

Acts 14:8-20 (NIV)

⁸In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. ¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: ¹⁵“Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past, he let all nations go their own way. ¹⁷Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” ¹⁸Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. ¹⁹Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

44-14-01-The Danger of Crowds

Gospel, healing, religion, anger, crowds, testimony

Acts 14:8-20

People lose themselves in crowds but find their true selves in Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

–Humans are generally *gregarious* [drawn to groups]. Jesus spoke to the crowd, but He saved the individual. Often, in the *wrong group*, people can lose their personal integrity. *Morality quickly vanishes in a mob*. –*Individuality and corporate unity are traits inherited from our Triune Creator*– **Gen 1:26**, “Let us make man in **our image**, in **our likeness**.” The **Three Persons of the Godhead** are in such perfect unity, *They call Themselves, “I AM.”* In that “likeness” to the Trinity, while *retaining our individuality as persons*, we can be *so united with others that we act as one*. –When sin severs fellowship with God, our “likeness” to God remains but is now *dangerous*. By disconnection from God, we can fall into *evil unions* and *false crowd mentalities arranged by the prince of darkness*. This is why One of the Trinity became human– **1 John 3:8b**, The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. **HOM.idea**. *That’s why...*

I. People Must Respond to God Individually– **Acts 14:8-10**, *In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.*

A. How did Paul know this man’s heart and know how to heal him?

1. Jesus showed us how– **John 5:19**, Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” **John 14:10**, Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (Jesus calls us to this same relationship.)
2. God’s Son became human to reconnect us to the Father by living in union with Himself. (**Christ’s** “I am in the Father, and... the Father is in me,” is now our “*I am in Christ, and Christ is in me!*”)
3. Paul lived and did his ministry this way– **Gal 2:20**, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Jesus, living in Paul, saw that the crippled man

had faith, and speaking *as* Paul, healed the lame man.)

- B. Out of that whole crowd, this one man “*listened to*” the Gospel Paul preached and “*had faith to be healed*” by the Christ Paul announced.
1. The crowd, content with their gods, felt no need for the message.
 2. The lame man, discontent with such gods, was ready to believe in *this loving God, Who was a Savior with transforming power.*

TRANS: People lost in crowds, only find their true selves in Christ.

Jesus is *in us* as He was *in Paul*, and *He’s not done* yet with His earthly work! His target isn’t *crowds* but *individuals*. Christ, *living inside of us*, is *sensitive* to those in need. *In us* and **as us**, He wants to speak and minister to them. We can’t let crowds distract or detour us, because...

II. Crowds Have a Mind of Their Own— v.11-12, *When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.*

- A. This “crowd” had ignored Paul’s word on the Gospel’s uniqueness, just as many today ignore what Jesus claimed— John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
1. We can’t be distracted by the favor of crowds, who may exploit our faith to promote political or special-interest-group agendas.
 2. We can’t be detoured from the Gospel’s integrity, when joining secular groups to work on social tasks. (*Joint-efforts can open a door to share how Jesus uniquely addresses the human condition, as long as our faith in Christ stays strong and undiluted.*)
- B. In *resisting* the crowd’s agenda, *Jesus, in and as Paul*, chose an area of common ground: divine providence— v.15-17, “*Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.*”
1. Paul called this “good news” without explaining the full Gospel.
 - a. If *Jesus* was speaking *in Paul*, then He was ***not*** (at this time anyway) telling them what they needed to know for salvation.
 - b. Still, the call was *to repent* [*change the mind*], “*telling [them] to turn from these worthless things to the living God*” (*Jesus in us* knows what

people are ready to hear *from us*, so we must follow *His lead*.)

2. Notice, no sin-talk here. (The focus was on how “*the living God, who made heaven and earth*” had “*shown kindness*,” providing “*rain... crops... food... and... joy*,” even without them serving Him properly!)

TRANS: *Later, Jesus led Paul to write much about sin. But here, with this unready crowd, Christ’s emphasis was on the undeniable goodness in God’s providential care*, because it too *can convince* lost people to *change their minds— Rom 2:4*, Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? *Jesus in Paul knew* that *the facts of divine providence* would plant a seed in some. But crowds tend to shift like wind. *That’s why...*

III. A Crowd Mentality Is Dangerous— v.19, *Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.*

- A. Individuals, united in religious fervor, moved as one body to exalt the evangelists. Then, the same group, united by the influence of religious prejudice, moved as one body to destroy them.
- B. This *corrupted unity* (where individuals get lost in the vacillating whims and passions of the crowd) is the dangerous result of our “likeness” **to** God being sinfully disconnected from God.

CONCLUSION:

–The ***only*** hope for our Trinitarian “likeness” to be restored to the human unity God designed, is for individuals to turn from sin and find their true selves in Christ. Then, with Jesus indwelling each individual believer’s heart, our unity as the one Body of Christ can be manifested.

–The Church, as one Body, is *so real, so valuable*, that believers, in some dangerous places today, risk their lives for it, just as Paul risked his a second time— v.19b-20a, They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and **went back into the city**.

– Now, why would Paul return to a place of lethally dangerous crowds? Surely it was to encourage the faith of a formerly lame man, who now had *Jesus in his heart*. It may also have been to see if his words about God’s kind and loving providence had caused others to be ready to leave their lostness in the crowd to find their true selves in Christ.