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## **Let's Keep Working**

### **Acts 14:21-22**

#### **Introduction**

1. Have you ever done something for someone which required great sacrifice on your part?
2. Are you a person here today who is the recipient of such a sacrifice?
3. If you are a Christian, the answer to that question is yes, many times over.
4. This morning, I would like to walk you through the remainder of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.
5. I believe that our understanding of what these two men went through to share the good news of God's salvation makes us appreciate even more what they as they retraced their steps home.
6. You may ask why this is important.
7. It is because our faith is too important to be left to chance.
8. There will be times in each of our lives as Christians when we will need to be built up, strengthened in our faith and reminded that we are not alone.
9. In short, we need God and each other if we are to finish the race that God has set before us.

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### **I. The Tribulation Faced By Paul and Barnabas**

#### **A. PISIDIAN ANTIOCH (ACTS 13:14-50)**

1. Last week we saw how Paul preached the gospel at Pisidian Antioch, a Roman colony more than 100 miles north of Mediterranean Sea over the Taurus Mountains.

2. Paul and Barnabas had entered the synagogue there and Paul's preaching of the gospel was so effective that the people begged him to come back on the following Sabbath (Acts 13:42).
3. Luke tells us that on the following Sabbath, "nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord" (Acts 13:44).
4. However, "when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming." (Acts 13:45, NASB95)
5. Because of their response, Paul told the Jews that since they judged themselves "unworthy of eternal life" he and Barnabas were turning to the Gentiles.
6. As a result, many of the Gentiles obeyed the gospel.

**2a**

7. This further angered the Jews who "incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district." (Acts 13:50, NASB95)

**Slide 3****B. ICONIUM (ACTS 13:51-14:7)**

1. Paul and Barnabas traveled 90 miles down the road to Iconium, an important commercial center.
2. Again, Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue where Paul spoke in such a way that a large number of people believed, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 14:1).
3. However, there were again those Jews who disbelieved.
4. They refused to believe, but instead "stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren" (Acts 14:2, NKJV).
5. Paul and Barnabas were able to spend a long time there preaching the "word of His grace" and performing a number of signs and wonders (Acts

14:3).

6. The city was divided — some people sided with the Jews and some with the apostles (Acts 14:4).

**3a**

7. When Paul and Barnabas learned of an attempt on the part of both the Gentiles and the Jews, along with their rulers, to mistreat and stone the two missionaries, Paul and Barnabas fled (Acts 14:5,6).

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**C. LYSTRA (ACTS 14:8-20A)**

1. They continued to preach the gospel as they made their way to Lystra, a city 100 miles from Pisidian Antioch, but only 10 miles from Iconium.
2. Lystra, however, had no synagogue which meant there were few if any Jews who lived there.
3. So, Paul found a place where he could stand up and preach and began to share the gospel.
4. It was in Lystra that Paul had an experience similar to that of Peter with the lame man at the gate of the temple.
3. As Paul was preaching, he noticed a man who had also been lame since birth.
4. When Paul saw that this man “had faith to be made well,” he said to him with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” (Acts 14: 9-10).
5. The man “leaped up and began to walk” (Acts 14:10).
6. The people of Lystra believed that two of the gods of the Greeks had come down to them.
7. “They began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker” (Acts 14:12).
8. The priest of Zeus from the temple just outside the city brought oxen and garlands intending to offer sacrifice.
9. Paul and Barnabas tore their robes and rushed into the crowd in an effort to

convince them there is only one true God.

**4a**

10. Suddenly, Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, won over the crowds and after stoning Paul, they drug him out of the city, thinking he was dead (Acts 14:19).

11. It is what Luke shares with us next that I do not want you to miss (Acts 14:20).

“But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city” (Acts 14:20).

12. It wasn't until the next day that Paul and Barnabas left Lystra and traveled another 35 miles to Derbe.

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**D. DERBE (ACTS 14:20B-21)**

“They . . . preached the gospel to that city and . . . made many disciples” (Acts 14:21).

