

Acts Chapter 14

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[0 : 00] Well, on your sheet we are just engaging. Chapter 14, we have just finished, where on the previous page, where the apostles had a certain degree of success, but they also had a certain degree of opposition.

And as they left town, they engaged in what was a very dramatic and understandable gesture in shaking the dust of their feet off against them.

That was a common response that people gave who preached the gospel to those who rejected it. And it was similar to what Pilate did when he washed his hands, or thought he could wash his hands, of the whole affair.

Pilate was put under pressure by the Jewish aristocracy in demanding the crucifixion of Christ. Pilate really didn't see any justification for doing that.

But in order to appease the Jewish constituency there that was demanding Christ's blood, he said, okay, take him and crucify him, but I want you to know something.

[1 : 13] I washed my hands of this whole affair. I don't agree with this. I have nothing to do with it. I'm just issuing the executive order to appease you, and that's it.

But we know that Pilate couldn't rid himself of it that way. Nevertheless, that was what the gesture was. And in the case of the apostles shaking the dust of their feet off against those who opposed the gospel in that community, it was their way of saying, look, you've been warned.

You've been given the truth. The gospel has been presented to you, and you rejected it. We just want you to know your blood is on your own head.

We have delivered ourselves. We have done all we can do. And they shook the dust of their feet off against them and departed from there. And this brings us to chapter 14, and we are on page 524 down in the lower left-hand corner.

We are working from what is called the 26th translation New Testament. These are simply photocopies of the page. And the reason we're doing it is because it gives us a variety of texts to consider, each one of which is abbreviated under the bold print.

[2 : 22] And if you look at chapter 14 and verse 1, you'll see, and it came to pass in Iconium. That bold print is the King James Version, and it is the base version or the base text for the whole thing.

So each time you see the bold print, you know it's the King James Version. Then right under that, you see TCNT. That's just an abbreviation for the 20th century New Testament.

Below that, BER. That's an abbreviation for the Berkeley translation. And then PHI. That's an abbreviation for Phillips translation.

And each one that offers any significant difference at all is included. And they have drawn from a mass of 26 different translations.

But, of course, you don't get all 26 because, in many cases, the verses are translated exactly alike. So there's no point in repeating those. But where there is a significant difference, that's what you find there.

[3 : 30] So we read, It came to pass, and I have to share this with you. Every time I hear this expression, It came to pass, I'm reminded of a scene that was recorded having taken place down south.

And I suppose it wouldn't be politically or socially correct today to say this. And that's one reason I'm going to say it. Because I don't subscribe to that nonsense.

There are some things that need to be maintained for truth's sake. And the story goes that this was a, well, let's see. They aren't colored anymore.

They aren't black anymore. Now they're Afro-American. Okay. I keep forgetting what we're supposed to be calling people of color now. But Afro-American. But this was back in the days when

it was a colored preacher.

Okay. And by the way, no colored person was offended at that then. But today it would be an offense. And he stood up to preach. And he came to this text.

[4 : 36] And it came to pass. And he said, let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the scriptures that say it came to pass.

And how we thank you, Lord, that it didn't come to stay, but it came to pass. And trust me, there is no demeaning or no insult meant to any of our African-American brethren.

But I will say this, that African-Americans have a way of expressing things, of saying things that us poor white folk can't duplicate.

You know, they have a way about them. It is in their genetic makeup. And it is the same kind of thing that you find in Jewish people and in certain other ethnic groups.

And it is not meant to make fun of or to demean in any way. It is just to point out that there is a difference and it is a delightful difference.

[5 : 48] I really appreciate some of the best preaching I've ever heard come from black preachers. and they just have a way about them. So, it came to pass in Iconium, we are in Asia Minor.

Paul has not yet crossed over into Europe. He is on his first missionary journey. And we read that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

Everywhere the Gospels preached some will believe and some will not. But, verse 2, but the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

This is a campaign that these Jews engaged in to discredit Paul and his colleagues and they are going to succeed in turning the non-Jews who are there present against them.

They do this by bad-mouthing them behind their backs, by deriding, by gainsaying, etc. And the stirring up of the Gentiles is probably the best way to put it.

[7 : 10] Look down the list at the TCNT, the 20th century New Testament. They stirred up the heathen because that's what they were. Gentiles were heathen. They were the pagans. And they poisoned their minds.

