saw that they went to a town called Antioch...not to be confused with the former Antioch; this is a different one...and there they preached Christ and created a riot. They were thrown out of Antioch. They didn't tuck their tail between their legs and crawl home. They proceeded further into Asia Minor, Galatia particularly, to a town called Iconium and, as we pick them up in verse 1, they have arrived at Iconium carrying the gospel to the pagan world, but the thing that we see in this chapter as they minister is that they are ministering their spiritual gifts.

Now we here at Grace have talked much about spiritual gifts. We have talked about the fact that every Christian at the moment of salvation receives 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. There are varying spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans chapter 12 and all believers should be aware of theirs and should be ministering them because this is how God uses you. Now as we look at these men, we find that they exhibit spiritual gifts and I'll show you the four dominant ones that they exhibit. The first one is the gift of preaching. One of the spiritual gifts, I believe, is the gift of prophesy or preaching. In verse 1, it says, "It came to pass in Iconium, they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke," and here they exercised the gift of preaching which is a spirit-given ability to declare the gospel with clarity and power. Not everybody has that gift, right? They had it. They used it.

Down in verse 21, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many...that's the city of Derbe...they returned again to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. There they are doing it again, exercising the gift of preaching or prophesy. Verse 25, "And when they had preached the Word in Perga, they went down to Attalia." There again, the gift of preaching. They had the ability then given them by the Spirit of God to proclaim the gospel with power and with effect. That's the gift of preaching but they had another gift and I believe gifts come in combinations. They had the gift of

teaching, also. If you'll notice verse 21 again, it says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many..." Verse 22, "Confirming the souls of the disciples..." The only way to confirm somebody is to establish them in the doctrine of the Scripture. So they exhibited again the gift of teaching...the gift of the preaching and the gift of teaching.

Thirdly, they had another gift that I think goes with spiritual leadership. It goes with the Apostles. They had the gift of exhortation. The gift of exhortation is just what it says. It's exhorting people. Sometimes it's exhibited publicly. Sometimes it's exhibited in a one-to-one basis in counseling. But it's the ability to encourage somebody 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 these men. Notice verse 22, "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." And so the gift of exhortation.

They had another gift. They had the gift of administration. The gift of administration, the Bible says, is the ability to put the pieces together to make things function. Notice verse 23, "And when they had ordained elders in every city, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." They went back after they'd gone through those cities and organized the church in each city on their return. That's the gift of administration. Now here, friends, 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 and I believe that in the main, though perhaps not exclusively, in the main, those are the gifts that pastor-teachers and evangelists still have today...preaching, teaching, exhortation and administration. Certainly, those are gifts 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 and they exhibit them here, I believe as Apostles, and I believe they are still the gifts belonging to pastor-teachers, for the most part, and to Biblical evangelists.

Now in addition to those gifts...incidentally, those are permanent gifts; if you have any questions about this, we do have a study on the gifts that you can follow through...but in addition to the permanent edifying gifts, such as those which still exist today, there were special gifts just for the Apostles which we don't have today. In 2 Corinthians 12:12, just a brief review, "Truly the signs of an apostle...says Paul; and there he says there are some signs that belong to Apostles...were wrought among you...and here they are...signs, wonders and mighty deeds." Now Paul says that Apostles were given the ability to perform signs which created wonder and they had the ability to perform mighty deeds. This is the gift of miracles. It is a temporary gift given to them to confirm their preaching. If a preacher comes to town and preaches, how are you going to know he's telling you the truth? If you got three guys giving you three messages, you believe the one who raises the dead, right? You believe the one who has the wonders accompanying him because it shows that God is attaching to his ministry supernatural evidence and so God attached to the Apostles supernatural

evidence. You say, "Don't we need that today?" No, because anybody, any place, can determine whether we speak the truth by comparing us with the Scripture and so the Scripture becomes the confirmation today, whereas miracles were the confirmation in the day before the Scripture was completed.

