

Acts 14:21-28 The Ekklesia

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and **made many disciples**, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the **souls of the disciples**, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. 24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Intro: Have you ever talked to someone who said something like this: I believe in Jesus -

A)But I don't need the church - or not interested in the church.

B)Or how about this statement: I don't belong to any church -

C)I just like to jump around from church to church. - this one for the teaching -

1)that one for the worship - best coffee

D)The church I go to really depends on the mood - I am in that day.

All of those mentalities really down play the importance that God places and the NT places on the local church.

A)Here at the end of Acts 14 we see a great example of the importance that the Lord places on the local church.

B)The term church in the NT is the Greek word - Ekklesia - *those who are called out, or those who called together.*

C)Two groups of people in this world

There is one group the collection of men and women who are organizing their lives without God

A)and against God.

B)The Bible refers to that group of men and women who are organizing their lives without God

1)and against God as "the world". -

C)This group essentially says - there are no absolutes - we do what is right in our own eyes -

1)That is the prevailing mindset in the world today.

D)Do what seems best to you - regarding your priorities, your view of religion,

1) View marriage, sexuality, gender - we are going to do and believe what seems best to us.

That is the prevailing mindset of most people who refuse to believe in God or follow God.

A)That is Group 1

B)The other group is the collection of redeemed, reconciled rebels, **who used to belong to Group 1**

1)that group of men and women who are organizing their lives without God and against God,

C)But this group has been rescued by Jesus; they've been called out of "the world."

And the Bible calls that group "the Church."

A)The Ekklesia - those who have been called out of the world and those who have been called together.

B)And God's primary way of reaching a lost world is through this called out group -

1)called to be in the world but not of the world - stand out as being different.

C)Called to shine as lights in a dark world - and be the hands and feet of Jesus to a world

1) that is wayward lost and hurting.

Now there is only ONE Ekklesia in the world -

A) We call that the BIG C church –

B) It is comprised of all the believers in Jesus all over the world -

1) all believers are a part of the BIG C church - it is Global!!

C) But within the Big C church there are millions of little c churches -

1) local gatherings of followers of Jesus in various cities and villages around the world.

D) And That is what Paul and Barnabas are seeking to establish on this first missionary journey.

When they set out on this journey they had a 3 fold goal

A) Preach the gospel - evangelize a lost world for Jesus - **Check!!**

B) they have done that in the cities they have traveled to.

C) The 2nd goal has been to Make Disciples - **check!!!** - 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and **made many disciples-** they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the **souls of the WHO? THE disciples,**

D) that is why we read last week that they stayed a long time in each city –

See The goal was not to make converts it was to make disciples. That Takes time

A) The great commission - **Go into the world and makes disciples.....**

B) A disciple is a learner who desires to be like the one who they are following

C) Now Every Disciple is a believer - but not every believer is a Disciple

D) Some people are saved - but they are not really surrendered - completely yielded to Jesus

1) They are saved but they are not disciples - the Lord wants them to be Disciples

So they had a goal to see believers become disciples -

A) Here at the end of Acts 14 we find Paul and Barnabas at the end of their first missionary journey

B) They are going to end up back where they started in Antioch in Syria

1) Notice the map

C) Here is the more direct route they could have taken a more direct route and- gone through Tarsus

1) But they circle back the way they came -

D) back through these cities where they have experienced great opposition and trouble -

1) remember Lystra - Paul was stoned

Why did they go back that way - 2 Reasons - To establish the Disciples and to establish churches.

A) What was the approach that Paul and Barnabas took to Establish the Disciples?

B) Three things - #1 The focused on Strengthening them in the Lord

C) The Greek word to strengthen is *sterizo*

1) which means - *to cause someone or cause something to be inwardly firm or committed or strengthened.*

D) To be inwardly fortified.

The basic idea is that of stabilizing something by providing a support or a buttress.

A) If you're not familiar with what a buttress is, Check out the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

B) Those large beams on the side are a Buttress -

1) they help keep those giant walls standing -

C) They give it structural strength. They keep the walls from falling.

That is what Paul and Barnabas were seeking to do with the Disciples in these cities -

A) give strength and stability to their lives spiritually.

