

Series: Acts

Lesson #: 51

Title: The Door the Lord Opens

Scripture: Acts 14: 19-28

Date: January 8, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

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V22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith,

The word “confirm” means strengthening, it means “to render more firm in the truth” This is another way of saying that Paul preached the gospel of the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus. Paul confirmed them in the truth that believers are established in Christ, by Christ, and kept by his power. It is what Paul preached everywhere he went on this first missionary trip and everywhere else he went.

Turn to Isaiah 34: 16: since Paul was preaching to Gentiles and this was a prophecy concerning Christ the Life who was being freely given to God’s elect among them, this is a good passage from which Paul might have preached. Paul and Barnabas did what every faithful witness and messenger of God does: **V22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith,**

Now be sure that you catch this important truth—where we begin is where we continue.

V22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, Continuing IN THE FAITH goes right along with this word that: **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.** Sin is the cause of tribulation. Sin in our own flesh causes us much tribulation. The sin in sinners all around us in this world is the cause of tribulation. The world, the flesh, all natural men, and the flesh in every believer, is sin. But this sin is what the Lord Jesus overcame for his people. He shall save his people from their sins. **John 16: 33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**

The only way—THE ONLY WAY—to continue in the faith and to overcome this tribulation is by continuing by faith in Christ Jesus. Christ himself--is Peace. Faith in Christ does not remove the tribulation or remove the pain of the trial. The believer shall suffer. Yet, faith is the conduit through which God continually strengthens us in the realization that in Christ, because he has put away our sin forever, as he has overcome the world, even so in him, we too, shall overcome the world.

The tribulation Paul had just endured is where much of the believer’s tribulation shall come. When you believe warfare begins between the flesh and the spirit—within us and without.

A CONTRAST WILL ILLUSTRATE THIS FOR US.

Notice how Paul and Barnabas conducted themselves in Antioch: **Acts 13: 14: But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.** Then in **Acts 14: 1: And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.** Again in **Acts 14: 6: Then they came...unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7: And there they preached the gospel.**

Now notice how those in the flesh conducted themselves? In Antioch, Pisidia: **Acts 13: 45: But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming...50: But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.** In Iconium: **Acts 14: 2: But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren....5:...there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone *them*** Now in Lystra: Verse 14, certain Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to Lystra, to these pagan Gentiles with whom they ordinarily would have had no dealings, **who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.**

THE POWER OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.

Those who are in the Spirit understand, believe and rejoice in Christ our Righteousness. Paul came preaching that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes and they hated him. Why? For those taking notes be sure you get this: 1. Christ is the end of the law as our Righteousness wherein we are fully, completely, totally accepted in the Beloved by God forever. So we can do nothing to justify ourselves; 2. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to the believer in that he is—the Finisher of faith. Christ is the righteous performer of everything God's law sets forth as being holy, just and good. Through the Spirit, Christ Jesus the Lord is our Rule of life; he rules in the heart causing us to follow him.

Christ is more than a mere example. Having been made a new creation by his indwelling Spirit, the believer: Has spiritual life by Him (he is the Life within us); we know God in spirit by HIS wisdom (Christ is the Wisdom, the Truth in us, all else is foolishness); we worship God by HIS strength (led of the Spirit of Christ); in our daily lives we follow, we walk after HIM (we walk after the Spirit, we run the race which He set before us, looking unto Him), And NOT after the flesh, after the beggarly elements, touch not, taste not, handle not—we walk by faith, not by sight. Listen to the effectual, power of revelation worked in the believer by Christ:

1 Thessalonians 2:13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. **I John 2: 27:** But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 5:20: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know HIM that is true, and we are in HIM that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Romans 8: 5: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The fruit produced by these Jews, who were under the dominion of their flesh, and the fruit produced by the apostle Paul who was under grace is radically opposite. **Galatians 5: 19:** Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, **20:** Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, **21:** Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **22:** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, **23:** Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. **24:** And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. **25:** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. **26:** Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Paul said to the believers at Rome: **Romans 6:21:** What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death

