



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 42 Learning How to Persevere Pt. 2 Lystra & Derbe
By Pastor Jody May 07/16/2023

Acts 14:8-21 ESV

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra

⁸Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵"Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

Paul Stoned at Lystra

¹⁹But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples,

[REVIEW]

As we said last week life is a race, and the way we get to the end is we build up our endurance as we go.



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How do we know it's a race? Because the Bible tells me so.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and **let us run with endurance the race** that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

This race accomplishes two things, a rewarded finish for you and a victory for the Kingdom. Finishing this race though, requires you have a certain Christian trait.

Romans 5:3-5 ESV

³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**, ⁴and endurance produces **character**, and character produces **HOPE**, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

HOPE! Hope (Faith in the unseen Heb 11:1) is what gets you to the finish line, it is what allows you to see the finish in your mind, to visualize the joy in completion, to see the cheering on of the cloud of witnesses of our ancestors by faith before you, and the longing to hear the words of our Savior, "Well done my good and faithful servant!" Hope is what spurs you on but the reality we need to embrace is this type of Hope doesn't come naturally, no it comes from endurance or perseverance (same word in the Greek), and here's our main point from last week and our same main point for the next two:

MAIN POINT: Perseverance is not something you are born with, it is something you have to develop.

Endurance/Perseverance is what will give you that Hope, but it comes through the path of embracing the mission of God, delivering the Gospel to the nations (Mat 28), and in that process, you persevere even when the going gets tough. Here's the first part of this regimen we learned last week.



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Practicing Perseverance with Courage (going back where you aren't wanted), Reliance on the HS (embracing things you know you can't overcome), and with Prudence (a wisdom highlighted by HS revealed enlightenment). It is by going through our crosses (met 16:24), embracing them, that God by His Providence inputs a Godly Hope, but He does that through our practice of perseverance.

This week we continuing to look at Paul and Barnabas and watch how they practiced their perseverance, for these men, made it to the finish. We don't know for sure about Barnabas' end, although I do not doubt we will meet him one day, but as for Paul's life this practiced perseverance we know for sure produced HOPE!

[READ THE TEXT]

[PRAY]

[INTRODUCTION]

Illustration of the auto correct texts. Nothing worse or as embarrassing as trying to communicate one thing and the person hearing something different all together! How about this, in our story today, not only was there a miscommunication but what the people thought they were perceiving they acted on it in two different, VERY WRONG, ways! This was definitely a bad day at the office for Paul and Barnabas! In all of that there was no chance to start over, they just had to ride that wave and practice the perseverance that was going to give them Hope!

So, I have two more ways to Practice Perseverance today that will help build that HOPE that gets us to that finish line, Practicing Perseverance through Faithful Evangelism and Practicing Perseverance through Trials.

1. Practicing Perseverance through Faithful Evangelism.



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⁸ Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,

It's a copy of the same miracle that both Peter did in chapter 3 at the temple and what Jesus did at the Pool of Bethesda in in John 5 right next to the temple.

Jesus met this man by the Gate to the North of the Temple at the pool, and that path was where they led the sacrificial lambs to the temple. The man could never get in the temple for he was unclean, so he couldn't offer a sacrifice, so THE sacrifice came to Him!

Peter on the way into the temple grounds again finds a man in need of a sacrifice, in the name of Jesus He gives to this man a healing in the power of the name of the true Messiah, the lamb of Israel. Then afterwards began to preach on the revelation of Jesus to His people, and who Jesus really was. You could possibly see that Peter was piggy backing on Jesus' miracle to prove the point, Jesus was who He said He was, and He was still doing the miracles of providing grace and mercy to whom He chooses.

So, Paul is like ***I got this***, he sees the man with Faith in his eyes, He knows the Spirit is with him, and he makes his move!

¹⁰ said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking.

- **Good works are done to demonstrate the Good News.**

The first thing I want us to see, that if you want to be taken seriously sometimes, and I would say most of the time, is that your proclamations need to match your machinations, your speech needs to match your works. If you are preaching the Gospel, how are you demonstrating it, to the person you are speaking to?



