



“Strengthening the Church”

Acts 14:19-28

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction:

In Acts 13-14 we’ve been following Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey.

- They have been moving through what is today the eastern part of the nation of Turkey.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas had just been driven out of Antioch, but they didn’t quit.

In Acts 14, they went to the synagogue in Iconium and shared about Jesus Christ

- And a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.
- But as we’ve already seen...when ministry is successful...there will be opposition.
- But even in the face of opposition, Paul and Barnabas stayed.

Proverbs 11:25 – “The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.”

It wasn’t until Paul and Barnabas heard that they were planning to stone them...

- ...that they fled to Lystra...healed a lame man...and the people decided they were gods
- So they called Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, bringing oxen to sacrifice to them.
- Paul and Barnabas tore their robes and begged them to stop...but they didn’t.

In Acts 14:19-28, we’re going to look at what it takes to follow Jesus...

- In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

So what does it take to follow Jesus? Following Jesus requires...

1. Courage to stand firm in opposition and hardship (vv.19-20)

Acts 14:19 – “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”

When it came to persecuting Paul...these Jews were dedicated...

- ...Some Jews came to Lystra from Antioch (111 mi)...others came from Iconium (20 mi).

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

- It doesn’t say it in the text...but don’t you think the disciples probably prayed...

James 1:2-4 – “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

2. Courage to make disciples and appoint leaders (vv. 21–23)

Acts 14:20b-21a – “The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples”

- Let me remind you...this is what we’re to be about as a church family...making disciples.

Hebrews 5:12-14 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

- The writer of Hebrews is calling the people to spiritual maturity...
- ...growing from basic faith...to deep biblical understanding.

Acts 14:21b-22 – “They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

- So they set out on their missionary journey to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
- And at Derbe they decided it was time to go back...and on the way back...
- ...they chose not to go to new cities...where they had never preached before.

Acts 14:23 – “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

- They had to appoint elders...but these were all new believers...how would this work?
- But they were trusting in God to keep these churches healthy.

3. **Courage to focus on God’s work and give Him the glory (vv. 24-28)**

Acts 14:24-26 – “They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. ²⁵When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.

- Now they’re back home in Syrian Antioch, at the church that sent them out.

Acts 14:27-28 – “When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they spent a long time with the disciples”

- They could enjoy sweet fellowship with their home church...celebrating what God did!

Don’t miss the amazing perseverance of Paul and Barnabas.

- And I think it reminds us of our need to persevere.

We don’t follow Paul and Barnabas, we follow Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:2 – “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. When you face pushback, criticism, or obstacles while trying to live out your faith, what is your typical reaction?
2. In what area of your life are you feeling knocked down or discouraged. What practical step can you take to “get back up” with God’s strength?
3. Who are the people in your life who gather around you to support, pray for and encourage you when you are hurting?
4. Do you tend to see trials as a sign that you’re doing something wrong, or as a natural part of the Christian journey?
5. Encouraging others when you are hurting is a great way for you to find encouragement. Who is hurting right now that you can reach out to and encourage?
6. When you experience success in ministry, are you quick to praise God? Why or why not?
7. The missionaries came back and shared stories with the church. When was the last time you shared a testimony with someone else of what God is doing in your life?