

“Through Much Tribulation!”
Acts 14:19-23

Introduction:

1. Please Head Back With Me This Morning:
 - To The Book Of Acts:
 - Where We Come To The Final Verses:
 - Of Our Introduction To The Galatian Churches!
 - The Churches:
 - To Whom Paul Will Later Write The Letter Of Galatians:
 - Are Found In The Same Cities Paul & Barnabas Went To On Their First Missionary Journey!
 - And We Have Already Visited With Them:
 - The Cities Of Antioch, Iconium & Lystra!
 - And In Each City - Paul & Barnabas Preached The Gospel!
 - And No Matter Which City They Came To, Their Message Stayed The Same!
 - For It Was Through The Gospel Of Christ:
 - That These Churches Would Be Formed:
 - And Would Continue To Grow!
2. The Story Of The First Missionary Journey:
 - Continues In Lystra This Morning:
 - Where Paul & Barnabas, At Least For A Time:
 - Were Considered By The People To Be Their Own Gods In Human Form!
 - And They Were Even About To Offer Sacrifices To Them!
 - Until Paul & Barnabas:
 - Introduced Them To:
 - The Living God!
 - The Only God Who Could Save Them From Their Sin & Even From Themselves!
 - But According To 14:18:
 - “And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them!”
 - The People Were Idol Worshipers At Heart!
 - And They Were Truly Captivated By Paul & Barnabas & The Power They Had Been Given By The One True God!
 - But Would It Always Be Like That?
 - Would They Always Experience This Kind Of Reception?
 - As We Read In 14:19-23 - The Answer Is Clearly No!
3. Because Not Long After – In The Same City Of Lystra:
 - We Read - “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. / Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. / And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, / 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. / 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!”
 - And Then - Paul & Barnabas Head Back Toward Home:
 - So They Could Give A Report To Their Home Church Back In Antioch:
 - Which We Find Later In 14:27 - “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!”
4. What I Believe We Find In These Final Verses:
 - Among These Newly Formed Galatian Churches:
 - Is Another Part Of The Gospel Message:
 - That We Don’t Often Hear Today!
 - And That Part Is Found In:
 - 14:22 - How That:
 - “We Must Through Much Tribulation Enter Into The Kingdom Of God!”
 - This Is Not A Popular Topic:
 - For Christians & For Churches:
 - In Our Own Country!

- Yet It Is What We Will Find Taking Place:
 - With Faithful Christians & In Faithful Churches:
 - All Around The World!
- “Much Tribulation!”
 - Jesus Himself Tells Us This In:
 - 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!”
- Now, This “Tribulation” Can Take Many Forms!
 - The World Will Constantly Try To:
 - Pressure All Those Who Believe In Jesus Christ:
 - To Conform To Its Mold!
 - But One Of The Main Tools Used By The World:
 - To Afflict Christians & Churches Is:

1. **Great Persecution!**

- And That Is What We Find Taking Place In Lystra:
 - In 14:19 - “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead!”
 - So - Some Of The Jews From The Other Cities Where Paul & Barnabas Had Already Visited:
 - Finally Caught Up To Them!
 - And These Jews:
 - “Persuaded” And Convinced The People Of Lystra:
 - To Reject Both The Message Of The Gospel & The Messengers!
 - And What We Can See In This Persecution Is That:
- It Is Erratic!
 - The Same People Who Were:
 - Just One Verse Ago - And Likely Only A Few Days Before:
 - Wanting To Worship & Sacrifice To Paul & Barnabas As Their Gods!
 - Are Now The People Who:
 - Are Ready To Go Along With The Jews:
 - In Their Persecution Of Paul!
 - This Shows The Erratic & Unstable Nature:
 - Of The World In Which We Live!
 - And We Can See It Everywhere Even Today!
 - **IE:** Wasn’t It Just Three Years Ago In Our Own State When Both The House & Senate Approved A Proposed Amendment To The State Constitution To Define Marriage As Between One Man & One Woman? And Today, The Debate Is Now On Giving Protected Legal Status To Anyone Who Identifies Himself Or Herself With Any Kind Of Sinful Sexual Behavior! Look At How Quickly The Tides Have Turned! In Our State, In Our Communities, In Our Country, In The World!
 - This World Is An Unstable Place!
 - And Is Often An Unsafe Place For Those Who Will Follow Christ!
 - Because:
- It Is Extreme!
 - Look At What Those Zealous Jews Did:
 - After Persuading & Convinced The People That Paul & Barnabas Were Of No Use To Them:
 - They “Stoned Paul, Drew Him Out Of The City, Supposing He Had Been Dead!”
 - These Jews Tried To & Even Thought They Did:
 - Kill Paul By Stoning Him!
 - The Punishment Reserved For Blasphemers!
 - Yet - Where Was The Trial?
 - Where Were The Witnesses?
 - Where Was The Justice?
 - It Was Nowhere To Be Found!
 - Jesus Tells Us In Matthew 10:16-17 - “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. / But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues!”
 - All This For What?
 - For Sharing The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!