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This is a point of evangelism everyone needs to grasp, in the world **you are commanded to preach the gospel by God**, but the **world wants to see a demonstration of the good news** in you **before they ever listen**. Are you demonstrating your love for others as you tell them about the love of God? Paul was doing the right thing, but it still went off track!?! That's how evangelism goes sometimes, you got the right motives, and you even apply some kind actions, and just like a text message it gets misconstrued.

¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"
¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

That was a autocorrect translation if I ever saw one! Paul is like let me heal you in the name of the person I was telling you about Jesus! What they heard though was that Paul was speaking for a god and the only god they had ever heard about was Zeus and the Olympians.

Why do they interpret it this way? It was a legend in that area that Zeus and Hermes, messenger of Zeus and the gods, had visited Lystra before in the forms of earthly travelers. You see they understand incarnation, gods in flesh. Then when they were there last time, they built a temple for Zeus worship, installing an old couple as the priests for they were the only ones that welcomed them into their home, and they punished the rest of the town. Their tradition was to respect divine visits, but the problem in their belief was they were combining their false doctrine with the TRUTH. (think of Muslims)

That's how evangelism goes sometimes, you say one thing and they hear another. It's why we need to combine evangelism with ongoing relationships so we can continually make sure we are communicating clearly. I have heard that in my missions class, my evangelism class, and in my leadership class at seminary; always follow up with evangelism with contact of a local church for clarification and implementation.



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“What do you do now Paul and Barnabas?”

¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out,

- **The call for Gospel Clarity calls for Emotional Charity.**

Just in case you are wondering why they didn't see this happening until the priest of Zeus comes through the gates with sacrifices for them, the people were speaking Lycaonian, that is a dialect/language native to those parts. They had no clue to what was being said, they just saw head nods and excitement! So now they have to try and make sense of what just happened they who are trying to overcome a huge cultural hurdle. Then they give a sign that actually communicated cross culturally, and they ripped their clothes!

Ripping off their garments, and it wasn't because it was hot, no it is a profound sign of grief and being upset. For us it would be taking your phone and smashing it. It is to show that what was happening has caused you to stop and bear the emotional brunt of it.

Do you know how key it was for Christ to come and be emotionally available for His people? As being divine, He had to choose to step into this life, to be associated with us/to have an earthly family, to endure our misunderstandings, to endure our rebellion, to see how we loved not His Father, He had to be Charitable with His emotions when we withheld our love for Him. **Is 53:1 “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,”** He didn't just rip His garment He allowed it to be ripped off of Him in order He could bare His emotions out loud for everyone to see, He loved His Father and He loved His people, and the work of Gospel clarity took all of His emotional charity.

To take the Gospel into this world it may mean that you can't just treat the world without being emotionally involved with them. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, He wept at the wake of Lazarus, He had compassion on the people, are we willing to be emotionally charitable with those that need us to clarify the Gospel for them. You may not have to be high and lifted up, but it



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may mean you need to move your schedule around some to talk to people outside your home that give you a headache, are you willing to do that?

Let me just say, if we spend all of our time just being mad or distant at those that believe differently than you, then you will never make any head way in your endurance training. Bearing our cross means giving a care about how people hear the Gospel, are you up for that challenge?

¹⁵“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” ¹⁸Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

- **Gospel explanations may require Whole Word proclamations.**

Paul and Barnabas don't just stay in the current times with what Jesus had done but they show the care of God and their relationship with Him from all the way back to Genesis. You may never encounter this in your personal evangelism, but it takes just as much faith to be an atheist as it takes to believe in God. Science can't disprove anything it only shows how a thing works (William Craig **Reasonable Faith**). But if you are ever sharing the Gospel with a well-educated type, or enlightened individual, or a radical from the far-left line of thinking, it is good to appeal to one's commonalities.

Paul is like we are just like you and being like you we were wrong in our assumptions about our beginnings and about God. The God we serve allowed all of mankind to walk under the darkness of their misgivings but even then, in nature was always the belief that someone is providing for all of this, it came from somewhere (Rom 1). This person Jesus is the revelation of who that is, and why it works that way. And this darkening of your mind is from sin and that requires you to repent if you want that darkening gone. In other words, if you want true enlightenment you have to accept you may be wrong about



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what you believe. Then put faith into Jesus and He will forgive that sin, removing that darkness so that you may understand.

