

Diaspora Ministry in the Book of Acts: Insights from Two Speeches of the Apostle Paul to Help Guide Diaspora Ministry Today

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Introduction

Who was the apostle Paul, diasporically speaking? Recent biblical studies of diaspora, viewed from the perspective of missiology, are noting the biculturalism of Paul that grew out of his diaspora roots. They note that Paul's biculturalism made him the ideal person to bring the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile.¹ Craig Ott, for example, has identified Paul in relationship to diaspora: "Diaspora is one way by which people become bicultural and through which people are prepared for cross-cultural mission. Paul himself . . . is an extraordinary example of a diaspora Jew who, after being exposed to both Jewish and Greek cultures, was positioned to serve as a bridge for the Gospel from the Jewish world to the Gentile world."² So, again, who was Paul, this Jew of the diaspora?

We know from the book of Acts that Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3). As a result, like hundreds of thousands of other Jews scattered throughout the known world of that day,³ Paul, because of the location of his birth outside of the Promised Land, was by default a diasporic Jew. Consequently, Paul was able to navigate both the Jewish world of his physical lineage and the Gentile world where he spent at least the formative years of his life. He was a citizen of both Tarsus (Acts 21:39) and, especially, of Rome (Acts 16:37-38, 22:25-29, 23:27; cf. 25:10-11, 28:19). He was born a Roman citizen and, unlike many others, did not have to win or purchase his citizenship (Acts 22:28). Because Paul was from a devout conservative Jewish diaspora family, (his father was a Pharisee [Acts 23:6]), his heart language used in his family home was most likely Hebrew (and some Aramaic?), for at root he was still a Jew.⁴ Nevertheless, as a bicultural person Paul undoubtedly was also fluent in Greek, the language used by the majority non-Jewish urban population of Tarsus, where Paul spent his early years.

¹ See, for example, the latest work from Enoch Wan, ed., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland: Institute of Diaspora Studies—USA, 2011). For an excellent overview of the various understandings of Paul and his pre-missionary life, see Eckard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission. Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), pp. 923-927.

² Craig Ott, "Diaspora and Relocation as Divine Impetus for Witness in the Early Church" in Enoch Wan, ed., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland: Institute of Diaspora Studies—USA, 2011), p. 89.

³ Cf. Acts 2:5-11 where Luke gives a hint of the multi-cultural complexity of the diaspora Jews who were in Jerusalem that first Pentecost morning.

⁴ Cf. Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:5-6; 2 Cor 11:22-23; and Rom 11:1.

While we know that Paul was born in Tarsus we do not know whether or not he was a second generation diasporic person (in other words, his Jewish father/mother? moved to Tarsus and Paul and any siblings were subsequently born there) or whether he was third generation or later (the son of a father/mother who also was born in Tarsus?). We do know that Paul left Tarsus and went to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) but again at what age that happened we do not know. A likely guess is around the time that he was twelve, the age at which Jewish boys began their formal religious training.⁵ Though his Jerusalem years formed him religiously, Paul was still influenced by his Tarsus roots; there was always a bicultural interplay between the Tarsus Paul and the Jerusalem Paul. As Andries B. Du Toit notes: “Tarsus was Paul’s main sociological and cultural home, although he also received his first religious impressions there. Jerusalem was his religious and theological home, although he also socialized there.”⁶

The fact that Paul was able to study in Jerusalem indicates that his parents were wealthy.⁷ Paul, like his father, was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6, 26:5) who, as a diasporic Jew was sometimes considered “second-class” in the eyes of those Jews born in Jerusalem and Judea,⁸ and thus was often needing to prove himself to the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem. This is perhaps why he was so zealous “for the traditions of my fathers” (Gal 1:14),⁹ why he was instrumental in Stephen’s death (Acts 7:58, 8:1), and why he wanted to persecute the early followers of the Way in Antioch (Acts 9:1-3, 22:5, 26:12).¹⁰

Even Paul’s name reflected two different cultures: Saul/Paul. Luke, in writing about him while he was persecuting the early church, refers to him by his Jewish name, Saul (Acts 8:1-3); likewise during his conversion and its immediate aftermath (cf. Acts chapter 9). Later, during the first missionary journey of this “chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15), Luke refers to him by his Roman/Greek name, Paul (Acts 13:9), and does so throughout the remainder of the book of Acts. The dual nature of his very name again illustrates Paul’s biculturalism and the role that such biculturalism played in his ministry to both Jews and Gentiles.¹¹

⁵ Cf. the story of Jesus in the Temple at age twelve (Luke 2:42).

