



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 43 Learning How to Persevere Pt. 3 the Return Trips**  
**By Pastor Jody May 07/23/2023**

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**Acts 14:21-28 ESV**

**Paul Stoned at Lystra**

<sup>21</sup>When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup>strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup>And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria**

<sup>24</sup>Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup>And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, <sup>26</sup>and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. <sup>27</sup>And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. <sup>28</sup>And they remained no little time with the disciples.

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**[REVIEW/INTRODUCTION]**

In chapter 14 we have been tracking the life and adventures of Paul and Barnabas and have been looking at that encounter as a study on how one endures/or perseveres. Why would we do that? Because perseverance, learning to endure, is how you and I make it in this life. It is the way we develop the spiritual, emotional, and mental fortitude that gets us to the finish line.

**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, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.



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Life is a race, and you and I need to build up that mental fortitude for those long nights of the soul when we would rather throw in the towel. But we have been running into a problem over the last two weeks, or let us just say we have been confronting one together:

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

That's the hard truth, no one is born a long-distance runner, no, it takes time to develop that type of perseverance. Because of that, Christians need to make a choice, as it is with any training regimen, to practice, to put in the miles to build that endurance. Over the past two weeks we saw several different things we need to practice building that perseverance.

- We **practice courage**, we walk into those places we know we aren't wanted, and do as Jesus said, "**blest those that curse us**" (Luke 6:28).
- We **practice a HS reliance**, we have to learn to trust in Him who we cannot see, instead of all the dangers we can see.
- We **practice at prudence**, a God given wisdom, of when to stay and when to go, when to push and when to pull back. Learning when to sacrifice.
- We **practice faithful evangelism**, even when we are misunderstood, we stay faithful to the message of the Gospel, and we keep trying to clarify.
- We **practice persevering through trials**, we learn to take punches, and when we are revived, we get back up again, and God uses that testimony to save His people.

**That's exactly where we are in the story Paul has gotten back up, but now his attention instead of looking forward to the next new horizon, he goes back into hostile territory, in a different capacity.**

### **1. Practicing Perseverance through the Strengthening of the Saints.**

At this point in the game Paul makes a strategic choice for he has a job to do for the Lord. He has been called, as we all have, to take the Gospel into all the world. He's not out then for numbers, he's not out to see how many



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professions of faith he can get, he's not out tallying up the Baptisms to let Jerusalem know of his good fortune, no **Paul is out to MAKE DISCIPLES.**

<sup>21</sup>When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,  
<sup>22</sup>**strengthening the souls of the disciples,**

So, he goes back through the towns where he was persecuted to ensure that they are strengthened. We will quickly look at the 4 different ways these new churches were bolstered:

- **Encourage the Disciples to Keep Believing the Gospel.**

<sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, **encouraging** them to **continue in the faith,**

Paul doesn't come back and teach them something new, He exhorts, encourages, stresses the importance to continue in the faith. By the time of his return no doubt they have had to face the derision of the Jews and those whose hearts had been poisoned by Jews, their own neighbors. He shows back up, and calls them to hold their ground, that they should **continue to believe in the good news**, and practice what it stands for. They are to cling to their new leader, King Jesus, and hold their ground.

Part of learning to persevere family, is **you can't check out when you have gone through your hard times**, the call of God and **to go and strengthen your brothers.** Do you remember me mentioning that last week when we discussed Peter's betrayal of Jesus, do you remember what He told him. "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, **strengthen your brothers.**" (Luke 22:32)

Paul had literally gotten back up again, like Peter, and now he returns to the presence of those that accosted him to strengthen his brothers.

Let me point out to all of us, perhaps our failures in life are allowed so that we may have the chance to strengthen those around us. As Christians no failure, no defeat, no suffering is wasted, it should be used to strengthen those we



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love. Learning how to persevere means sharing with your church family the wisdom you have gained, Godly prudence, and your scars become trophy marks of God's Grace. Let us all encourage the disciples in our lives to keep living out their Faith!

- **Explain the Truth about Trials**

and saying that **through many tribulations** we must **enter** the kingdom of God.

Paul is now the poster child for Christian Sanctification. He's like, "*take a look this is what you are in for.*" But don't let that fool you, because every human being in this world suffers, thanks to an **event** called the **fall**. No one escapes sickness, no one escapes pain, no one escapes mistreatment, the question I have for us is ***will you make your suffering count!?***

Some would falsely believe that a prayer gets you into heaven, a whispered confession of sin, opens the door. When Jesus says, ***He is the way the Truth and the Life*** (John 14:6), it is an offering to be discipled by Him, and disciples do as the master does. In Acts in Antioch, people were first called Christians (11:26) because they acted back then, like the famous Jesus of Nazareth, is that what we are known for?