They probably circulated all kinds of vicious rumors about them. And it's interesting here that this is coming from the Jews.

And I don't know how familiar you are with Jewish history, but these who are producing the persecution here in chapter 14 are the same ones who have been on the receiving end of persecution for a couple of millennia.

In fact, this goes all the way back to the book of Esther and Haman and so on. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Jewish libel laws or the accusations particularly in Europe regarding the Jews and the vicious rumors that were circulated.

And you would be surprised how many people believe this. And they believe that the Jewish people kidnapped Gentile children and murder them and use their blood in connection with making the Jewish matzo balls and the things that are going to be served at the Jewish Passover.

[8 : 43] Now that is so bizarre and so weird and so untrue. But you would be surprised how many literally millions of people believed that and circulated that.

Many of the Jews were blamed for the black plague. The Jews were blamed for almost anything and everything. All it takes for vicious rumors to impact a culture or society is for somebody who has no scruples to circulate them.

And there are all kinds of lies that are out there right now. Political lies economic lies sexual lies all kinds of lies circulating permeating our community and people who start these things usually have some kind of evil agenda and the lie that is circulating doesn't have to have a shred of truth in it.

You just make the accusation and we see this every time an election time comes around there's all kinds of scuttlebutt in circulation lies in circulation part truths and it's almost impossible for the average person to sort it out.

So here that's exactly what's taking place here. This is an age old game. They stirred up the Gentiles made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they there speaking boldly in the Lord which gave testimony unto the word of his grace and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

[10 : 27] But the multitude of the city was divided and part held with the Jews that is the Gentile population whom the Jews had negatively affected part held with them and part with the disciples or

the apostles.

So here you've got a polarized community. Everybody is taking sides in this issue. It has been that way ever since the truth has been proclaimed. When Noah way back in Genesis 6 began proclaiming the truth there was only a tiny minority who aligned themselves with him. That was Mrs. Noah, three sons and their daughters. Everybody else was opposed to the message. But fellas, truth is never determined by how many people believe it. Truth is determined by its intrinsic truthfulness. Francis Schaeffer way back in the 60s found it necessary to coin a term that has been embedded in my mind ever since and it's a term that shouldn't even be necessary. He coined the term true truth. True truth? What other kind of truth is there? Well, there is a lying truth.

[11 : 51] There is a shaved truth. There is all kinds of fictitious things that are ascribed as truth. truth. And truth is the what is-ness of life.

Truth is that which corresponds to reality. And we cannot justify our being here this morning apart from the idea that we subscribe to the concept that there is such a thing as truth.

truth. And if there is such a thing as truth, there is such a thing as untruth. Truth is that which corresponds to reality. Untruth or a lie is that which does not.

And when truth is proclaimed, there will always be a certain element who will embrace it and a certain element who will reject it. And what is being used here to vindicate that truth is being spoken is that it is accompanied by signs and miracles.

This is nothing more than a replication of what Christ did himself when he came proclaiming the kingdom of God is at hand.

[13 : 10] Really? How can you verify that? Christ came to present himself as the king and he announced that the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God is at hand.

People had every right to ask. What gives you the right to say that? Why should we believe you? Where are your credentials? How do we know that the kingdom of heaven is at hand?

Well, every Jew familiar with the Old Testament knew what was going to happen when the kingdom came. When the prayer is answered, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, they knew what to expect.

Because when the kingdom comes, that is God's utopia, from heaven come to earth. And everything that is wrong with the earth is going to be fixed during the kingdom, and the Messiah is the one who is going to fix it.

So, when the kingdom comes, the deaf, the ears of the deaf will be opened, the lame man will leap like a deer, the sightless will be given sight, the dead will be raised, these are going to be characteristics of the kingdom.

[14 : 28] It is literally like Eden revisited, it is utopia come to earth, it is everything that is wrong with the earth is going to be fixed, and the knowledge of the Lord is going to cover the world as the waters cover the seas.

That's what's going to happen when the kingdom comes. And when Jesus said, behold, the King, the King James translates it, the kingdom of God is within you.

Not a good translation of the preposition. What he's saying is, the kingdom of God is among you. What did he mean by that?

He meant, look at me. Here is a personification of the kingdom of heaven. You want a sample? All right. God healed the blind. And he caused the lame to walk. And he raised the dead. Those are all kingdom conditions.

[15 : 29] That's how Christ authenticated himself in his claim of Messiahship. Okay, you say you're the Messiah, you've come to bring the kingdom, show us.