⁶ Andries B. Du Toit, “A Tale of Two Cities: Tarsus or Jerusalem Revisited.” *New Testament Studies* 46:3 (2000), p. 401, as quoted in Craig Ott, “Diaspora and Relocation,” p. 90.

⁷ Cf. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, p. 926.

⁸ Though all Jews were equal with one another in light of the Torah, there was still a hierarchy of social status and class. We get a clue of this in the Gospel accounts where the disciples are seen as “different” by the Jews of Jerusalem because of their strange accents, different clothing, and lack of education; cf. Matt 26:73; Acts 2:7, 4:13.

⁹ All Scripture quotations taken from the New International Version (NIV).

¹⁰ This sense of class inferiority is perhaps also why Paul felt that he had to show that he was equal with the Twelve apostles who remained in Jerusalem, his fellow Jews who, though born in Galilee, were still born in the Promised Land and thus, at least unconsciously considered themselves superior to diaspora Jews (cf. Gal 2:1-10).

¹¹ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, p. 925, gives us some keen insights into the dual nature of his name: “As a ‘Hebrew born of Hebrews’ (Phil 3:5), as a full Jew whose family maintained the Jewish customs, his (Hebrew) name was Saul (Heb., *Sha’ul*; Gk., *Saulos*). His Roman (or Greek) name was *Paulos*: this was either (1) the *cognomen*, an official element of the *tria nomina* that his family received after manumission from the Roman owner who had released an ancestor (his father?) from slavery, or (2) the *signum* or *supernomen*, the Roman, Latin-sounding surname that the family used. Many exegetes regard the second option as more likely.”

So what does all of the above have to do with the topic of this paper? I think that it is important from the outset to see that Paul, as a diasporic person, was also a bicultural person. He was at home in two cultures: Jewish and Greek. We must see this fact in light of all of the speeches of Paul as found in the book of Acts. As a bicultural person, Paul could and did express his speeches in ways that were remarkably appropriate for his specific audiences, whether they were Jew or Gentile. As a bicultural person he was sensitive both to his exegesis of the biblical text (in his case, the Old Testament), as well as to his exegesis of the audience to whom he was speaking. In this way Paul was sensitive both to ministry context (who is the audience and where are they located) as well as sensitive to message context (what is actually said to that audience).

This brief paper will specifically address both the ministry context and message context of diaspora ministry by looking at two examples from the bicultural Paul's ministry: first, his message to the Jews and God-fearers of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13) and, second, his message to the Athenians in the Aeropagus (Acts 17). Both speeches give good evidence of the sermonic dexterity that the bicultural Paul displayed and how his biculturalism influenced the content of his sermons. The paper will conclude with some implications of this for those who are bicultural diasporic followers of Jesus doing diaspora ministry today.

Paul's Speech in Pisidian Antioch

Paul's speech in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-43) is the first recorded speech of his missionary career. Luke describes it in its context as follows:

¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

¹⁶ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, ¹⁸ he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, ¹⁹ he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²² After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

²³ "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

²⁶ "Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷ The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸ Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

³² “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

“ ‘You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.’

³⁴ The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

“ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’

³⁵ So it is stated elsewhere:

“ ‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’

³⁶ “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

³⁸ “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

⁴¹“ ‘Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish,
for I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you.’”

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Several items can be noted from Paul’s speech to these “men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God.”

First, Paul exegeted his ministry context, making sure that the content of his message fit the context of his audience. The audience was made up of diasporic Jews (Acts 13:16, 26, 43) like Paul, as well as non-Jewish Gentiles (most likely natives from Pisidian Antioch?) (Acts 13:16, 26, 43). Since both groups were undoubtedly knowledgeable about the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul freely alludes to events in the Law (Exodus) and in the Writings (Joshua, Judges and Samuel), as well as quoting directly from the Writings (Ps 2:7 and Ps 16:10) and the Prophets (Is 55:3 and Hab 1:5). It is significant to note that Paul quotes from the three major sections of the Old Testament canon (Law, Writings and Prophets) as he attempts to prove to his audience the good news: “What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus” (Acts 13:32-33). Paul reasoned correctly that many Pisidian Antiochan Jews, and those Gentiles there who also worshiped the true God, would be convinced of this fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus since it was seen throughout the major parts of the Old Testament. The fact that “many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism” who heard Paul’s message talked further with Paul and Barnabas concerning what Paul had spoken, and since these “many” were “urged . . . to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43), we can no doubt conclude that they became believers as a result of Paul’s audience-appropriate message.

