

# **When It's All About God**

Acts 14

## **What's with all the opposition?**

With Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey, **it was all about God and His mission** to take the gospel the ends of the earth, so much so, that **they stayed on mission**. So **what's with all the opposition to that mission?** **Why** isn't God protecting them from all the hostile obstruction they are facing all along the way, so they would be freer in fulfilling God's calling on their lives? It's the great **why** question.

**Preaching Today** editor Matt Woodley asked his son Matt who's a medical doctor in Papua New Guinea, "What's the difference between the preaching you've heard in America and the preaching you've heard in PNG?" Matt, Jr. said, "Most of the preaching I hear from pastors in the US focuses on God's love and compassion. American preachers always come back to God's grace. In contrast, most preachers I hear in PNG focus on God's power. They see the world through a lens of encounters with the very real powers of darkness, the evil principalities and powers at work in the world vying for the control of human souls."

In the first five Books of the New Testament and beyond, and in PNG and beyond, we are forced to face this power encounter. Perhaps the difference between us and them is they \_\_\_\_\_ to be confronted by forces of evil. We tend to expect an encounter with God's goodness, grace, and love, *not* opposition by great evil powers at every turn.

They expect it because they see the world around them as utterly fallen, as totally broken, and as frontline enemy territory. In our seemingly safer culture, we don't expect it. So out of *unrealistic expectation* comes our questions of **Why?** and **What's with that?!**

**When our lives are all about God and His agenda**, then we should *expect* a power encounter between God and forces of evil. What we see in today's Scripture, are **the attributes of effective gospel witnesses** in enemy territory, where God is greater, and who are serious about their lives and ministries being **all about God and His mission**. In that case, there is no **why** in their God-centered character.

## The attributes of a gospel witness:

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_ in the face of opposition (1-7).

**Verse 3:** The Greek word translated “so” in the ESV is usually translated, “Therefore...”

**Verses 6-7:** Fleeing, in this case, is an act of wisdom. Paul and Barnabas always seem to control only what they can control, and leave the rest up to God’s sovereign hand. And, in this case, they *could control living* to preach another day. But they stayed on as long as they could, *speaking boldly the gospel for the Lord.*

Have you noticed that where there is spiritual \_\_\_\_\_, there is spiritual opposition? For example, you’re knocking yourself out to be light in the darkness and to grow like crazy in Christ, when someone in your life tries to throw a wrench in the works; someone opposes you and attempts to hold you back. **When it’s all about God and His mission**, evil forces behind the scene are at work. That’s when you and I are called to be bold in the greater power of the Holy Spirit.

**A side note:** Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe are in the region of Galatia. Galatia is not a city but a region. When Paul later wrote to the Galatians, he wrote to the churches in these cities.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ when confronted with a need (8-10).

In the Jewish synagogues, there were both Jews and *God-fearing Gentiles*. Apparently, there was no synagogue in Lystra, so Paul used a different strategy to reach these *pagan Gentiles*: the miraculous healing of a lame man who loved what Paul was preaching. And obvious to Paul, the cripple had the faith to be saved in both body and soul. So Paul performed the miracle to set up the preaching of the gospel.

But, also, that's what good Christians do. When confronted with a need they can meet, they meet it. **That's an attribute of a gospel witness.** We do good with no strings attached. And if someone gets saved in the process, we are full of joy, because that's the ultimate \_\_\_\_\_, being used by God to save a soul to His glory. So, many of us do good to unbelievers while hoping to see in their eyes the faith to be saved.

## 3. \_\_\_\_\_ when lifted up on a pedestal (11-18).

Even Christians can care more about their image than their substance; even they can desire honor that belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ alone, not to them. In a society that makes idols out of people, making the merely human into gods, it's too easy for that to cross over into the church. Perhaps we don't worship our "celebrities" like the world does, but we certainly can put them on a pedestal, which is a form of idolatry.

Men and women whose lives are **all about God and His mission** are in the *process of conquering pride, of living humbly* in the presence of God's majesty and might, *and of hating* being honored in dishonorable ways. Like, Paul and Barnabas, they cry out against it.

## 4. \_\_\_\_\_ even during severe tribulation (19-23).

**Verses 19-20:** After getting driven out of Antioch, mistreated in Iconium, and (maybe) stoned to death in Lystra, where's their complaint? Why aren't they asking why? Why aren't they voicing the questions we would voice? "God, what's with all this opposition and awful treatment?" Why don't they \_\_\_\_\_ what *we would* expect: little to no trouble? And why do they expect what *we don't* expect: much tribulation in enemy territory? Why? Because it's not about them—**it's all about God and His mission**. But when it's more about me than it is about God, I want to quit. I want to put up walls.

**Verses 21-23:** The warning was a prediction as the apostles made it clear: **We will enter God's eternal kingdom in heaven *only through many tribulations, trials, and hardships.*** "But I thought that once I placed my faith in Jesus, I would be on *easy street!*" Who told you that?

Have you learned the absolutely biblical and necessary lesson about the necessity of **patient endurance** *through* trouble, **faithful perseverance** even during the severest trials, all the way home? Let me encourage you: **when it's all about God and His mission**, be \_\_\_\_\_!

**5. \_\_\_\_\_ when the mission is accomplished (24-28).**

We can be sure that that church service was a worship service, and Jesus was highly glorified in holy worship!

Matt Redman: "The heart of worship [is when] it's all about You, Jesus!" When **it's all about Him**, He receives all the credit and all the glory, for the awesome things that He has done in us and through us. We're just vessels, cracked pots even, *and He is using us?!*

**It's all about ... \_\_\_\_\_!**