1. Derbe was another city without a synagogue.
2. That didn't stop Paul who preached to the Gentiles who lived there.
3. The result was that many obeyed the gospel.
4. What did Paul and Barnabas do when they left Derbe?
5. They returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, the very cities where they had experienced such opposition.

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“After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21–22, NASB95)

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## **II. How Do We Become A Strong Church?**

### **A. WE WORK TO STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER'S SOULS**

1. Realize that God is our strength.

“God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:26).

“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

2. Pray for one another's faith.

- a. Jesus told Peter “but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:32a, NASB95)

- b. “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,” (2 Thessalonians 1:11, NASB95)

3. Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica to “encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

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### **B. WE ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO CONTINUE IN “THE FAITH”**

1. Not their trust in the Lord but the doctrine they held (cf. Acts 6:7; 16:5)

“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7, NASB95)

“So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” (Acts 16:5, NASB95)

2. Elsewhere it was called ‘the traditions’, ‘the deposit’, ‘the teaching’, or ‘the truth’.

- a. ‘The traditions’

“Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold

firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.” (1 Corinthians 11:2, NASB95)

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15, NASB95)

b. ‘The teaching’

“Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.” (Acts 13:12, NASB95)

“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.” (Romans 16:17, NASB95)

c. ‘The truth’

“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4, NASB95)

“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . these men also oppose the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7,8, NASB95)

3. “The faith” is that recognizable body of doctrine, that cluster of central beliefs, which the apostles taught.
4. At the end of Paul’s life, he wrote that he had “kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).
5. As a result, he knew that “the Lord, the righteous Judge” would award him with “the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8).
6. However, there are those who . . .
  - a. Give up “the good fight”
  - b. Do not finish “the course”
  - c. Stop keeping “the faith”
7. It is imperative that we encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ to “*keep the faith.*”

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**C. WE REMIND EACH OTHER THAT ENTRANCE INTO GOD’S KINGDOM IS NOT**

### **WITHOUT TRIBULATION**

1. If anyone knew about tribulation, it was Paul and Barnabas.
2. At almost every stop along the way on this missionary journey they encountered some form of opposition or persecution:
  - a. In Paphos it was a false prophet, a sorcerer named Elymas (13:8).
  - b. Persecution at Antioch drove them away (13:50).
  - c. An attempt to stone them forced them to leave Iconium (14:5).
  - d. Jews from Antioch and Iconium incited the crowds to stone Paul in Lystra, then drug him out of the city, thinking he was dead (14:19).
3. Tribulation comes in many forms:
  - a. Physical persecution, intimidation
  - b. Mental and emotional intimidation
  - c. Personal rejection, ostracism
  - d. Financial and legal pressure
4. In his final letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul affirmed what he had experienced almost from the day he had put his Lord on in baptism:

“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).
5. Remember . . .
  - a. **Jesus was rejected** (Isaiah 53:3; Acts 4:11)

“He was despised and forsaken of men” (Isaiah 53:3, NASB95)

“He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.” (Acts 4:11, NASB95)
  - b. **His disciples were rejected** (Luke 10:16; Acts 5:

“The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”” (Luke 10:16, NASB95)

“They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.” (Acts 5:40, NASB95)

- b. In one way or another, every faithful servant of God has been mistreated (Luke 6:22-23)

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.” (Luke 6:22–23, NASB95)

- c. God is always faithful (1 Peter 4:19)

“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:19, NASB95)

## **Conclusion**

1. Each of us who wear the name Christian here today do so because of someone's influence in our lives.
2. Bringing others to Christ isn't the end of our responsibility.
3. We must all work to help one another grow, mature and remain faithful in our Christian lives.
4. This is a work which requires that we . . .
  - a. Establish(strengthen) one another's souls.
  - b. Encourage each other in the faith.
  - c. Help one another face the tribulations which are destined to come our way.
5. Have you obeyed the gospel?
6. If not, why not today?