When the Apostles came to the congregation of whom the Hebrews were a part...the letter of Hebrews is written. It says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first was spoken by the Lord but unto us by them that heard Him." It was confirmed to us by them with signs, wonders, mighty deeds and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit, so when the gospel was preached in the early days, there were certain special gifts given to these men in order that they might confirm their message and that the message might be believable as it was accommodated by supernatural miracle. So in the apostolic day, they not only had these permanent kinds of gifts, these edifying, body-building gifts, but they had the gifts geared to convince unbelievers. Miracles is one that they had, obviously, from verse 3. It says that "Unto them God granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Secondly, the gift of healing, verse 8. They saw a cripple. Paul said to him, "Get up," verse 10, and he did and that was a miracle to establish in the minds of an unbelieving people that this message was of God. So they exhibited spiritual gifts.

Now let me hasten to say this. As we have seen so many times in the Book of Acts, it is not a question of sitting around, saying, "Oh, I wish God would use my gifts." It is a question of already functioning with your gifts and then being moved by God into critical situations. Do you understand the difference? Remember how we saw Peter? It says that "as Peter passed from all quarters." Isn't that a terrific statement? He's just going everywhere doing everything. The Spirit of God put him here, put him there, and put him there and put him there, and he kept doing things and we told you at that time when we studied that that God doesn't dust off crusty Christians who haven't done anything and stick them in critical situations. God uses people who are already overdone, busy and actively ministering their gifts. In the flow of the Christian's life, he ought to be ministering his gifts and, as you minister your gifts, just in the flow of life, the Spirit of God will direct you to the strategic places where you're going to see those gifts maximized.

From the time of Paul's conversion, he began to minister. It's in the same chapter that he was saved that it says he was preaching in Damascus and he preached and kept preaching and never stopped preaching and he was teaching. Paul, from the very beginning, began to minister his gifts and consequently when it got to be time for Barnabas to look for a good guy to help him in Antioch, the one guy that he wanted was the guy he knew was functioning already and he chased all over the place until he finally found Saul and hauled him off to Antioch and made him his co-pastor. Why? Because the Spirit of God is always in the business of collecting people who are functioning already.

I'll never forget a missionary who told me that if a person isn't a missionary at home...it's inevitable...99 times out of 100, they never become one on the field because where you are

geographically has nothing to do with your commitment and they look for people who are already functioning people and always the Holy Spirit has done that and so when the Holy Spirit wanted a couple of missionaries to go to Cyprus and then to Antioch of Pisidia and then to travel to Galatia, He didn't go to some 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 or you're not on this committee or you're not working over here in evangelism and you're just kind of nothing. I want to send you to Antioch of Pisidia which will be a tough place to go." No, not at all. He picked the two busiest guys going in the Gentile church, Paul and Barnabas, and said, "Get out. You're My man." That's the way God operates.

And so we find then that to begin with really effective missionary service wherever it is demands the ministry of spiritual gifts. If you're not ministering your spiritual gift...watch...then you're not functioning in the way the Spirit of God designed you to function. You say, "John, I don't even know what my spiritual gift is." Then you're even a further step removed from effectiveness and you need to read Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, pray, be filled with the Spirit and see what the Spirit does through you. People say, "Well, how do I know my gift?" And I even heard of the computer thing where you can send in all your qualifications and they'll send you back your gifts. No, that's not the way to do it. You want to know what your spiritual gift is? Just be filled with the Holy Spirit, see what the Holy Spirit does and say, "Oh, so that's what my gift is." Look at it in retrospect and stay with it. They were ministering spiritual gifts.

You know, the Bible is very strong in urging us to do this. In Romans chapter 12, Paul lays it on pretty thick. He says beginning in verse 6, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...we have these gifts...whether prophecy, let us prophesy...if you've got the gift, use it...ministry, let us wait on our ministering or he that teacheth, on teaching...get with it...he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it with liberality; he that rules with diligence, he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness." In other words, if you've got a gift, use it...use it. 1 Peter, the end of the chapter...I should say at the end of the book chapter 4 verse 10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold...or multicolored...grace of God." If you've got some gifts, use them. They're not even yours. You're a steward of them. You're holding them in trust for God. Don't waste them. Use them. Determine your gift; use it. That's the beginning of effective missionary service. These guys were functioning in every capacity. They preached, they taught, they exhorted, they administrated. The dominant gifts which they possessed, they used and they had all along been using them. We can trace back and we'll find preaching, teaching, exhortation and administration revealed in the life of Paul or Barnabas already at least once in the Book of Acts before this ever happens. They already were functioning people in the body of Christ. Consequently, the Spirit chose them for the specific task to which they come in the 13th and 14th chapters.

