

Today's Message

GETTING OUR ACTS TOGETHER GCF Sermon Series on the Book of Acts

#23: "The Men of God and the Gods of Men"

Acts 14:1-28

Men of God and the gods of men meet constantly in a variety of ways and places all the time. As you and I mingle with our peers and colleagues and even relatives, it soon becomes observable that either God or a substitute god is (or substitute gods are) given due homage in people's opinions and actions. We may see it in others but do people see the true and living God actively worshiped in our personal lives and actions? That's our mission; that's witnessing.

In our Bible passage today, we see the men of God fleeing from Iconium due to persecution (vv. 1-7) and heading for Lystra. There Paul and Barnabas preached the good news and healed a lame man. Awed by a miracle, the people proclaimed, "the gods have come down to us in human form." Together with their priest, they offered sacrifices and not even the protests of Paul and Barnabas could dissuade them. When people are ignorant of the true God worthy of worship, they end up bowing before worthless gods that they create or recognize. That should motivate us to correct the errors of others who bow before false gods. For this, we can gain insights from the events recorded in Acts 14.

1. The Condition Described: People are inherently religious but distorted views of God prevail, vv. 8-13.
 - a. Any phenomenon deemed to be beyond human ability to cause is attributed to the supernatural
 - b. God created man and programmed us to be related to him but sin has separated us from God.
 - c. Sin also caused distortions in truths that God has programmed in and revealed to man.
 - d. Man's separation from God and distortions of God's truths account for world religions and cults as it also accounts for modern secularism and atheism.
2. The Correction Prescribed: Unless corrected, errors about God and worship will prevail, vv. 14-17.
 - a. Christians' consciousness of mission and witness prompts us to go to people who are ignorant of God and true worship or to those who create and worship their own false gods, v. 14.
 - b. Preaching the Word and/or the good news is the indispensable corrective tool of our mission, vv. 7, 15, 21, 25.
 - c. God's goodness in creation and providence are also silent witnesses that God exists, that He is good and that He is worthy of worship, vv. 16-17.
3. The Caution Applied: Be careful in correcting errors and beware of other possible reactions, vv. 18-28.
 - a. Attempt to correct with due respect and without being offensive, judgmental or self-righteous.
 - b. Some people bent on wrong worship not only refuse to believe but they poison the minds of others to refuse the message and attack the messengers, vv. 2, 19.
 - c. The crowd who was quick to worship Paul and Barnabas also proved gullible and quick to stone them later, vv. 19-20.

Amid all the ups and downs in missions and witnessing, despite restrictions and threats, the positive expansion outweighed all the setbacks and they were recorded to encourage Christians that the progress of God's church will never be stopped by all the combined forces that seek its demise.

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