What do you got? And that's exactly what he did. But there were still some for whom that was not good enough.

When our Lord was at a couple of principal cities in Israel, Chorazin, Bethsaida, he laid them out and he said, woe unto you, Bethsaida, woe unto you, Chorazin, for if the mighty deeds that have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented.

They would have changed their mind. And those are Gentile communities. They're not even Jews. They don't know diddly about the kingdom or what it's supposed to be about. But the Jews were steeped in it.

And at the same time, they saw the miracles that Christ performed, and they said, how does he do this? And even the high priest, this is disgusting and humorous at the same time, even the high priest got together in a little conflagration shortly before they decided to meet with Judas and arrest Christ, and they said, what are we going to do with this guy?

[17:02] What are we going to do? Because the fact that mighty miracles have been done through him, we can't deny. What are we going to do?

We can't deny the miracles that he performed. The implication is, they wanted to deny them, they wanted to explain them away, they wanted to satisfy the questions of the people, but they didn't have any answers.

And somebody came up with this, oh, well, you know what he's doing. You know what he's doing. He's in league with the devil himself. Jesus of Nazareth is in bed with Satan.

That's how he does these miracles. He does it through the power of Satan. To which Christ responded, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

And how can a kingdom divided against itself stand? If Satan casts out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand? And of course, he repudiated the idea. And I say all that, fellas, to say this, and this is a really important point.

[18:05] Maybe this is the most important point of the morning, and that is this. man's problem of unbelief has nothing to do with a lack of evidence.

It has everything to do with the condition of the heart. It is an attitude that compels man not to believe no matter what, because he knows what that belief is going to involve and lead to, and he doesn't want to go there.

That's the sum and substance of the matter. It is not a question of evidence. Give us more evidence. Bertrand Russell, brilliant mathematician, brilliant philosopher, IQ that could buy and sell my IQ six times and have change left over, was asked one time, if you stand before your maker someday, and he looks at you and says, Bertrand Russell, what's your excuse?

Why didn't you believe? What would you tell him? Russell said, I would tell him, you didn't give me enough evidence. Well, the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament shows his handiwork. We're told in Romans one, that man is without excuse, because the things that God hath made are clearly seen, and God has placed the reality of his own existence and his creatorhood in the minds and hearts of man, so that he is not in a position to deny it.

[19:54] So, man is without excuse. Bertrand Russell's answer will not hold up. God isn't going to say, well, gee, Bertrand, I'm sorry, I didn't give you more to go on.

Man does not believe because he does not want to believe. I've often said man doesn't believe, can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman.

It is a condition of the heart because we know once we believe, once we submit ourselves to Jesus Christ and hand the reins of our life over to him, you've got a new boss.

You've got a new master. We love our autonomy. We like to think we are running the show.

And we are so arrogant as to think we could run the show better than the creator ever could. Truth of the matter is, those of us who have crossed over and made that commitment are very much aware that all we know how to do with our lives in reality is just make a mess of it.

[21:07] But God is the one who can straighten it out and make life make sense. But, you have to surrender your autonomy. When you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, think of that.

You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. What's that mean? The word Lord, kurios, the word Lord means one beyond whom and above whom there is no other.

That's what Lord means. And we can entertain the fallacious idea that we are somehow Lord of our own life, captain of our own fate, master of our own destiny.

That's just so much baloney. We're not. The creator who brought us into existence is the only rightful Lord and the only one to whom we owe allegiance.

And people know if I make this decision and give my life to Jesus Christ and trust him as my Savior and my Lord, that means I'm no longer in charge.

[22:07] He is. And we don't want to do that. None of us do. But the grace of God and the repetitive message of the gospel and the love of Christ can wear us down and make us see the folly of our position.

And we come to the end of ourselves and put our trust in Christ. So, the multitude of the city is divided in verse 4, and when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews

with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, they were aware of it, they were advised and got onto it, and they got out of town.

They fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lyconia, that's a region also in Asia Minor, and unto the region that lieth round about, and there they preached the gospel.

Well, guys, you just came out of a bunch of hot water. You just got literally rode out of town on a rail, if you will. You knew they were coming after you, and who knows what they were going to do, and you slipped out of town.