All right, now there's a second qualification that really comes out of the first seven verses and now we'll get into the text proper and that is this: boldness. Somebody told me...I forget who it

was...recently that the thing they had learned most out of the Book of Acts and appreciated most and had made the most difference in their life as a Christian was the concept of boldness. Now for us who have been studying the Book of Acts for any time, it's a review, isn't it, because we've seen so much boldness in the Book of Acts, we're almost overwhelmed by it but here it is again and the reason the Spirit repeats it so often is because it's truly a part of the early church and it's also because we need to know about it. We need to be reminded that boldness is a basic ingredient to the Christian experience, and I'll show you why in a minute, but let's begin by looking at verse 1 and let's follow the pattern of boldness revealed in the city of Iconium.

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews...Paul and Barnabas...and so spoke, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also the Greeks believed." Now there's a couple of things that just really hit me here. They came to Iconium, which is about 100 miles southeast of Antioch. You remember they were thrown out of Antioch. They messed up Antioch so badly that the city split wide open. Finally, they kicked them out but they didn't go home. They didn't quit. They didn't go back and lick their wounds and say, "Oh, we've got to get a new strategy to reach the Gentiles," and then invent some gospel blimp or something. They stayed right where they were and pursued the path the Spirit of God had led and they came to Iconium. Now I like this: "They went both together into the synagogue of the Jews and so spoke that a great multitude believed."

There's one word in that verse that escapes most eyes and it escaped mine the first couple of times I read it and then it hit me like a ton of bricks. That's the word "so." They so spoke that a multitude believed. There is speaking and then there is so speaking. You say, "What is so speaking?" That's speaking in the energy of the Holy Spirit. The only time anybody is going to believe, the only time you're going to have any kind of response at all, is when you so speak that it could happen and the only time you have so spoken that it could happen is when you have spoken in the energy of the Holy Spirit...right?...which means they ministered their gifts. They so spoke that results happened. You go out and try to minister your gift in the flesh and you know what'll happen? You'll speak...period, paragraph. And then there are the times in the energy of the Spirit when you have so spoken that multitudes have believed. You see, there's a big difference. Just watch those little ones. They'll get you. So...very important.

So they so spoke that people believed. Now this little old frontier town, which was officially a Roman colony since Emperor Hadrian, was little out in the boondocks a hundred miles from Antioch. Its population was the usual conglomeration of ex-soldiers, expatriates, Jews, Romans, Greeks, Syrian merchants and some half-civilized natives who inhabited the area and it was a typical kind of frontier dusty, dirty place, not much bigger than a village, though it was a fair sized city, and it's an interesting footnote, too, that Paul usually went to large cities. He left the evangelization of the village to the people that got saved in the city. I think it would be good if some missions realized that this is the pattern of the New Testament. Now times were that he did go to small towns but usually large cities and then when they got saved, they would go to the villages.

Well, he came to Iconium and it says in verse 1 that he went to the synagogue and again here's the same pattern, isn't it, that we've seen before. He goes to the Jews. Why? Because he loves them. Because he knows there's a ready-made audience. Because he knows they know a little about the Old Testament so he has kind of a base on which to go. He knows also that if some of the Jews get saved, they can help him win the Gentiles. Let me give you another reason I haven't given you before. Another reason to go to the synagogue first is because if he went to the Gentiles first, you'd never get to the synagogue. You see, if he evangelized the Gentiles, the Jews would have written him off and the synagogue never would have been open, so he started with the synagogue and went from there.

Well, they went in there and they both preached and tremendous results. People believed. Now we have no idea whether they continued in the faith and were really saved. We just know that there was an initial reception of the gospel. We've learned long ago that when it says, "They believed," it's no guarantee they were really saved, right? We have to wait to see if they continue in the faith. But at that point, they believed in their minds that this was so. He preached Christ. Barnabas preached Christ. The people bought it. It's true. That was a great beginning. The pattern so far has been go into the synagogue and have a terrific start, hasn't it? And then immediately, trouble. You know, just when you think everything's going good is when Satan's really at work. They knew this. They weren't overly-joyed when this initial response happened. That's exactly what happened in Antioch in the last town and, before everything cooled off, they were thrown out.

