

Text: Acts 14:8-23, Title: Commando Christians, Date/Place: 5/14/17, The Road, AM

- A. Opening illustration: Judson was united in marriage to Ann Hasseltine February 5, 1812, and was ordained the following day. He had counted the cost of being a missionary. When asking Mr. Hasseltine for the hand of his daughter, he had written: "I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India, to every kind of want and distress, to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you?"
- B. Background to passage: Paul and Barnabas had left Antioch Pisidia, come to Iconium and received a mixed response, and now are in Lystra, which is where I want us to dwell today. The setup from Iconium was initially an open reception to the gospel and Paul and Barnabas. Then unbelieving Jews stirred up unbelieving Gentiles and the fight was on. However, Paul and Barnabas stayed for a long time, enduring the persecution, and preaching the gospel boldly, and discipling believers. When they learned about a plot to stone them, they left the city, moving on to Lystra. In Lystra events take place, which put Paul and Barnabas again on dangerous ground, nearly getting Paul killed. I want to examine those events today.
- C. Go through the list down through the text of the things that demonstrate Paul's boldness in the gospel.
- D. Main thought: Today we will see some reasons behind their drive and commitment to the gospel.

A. **It was necessary**

1. Why would a person be so concerned about people in other lands and countries to hear about a new faith? Why would they cross land and sea to find others to tell about Jesus? A couple of reasons, but one is that they believed what Jesus taught, that no one will enter into heaven without faith in Christ. They knew that unless you heard the gospel, you couldn't believe, couldn't go to heaven, and would spend eternity in hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Talk a little bit about the reality of hell. Explain the gospel, and how it can make the unrighteous righteous, forgiving sin, averting wrath, and making sons and daughters. Finally, as Paul taught with his lips what he lived with his life: Christians MUST endure many tribulations to enter into the kingdom.
2. John 14:6, Rom 10:13, filling up what is lacking,
3. **Illustration:** Youth anonymous question about what happens to people who don't hear about Jesus. **When we were in Peru on our first trip to the mountain town that we knew didn't have evangelical churches. On one of the last days that we were there, we were driving down one of the roads there and we came upon this large, blue, long and rectangular building. It had small squares in the front that went all the way across the building in a row. It was about 3-4 rows all the way down. When I saw the statues and shrines, I knew that this was a cemetery. As we drove by, we could see the hundreds of spots that people were laid to rest there. It was then that I asked the question: were there any who knew Christ? Maybe they had come from another town to live there, and that town had a church? Maybe they had found a tract or a bible once upon a time. Maybe a chance encounter in the market of the large town where we stayed? But I knew that most of those squares contained people that had to pay their own penalty for sin, and it shook me to the core.**
4. So, in our culture, being narrow-minded enough to hold to a truth that everyone who is not born again, who has not placed their faith in Christ is going to hell, is viewed as intolerant and even bigoted. Are there other faiths that hold such a position? Are they viewed in the same light as evangelical Christians? Are there some areas of hypocrisy where a Christian position brings about persecution? Is it easier to abandon or ignore this truth? God has ordained the means as well as the means. The love of God compels us. If we love others, we must share, even under the most difficult of circumstances. It is possible and most helpful when we speak of these truths in love. We often speak of the millions and billions of people across the world who are unreached, but Paul was concerned about those in the here and now.

B. **It was worth it**

1. Another major reason Paul endured such awful treatment was because it was worth it. The joy we find in God causes any pain and suffering in this life to be viewed as totally worth it because of our end. Pleasing Christ is the highest of all things, and the most satisfying of all situations. The worth of Jesus in Paul's mind played a huge role in spurring him on. Many of the disciples died for their belief in the resurrection and that followership of Christ, as well as many down through the ages believing that death with Christ is better than recanting and abandoning Christ to save their life. If you save your life, you will lose it, and if you lose your life for my sake and the gospel, you will gain it!
2. Glory that shall be revealed in us, this light momentary affliction, laid up for me a crown, do not count my life dear, suffer the loss of all things, Heb 10:34, 11:24-26
3. **Illustration:** "It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God. God Himself could not make him happy any other way... There is nothing in the world worth living for but doing good and finishing God's work, doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing his whole will." – Brainerd. "He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Nate Saint, Roger Yoderian, Ed McCulley. "If God would grant us the vision, the word sacrifice would disappear from our lips and thoughts; we would hate the things that seem now so dear to us; our lives would suddenly be too short, we would despise time-robbing distractions and charge the enemy with all our energies in the name of Christ" –Nate Saint, "With your eyes on the prize, you can not only risk it all, not only joyfully accept the plundering of your stuff, or be sawn in two, or be crucified facing all of it unjustly, you can repair the relationships because you don't have to be right! You don't have to save face. You don't have to get your revenge. You don't have to punish others. You don't have to harbor bitterness. You can just be wronged and know that 10,000 thousands of unjust acts against you pale in comparison to the joy that awaits you. You are free and the infinite value of the prize helps ease the pain of suffering, but more so helps give strength to endure"
4. We need a constant check of the value of things in our lives. Just like these Lystrians held on to idols (the false gods of the Greek pantheon), we have idols that hold more value than God in our lives. And the thing is, we don't realize it. The reality is that Christ is the most valuable treasure in the universe, but we don't live in accordance with that reality. We live with the value system of our world and culture, and it blinds us to the glory of Christ. We must seek to see his worth. Our gaze into his true worth solves the problem of sin and idolatry. We see how awesome he is, then we want to cast of lesser things. Knowing the wonder of his person (including the full measure and facets of his character) and the beauty of what he did for us in the cross compels us to sacrifice.

A. Closing illustration: In 1939, Howard Guinness, one of the early founders of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, wrote a little book called Sacrifice. He was trying to do then what I am trying to do now. He wrote, "Where are the young men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap, and be faithful even unto death, who will lose their lives for Christ's, flinging them away for love of him? Where are those who will live dangerously, and be reckless in this service? Where are the men of prayer? Where are the men who count God's Word of more importance to them than their daily food? Where are the men who, like Moses of old, commune with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend? Where are God's men in this day of God's power?"

B. Recap

C. Invitation to commitment

Additional Notes

- **Is Christ Exalted, Magnified, Honored, and Glorified?**