- All This:
 - For Pointing Out Sin:
 - And For Pointing Sinners To The Savior!
 - But We Also Can See That:
- It Is Expected!
 - When You Read 14:19 As Luke Wrote It:
 - It Is Just So Short & Terse & Matter Of Fact!
 - To Us - It Is The Most Shocking Part Of The Story Of Paul & Barnabas In This City!
 - Yet In Just One Verse:
 - We Read Of The Attempted Murder:
 - Of The Apostle Paul!
 - It's As If The Holy Spirit Is Reminding Us:
 - Persecution Is To Be Expected!
 - Peter Understood This When He Wrote In 1 Peter 4:12-13 - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: / But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy!"
- Persecution Is One Of The Main Tools Used By The World:
 - To Silence Christians & Churches!
 - But What Do We So Often See Happening In The Midst Of Such Great Persecution? By Christians?

2. ***Great Perseverance!***

- This Is What We See In 14:20-21:
 - "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. / And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch!"
 - Once Again - Luke Records For Us The Details In Such A Matter-Of-Fact Way, Doesn't He?
 - But We Must Not Overlook The Emotions That Must Have Been There As Well!
 - Think About The Disciples!
 - The New Believers:
 - Probably Including The Crippled Man Who Had Just Been Healed A Few Days Before!
 - What Must Have Been Going Through Their Hearts & Minds?
 - Many Questions!
 - Much Doubt!
 - Great Fear!
 - Think About Barnabas!
 - Paul's Partner Through All Of This!
 - What Could He Have Been Thinking & Feeling!
 - And Think About Paul!
 - Left For Dead!
 - He Was So Bloody & Bruised!
 - His Breathing Slowed To The Point Where Everyone Thought He Was Dead!
 - What Pain & Suffering He Endured!
 - Yet - 14:20 - "As The Disciples Stood Around Him, He Rose Up, And Came Into The City!"
 - Certainly God Was In This!
 - Although It Doesn't Say That He Jumped To His Feet Or That He Was Perfectly Healed From His Wounds:
 - God Did Strengthen & Enable Paul To Get Up!
 - More Than Likely - I Believe He Got Up Slowly:
 - Feeling The Pain In His Body Acutely:
 - And Then Slowly Headed Back Toward The City:
 - On The Same Path That He Had Just Been Dragged!
 - Why Do I Believe This?
 - Because Later In His Letter To Them, He Will Write:
 - In Galatians 6:17 - "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!"

- The Same Marks He Received:
 - When He Was Among Them In Lystra!
 - Yet - Even Through This - Paul Did Not Give Up! He Persevered! How?
 - To Persevere, Often:
- It Takes Concern!
 - Concern For The New Believers In That Same City!
 - He Got Up And Went Right Back Into The City Of Lystra!
 - To Comfort And To Help:
 - Those New Christians!
 - Who Still Probably Had Many Questions, Much Doubt, And Great Fear!
 - But To Persevere:
- It Also Takes A Calling!
 - 14:20 - “And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe!”
 - They Still Had A Mission To Accomplish!
 - They Went To The Fourth & Final City There In The Region Of Galatia – Why?
 - 14:21 - To Preach The Gospel To That City As Well!
 - The Same Gospel They Preached:
 - In Antioch & In Iconium & In Lystra!
 - Even Knowing:
 - What Kind Of Reception They Might Have There As Well!
 - Yet - Many Believed In Derbe As Well:
 - And A New Church Was Formed!
 - And Then We Are Amazed At What We Read Next In 14:21:
 - “They Returned Again To Lystra, And To Iconium, And Antioch!”
 - To Persevere:
- It Also Takes Courage!
 - Paul & Barnabas Went Right Back To The Same Cities:
 - Where They Experienced Persecution!
- Now - Where Did This All Come From?
 - Where Did Paul’s Concern, Calling & Courage:
 - Come From - For Him To Persevere In This Way?
 - It Could Only Come From The Lord!
 - So - Whenever We Face Persecution:
 - Look To The Lord For His Help & Strength:
 - To Persevere Even Through The Most Difficult Trials & Tribulations The World Can Put Us Through!
 - Remember What Paul Wrote To Timothy In:
 - 2 Timothy 3:12-14 - “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. / But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. / But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them!”
 - The Lord Alone Can Help You Persevere In These Ways!
 - And Never Forget What The Lord Has Given You!