We were meeting with our elders this morning as always for prayer about an hour before our early service and I said, "What do we have to share this morning by way of prayers and what are we going to pray for and what's happening and what's Satan doing and so forth," and nobody said anything. It was just kind of silent for a few minutes and a few little things were shared and I said, "You mean nothing really going on specifically we need to pray about?" Nobody said anything. I said, "Well, let me just tell you, men. Get ready. A bomb is about to blow up somewhere." Just when everything gets going smoothly is exactly when you can be sure that Satan's busy doing something and, believe me, it'll pop. It'll happen.

Well, it happened. Verse 2, "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles." There were some Jews who didn't buy their message at all and they stirred up the Gentiles. Now it doesn't say what they did. "Unbelieving Jews" is an interesting phrase. In the Greek literally, it says, "the Jews...and then a participle...the ones who were disobedient." An unbeliever is disobedient to God, disobedient to God's revelation, disobedient to God's truth. And so these Jews, the ones who were disobedient, did not obey, stirred up the Gentiles. Somehow they riled them all up "...and made the minds evil affected against the brethren." They stirred them up against the Apostles and whoever had believed and apparently some were saved and they are called "brethren." And so the unsaved Jews started to foment against the saved who had come to Christ under Paul and Barnabas' preaching.

Now apparently, this opposition was kind of underground, just kind of like smoldering, just kind of boiling. Have you ever seen a geyser just bubble before it goes? Just kind of...nothing really explosive but just smoldering bitterness and hatred and sort of a slow, polarization of the population of Iconium was taking place. Verse 3, it took a while for it to unfold apparently because it says, "A long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord." The Lord kept the lid on this boiling pot of bitterness for a long time. Now that phrase, "a long time," in the Greek 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 that city and they continued to preach and they continued to teach, speaking boldly in the Lord. "And the Lord gave testimony unto the Word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." The Lord confirmed what they were preaching by miracles so they stayed a long time and the thing continued to smolder.

Now notice the word that keys on our point here. The word is boldly...boldly. They knew the resentment was brewing. They were well aware of the treacherous nature of really the events to come. They knew it was inevitable and yet they were bold in their continuing to preach and I think that's a quality that really makes the difference in the Christian's life and that is the quality of fearlessness. It is the declaration of the truth in the face of any kind of opposition. This was absolutely characteristic of the Apostle Paul. I mean he didn't even know how to live any other way than that. He had tremendous kind of commitment to boldness. In 1 Thessalonians 2:2, just for example, "Even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully treated, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel." He says, "Even after we've been beaten up and were treated shamefully, we still were bold." You could never daunt Paul. There just wasn't any way to stop him and this is a quality that I think has no substitute. Let me show you why.

I believe...and this is worth something to you so grab this thought...I believe that boldness is a necessity to any effective service. You know what most of us do? We say, "Well, I think I'll witness to Martha over here." And so you run over to your neighbor and Martha says, "I don't believe any of that garbage. Don't bother me with that anymore." E-e-e, see. You just freeze up. Your mouth becomes like the Arctic River, you know, frozen over at the mouth, just kind of...was it that bad? Anyway, you just kind of hmmm, you know. You have this terrible cold feeling. You've been rejected and you sort of crawl back. Or at the job, a guy says, "You know, I started to talk about Christ and the guy told me shut up. My foreman told me to shut up or I'd get fired." And so we whew; clam up. You know what boldness is? Boldness is this: it's meeting the opposition and whew; going through.

You want to hear something? Nobody ever accomplished anything for God in the long run without boldness. Let me show you why. You start something for God. You get all organized. Here I go, God. I'm going to do this for You. As soon as you take one step, who knows? Satan does and wham! He's there. Now you have a test. If you have boldness, hmmm, see. Right through and victory. If you don't, ah-h, see. Boldness then is essential to victory because boldness is that quality that makes you go

through when you're being resisted and if you don't have that, you'll never go through because you'll always be resisted. So to say, "Well, I'm a Christian but I'm not very bold," is to admit that you're hopelessly defeated. If you go to work and you share Jesus Christ and somebody says, "Shut up. You'll be fired." In your heart, say, "Good," and then continue to declare Jesus Christ and if you get fired...good. Go somewhere else, some new territory to declare Jesus Christ. And if your neighbor gets excited and can't stand your testimony, she'll move away and a new one will come.