Still, being yet in the flesh, we **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God**. Yet, when one of us stumbles during a trial, the Lord keeps us through the truth, using our fellow brethren who are filled with the Spirit of Christ, to restore us to Christ, in love, longsuffering, etc—rather than that harsh, railing spirit of the legalist. **James 3: 18:** **And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.**

It is all because the believer is: **I Cor 9: 21:** “Not without law to God, but under the law to Christ”—a better translation might be “under the dominion—the law of Christ who reigns in our hearts.” And Christ's law is the law of love. **Romans 8: 2:** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. **3:** For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: **4:** That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Let me give you another contrast: You see how these fellows who were in the flesh tried to MAKE others conform by threatening, and by their own power—they were not in the faith, much less continuing in the faith, so their way resulted in much tribulation. Though they were zealous for the law, when they were told the law was out of their hands, they manifest how far they were from obeying the spirit of the law by attempting to murder Paul.

Now turn to I Corinthians to see the opposite of that spirit. When Paul came to the Corinthian church, the brethren there were being very carnal, "babes," Paul said. But how where we first turned from the flesh to Christ? By the gospel which declared Christ has established us by his blood and his righteousness. We begin in the Spirit through that gospel and that is how we are kept from our flesh. So listen to how Paul begins: **I Corinthians 1: 1: Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2: Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: 3: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 4: I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5: That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6: Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9: God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** Not once does Paul treat them as anything less but his brethren and those for whom Christ shed his precious blood.

The fleshly spirit manifested itself in the way the Corinthian brethren were divided by setting various preachers up on a pedestal. So Paul first begins to turn them from the flesh to Christ by declaring this: **I Corinthians 3: 7: So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase....21: Therefore let no man glory in men.** (But because these are brethren, listen to how Paul strengthens them with the gospel) **For all things are yours; 22: Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23: And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.**

Now in our flesh we are two things: legalist and lawless. Paul first dealt with an issue of lawless between them and then with an issue of legalism between them. Paul dealt with the matter of lawlessness, first. There was a preacher in the church who was guilty of fornication. This was greatly interfering with the brethren worshipping Christ. But in the pride of their flesh, they used their liberty as a cloke to excuse the man. Paul said, **this is a thing to mourn over.** In order for the brethren to be restored back to Christ this interference had to be removed—but listen to the spirit with which Paul instructs them: **I Corinthians 4: 14: I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you...17: For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the**

Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. Paul's desire was not to do battle with those who were puffed up, but to come to the saints in love and the spirit of meekness.

As we survey this letter, listen to the fleshly list of complaints and questions and problems the Corinthians had against one another. This is much of the tribulation we will face, if not from each other, in this world.

Right after dealing with a problem of lawlessness, Paul deals with their problem of legalism. It was so bad that they were taking their brethren to the law in public, to the legal magistrates. Can you imagine what they were doing in the church? Paul did not take them to Sinai to deal with this, he took them to Christ. **I Corinthians 6: 7: Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* 8: Nay, (by insisting that their brethren were wrong rather than suffering being defrauded that he might restore them to Christ, Paul says, they were unrighteous, and so were those doing the defrauding, he said,) ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren. 9: Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** (Now he lumps the legalist and the lawless in the same camp with these others fruits of the flesh which he lists) **Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10: Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.** (But now listen how Paul does not use the law to constrain them but rather he reminds them of the love of Christ?) **11: And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.**

They had a problem with one another over eating or not eating things offered in sacrifice to idols. Paul said an idol is nothing, but your brethren for whom Christ died are everything. **I Corinthians 8: 6: But to us *there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* 7: Howbeit *there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.* 8: But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9: But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.**

This may be the best example of how Paul displays the spirit of love and longsuffering. They had all this blame toward one another, yet they all excused themselves for not providing for their ministers. Now here is the spirit of liberty and of love. This is how you continue in faith in Christ, and suffer tribulation. Paul said, indeed, **1 Corinthians 9: 9: For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10: Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he**

that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11: If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12: If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are not we rather*? If Paul would have been telling them they were under the law instead of under grace, he would have demanded they provide for him. If he had been under the law he would have scolded them for not providing for him. But being under grace, under the law of Christ, he says, **Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things,** (why on earth would you do that?) **lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.**

Back in our text, we see how some severe some of this tribulation shall come about.