Second, Paul used hermeneutical methods that were well known by his Jewish and God-fearing audience. When Paul quotes the Old Testament passages in this sermon he is using a common first century hermeneutical technique known as *midrash*, where the truth of what has been said is verified by the use of an Old Testament quotation that supports it. *Midrash* uses Old Testament scripture in a “That is this” type formula, where “that Old Testament passage” is truly understood or is relevant for today in the “this of the Gospel message of our present situation.” How does *midrash* work in Acts 13? In verses 32 and 33 Paul midrases Psalm 2:7 “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” in light of the good news that God “promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.” In other words, “that” excerpt from Psalm 2:7 is the “this” of the raised Jesus. Likewise, in verse 34 the “that” paraphrase from Isaiah 55:3—“I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David”—is again the “this” of the risen Jesus who “God raised . . . from the dead, never to decay.” The “this” of the never decaying Jesus is further confirmed in verse 35 by the “that” of the second half of Psalm 16:10: “You will not let your Holy One see decay.” Paul finishes his speech by charging his audience to believe the “this” truth of his message of Jesus by quoting the “that” from Habakkuk 1:5 which refers to scoffing and perishing and not believing the wonderful things that God is now doing in their days. Though modern audiences may be confused by the hermeneutics used by Paul here (for example, what about the original context of these quoted Old Testament passages?), Paul’s original audience had no such concerns. They understood the hermeneutical methodology that Paul was employing.¹²

Third, Paul displayed his knowledge of his audience (obtained by his observations from his arrival in Pisidian Antioch to the day of the Sabbath [Acts 13:14]?). Paul did this by referring to them in different ways. He refers to the diasporic Jews gathered there as “men of Israel” (Acts 13:16) and “children of Abraham” (Acts 13:26) (note that Luke merely refers to them as “Jews” [Acts 13:43]). Paul refers to the Gentiles gathered there as “you Gentiles who worship God” (Acts 13:16) and “you God fearing Gentiles” (Acts 13:26) (note that Luke also refers to them as “devout converts to Judaism” [Acts 13:43]). This knowledge of his audience seems to have been used by Paul for the purpose of helping to gain a better rapport with them, as evidenced by his use of the more intimate word, “brothers,” a word he applied to both groups (Acts 13:26, 38).

Fourth, Paul did not hesitate to clearly speak of the Gospel. Thus, while understanding the context of his audience, as well as displaying his knowledge of them, Paul does not hesitate to clearly point out what the good news is all about: Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 13:30, 32, 37) and through this raised Jesus they can have forgiveness from their sins (Acts 13:38) if they believe (Acts 13:39, 41). Audience sensitivity never took precedence over Paul’s desire to clearly proclaim the truth of the Gospel.

¹² For a more in-depth analysis of the apostle Paul’s hermeneutical methods, particularly *midrash*, see Larry W. Caldwell, “Reconsidering Our Biblical Roots: Bible Interpretation, the Apostle Paul and Mission Today” Parts 1 and 2, in the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 29/2 and 29/3 (April-June, 2012 and July-September, 2012), pp. 91-100 and pp. 113-121, respectively.

Paul obviously struck a positive chord with his speech since the people of the synagogue invited Barnabas and himself “to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath” (Acts 13:42). Unfortunately, this did not happen, as the events in Acts 13:44-52 make clear.¹³

Paul’s Speech in Athens

Paul’s speech in the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-33) must be seen in the entire context of Acts 17:16-33, with Acts 17:16-21 being Luke’s introduction to the the actual speech event:

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbling trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?” ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.” ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” ³³ At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Like he did in Pisidian Antioch, while waiting in Athens Paul was a keen observer of his surroundings (Acts 17:16). Likewise, as in Pisidian Antioch, Paul first went to the synagogue and reasoned “with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks”; however, he did

¹³ The events subsequent to Paul’s speech on the following Sabbath—namely the jealousy of the Jews at the large crowds that had gathered, the turning of Paul and Barnabas to the fully pagan Gentiles (and their *midrash* of the Isaiah 49:6 text to justify their actions), the acceptance of the message by many of these Gentiles, and the persecution and expelling of Paul and Barnabas from the region—does not negate the positive response that Paul’s first speech initially had on some of the audience.