Boldness makes for greater opportunity. It always did in the Book of Acts. They were bold and people got upset and threw them out and they went new places. Don't be ashamed. Boldness is basic because there's always to be resistance and boldness is only the capacity that says, "I will not succumb to the resistance," you see. Now this doesn't mean you're some kind of a bull in a china closet or you stomp all over people's necks and become terribly offensive but it does mean that nobody, but nobody, stops you in a ministry you believe the Spirit of God has called you to do.

Now my favorite word in verse 3 might surprise you. Of all those wonderful words in there, my favorite word is "therefore." You say, "What's so great about that?" Well, it's like "so" up in verse 1. Verse 2 says, "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." You say, "Oh, tragedy." Then this: "A long time therefore abode they speaking boldly." When the persecution got hot, therefore they stayed. Don't you like that? I like chapter 8 verse 3 and 4. It's similar. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church. He entered into every house and was hauling men and women and committing them to prison." You say, "Oh, wonder what the terrible results of that were?" "Therefore...next word...they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." See, it always has a positive effect. They ran into opposition. They just plowed through to victory and I love the fact that it doesn't say, "a long time in spite of that." No, a long time because they were persecuted, they stayed and spoke boldly. You see, persecution just means the battle's getting hot and somebody's going to win. If there's no fight, there's no winner, so when you get opposition, you get an opportunity for victory. You plow through and you've won. Therefore, they stayed a long time because it was a tough...listen, they knew that when things were smoldering something was happening and so they stuck it out and they were bold.

Boldness is that willingness to go through. You know the early church, chapter 4, they hauled Peter and John in there in front of the Sanhedrin and all the religious mucky-mucks and they said, "Look, that's all. No more preaching about this Jesus. We've had it with you." And 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." And they couldn't find any reason to punish them, it says, so they just said, "Don't do it anymore," and sent them out. So they went back to the Christians. They said, "Guess what? We just got persecuted. They told us we couldn't preach anymore." And so they all fell on their knees and started to pray, chapter 4, and I love what they prayed. Let me just read it to you. I don't want to misquote it because it's so rich. Verse 29, "And now, Lord, behold their

threatenings"...they're after us. What'd they say? Grant unto Thy servants that we may be protected. No. "...That we may with all boldness speak Your Word." They had a prayer meeting and when the prayer meeting was over, "the place was shaken, the Spirit filled them and they spoke the Word with boldness and a multitude believed." You see, that's boldness. That's plowing through the opposition. That's what it's all about and that's so basic to Christian service. If missionaries got stopped every time there was opposition, nobody would get anything done. That's the difference between an effective, victorious Christian and one that's just saved, just standing around watching things happen.

Well, the opposition was getting worse and the longer they stayed, the tougher it got and the Lord was giving testimony unto the Word of His grace...I love that phrase. The whole gospel is grace, isn't it? And you say, "Well, how is the Lord giving testimony?" By those miracles. They'd preach and the Lord would give them the power to do miracles and people would believe and so the Lord was giving testimony by granting signs...semeion; sign points to something. It pointed to the power of God and wonders. It created wonder in their minds. It was done by the Apostles. This was the gift of miracles as the Lord confirmed the Word of grace. Well, the city began to polarize. The longer they stayed, the more it polarized. Verse 4, "But the multitude of the city was divided: part held with the Jews, part with the Apostles." Paul and Barnabas, two guys, hit town and split the thing right down the middle. They polarized the believers and the unbelievers to two extremes and the thing was a smoldering caldron about ready to explode. Jesus said this: "He that is not with Me is...what?...against Me." When the claims of Jesus Christ are laid upon men, they polarize men. Jesus even said, "I am not come to bring peace but...what?...a sword, to divide."