Acts 14: 21: And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

After Paul was stoned he went on preaching. He did what he said. He exhorts us to continue in the faith. Paul persevered in faith through this tribulation—even after suffering at the hands of those who opposed the gospel. Paul continued in the faith ready to suffer more of this tribulation by going back to those cities where the Lord had saved some. And because this strengthening and continuance in the faith is wrought by Christ through the foolishness of preaching, they did not depart until the Lord provided brethren who could continue to preach the gospel to them. **Acts 14: 23: And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.**

We shall face tribulation. It is our natural tendency to have a pity party for poor old self. When we do then every message we hear makes us think of how other folks are not treating us like the bible says they should.

<p>Pastor Todd Nibert—The Bible never tells me how other people should treat me; only how I should treat other people.</p>

NOTICE THAT NOT ONE WORD IS MENTIONED ABOUT PAUL LOOKING FOR PITY AFTER HE WAS STONED. NO, BY GOD’S GRACE, BY CHRIST WORKING IN HIM, BY THE BRETHEN WHO STOOD WITH HIM, HE ROSE UP AND WENT ON. WHY? HE HAD SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT TO DO THAN LOOK TO HIMSELF.

The Lord narrows the way for us to walk in—he does his work “with us”—though we face all kinds of tribulation—he strengthens us, and as we continue in the faith, pressing on and trusting the promise of God the Lord always faithfully strengthens us more. One of the ways by which God strengthens us is by causing us to look away from ourselves and the tribulations we encounter by putting us in situations where he moves us to provide for our brethren. He leaves us rejoicing in Christ, thanking him for what he has done for us—

temporally and spiritually. Simply by God opening the door for us to lighten the burdens of others, the Lord causes the afflictions in our own lives to become far lighter.

NOTICE WHO PAUL GIVES ALL THE GLORY TO IN THIS WORK:

Acts 14: 24: And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25: And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. 27: And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28: And there they abode long time with the disciples.

They rehearsed all that GOD HAD DONE with them—instrument in his hand

Ro 6:13: Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

Illustration: At your workplace. You are the instrument of the one who is your head to be used by that head to accomplish the work your head is pleased to perform. A good worker is one who is resolved and submits to that very truth. One who stirs up others, revolts, makes excuses, or is lazy is a hindrance.

Therefore, brethren, let us be diligent to be used of the Lord. Let us remove every hindrance in our lives, readily anticipating the Lord to use us as his instruments in whatever capacity pleases him. And let us be content in whatever capacity it is. And let us be ready at the same time, to be put to use in some other way if the Lord so chooses.

They glorified God for HOW HE HAD OPENED THE DOOR OF FAITH unto the Gentiles.

In case you notice, the “open door” refers to the Gentiles, particularly beginning in Lystra—but remember, every place the Holy Spirit drew them since the day they left Antioch until the day they came to the Gentiles was GOD OPENING THE DOOR.

Illustration: On My Way To Preach Somewhere And Had Car Trouble—frustrated because I needed to get to where I was going so I could preach the gospel. When Paul was arrested he appealed to Caesar and desired to preach the gospel to him. But when he was shipwrecked on the island of Malta he preached the gospel there. Where ever we are, look for the door which God has opened.

Quote: Let other’s shut the door.

Two things to remember:

1. Always remember when we talk with others and especially with each other as we endeavor to be a helper of one another's joy—when you first heard the truth of Christ did you put up opposition? You were under the dominion of the same carnal mind which these Jews were governed by. But it took Christ taking dominion of you, the Spirit washing you in regeneration, God giving you faith and repentance, so it is for the unbeliever you may witness to. And it takes the same thing continually amongst our brethren who may be overtaken in a fault. But remember this: **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” 2 Timothy 2: 24: And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, 25: In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;**

2. Always, remember, the soul-strengthening, soul-establishing Word is the declaration of what Christ HAS done, IS doing and SHALL do.