not limit himself to the synagogue for he also talked daily in the marketplace “with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). We can safely assume that “those who happened to be there” included Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, and pagan Gentiles like the group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers that Luke specifically mentions. Paul communicated so well that his pagan Gentile audience invited him to speak at the prestigious Areopagus because they were intrigued by his “strange ideas” and they wanted “to know what they mean” (Acts 17:21). Clearly by now this diaspora Jew is comfortable in both Jewish and Gentile contexts. As Ott says, “Paul’s experience as a diaspora Jew in Tarsus may well have prepared him for engaging an environment of religious pluralism, competing worldviews, and value systems. This skill is seen in his Areopagus speech and his ability to dialogue with both Jewish and Gentile audiences.”¹⁴

Once again, several items can be noted from Paul’s speech in the Areopagus to these “men of Athens.”

First, Paul took the time to exegete his audience. Like he did in Pisidian Antioch, here in the Areopagus Paul made sure that the content of his message fit the context of his audience. Even though Paul was “greatly distressed” because of all of the idols that he had previously observed in Athens (Acts 17:16), nevertheless he carefully noted these idolatrous objects of worship, so much so that he even found an altar with the inscription: “To An Unknown God” (Acts 17:23). Surprisingly, rather than condemning them for their idolatry, Paul instead commends them: “I see that in every way you are very religious” (Acts 17:22). He then goes on to sympathize with their religious strivings and to help them understand that “what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). No doubt the Athenians were impressed by Paul’s cultural sensitivity and positive response to their religiosity. They were ready to listen to his ensuing message.

Second, Paul was not afraid to use sources outside of the Old Testament. His Athenian audience most likely knew little about the particulars of the Old Testament. Thus Paul, in his speech, only alludes to the Old Testament, he does not directly quote from it. Instead, Paul displayed his knowledge of his audience by referring to their own poets (Acts 17:28). The first quote, “For in him we live and move and have our being,” comes from the fourth line of a poem attributed to Epimenides the Cretan from around 600 B.C. It speaks of Zeus:

They fashioned a tomb for you, O holy and high one—
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!—
But you are not dead; you live and abide for ever,
For in you we live and move and have our being.

The second quote, “We are his offspring,” comes from the fifth line of the opening of the work known as the *Phainomena*, written by Paul’s fellow-Cilician, Aratus (born 310 B.C.):

¹⁴ Ott, “Diaspora and Relocation,” p. 91.

Let us begin with Zeus. Never, O men, let us leave him
unmentioned. All the ways are full of Zeus,
and all the market-places of human beings. The sea is full
of him; so are the harbors. In every way we have all to do with Zeus,
for we are truly his offspring.¹⁵

Of course Paul is quick to reinterpret (*midrash?*) what their poets are saying about Zeus to what he, Paul, is saying about God in relationship to His making Himself known not as “an image made by man’s design and skill” (Acts 17:29) but as a God who “is not far from each one of us,” and who can be found by those who seek him (Acts 17:27). Paul is using their own poets to show that this unknown God can indeed be known.

Third, as at Pisidian Antioch so, too, here in the Areopagus: Paul did not hesitate to speak of the Gospel. He speaks of the need to repent (Acts 17:30) and of a day of judgment by the man God appointed and raised from the dead (Acts 17:31). Interestingly, Paul had already had a mixed response to his message of Jesus and the resurrection when he had previously spoken to the Greeks in the marketplace (Acts 17:18). One might think that by now Paul would have learned his lesson about the possibility of a negative response to his message of the resurrection, which indeed did happen as “some of them sneered” (Acts 17:32). To the contrary, even though Paul knew that speaking of the resurrection in the Areopagus would be for some a stumbling block to accepting the Gospel, it had to be talked about since the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is so crucial to everything that the Gospel is. So rather than compromise, Paul—after doing his best to understand the context of his audience and to communicate in ways that they would best understand—speaks clearly about a key component of the Gospel, namely the resurrection of Jesus. As a result of his lack of compromise Paul did see some success: “A few men . . . believed,” even a member of the Areopagus, Dionysius, as well as “a woman named Damaris, and a number of others” (Acts 17:34). This positive response to Paul’s message, though seemingly small, was significant given the possibly cynical nature of the Areopagus crowd (cf. Luke’s disparaging comment about them in Acts 17:21).¹⁶

¹⁵ Both the poem attributed to Epimenides and the lines from the *Phainomena* are taken from F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*. The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 338-339.