A footnote of interest in verse 4, it says that "...part held with the Jews and part with the Apostles." The apostles...apostolos is in the plural. Isn't that interesting? There's only two men there, Paul and Barnabas. Paul was an Apostle by title; Barnabas was not. But the plural indicates that Barnabas here is called Apostle. Now we run into a problem. Was Barnabas an Apostle or was he not? The answer is in terms of the specific sense, he was not an Apostle. There were 12 Apostles, Matthias substituting for Judas, plus...who was the other one?...Paul. The qualifications of an Apostle were two-fold, a personal confrontation with Jesus Christ, seeing Christ, which Paul qualified for on the Damascus Road. Secondly, a true Apostle, capital A, the official title had to have been called by Christ himself to be an Apostle. Barnabas didn't qualify on either count. As far as we know, he'd never seen Christ. It may have been that he had seen Him but we do know, secondly, that nothing in Scripture says Barnabas was ever called and commissioned by Christ as an Apostle. You say, "But there, the plural then has reference to what?"

The word apostolos, which is translated Apostle here, I feel, perhaps would be better translated "messenger." It is so translated, for example, in Philippians 2:25. The word does mean messenger. For example, you have a word diakonia in the New Testament or diakonos which means servant. Sometimes it's used just to speak of servant. Other times, diakonos is transliterated "deacon" when it's speaking of the office. Every Christian is a servant but not all Christians fit the qualifications of a

deacon and so the same word is used in some senses for the title; in other senses, in a general sense. The word apostolos is sometimes also used as an official title. In other senses, it is used to speak of a messenger from apostello, one who is sent, and so apparently, Barnabas is simply included as a messenger and we might even conclude that in a secondary sense, he is an Apostle as an early church sent one. Some commentators say he's called an Apostle because he's sort of sliding in on the apostolic coattails of Paul, but it's best to see it in its widest possible meaning as a messenger from God rather than in the narrow significance capital A, the official Apostle. Well, that's a footnote.

But anyway, the town split. Those who attached to Paul and Barnabas, the gospel of Christ. Those who were with the Jews who were bitter, hating and angry. Well, the pot blew in verse 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"...we'll stop here...finally the lid blew. The word "assault," the cognate verb, the verb that goes with the noun means "to rush." They literally rushed. A big mad mob just took off through town tearing toward Paul and Barnabas. The verb is translated "rush" in Acts 19:29 so it's the same word. They just rushed on them. It was a furious mob. This was nothing but a lynching only without a rope, with rocks instead. The whole mad mob just lost its cool, reached the end of its tether. The polarization had finally just kind of maximized to the place where tolerance was no longer possible and they just flew in a rage after Paul and Barnabas and it says, in the classic understatement characteristic of the King James, they wanted "...to use them despitefully," which being interpreted means they wanted to blast them out of existence. They wanted to bring upon them contempt, injury and death and they were going to stone them, verse 5 says.

Now this is indicative of the fact that the Jews had perpetrated the thing because Gentiles didn't stone people. This was a Jewish form of execution and it was a Jewish form of execution in connection with blasphemy, so the Jews had perhaps convinced the Gentiles first of all that these guys were guilty of blasphemy against God and also perhaps convinced the Gentiles of the terrible thing they were doing to the town by splitting it up and creating problems, so the Gentiles joined in and the whole big mob came to kill Paul and Barnabas. And as I say, it's nothing but a lynching mob. They're just completely wild. They've lost their control. There's no law and order. There's no nothing. It's a wild, uncontrolled, mass hysteria. They're going to take their lives.

Well, Paul and Barnabas were bold but they weren't stupid and so verse 6 says, "They were aware of it." Somehow...maybe they heard the thunder. "And they fled into Lystra, Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about." You say, "Ha-ha. I knew they'd chicken out when it really got hot. What happened to their boldness?" Well, boldness is one thing; stupidity is another. There's obviously the time when the Spirit of God says, "Now it would be wise, men, to go to Lystra." I mean it's fine to be bold but God wants living, bold servants and it's apparent that it came to the place now where they would not really have any necessity to stay. Their ministry had been completed there...it's obvious. Everything had polarized. The thing was done. The Spirit had accomplished it and when He

had accomplished it, after a long time, God subsided the revolution. Finally when God let it go, He let it go when it was consummate with the ministry so that they could leave no sooner than God had designed them to leave in the beginning. So beautifully they took off.

