

What Does the Preaching of the Gospel Produce? Acts 14:1-6

Introduction:

1. Have you ever had the feeling that you weren't wanted someplace? I'm sure that Paul and Barnabas got that feeling in Antioch of Pisidia (13:50). But they didn't allow this to dampen their spirits. 13:51-52
2. They moved on to a large and wealthy city about 60 miles east, called Iconium.
 - This was the chief city of the district of Lycaonia.
 - It was part of the area known as Galatia.
3. As was Paul's habit, he would first preach the gospel in the synagogue and use it as a springboard to preach to the Gentiles. Acts 14:1a
4. As was usual, the preaching of the gospel produced many different reactions from people within the city. When the gospel is preached, it has a way of bringing to the surface what is in a person's heart.
5. Do you remember when you first heard the gospel? How did you respond? Let's examine this text and see what the gospel of Christ produces.

The gospel produces faith in believing hearts. vs. 1

1. There were many people with tender hearts that were ready to receive the gospel of Christ. Jews and Gentiles believed the message of Christ that Paul proclaimed.
2. It is so exciting when you see people whose hearts are tender toward God and toward God's truth. When you share God's truth, they readily receive it. This is something we need to pray about constantly. 2 Thessalonians 3:1
 - Why do some readily receive the Word? There are many factors. One is prayer. Has the person had people praying for him or her? Another would be the level of callousness built up in the person's heart as a result of sin. Some are tougher nuts to crack because of years of sin and walking in darkness.
3. Paul spoke the gospel of Christ, and there were some who believed. This is the Bible formula, and we should never stray from it. 1 Corinthians 1:21; Romans 10:17
4. Paul didn't give away door prizes, use worldly gimmicks, or clever marketing schemes to draw a crowd. He simply proclaimed the truth of God. Paul's preaching produced conviction and then conversion. God's Word does this. Psalm 19:7

The gospel produces opposition by unbelieving hearts. vs. 2

1. The unbelieving Jews immediately began to stir up the Gentiles.
 - "*Stir up*" means "to rouse; to excite against."
2. What was their chosen method of opposition? They attempted to infiltrate and pollute the **minds** of the people. This strategy comes right from Satan's playbook. (It's all about the mind, and Satan knows it!) 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:3; Titus 1:15

3. These unbelieving Jews began to spread lies about Paul and Barnabas and their message. Why did they do this? They did it to get in the minds of the people, and thereby turn them against the truth of God.
4. Satan is ever polluting the minds of people. By and large, Satan has managed to take control of:
 - Hollywood – to pollute people’s minds morally
 - The public schools – to pollute people’s minds philosophically
 - Church denominations – to pollute people’s minds theologically
5. Do you know why there is less and less tolerance for straightforward Bible teaching and gospel preaching? Satan has infiltrated people’s minds and polluted them.
6. Today, we preach the message of God’s grace (vs. 3) which **should** bring joy to people. But it is not so. Why? It’s because their minds have been corrupted by the prince of this world.

The gospel produces boldness in courageous hearts. vs. 3

1. What did Paul and Barnabas do in the face of fierce opposition? Did they whine? “They’re lying about us! We’re quitting! We’re leaving! This isn’t fair!” No sir! They spoke **boldly** in the Lord. They didn’t back down for a minute. vs. 3
2. In fact, the idea of the text is that they stayed longer than they otherwise would have because of the opposition. They took it as a call to boldness. They would make the truth known and counter Satan’s attacks.
3. It would have been easy to quit, but they courageously stayed put and continued giving testimony unto “*the word of his grace.*” 2 Timothy 2:1, 3; Ephesians 6:10-11; 1 Corinthians 16:13
4. Serving God, sharing the gospel with others, and proclaiming God’s truth is not for spiritual wimps. It takes God’s Word working in us and through us to produce the boldness that is needed.
5. Paul and Barnabas possessed incredible courage and dedication. They just kept going no matter what.
 - In Perga, John Mark quit. They kept going, though short-handed.
 - In Antioch, they were verbally attacked and openly disgraced by being thrown out of the city, yet they kept going.
 - Here in Iconium, they were lied about and encountered opposition, yet they stayed and kept preaching God’s grace.
6. May God give us believers who, despite fatigue, difficulty, danger, or criticism, just keep serving God!

The gospel produces division in the world. vs. 4

1. When Paul preached the gospel of Christ, the city was far from united. It was divided right down the middle. All over town, people began to take sides.
2. Did you know that the gospel of Christ is the great divider of men? It puts people in one of two categories: saved or lost, believing or unbelieving, objects of God’s grace or objects of God’s wrath.

3. Draw a line from the cross to the empty tomb and you have the great dividing line that separates mankind. The name of Jesus is divisive. It always has been and it always will be. We see it today in our culture.
4. Most of the time the world will accept the mention of God or a “Higher Being.” But mention the name of Jesus, and people get in an uproar.
 - Somebody may say, “See there! You admit it. Jesus is divisive, so He shouldn’t be mentioned at all.”
 - The reason why the name of Jesus is divisive is not Jesus’ fault. The fault lies within the sinful heart of mankind. It is man’s prejudice against Christ that causes the division. It is man’s pride and refusal to accept who He is that causes division.
5. Whenever God’s truth is proclaimed in an uncompromising fashion, it will always cause division. Water it down and nobody cares. Luke 12:51-53
6. Truth unites if people accept the truth. But if truth is rejected, it divides.
7. Satan wants every person to stay in his camp. But when God’s truth is preached, some will leave the camp of Satan’s world system and follow God’s truth. So whenever God’s truth is being proclaimed, you can rest assured Satan will cause opposition.

The gospel produces rage among God’s enemies. vs. 5-6

1. An assault was planned against Paul and his group. When it says they planned to “*use them despitefully*,” it means they were going to exercise violence and abuse.
 - They were going to stone them (a Jewish form of execution).
2. Somehow Paul caught wind of this violent plan, and they immediately left town.
3. This was not weakness, but wisdom. So far there had been no violence, and to wait for such a thing would have been foolish. It would have also made things harder for the infant church that had just started. It was wiser to just move on.
4. As believers, we need wisdom to know when to press forward, and when to simply back off, refocus in another direction, or wait for another time. Jesus did this. Matthew 12:14-15; cf. Matthew 10:23

In Conclusion:

1. **Illustration:** Over the past several years, most major news outlets have started giving readers the ability to post comments in response to their online articles. In just about any article that contains even the slightest hint of “religious” content, you can typically see all five of these responses played out in the reader commentary. In an article that includes actual biblical content or - heaven forbid - the name of Christ, the reader commentary turns into a hotbed of debate, heavily leaning towards “rage among God’s enemies.”
2. As believers we must make sure that our presentation of the gospel is done in truth, but with grace and love. But even when we do this, we must be prepared for these same responses that Paul received when he told people God’s truth.