

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 2

Confronting Opposition

Acts 13:1-52 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

As followers of Jesus, we should not be surprised when we face opposition. The Bible tells us that it is a normal part of the Christian experience as we live this life. So what are we to do when confronted with different types of opposition? Let's learn from the Apostle Paul and see how he confronted the various oppositions he faced.

SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION: Identify sin and respond with God's truth (v. 1-12)

- Why was it important for the church leaders to pray over Barnabas and Saul as they were officially commissioned to go out and do the Gospel work? Why is spiritual opposition expected to be encountered when the Gospel is being spread or shared?
- For what reason, as a rule, should you remember that even if something sounds spiritual, or someone uses Christian terminology and words, or even quotes Bible verses, you should be aware,

cautious, and discerning about that person when you do not know him/her well? What does 2 Corinthians 11:4 say about it?

- How did Paul deal with the sorcerer that opposed him and Barnabas? What was the result of it in verse 12 that authenticated the truth of the message that Paul and Barnabas preached?
- How did Paul respond to spiritual opposition that you, as Jesus' follower, can emulate?

INTELLECTUAL OPPOSITION: Present the truth and engage those who really want to learn (v. 13-16, 38-43)

- What did the people who heard the message of Paul and Barnabas request them to do?
- What important lesson could you learn from Paul and Barnabas in dealing with intellectual opposition or with those who may have a different set of beliefs or world view from the Scripture?
- Why is it better not to engage in debates or push people hard to listen, but use your time to talk with people who are ready to learn and ask sincere questions?
- If you were invited to speak and share as Paul and Barnabas did, would you be able to share your faith and your testimony well and coherently that it elicits people to want to ask more questions? What should you do in order to be confident in sharing the gospel to others?

EMOTIONAL OPPOSITION: Call out unhealthy emotions and affirm positive ones (v. 44-48)

- Why were the Jews who had initially invited Paul and Barnabas to share so envious of them?
- For what reason is emotional opposition tough for a person who is on the receiving end?
- What other range of emotions drive opposition between people including friends and family members?
- How did Paul and Barnabas deal with the emotional opposition brought by the Jews?
- How do you deal with the negativity of people so that they cannot pull you down?

PHYSICAL OPPOSITION: Walk away from the fight with a joyful heart (v. 49-52)

- How did Paul and Barnabas react to physical opposition in these verses?
- Is it okay to avoid and walk away from physical opposition? Why do you think so?
- How did physical opposition help in the spreading of the Gospel message during the early church?

REFLECT

Opposition kept the church focused on the work of Christ's Great Commission and strengthened and matured the believers. Examine yourself and find out which area in your life do you struggle with the most when faced with opposition:

- In the face of spiritual opposition, are you able to identify sin and respond with God's truth?
- When faced with intellectual opposition, are you able to present the truth and engage those who really want to learn in the face of intellectual opposition?
- Do you call out unhealthy emotions and affirm positive ones when you are faced with emotional opposition?
- In the face of physical opposition, are you able to walk away from the fight with a joyful heart?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I admit that opposition is hard to deal with especially if it is coming from people I'm close with, like my coworkers, neighbors, friends, and most especially family members. Thank You for the examples of Paul and Barnabas that demonstrate how I as a follower of Jesus should confront opposition: with joy in my hearts as I share the Gospel to people around me. Thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.