But, believe me, old Paul left an impression on that town. That's an impression they never forgot. In the second century...in the second century, a description of Paul comes from the tradition of Iconium. From this time on into the second century, Paul had left such an impression on that city that an old traditional description of Paul was hanging around Iconium and it was added into a writing called The Acts of Paul, which is not Biblical. This was the Iconium description of Paul. It's the only one we have. Whether he looked like this, I don't know. This is what came from the tradition of Iconium. "He was a man small in size with meeting eyebrows, a rather large nose, bald-headed, bow-legged...not too good so far, right...strongly built, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man and at times he had the face of an angel." Now if that is an accurate description...and we'll not know that and we may never know it...if he's got a glorified body in heaven, that certainly wouldn't be what a glorified body looked like so we never would know but if that is the case, he really left an impression on that town.

Well, they fled out of town. You say, "Well, they shouldn't have chickened out." Listen, Matthew 10:23, Jesus gave explicit orders. He said this: "When they persecute you in this city, flee unto another." Remember that...Matthew 10:23? He said, "Even shake the dust off the feet. Get out." Well, the persecution only resulted in more evangelism. By the way, they weren't really without courage. They only went 18 miles away and guess what they did? They holed up in some cabin. No, they started preaching again. Right away, 18 miles away, wham! Verse 7, "And there they preached the gospel," as soon as they got to Lystra, 17 miles down the road. And incidentally, they were going the wrong direction. They were going away from civilization. They were really going out into the boondocks. The dusty, provincial market towns of Asia Minor were out in barren country far from civilization and the further east they went and the further distance from the coastline and the city of Perga on the coast, the greater the dangers...corrupt magistrates, superstitious natives, hostile sorcerers, rebellious Jews, a lack of Roman law...all that became worse and worse the further they progressed into this barren country but they went because the Spirit sent them and they went preaching Christ.

Lystra was a Roman colony, also, founded by Augustus. It was a part of the region there called Lycaonia and again all of this is in the area known as Galatia. Now there's no mention of a synagogue there, none at all. Now there may have been a synagogue, we don't know, but it's not mentioned. But in Lystra they began to preach. They had fought through the opposition and had victory at Iconium and they weren't to be daunted and so they preached when they got to Lystra. Boldness...there's no substitute, beloved, for the ministry of spiritual gifts and boldness. They are the two basic frontline ingredients that are listed in the chapter.

I want to give you the third briefly and then I'm going to quit. Power...these three are where the starting place is. Now when I say power, I mean this: an effective Christian servant, an effective missionary, experiences the free flow of the power of God. Acts 1:8 says, "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you," right? 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. They did. Watch just a simple illustration of the flow of power in their lives. They'd already seen it in Galatia. They'd seen it back in Cyprus. Here it comes again, verse 8. "There sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from birth who had never walked." Here was a man crippled in his feet. Impotent means without strength. He couldn't stand up. He couldn't walk. In his life, he had never walked; congenitally crippled. No capacity for walking. Everybody in town had known it. He'd probably lived there all his life. If he couldn't walk, he would have a hard time going anywhere else. Transportation wasn't easily accomplished in those days so perhaps he had grown up in the place. Everybody knew he was the town cripple.

And Paul was preaching as always, and he wasn't preaching in a synagogue, as I say. Maybe they didn't have one. "But the same heard Paul speak." The word "heard" is in the imperfect tense in the Greek which means he was continually listening. He was listening to Paul's presentation of Christ. Now watch this. God was working on that guy's heart. He was crouched, huddled somewhere in the street of the marketplace where Paul was preaching and then Paul "...steadfastly beholding him." And again it's in the linear sense. He was listening and Paul was continuing to stare at him. Out of all that gob of people out there, Paul's eyes stuck on this cripple over in a corner and that was unusual because, in the eastern world, cripples were very common. They stood by gates or they sat by gates. They were everywhere and yet the Spirit of God drew Paul right to that man. He just stared at that man. That man was being convicted by the Spirit of God in his heart. And it says, "Paul perceived that he had faith to be healed," in verse 9. Somehow the Spirit of God revealed to Paul that this guy believed. "That cripple over there believes," the Spirit said to Paul. He believes in Jesus Christ and he believes in the power of Christ for healing.