Just to be clear our vision is to develop ***Kingdom Minded Families***; we are seekers of the Way of the Christ. Loved ones, heads of homes, let me just ask you today, have you been leading your family in such a way that it teaches them they are called by Grace to **endure their trials** for the cause of Christ? Make these days count family, we all go through storms, BUT let them be public tribulations where we too are **accused of being Christians**, because our actions speak louder than our words!

- **Elect Elders through Prayer and Fasting**

<sup>23</sup> And when they had **appointed elders** for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.



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This shows you the love Paul had for the church. He knows he can't stay, he knows the sheep will be attacked, he knows because he was even used by the devil at one time to attack his own people. He needs to appoint men to lead these churches. It will be in his later letters to 1 Timothy (3:1-7) and Titus (1:5-9) on the characteristics and traits that these men must have. Paul knows what it takes to make an elder because he understands by his trials what is needed, to protect and guide the church.

Here's the plan, the church in order to enter into the Kingdom and remain there, must be led by men that not only do that for themselves but are **sacrificially helping the body** do that as well. It is the biblical model for church leadership, it is the biblical model for the home, that is '**male sacrificial patriarchy**', and it is the first thing the church must focus on when it is planted.

That's why on August 20<sup>th</sup>, HCC will install its' next 2 elders Mike Clark and Onan Coca. On that day we as the church will rally around these men, their families, we will lay hands on them and task them with the hard job of leading by example the people of HCC. We have spent years now getting to know them, prayed for them and with them, we have watched their personal lives, we put them on a strenuous training regimen, and put them in charge of various duties over the last two years. We will also call for a fast in the church on that week leading up to their ordination. It was a hard and long path for them, to be clear, but that was because of what must happen next.

- **Entrust them to the Lord and let them loose!**

<sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they **committed them to the Lord** in whom they had believed.

Being an Elder there is no work-place grace period. If they have been living a life where the qualifications are shown then they have most likely been pastoring people already, it is time to turn them loose and entrust them as Bill and I have been entrusted, with the preaching of the Word and the care of the souls of the people in this church. Part of the public ordination is so that the church sees the installing of these men so that they understand they speak



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with no authority of their own, but they speak underneath and with the authority of God's Word, and they should be listened to and cherished as they will cherish you.

Perseverance is taking the lessons you have learned and going back to those disciples around you and putting to good use the stories of your scars to bless the church, to raise up leadership, thereby strengthening them for the work of the Gospel. Then you keep doing that same process for the rest of your life.

## **2. Practicing Perseverance by the Sharing of Testimonies.**

- **Declare what God is doing through Perseverance.**

<sup>24</sup> Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, <sup>26</sup> and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. <sup>27</sup> And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they **declared all that God had done with them**, and how he had **opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**.

Sharing Testimonies of your missional pursuits is how the church is encouraged and it demonstrates or clarifies where the church needs to go. Paul and Barnabas shared what they had seen and experienced by the Grace of God, and then they shared the specific calling of reaching the Gentiles. They understood that their calling in ancient Asia was to reach people that were far from God, it had been confirmed to them through the Spirit, through their trials.

The church of Antioch would have never learned their calling as the Gentile base of Christian Evangelism in the World if first these men were not sent, and secondly if they had not gone through the persecution of the synagogues they visited. It was a practiced and repeated perseverance by sacrificial men that taught the church how they were to be stewarding God's resources.



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In a few minutes Pastor Bill will give you a report of what was discovered out in the world, what is needed, and in His words, you will hear a path that our church needs to begin to follow. That's how this works, people are sent out and they come back and report, and then the church prays and asks God what we should do next. Then this is where it will lead us.

- **Devote yourself to Discipleship, preparing the next wave.**

<sup>28</sup> And they **remained** no little time **with the disciples**.

When Paul and Barnabas had reported and ordained elders they stayed a while, again to train that church for what must be done. That was the process to train then the people for what was coming next. Paul would have more missionary travels going much farther, that would require more support from home, it would require the churches to grow, it would require the training of evangelists and apologists, it would call for everyone to practice perseverance. This is the picture of the church militant and triumphant; it has been mobilized into an attack unit storming Hell and taking back its' people.

But you have to know what you are mobilizing for, and you have to have people that understand their training, so you have to have people that **don't avoid conflict they push into it.** People who practice persevering are people that can be used by the Kingdom, to expand the Kingdom, for the sake of the Gospel and the Fame of Jesus. Family Bill is going to wrap this up in moment but when he speaks, I want you to listen intently in his challenge to us, so that you may be encouraged to build your endurance for the race set before us.

**[CHALLENGE]**

This will be done through the Testimony of the World Changers.

**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**



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Go in the name of the Father, that has called us to take the name of His glorious Son into all the earth.

Go in the name of the Son, that is the author and perfecter of our Faith, let us strive to make this world see Him through our lives.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that strengthens the believer for their task of proclaiming His great name now go and share this good news with others.