¹⁶ Some might argue that the seemingly underwhelming response to Paul’s message in the Areopagus denotes failure, that Luke specifically includes the Athens speech to show the early church what *not* to do when presenting the Gospel. This argument, however, is without merit. The amount of space that Luke gives to Paul’s speech in Athens—five paragraphs in total, with quotes from the two poems, as well as the mentioning of the names of two prominent people who did believe, and speaking also of “a number of others”—offers clear evidence that Luke considers this speech to be an important example of the progression of the Gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Implications For Diaspora Ministry Today

Diaspora Christians today are playing a key role in the ministry of the Church worldwide.¹⁷ This is seen both in their evangelizing efforts among their own diaspora people group, as well as in their crossing cultural barriers and becoming missionaries to other diaspora people groups, many of whom are unreached peoples. Diaspora Christians in ministry today, like the apostle Paul, need to: 1) embrace the fact that they are bicultural people; and 2) use their biculturalism to powerful effect in their various ministries, especially as they pay attention to both the context of their audience as well to the actual message that they convey to that audience.

There are many implications for bicultural diaspora Christians today that can be drawn from the examination of these two speeches of Paul in the book of Acts. These implications are especially pertinent for those who are diaspora Christians and who are, or who want to be, cross-cultural missionaries. I will here mention five implications and will do so by speaking directly to those who are diaspora Christians.

1. *Accentuate the positive.* Recognize the many positive attributes of being a person of the diaspora. While there are certainly many negative aspects to being a diasporic person, let the positives outweigh the negatives. The greatest positive is the fact that, whether or not you like it, you are now a bicultural person: a person of your native home culture as well as a person of your adopted foreign culture. Like the apostle Paul, as a bicultural person you have many strengths that you bring to ministry, especially ministry in cross-cultural situations. Diasporic bicultural followers of Jesus make good missionaries, if they are aware of, and allowed to use, the bicultural gifts that they have gathered in the midst of their diasporic adventures. This fact is especially true for those of you who are second generation diaspora individuals.

2. *Exegete your audience.* Diasporic ministers of the Gospel need to be able to communicate the truths of the Gospel in light of the particular audience that they are addressing, being aware of both ministry context and message context. As we have seen, Paul did this all the time. While he was an expert at exegeting the Old Testament, as a bicultural diasporic Paul was also well-equipped to exegete the specific audience to whom he was trying to bring the results of his Old Testament exegesis. If you are preparing to become a missionary, make sure that you take courses in how to better exegete the Bible (courses in Bible Interpretation, Old Testament, New Testament, and so on) as well as courses that will help you better exegete the culture (courses in anthropology, sociology, communication, and so on). Along with this, like Paul did with the pagan poets, don't be afraid to use the media of your audience (music, movies, books, YouTube, Twitter, and so on) to help communicate the truths of the Gospel message.

¹⁷ In a theological sense all Christians are diasporic Christians since Jesus has called all of His followers to "not belong to the world" (cf. John 15:19). That being said, there are unique implications for those Christians who are truly bicultural because they have lived for a significant time in at least two different cultures.

3. *Don't be too quick to condemn.* Diaspora missionaries indeed need to be distressed about the things they see in their own culture, and in other cultures, that are sinful. Paul, too, was deeply upset by the paganism of the Athenians. But, like Paul, try to find the underlying positive aspects that ultimately find their expression in sin. And like Paul did, attempt to put a positive spin on it. Anybody can be quick to condemn. It's harder to do your homework, understand why the sin is occurring, and use that understanding for Gospel purposes.

4. *To the Jew, first.* Like was true for Paul, it's natural to go to your own people first with the Gospel. After all, they need to hear about Jesus, too. But don't leave it at that. As diaspora missionaries you are best prepared to take the Gospel to people who are different from yourself. Take advantage of your unique biculturalism for the building up of the Kingdom among all peoples.

5. *Be aware of possible prejudice.* As was true for Paul, diaspora missionaries face possible prejudice both from their own people living in their country of origin as well as from the native people of their adopted country. Diaspora missionaries of the Gospel need to be aware of this prejudice if it occurs and to persevere in spite of it.

Conclusion

There is no better way to end this brief paper on diaspora ministry—as seen through an examination of two speeches of Paul in the book of Acts—than with the very words of the apostle Paul himself in describing his own unique bicultural ministry. This is seen in the powerful paragraph that Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 19-27:

¹⁹Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

May all of us—bicultural diaspora people, or not—take these words to heart, for the sake of the Gospel and its continuing expansion among all the people groups of the world.