

The Danger of Confusion

What I really need

- Electricity
- Clothes
- Money
- Not feel lonely
- Know God

Container or Conduit

- Get a new extension cord
- Get a different suitcase
- Open a new bank account
- Find better friends
- Find a spiritual person or organization

What are some risks in looking for containers or conduits for what I really need?

Pray: Ask God to help us find what we really need

The Danger of Misdirected Worship

Acts 14:8-18

Chinese: page 1791
 Spanish: page 1406
 English-Green: page 754
 English-Brown: page 1107
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Luke's description of Paul's & Barnabas's ministry

“So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, **speaking boldly** for the Lord, who **confirmed** the message of his grace by **enabling them** to perform signs and wonders.” *Acts 14:3*

– **Paul & Barnabas**

- Spoke boldly the message of God's grace

– **God**

- Confirmed the message with miracles through them

Overlap of Speaker (Paul) and Audience (Lycaonians)

Jewish/Christian religion (monotheism)

Jewish culture

High formal education

Native Greek speaker

Urban

World traveler

Polytheistic religion

Lycaonian culture

Less formal education

Greek as a foreign language

Rural

Limited outside exposure

High risk of
misunderstanding!

First Century
Middle East

Exposure to Roman rule

Acts 14:8-18

8-10: God healed a lame man through Paul

11-13: • Luke emphasized

14-17: • the depth of the trouble

18: • man's faith to be healed

• God as the source of the miracle

• Paul's part:

recognized man's faith and joined the work of God

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Acts 14:8-18

8-10: God healed a lame man through Paul

11-13: People thought Barnabas & Paul had the power & tried to worship them

14-17: • Language & culture gap contributed to

18: a critical confusion

• Their focus: visible source of God's power: apostles

• They fit God into their own worldview, leading to profound confusion

• In Christianity, life and goodness is from God and for God's glory alone

Acts 14:8-18

8-10: God healed a lame man through Paul

11-13: People thought Barnabas & Paul had the power & tried to worship them

14-17: Barnabas & Paul strongly objected; pointed to God

- 18:
- Urgent, intense effort to stop them!
 - “We too are only human like you”
 - “We are bringing you good news” **about God**
 - Groups of people
 - Always: **general revelation** of God’s orderliness, power, and goodness in nature (see Romans 1)
 - Eventually: **special revelation** of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ
 - Greater responsibility with greater revelation

Acts 14:8-18

8-10: God healed a lame man through Paul

11-13: People thought Barnabas & Paul had the power & tried to worship them

14-17: Barnabas & Paul strongly objected; pointed to God

- 18: The tendency to praise people rather than God was very hard to stop
- Sacrificing to Paul & Barnabas may not mean that they liked them
 - Pattern: give idols what they want in order to get what they can give
 - Radically different from worship of God & Jesus
 - Eventually there were many disciples in Lystra

Acts 14:8-18

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Parallels between Peter's and Paul's first miracle**Peter: Acts 3**

- a man who was lame from birth
- He jumped to his feet and began to walk.
- all the people were astonished [as though Peter had the power to do this]
- Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?
- It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

Paul: Acts 14

- a man who was lame...from birth
- the man jumped up and began to walk
- the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them
- they tore their clothes... "Friends, why are you doing this?"
- We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God

The Big Idea

God's work through people

can lead to the great danger of worshipping people

and "fearing"

and "fearing"

rather than worshipping God

fear = hold in high regard; "tremble" at their words and opinions

When we are thirsty what matters...

is not the quality of the container...



When we are thirsty what matters...
is not the quality of the container...
but the quality of what it contains

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks **the water I give them** will never thirst. Indeed, **the water I give them** will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." *John 4:13-14*



How the Gospel helps us see the world more clearly...

**GOD'S
HOLINESS**

Only God is holy and truly good
God is holy and truly good

**HUMAN
SIN**

Every person and every organization (secular and religious) is sinful and broken

– “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

Romans 3:23

– “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”

1 Corinthians 3:7

**GOD'S GRACE
IN CHRIST**

Our hope:

**HUMAN FAITH/
SPIRIT'S WORK**

– Grace of God in Christ: forgiveness

– Spirit's work through people in faith

Be extremely cautious about...

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **God's servants**

- Treating individuals in the way we should only treat God
 - “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and **worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator**—who is forever praised. Amen.” *Romans 1:25*
- Seeing organizations as the hope for the church or society
- Seeing individuals or organizations as if they were the real enemy, rather than sin and Satan
 - “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” *Ephesians 6:12*

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but **God has been making it grow**. So **neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything**, but only God, who makes things grow.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Be extremely cautious about...

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **God's servants**

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **ourselves**

- Paul said, “For **I am the least** of the apostles and **do not even deserve** to be called an apostle...

But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and **his grace to me was not without effect.**” *1 Corinthians 15:9-10*

Be extremely cautious about...

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **God's servants**

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **ourselves**

...people thinking too highly of us

- “We too are only human, like you.” *Acts 14:15*
- Otherwise...
 - They may trust in us rather than Christ
 - When we disappoint them, they may walk away from Christ

Be extremely cautious about...

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **God's servants**

...thinking too much (**good** or **bad**) about **ourselves**

...people thinking too highly of us

...thinking too much about **people's opinion of us**

- “I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. **It is the Lord who judges me.**” *1 Corinthians 4:3-4*

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God's work through people

can lead to the great danger of worshiping people ^{and “fearing”}

rather than worshiping God ^{and “fearing”}

fear = hold in high regard; “tremble” at their words and opinions

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that **this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.**” *2 Corinthians 4:7*

“May His beauty rest upon me
as I seek the lost to win,
And may they (and I) forget the channel,
seeing only Him.”

*May the Mind of Christ my Savior
by Kate Wilkinson (1925)*