Well, Paul as an Apostle had the gift of miracles and the gift of healing and Paul saw here is my opportunity in the power of God to confirm my message. The people were standing around saying, "Oh, this guy might be right. That sounds pretty good. Not bad." Others are saying, "No, can't be. How do we know he's from God?" All of a sudden right out of the blue, verse 10, "Paul said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet." That's what he says to this guy who has never stood upright in his life and everybody knows it and his eyes have been fixed on the man and, when Paul said it with a loud voice, you better believe it was loud. He was used to speaking to big crowds outdoors without a microphone and he hollers, "Stand up on your feet." Now that's the test of faith for the little crippled man. A normal guy would say, "Is he kidding? Me? Who's he talking to? I've been like this all my life. What's this?" I love this. "And he leaped and walked." He leaped first, walked later. He shot up. I mean he was so ready. The Spirit of God had so prepared him and so prepared Paul that when the two came together, the little guy just shot right up and started walking and some of the people

undoubtedly said, "I think there may be some truth to this guy." And that's exactly what the Spirit of God wanted them to say. That's the point, but don't you see? Here is Paul in a situation where right in the middle of his sermon, doing...ministering his spiritual gift, the Spirit of God was able to let the power flow to accomplish a dynamic miracle. It's just another illustration how that in the life pattern of the man of God, the flow of the Spirit is free to exercise itself at any point.

Now that's the kind of power I'm talking about. The kind of power that makes the difference in the Christian life is not that kind that comes the day after you get home from camp or not that kind that you have when you leave the service thinking, "Ooh, boy, I'm so dedicated, committed, rededicated, irrigated, whatever's been...needs to be done, I've done it. I'm ready." And you run out here and you're like the man who jumped on his horse and rode off madly in all directions. You're just exploding but it really isn't harnessed but here was a man, Paul, who just lived in such a state that the free flow of the power of God moved through him all the time. You see? In the middle of doing one thing, the power of God does another thing. All through his life, he exhibits this. You say, "Well, how could I ever know that in my life? How could I ever experience that kind of power?" It's simply a question of confession. What's the one thing that bottles up the power? Sin, and sin just needs to be confessed. We need to confess it as soon as we commit it. That just keeps the channel clear. If you're harboring sin, you're clogging up the channel. A 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.

Now you and I can't do miracles like this. We can't raise the lame and the dead and all like the Apostles did. We don't need that kind of confirmation. We have the Word of God, but God wants to express His power through us, doesn't He...His power in witnessing, His power in prayer, His power in our spiritual gifts, His power in accomplishing the ministry He gives us and He wants it to be the free flow of that power, unrestricted, which comes by living in constant harmony with the Holy Spirit and in confession of sin moment by moment. And so we see the power. I mean Paul had power. This man was crippled all his life and in one statement, he shot up and leaped. Didn't even need lessons on how to walk. That's power. You say, "I wish I had that power." Listen to this. "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think according to the power that works...where?...in us." You've got that power. Same chapter, Ephesians 3, it says that we are filled with all the fullness of God. That's power. Just let it flow. There it is. A man of God is effective ministering spiritual gifts, boldness, power.

Let me close with this. If you've got all three of those, you know what's going to happen? You're going to be really effective and you know what you're going to be tempted to do? One great temptation is going to come to the person whose functioning in his spiritual gifts, who's really bold, who's really powerful. He's going to see results and he's going to be tempted to be proud. You know what the next qualification is? Humility. You think the Spirit of God knows how to put things in the right order? We'll see that one next week. Let's pray.

Father, we are thankful that we've been able to look into the Book this morning. Our hearts have been stirred and enriched because of our fellowship. Father, we are thankful that the Word of God presents to us not only by precept but by example, truths for life. Father, help us. Help us to be faithful in ministering the spiritual gifts that are ours, in being bold, blasting right through the opposition and in confessing our sin, living in the fullness of the Spirit, that the flow of the power might be unrestricted. Father, as we close this morning, we pray that You'll speak to our hearts. Encourage us. Bring to our minds the decisions that need to be made, the commitments, that we might go from this place to be used of Thee. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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