B) Building in the Kingdom is always an ongoing process - it is always fluid and never static

C) There never comes a time when the Building of our lives spiritually gets stamped complete - or Done

1) Always Under construction - always a work in progress

The Couple in Chicago - Illiterate - Salvation army - Red Sweater

A) Found her husband a Red sweater - stitched white letters a sign she saw on a vacant Building - **Under Construction**

B) All the other guys thought that was so cool

So Building in the Kingdom is all about pointing men and women away from anything and everything that can't support them -

A) and pointing them to Jesus

B) One of the best ways to do that is by pointing people to Jesus in the pages of Scripture.

C) That's why we study the Bible so much here at CV

1) The #1 Way we grow and become more stable as Believers

**D) So Paul and Barnabas looked to strengthen them in their inner man - their souls
2nd thing they did was to Encourage to CONTINUE in the Faith**

A) See it is not how start this Christian race - it is how you finish!

B) These people were living in extremely pagan and Idolatrous communities where sexual immorality was rampant -

C) They had started well in their Race - the apostles wanted them to end well.

D) Notice they were encouraging them to continue their faith - but THE faith

The article THE - points to that which is very specific - not random

A) The doctrines of the Gospel - the truth concerning Jesus - who he is God in human flesh -

B) The only way - the salvation

C) Truth about man - man was made to live in relationship with God - apart from Jesus - lost in Sin

D) No doubt they spent time reminding them of the essential tenants of the Christian faith

1) Things like the reliability of the Bible -

E) The doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ -

1) The Deity of Christ - the reliability of the Resurrection

F) All things we seek to cover here in our New Believer materials

1) And Core Theology classes in the spring

Important for each of us to Know what we believe and why - Know how to give an answer to anyone who would ask us the reason for the hope that we have

So in order to establish the Disciples Paul and Barnabas were focused on strengthening the people -

A) #2 encouraging them to continue in the faith

B) #3 reminding them of this important truth **"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."**

C) that word tribulations speaks of - *trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, and affliction, -*

1)that's pretty gnarly -

D)Now you see, we can have some troubles that don't do anything.

1)They're just trouble.

You get in the car, only to find out that your precious wife has left it on empty. That's trouble.

A)But You have enough gas to get to the gas station. You're going to be ok

B)You left something at home that you needed to bring to work. Well, that's trouble.

1)But you're going to survive.

C)But there is *trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, affliction* -

1)so much so that you call it tribulation.

And then notice this - "we must" - That's a radical phrase!

A)The Holy Spirit did not say "*we might*" or "*we won't*". He said, "we must".

B)It's an absolute guarantee!

C)The moment you believe with your heart on the Lord Jesus, you are guaranteed some stuff.

D)The moment we believe with your heart on the Lord Jesus, **you are guaranteed the forgiveness of sins.**

E)The moment you believe with your heart on the Lord Jesus, you are guaranteed the free gift of eternal life,

1)Quality of life that starts now -

F)Those are things the Bible guarantees us of in coming into a relationship with Jesus

But one thing we are never guaranteed of is a life free from *trouble that inflicts distress, oppression and affliction and tribulation.*

A)The word tribulation literally means to press and to crush

B)Think about the wonderful things - that we have that are the result of crushing

1) How many of your like Bread - Love bread -

C)Places that serve bread with the meal - Cheese cake Factory - literally just eat the bread. - So good

D)Italy once - they do things differently there - visiting the Stewards we go out one night -

1)they bring bread the table - bread with our Salads

E)Main dish comes - Pasta - Denise ask for More bread please and the waitress literally says -NO - you have had enough!!!! - What excuse me

But in order to make Bread - wheat had to be crushed

A)In order to make Wine - grapes had to be crushed - in order make Olive oil - olives had to be crushed -

B)Interesting on the night before his death on the cross Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane -

1)Jesus prayed 3 times -Lord let this cup pass from me - not my will but your will be done.

C)Gethsemane = **The Olive press**- Jesus in that garden was being pressed for us - his soul was vexed

D)On the Cross at Calvary - he was crushed for us - he took the punishment we deserved

And I find this so interesting that when Paul and Barnabas are seeking to establish this Disciples in their faith

A)They aim at strengthening them in their souls - their inward man/woman

B)They want to make sure they know what they believe and why about THE FAITH

C)And they remind them that following Jesus is going to be hard!