Now you're going to another place, and you're going to put yourself right back in the same position. Why don't you just cool it? Why don't you just dummy up? Give yourself a break, because everywhere you go, preaching this gospel, it results in a lot of pain, a lot of inconvenience, a lot of problems, a lot of difficulty.

[23 : 45] Why don't you just dummy up for a while, give yourself a break, and go silent? Just stroll into town as strangers, and keep your mouth shut. But when you know what you know, and you know that you know, and you know how desperately needed what you know is by the people out there, you can't hold your peace.

I'm reminded of Jeremiah, I think it's back maybe in chapter 9 or something like that, where Jeremiah is complaining, he is telling God, you know, I'm not sure I want to do this anymore. Jeremiah, we're told in chapter 1, was raised up by the Lord, and he says, when you were in the womb, I knew you, and I pointed you to this mission, and I want you to go and preach to the people of Judah, and warn them of what's coming, and I will be with you, Jeremiah, oh, yes, one more thing, Jeremiah, they won't listen to you, they're not going to pay any attention to your message, and they're going to shamefully entreat you, and they're going to abuse you, and persecute you, and that's part of the price that you're going to pay, and Jeremiah says, Lord, you have deceived me, and I'm deceived, and what he's saying there is, you didn't tell me all this in the beginning, I didn't know what I was getting into, and he says, and I could just see the humanity in this, because I think probably every preacher is felt this way sometimes, especially on Monday morning, and Jeremiah said, and I decided right then and there,

I am not going to speak anymore in his name, bottom line is, let them go to hell, let them go the way they want to go, I'm not going to subject myself to this treatment anymore, these people don't appreciate me, they don't listen, I just, forget it, I'm not going to preach in your name anymore, and the next verse says, I love this, the next verse says, but his word was as a fire in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, he's saying, it was getting to me, that I was being silent, I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay, because he knew what he knew, he had to give it out, and guys, it is not our responsibility for the results, it's our responsibility to give out the message, and leave the results with the

Lord, and that's what Paul is going to be doing, that's why he goes back into this time after time, because he knows what he knows, and he knows how desperately these people need it, and he is always recalling his own spiritual ignorance and blindness, before he came to faith in Christ on the Damascus road, and he knows that's exactly where these people are.

[27 : 05] So, we are reading that they come to this man, in verse 8, there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, had no power, crippled man, and he was a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked, that's pretty emphatic, we don't know what the condition was, but we know that even today, despite our advanced medical science, there are people born this way, there may be a genetic problem, there may have been an injury during the nine-month gestation period, that impaired, there may be a spinal cord problem, but this man is impotent from his feet, and he is listening to Paul speaking, man, and who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, how did he perceive that, how did he know that,

I've just got a wise man opinion for you, because the text doesn't say this, but whenever a preacher is preaching, and he looks over his audience, you can usually tell who is with you, and who isn't, maybe it's just something that you develop over the years, but if you look out there in the pews, and somebody looks like this, they're probably not with you, someone said, if you took all of the people who dozed off on the preacher on Sunday morning, and laid them end to end, they would be a lot more comfortable, so every preacher has somebody who does, but you know what, every preacher usually has a sensation when you're delivering a message, the way people look, and the way they focus, you can usually tell, they're with me, they're listening, they're getting this,

I think that's what Paul saw in this man who was impotent, and as he looked down at him, this guy had his gaze fixed on Paul, he was hanging on every word, and I think Paul knew this was a man who was ripe and ready, and he perceived that he had faith or confidence to be healed, and Paul was going to proceed with the healing, and he says with a loud voice, stand upright on thy feet, he said it with a loud voice, I think that's because he wanted everybody to hear it, and can you imagine, Paul is about to say to this man, stand up on your feet, but before he does, he mutters under his breath, oh man, I sure hope this works, or it's going to be really embarrassing, but there was none of that, because he knew it was going to work, he knew who he was, and he knew who his God was, and he issued the order, and you see the results that follow, and we'll pick up there next week.

Any comments or questions as the food is being served? Feel free. Anybody? Yeah, I've never heard the term impotent in his feet. I never know what it means, but I never heard that term. Well, impotent, the word impotent simply means devoid of power. It's, we use the word omnipotent or omnipotent, omnipotent, meaning possessing all power, all energy.

[30 : 52] We even talk about a drug maybe as being potent. We mean it's strong, and over time it may lose its potency so that it no longer works. But if your feet are impotent, that simply means your feet have no power to hold you up or sustain you.