3. **Great Purpose!**

- God Gave Paul A Great Purpose:
 - Which We Find In 14:22 - “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!”
 - He Went Back Through Those Cities:
 - And To Those Newly Formed Churches:
 - For Three Reasons!
 - And These Reasons Kept Him Going!
 - To Establish:
 - The New Believers!
 - “Confirming The Souls Of The Disciples!”
 - This Was The Ministry Of:
 - Discipling Them In The Word Of God & In Their Faith!
 - He Taught Them The Truth!

- Another Reason / Purpose:
 - That Kept Paul & Barnabas Going:
- To Encourage:
 - The New Believers!
 - “Exhorting Them To Continue In The Faith!”
 - How They Needed This!
 - Especially After What They Had Just Seen & Heard Happen To Paul!
 - He Would Have Answered Their Questions!
 - He Would Have Soothed Their Doubts!
 - He Would Have Calmed Their Fears!
 - He Knew What They Were Going Through:
 - And So He Came Back To Them:
 - To Come Alongside Them:
 - And Encourage Them To Persevere & Continue In Their Faith!
- Another Reason / Purpose:
 - That Kept Paul Going Was:
- To Exemplify:
 - The Truth That:
 - 14:22 - “We Must Through Much Tribulation Enter Into The Kingdom Of God!”
 - As The Ladies Sang A Few Months Ago:
 - “No - It’s Not An Easy Road!”
 - It Can & Often Is A Very Difficult Road!
 - Jesus Tells Us In John 15:18-19:
 - “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. / If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you!”
- But Paul Knew That These Young Christians:
 - Would Need This Kind Of Help!
 - And That Kept Him Going!
 - Do You Realize That God Has Given You & I:
 - These Same Purposes As Well?
 - I’ve Often Spoken To Older Christians Within Our Church - Some Who Have Passed Away - And They Ask - “What Is My Purpose Here?”
 - What Can Keep You Going?
 - To Help Establish Other Christians!
 - To Help Encourage Other Christians!
 - To Be An Example To Other Christians!
 - Because It Is Not An Easy Road!
 - And That We Will Experience “Much Tribulation!”
 - But What Is The End?
 - “The Kingdom Of God!”
 - As Jesus Said In:
 - 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!”
 - We Still Have A Purpose In This World!
 - But What Do We Rely On? Who Must We Rely On Through It All?

Conclusion:

1. The Power Of The Lord!
 - 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!”
 - The Last Things Paul & Barnabas Did In Those Young Galatian Churches Was:
 - To Point Them To The Only One Who Could Help Them In Their Christian Lives!
 - Their Savior! The Lord Himself!
 - After Organizing The Churches:
 - With Elders & Pastors:
 - They Reminded Them Of The Great Importance:
- Of Prayer!

- They “Prayed With Fasting!”
 - The Knew That They Needed The Lord!
 - That They Could Only Depend On The Lord!
 - Paul & Barnabas Would Be Leaving Soon:
 - But The Lord Would Remain!
 - Oh How We Need To Get Back To This Kind Of Passionate & Powerful Prayer!
 - We Need The Lord!
 - Especially Now, As We May Go:
 - “Through Much Tribulation!”
 - Remember Hebrews 4:16 - “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need!”
2. But Then - We Are Told That:
- “They Commended Them To The Lord, On Whom They Believed!”
 - They Committed These New Believers:
 - And These Young Churches:
 - To The Lord!
 - It Was The Lord:
 - Who Saved Them! And It Was The Lord:
 - Who Cared For Them Most Deeply!
2. And So - When Our Own Mission & Our Own Ministries:
- Come To An End:
 - We Rely On The Power Of The Lord:
 - To Keep His Own Promises!
 - And To Keep His Own People!
 - Even - “Through Much Tribulation!”
3. The Events That Took Place In These Cities:
- Remained With The Apostle Paul:
 - For The Rest Of His Life!
 - For Paul Later Wrote To Timothy:
 - In 2 Timothy 3:10-11:
 - “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, / Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me!”
 - For Christians & For Churches:
 - It Is Not Always An “Easy Road!”
 - We Find Over & Over Again In The Bible This Truth:
 - “That we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God!”
 - But We Do Not Need To Doubt!
 - And We Do Not Need To Fear!
4. But No Matter What Kind Of Persecution We Face:
- We Can Persevere In The Purpose God Has Given Us!
 - Knowing - That “Out Of Them All”:
 - The Lord Will Deliver Us!
 - For - “Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world!” (1 John 4:4)

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