

Series Title: Acts, Part 7- The Original Road Trip

Sermon Title: Week 7: Committed. Date: 06-20-21

- **Today we are continuing in ACTS- wrapping up part 7- Original Road Trip- as Paul and Barnabas return home from their first missionary journey.**
- **At first reading, not much here to delve into- we are told how B&P make their way back to Antioch in Syria, visiting the new believers along the way. On its surface, this is a transition to the VERY important events we will find in Acts 15.**
- **BUT, as is true of MUCH scripture, when we look closer, this part of the story has MUCH to teach us, ENCOURAGE us. Here in these details we see several very SIMPLE- basic.. but PROFOUND truths about the GRACE OF GOD, and how God calls us to LIVE in the goodness of our relationship with Jesus**
- **The BIG TAKEAWAY's here are things you have heard me say MANY TIMES... but If it seems I'm stuck on a certain theme, it is because SCRIPTURE is stuck on this theme, and it is a PRACTICAL TRUTH OF HOW WE LIVE that is at the core of our lives as followers of Christ- one we too often miss.**
- **SO! Last week we saw P&B travel to LYSTRA, a city dominated by worshipers of Greek God's ZEUS and HERMES. After a crippled man is healed, the townspeople decide B&P are in fact Zeus and Hermes in human form, and try to offer sacrifices to them. In response, Paul beg's them to stop- and he makes the key statement "YOU MUST TURN AWAY FROM THESE WORTHLESS THINGS and TURN TO the Living God." A call we need to hear today.**
- **MEANWHILE, it turns out the religious leaders from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium have been pursuing them, with the goal of shutting P&B (message) down- by killing them if necessary.**
- **SCENE- Crowd... MOB... confused, probably angry. We thought these guys were Gods, they say they're not Gods, and they just insulted our worship of our idols. Then the religious zealots arrive, seeking to shut Paul up once and for all. P&B find themselves...**

† Caught in the mob

Acts 14:19-20 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

- **This is the worst violence against Paul so far. He was likely knocked unconscious, and severely injured. But even though they thought he was dead, he wasn't, and after some time, his friends- other believers, revived him and took him presumably to a safe home, and the next morning they left.**
- **Was this a miraculous healing? We don't know. We DO know that later Paul would write about his many injuries sustained during his travels.**
- **The point I want to make here, however, is the action of the crowd. This was a mob, caught up in anger, emotion, and stirred on by the purposeful action of people who wanted to incite them to violence.**
- **Church, this still happens today, far too often, and it is tragic when followers of Christ get caught up in this.**
- **MOB mentality when we get caught up in fear, and spread that fear to others.**

- **MOB mentality when we go along with a crowd who is demeaning a person or type of person**
- **MOB mentality when we forward or approve of information on social media that is inflammatory, without sincerely considering the truth of such information, and how our actions might impact others. BOTTOM LINE...**

The mob mentality always elevates fear and anger over the value of human life. This is something the Spirit of Christ will never do!

- **Story continues... P&B head to the next town, DERBE. It is not far, and also part of Lycoania- last week we learned how this region was known to be superstitious, worshipped Zeus and Greek gods. It is JUST LIKE Lystra, which was a disaster. WHY GO TO DERBE? Why think there would be any different outcome? Definition of insanity? VERY RECENT past experience would say STAY AWAY. BUT P&B went anyway, and they experienced...**

† An unexpected outcome

Acts 14:21a *They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples.*

- **Why did P&B go on to Derbe? Felt God was leading them? I think they genuinely cared for these people- living in bondage to idolatry, and wanted to give them the GOOD NEWS of freedom in Christ. They had every reason NOT TO GO, but one powerful reason TO GO. Their desire for people to know God- and this was a motivation of LOVE.**

Past experience is useful, but the leadership of God's love is powerful.

- **We see this again in what P&B did next. If you look on a map of the ancient northern Mediterranean (Turkey), you will see that P&B had traveled from the western med to the east, and were very near the region of CILICIA. TARSUS. This was Paul's hometown. This has NOT been an easy trip, and HOME is RIGHT THERE. From Tarsus, short boat ride back to Antioch in Syria, where they started. LETS GO THERE! HOW IS THIS NOT A GOOD PLAN?**
- **But they didn't. They chose to take...**

† The long way home

Acts 14:21b *Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

- **Lystra- Nearly killed, run out of town. Check.**
- **Iconium- threat of death, run out of town. Check.**
- **Psidian Antioch- serious threats, run out of town, hotly pursued by people who want to kill you.**
- **WHY GO THIS WAY? In each of these communities there were brand new believers- brand new brothers and sisters, themselves under threat, who needed to be encouraged.**
- **It is doubtless they felt the spirits leadership to make this return journey. This was an act of obedience to God... but not just that. Their obedience to God's leadership was expressed thru their love of these people.**

The ultimate expression of love of God is obedience to God. The greatest motivation for obedience to God is love of people.

- **Hold that thought- come back to it.**
- **SO, P&B take the long way home- a journey of encouragement. And in each community they revisited, they did four key things....**

✠ Imparting (*imparted*) strength
strengthening the disciples

- **What did that look like? Just their presence. Praying with them. Teaching them, reminding them of the truth they had believed. Telling them what God had done in the other cities. Perhaps more than anything, these new believers were encouraged knowing P&B had made a great sacrifice to come back to them- they knew they were not alone.**
- **TODAY, one of God's great callings to us is to ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER. Strengthen one another. Spur one another on toward love and goodness toward other.**
- **QUESTION..**

How may God use you to strengthen someone who needs your presence, your encouragement? Is God using someone to strengthen and encourage you?