Bottom line you may have to open up your Bible to appeal with a historical approach encompassing all of history as much as you may just want to share with Jesus. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,”* (2 Tim 3:16). Trust in God’s Word, it is inerrant, it is inspired, and it is fully sufficient for you.

The **LBCF 1689 1.7** reads like this.

7. Some things in Scripture are clearer than others, and some people understand the teachings more clearly than others.¹² However, the things that must be known, believed, and obeyed for salvation are so clearly set forth and explained in one part of Scripture or another that both the educated and uneducated may achieve a sufficient understanding of them by properly using ordinary measures.¹³

¹²2 Peter 3:16. ¹³Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:130.

Trust God’s Word, it is how God communicates with people, and if they still don’t believe that is on them and them and the HS. But sometimes we can’t clear up those miscommunications, it is not God’s will or timing, what then? What about when you have been working so hard at sharing, so hard at being emotionally available, only to have the rug pulled out from under you? There is a way to persevere through this as well.

2. Practicing Perseverance Through Trials.

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds,

- **It doesn’t take much to convince the heart of the Lost.**



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Well, you may have already shaken out the dirt from your sandals on them, but it doesn't mean that they are done being a thorn in your side. That's the hard thing about this world, when you go against them, they don't forgive too easily. **Live and Let Live**, is no longer the theme of the land it is more like eat or be eaten. I can't imagine how disheartening it must have been for these men to see all their investment, their emotional equity, their pleading all only to be fuel from people that wanted nothing but their demise. And to watch it play out in front of their eyes, and like a train derailing they couldn't do anything to stop it.

Have the tables ever been turned on you like that? Have your good intentions been used against you to make you look like the bad guy? That is one of the best schemes of the devil, to look at Christians and to get the world to see were just a bunch of do-gooders, looking to control people for the sake of our own gain.

One of the painful lessons about perseverance is that you will have to stand and watch how people who seemed so close to faith, walked away from it all, and you witness the parable of the seed thrown in rocky ground played out as the Devil snatches up the seed before it can root. Family, please also know there is some comfort in that as well, for you will be reminded you are saved by grace, you are saved through love, and if that is true, He will persevere in you until you get home.

¹⁹ they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

- **You can't always run from trouble.**

Oh, just when you thought it couldn't get worse, these people that you have labored for, they pick up rocks, probably being taught by those good Jews that came and poisoned their minds, and they stone you. I mean what in the world!? Part of learning to Persevere is learning how to, **take a licking and keep on ticking**. How to take a punch, because you will not always be able to escape trouble. Look the Lord never promised us you won't get bumps and bruises on the way, but let me tell you what He did say. As He told Peter, the Devil has asked for you, "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when



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you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 2:32. Peter you can’t escape this trial!

Jesus prayed for us as well, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

So here’s what we have, no promise of no bruises, no promises that the Devil won’t mess with you, and no promises that it may not take your life, but the guarantee is this that our trials will not get the best of us, our eternal souls, and we will on day see Christ! And when you rely on Jesus to be a forever High Priest for your immortal soul, well, miracles things happen.

²⁰But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples,

- **You can always choose to get back up again.**

You may not be able to correct bad doctrine, you may not be able to mend a broken relationship, but you do have the ability to keep moving. Not only that, be a public declaration of your rebellion against the world that you won’t be silenced God uses that testimony to get the people in the next town to believe. That’s when you and I are blessed that what we thought was a bitter ending was only God teaching us to persevere because the reward lies beyond your current storms!

For the Christian rising from our trials, our failures, our persecutions, is the demonstration to this world, we have been buried with Christ you can’t keep us down! We too are destined to rise again! By getting up and moving on, we are living as our Lord lived, walking out our new lives. That is the greatest testimony that anyone can have, to image the Son and how a grave could not hold Him down.

[CHALLENGE]



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Family, let me just ask you, how are you doing at persevering? Are you working at letting people know you care by proclaiming God's Word, by sacrificing your time and talents to make the message clear? Are you enduring through your trials, are you riding out your storms? This path too is for your good, **for your Savior loves you**, He has prayed for you, and to get you home He is wanting you to discover His goodness through practicing your perseverance, are you embracing it?

Let's pray together and ask for strength, let's pray and ask for courage, let's pray and ask for the opportunity when it comes to show the world what it looks like to be raised up once again in new life.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father,.

Go in the name of the Son,.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit,.