1)How ironic is that - Is that part of our Discipleship curriculum

Don't miss understand this: Paul is not saying that Christians go through tribulations to get to heaven,

A)No we get to heaven by believing that the crushing that Jesus went through was enough for us - **to be made right with God.**

B)We are not saved by our suffering!

1)We are saved because Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died for our sins!

C)We are saved because He rose again and He lives forevermore!

Paul was not teaching these believers that they have to suffer in order to make it to heaven!

A)Paul was teaching the new believers that because they had been saved by the Lord Jesus

B)they would in turn suffer because of their faith in Jesus." - It just comes with the territory -

C)these people that Paul and Barnabas were speaking to in just a short time were going to feel the crushing of persecution under the Roman empire.

D)Saw this week in 2 Timothy 3 a promise none of us like to claim - ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12

E)Should the Lord tarry in his coming -

I believe the threat of persecution against Christians will grow more intense here in America

F)Seeing that attitude of blame arising constantly

But it is not just the Crushing of persecution that this word tribulation speaks of it is also the crushing of life -

A)The things that we go through -

B)the things that God allows - to crush us a bit to make us into something else -

1)make us more like Jesus

C)But this is our hope and confidence

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but because of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

So Paul and Barnabas in order to establish these disciples in the Lord set to strengthen them in their inner man

A)Encouraged them to Stay in the Faith

B)And reminded them that follow Jesus is going to be hard

And that is why the 2nd thing that they did is so important -

A)Not only did they seek to establish the Disciples - they also set out to establish Churches - v.23 they appointed elders in every church

B)Why? Because we are not supposed to do this ALONE

C)So they established Churches and appointed Elders -

1)part of establishing the church was establishing leadership in all the churches

Remember Studying Titus: Paul was leaving Crete he left Titus there with this charge

A)Titus 1: ⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I commanded you

B)The Churches needed leadership -

1)Paul told Titus - leaving you there to find men that you can appoint to be leaders

C)The terms Elder, Bishop and Shepherd of Pastor are used interchangeably in the NT -

1)used to describe the same position

Elder describes the man - Mature in the Lord

- Bishop describes the ministry - Serving as overseers
- Shepherd or Pastor describes the method - to feed and to tend

D)Peter would write:

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:
²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers. 1 Peter 5:1-2

Peter an elder is writing to fellow elders to shepherd the flock of God that is among them -

A)their local gathering of believers

B)I am responsible for this church - not the church around the corner -

1)the church down the street - churches in other cities

C)I am going to answer to God for how I shepherded this flock - period -

1)this is my assignment - and I am grateful for it

D)Told Pastor Chuck once - Greatest church - only time he has ever quoted me

1)Really how I felt then and feel now.

Every now and then - I get asked if to pray about going somewhere else -

A)Would you consider it pray about it - I always pray - Lord please don't make me go there!

B)Love it here - Love you guys - don't love everything - parking - out of space -

1)short on funds - but over all love this city and I love this church

C)So Paul and Barnabas seek to establish churches in all of these cities by appointing elders to Lead and feed and tend the flock

When it comes to leading a church I believe there is a twofold Goal for us as Pastors

A)General Goal - and a Specific Goal -

B)The General goal ²⁸Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. Colossians 1:28

C)This is the general goal - warning and teaching - preaching and teaching in all wisdom -

1)give the whole counsel of God's word

D)In order to Present believers complete in Jesus - THE GENERAL GOAL

E)That is what I will be judged for when I stand before Jesus -

1)How well did I do my part to help you become mature.

F)So that is what we are doing here - that is what this is all about -

G)Not random - all the studies - the groups - focus Wednesdays is aimed in that directions

Preach Jesus - point to Jesus - emphasize Jesus - so that we can hopefully present.... Complete ...Christ

Now The Specific goal - Keep your place here and turn to Ephesians 4 - NEXT WEEK

A) New People Jesus brought you here to gain something

B)Jesus brought you here to give something - Time talent treasures

C)That is what Ephesians 4 is about - Deep dive next week.

Wrap up our text today

The Final verses of this chapter illustrate the accountability and encouragement that should exist in the local church with Ministers and Missionaries

Accountability and Encouragement

24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles Accountability. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples. -

Encouragement - built up again