- **Also see P&B encouraging believers to remain...**

✠ True to the faith
encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

- **What did that look like? What were the essentials of the faith P&B taught them, reminded them.**
- **Our greatest clue is the content of Paul's first sermon in P/Antioch. THRU FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST YOU ARE FORGIVEN... RECEIVE A FREEDOM THE LAW – religious performance, moral self-effort, our own righteousness- COULD NEVER BRING.**
- **MESSAGE: We are FREE from having to try to measure up to God, others, selves... through our own SELF EFFORT to be good. We have been set free from PERFORMANCE BASED ACCEPTANCE.**
- **IN CHRIST, God has come to us, redeemed us, loved us, NOT because we deserve it, but because of his GREAT LOVE FOR US.**
- **Interesting note- in Galatians, we see that the church was being tempted to turn back to Religious Law as their means of life- "We will be righteous if we just do all these things"... If you read Galatians 3&4, you hear Paul almost shouting... NO!! WHY would you do that! You have been set free in Christ... WHY would you turn back to these weak and miserable things that will NOT bring freedom.**
- **MAKE NO MISTAKE! God cares about how we live. In the NT we see the moral teaching of God, what our lives will look like as we are CHANGED by our relationship with Jesus. HOW WE LIVE MATTERS.**
- **THAT SAID, The great truth of Life in Christ that resounds throughout the NT, is that our motivation for how we live is NOT religious LEGALISM. NOT LAW.. it is the transforming presence of Christ in us, changing us.**

– **Years later, Paul would write this to church in Rome:**

Romans 7:6 *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

The greatest expression the New Way of the Spirit is how we love people!

Matthew 22:34-40 *Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

Romans 13:8-9 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

1 John 3:23 *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*

– **Ok... moving on... P&B had one more important thing to say.. the truth that in this life...**

† Trouble will come

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,”

- **“kingdom of God” often means ‘everything God is doing- his plan’... here, Paul most likely is pointing to the believers great hope that when this life ends- which it will, what awaits is the FULLNESS of God’s presence & goodness, the fullness of God’s kingdom. BASICALLY, ‘from now until we die... IN THIS LIFE.. we will have trouble- but we have the great hope that this life is NOT all there is.’**
- **What trouble is Paul talking about? To some degree, he’s talking about the difficulty we may face as followers of Christ. Jesus himself said “The world hated me, and as my followers, it will hate you too”.**
- **The bigger picture here is that LIFE CAN BE HARD! We live in a fallen world. Tragic events happen. Not everything bad is result of persecution or spiritual attack, although those things happen.**
- **Paul’s words here, as well as Jesus’, stand in stark contrast to the snake oil being sold by preachers who claim that if you just DO THE RIGHT RELIGIOUS THINGS- give them money- JUST HAVE ENOUGH FAITH- then life will be rainbows and unicorns.**
- **NOTHING in scripture that promises our faith in Christ will exempt us from the hardship’s of life.**
- **What JESUS DID PROMISE, is that when hardship comes, WE ARE NOT ALONE. We are people of FAITH IN GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, and this is a source of hope and perseverance that never fails, even when we do.**

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

- ***If you are in the midst of a storm... IN CHRIST, you are not alone. Come what may, there is HOPE, and there is a source of PEACE.***
- ***MOVING ON... as P&B went into each town, they appointed leaders.... Committing them to the Lord.***

‡ Committed

Acts 14:23 *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

- ***We’ll talk about this more in depth later in Acts- but for now one point.***

Scripture calls believers to raise up Godly leaders for the church. But our trust is not in our leaders- our trust is in God.

- ***Even the best human leaders will disappoint us. But God never will.***

Acts 14:24 *After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.*

- ***Finally, after a long journey, P&B are heading back home. As we read Luke’s closing of this part of the story, we see once again the great recurring theme... everything that had happened was a work of God’s Grace.***
- ***In protestant reformation, 5 great ‘Sola’ statements....***
 - ***Sola scriptura***
 - ***Sola fide***
 - ***Sola Christus***
 - ***Sola Gratia***
 - ***Sola deo Gloria***

‡ ***Sola Gratia- by Grace alone.***

Acts 14:26-28 *From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.*

- ***In his Grace- his presence and provision- God had sent them out. By his grace, God had opened the door for their message. By his Grace, God had brought them home.***

The story of Paul’s first missionary journey is the story of what GOD DID, as He worked through the love, obedience, and trust of His disciples.

- ***God still works this way today. In His Grace, God is working to bring his hope, his life, redemption to the world through faith in Jesus Christ.***
- ***And god DOES THIS WORK... THROUGH US.***

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

– **What have we seen here?**

- ***In Christ, we will never elevate fear and anger over the value of other people.***
- ***We may learn from past experience, but we are LED BY GOD’S LOVE.***
- ***God works in us to strengthen and encourage one another. Let him do that work!***
- ***In Christ we have been set free from legalism and performance based acceptance. We now live/serve, in the NEW WAY of the Spirit- and the greatest expression of the Spirits work in us is how we love one another.***
- ***Trouble will come- but In Christ, we are not alone, through faith, we may know/ experience peace.***
- ***We have human leaders, but our trust is in God.***
- ***In Christ, the foundation of our life- the moving force in all we do, the lens through which we engage the world- is the GRACE OF GOD***