

“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. 20 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.

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.

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. 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.” (Ac 14:19-28 AV)

And so we have the conclusion of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. There are many things to learn, and Luke recorded these things exactly as he was led by the Spirit so that we could learn from them. This is history, but it is more than history, it is the word of God and is profitable for us to learn from it. The full itinerary of the last of this journey is described at the end of the chapter, but we will not be concerned about this today.

But I so want to speak of verse 22. After being left for dead outside the city of Lystra, Paul rose up and continued his missionary work to Derby, where they were well received and many were taught by them. Then they retraced their step from Derby back to Lystra and Iconium and back to Antioch. We see the great love that Paul and Barnabas had for the disciples in these cities, for they had almost lost their lives before, but they were concerned to go back and undertake the care of the believers in those city. Remember that Paul had written to the Philippians: “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” John had also written, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” It was serious business with the apostles and it ought to be also true of us also.

Well, what did they do when they retraced their steps and visited those who had been made disciples the first time through. Vs. 22 tells us: Confirmation; Exhortation; Tribulation. Let us look at each of these.

- I. Confirmation. This means to make more firm and strong.
- A. They were disciples, enrolled in the school of Christ and under His teaching, through those ordained for that purpose.
 - B. “Teaching them to observe all things...” This needed repetition and strengthening, for their new faith was contrary to all the pagan world view of their culture. Everything had to be re interpreted and learned.
 - C. This has nothing to do with the rite of confirmation practiced by our churches, except it is certainly true that our children and youth must complete an organized system of instruction by their parents and schools and churches if they are to be prepared to stand in the faith in these days. Because the culture is increasingly pagan in our modern day, it is essential that parents be heavily involved in this work, to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Moms and Dads should not only work out a plan for this, but they should be constantly evaluating their plan to see that they keep on track.
- II. Exhortation.
- A. Along with knowledge must come exhortation. This word means “1) to call to one’s side, call for, summon, to teach, to beg, entreat, beseech, encourage, strengthen, etc.
 - B. This word of God is preached for many reasons, some of which are included in 2Tim. 3:13-17 which read and exhort.
 - C. Calvin: Wherefore, let not pastors think that they have done their duty as they ought, when they have well trained up their people in true knowledge, unless they employ themselves to this part also. Again, let not the faithful neglect the Word of God, as if the reading and preaching thereof were unnecessary; because there is no man who hath not need of continual confirmation.
 - D. They were exhorted to continue in “the faith.” There are not many faiths. See Jude 1:2 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
 - 1. Jude gave all diligence: it was needful and required exhortation so they might continue in the faith.
 - 2. They should earnestly contend for the faith.
 - a. Faith some times mean the content of the Gospel concerning the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief stone of the corner.
 - b. Faith some times mean the subjective response and assent to the Gospel, the work of the Holy Spirit. Both these meanings go together.
 - c. Pray that the subjective faith increases as knowledge increases.
 - 3. We should also be careful that our walk does not turn other people out of the way:
 - E. 1 Cor. 1:6ff
 - 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.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. [“beseech” means to exhort.]

III. Tribulation.

- A. Nothing is said here about the duration or the intensity of the tribulation, but only that there will be some. [The word tribulation means “trouble, narrow, said of grapes when they are squeezed to get the juice.] Persecution is only one kind of tribulation.
- B. “Must” means it is necessary and we are appointed to it.
- C. These are also necessary for the confirmation that is mentioned first.
- D. The definitive lesson, perhaps, on this subject is Hebrews 12:5-17. It is essential that Christians know that they must endure these things.
 - 1. Comes from the Father’s love: vs. 6
 - 2. Evidence of sonship: vs. 7-8
 - 3. Designed to teach us to hallow God’s Name and partake of His holiness. vs. 9-11
 - 4. Exhortation: Lift up your hands and strengthen your knees. Walk straight; etc. vs. 12-17 There will be some who fail of the grace of God. Remember the parable of the sower.

Application: verse 23 Several things:

- 1. Churches were established. There was organization.
- 2. Practice: church elected elders; apostles laid hands [ordained them]
- 3. The church is a house of prayer.
- 4. The Lord Jesus is the Head of the church.

Wow! May God bless you.