

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

COMPLETION OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY, Acts 14:20b-28

- A. At Derbe (20b-21a), *and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples,*
1. Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel in Derbe.
 - a. Derbe
 - 1) It is on the eastern border of Galatia.
 - 2) It was the most remote of the cities reached by Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey.
 - 3) This was the home of Gaius, one of Paul's later companions (Acts 20:4).
 - b. Thomas Constable, *The larger towns of Antioch and Iconium seem to have produced more influential churches, but the smaller ones of Lystra and Derbe contributed more young men who became leaders.*
 2. Many placed faith in Christ.
 - a. There was little opposition and large number came to faith in Christ.
 - b. They not only preached the Gospel but disciplined those who came to faith.
 - c. It is not known how long they were in Derbe, but it was probably not more than a few months.
 - d. The proclamation of the Gospel will transform lives.
- B. A return visit to Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch (21b-25)
1. Paul and Barnabas encouraged believers in their walks of faith (21b-23), *they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 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. 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.*
 - a. They retraced their steps instead of moving further east.
 - 1) It was only 160 miles to Tarsus, Paul's hometown.
 - 2) Possibly, Paul had spent time ministering in that region while he was in Tarsus before Barnabas took him to Antioch.
 - 3) Probably, Paul was anxious to see how the converts were doing. This leg of the trip had a greater emphasis on discipleship instead of on evangelism.
 - b. Why did they not experience opposition on their return trip?
 - 1) It is believed by some scholars that new magistrates were in office where they had been, so they could pass through those towns safely.
 - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Perhaps we should conclude that on the return trip they confined their ministry exclusively to small groups of believers and therefore did not offend synagogue leaders or influential people in either Gentile or Jewish communities of those cities.*
 - c. Paul and Barnabas disciplined the new believers by strengthening them spiritually.
 - 1) They encouraged them to persevere despite difficult circumstances.
 - a) Tribulations are normal for Christians, 2 Timothy 3:12, *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*
 - b) All Christians will experience tribulations but not the Tribulation.
 - c) Richard Lenski, *The one thought that had to be impressed upon them was that persecution belonged to the normal state of Christians. The world always hates them; moreover, tribulations are to help to develop their strength of faith.*
 - 2) They established church structure.
 - a) Elders were appointed in each church.
 - b) Men had time to demonstrate spiritual growth while Paul and Barnabas were gone.
 - c) Paul clearly set down qualifications for elders in his letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
 - d) William Barclay, *Paul showed that it was his conviction that from the very beginning Christianity must be lived in a fellowship. We are interdependent, not independent.*

- 3) They modeled the importance of prayer.
 - a) They spent time in prayer and fasting with the believers.
 - b) They committed the believers to the Lord.
 - 1] Their faith was placed in the Lord Jesus Christ, not Paul and Barnabas.
 - 2] Their hope for the future is in their living Lord.
 - d. Kenneth Gangel, *These churches of southern Galatia were the likely recipients of the epistle to the Galatians written between the end of the first journey and the Jerusalem Council. When we read Galatians, therefore, we might think about these believers and remember how they came to Christ, enduring opposition from both Jews and Gentiles in the earliest days of their faith.*
2. They preached the Gospel in Perga (24-25), ***Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia,***
- a. They preached the word in Perga where they did not minister on their arrival, note Acts 13:13.
 - b. Perga was the chief city of the province of Pamphylia.
 - c. It is estimated that the first missionary journey lasted about eighteen months.
 - d. The Christian life is not trouble free but worth the commitment.
- C. Back to Syrian Antioch (26-28)
1. A reminder that the church at Antioch sent them and supported their work (26), ***and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.***
 - a. The Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work.
 - b. The church at Antioch partnered with them by *commending them to the grace of God.*
 - 1) They affirmed the call by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) They committed to praying that the grace of God would be sufficiently supplied to them and their work.
 - 3) William Barclay, *Paul and Barnabas never thought that it was their strength or their power which had achieved anything. They spoke of what God had done with them. . . . We will begin to have the right idea of Christian service when we work, not for our own honor or prestige, but only from the conviction that we are tools in the hand of God.*
 - c. The work to which they were called was completed, at least, their first journey.
 2. They gave a report on their missionary efforts (27), ***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.***
 - a. The first missionary journey covered about 1,400 miles by land and sea, and lasted between 1 and 2 years.
 - b. The message of the Gospel went directly to Gentiles for the first time.
 - 1) Their ministry would be affirmed at the Jerusalem Council.
 - 2) The Gospel clearly proclaimed that Christ is received by faith alone in His person and work.
 - 3) God opened doors which confirmed His blessing on the message and the work.
 - 4) The wall between Jews and Gentiles was demolished, note Ephesians 2:14-16, *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
 3. They remained for a period of time in Antioch (28), ***And they remained no little time with the disciples.***
 - a. Such an arduous trip must have put great strain on their bodies, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
 - b. God always gives the ability and strength to allow a person to do what He calls him to do.
 - c. They stayed in Antioch for less than one year.
 - d. Paul wrote the Book of Galatians from Antioch at this time.

CONCLUSION

- A. Kenneth Gangel notes places in chapter 14 that should encourage us.
 - 1. *Speaking boldly for the Lord (verse 3).*
 - 2. *Gratitude for God's common grace (verse 17).*
 - 3. *Inevitability of hardship when proclaiming the Gospel (verse 22).*
 - 4. *Joy in hearing reports of God's faithful work in and through missionaries on furlough (verse 27).*
- B. The Gospel became known as a message of eternal hope for all people.
 - 1. Thomas Constable, *The fact that God had granted salvation to Gentiles equally with Jews simply by faith in Christ would have been of special interest to Luke's early readers. This new phenomenon had taken place before on the Gaza Road, in Caesarea, and in Syrian Antioch. However now large numbers of Gentile converts were entering the church without first becoming Jewish proselytes.*
 - 2. In a short period of them, a council in Jerusalem would meet and affirm what had taken place on the First Missionary Journey.

A VIEW OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- A. Opposition follows those who seek to serve God.
- B. Persistence is a necessary gift for spiritual ministry.
- C. One must be willing to use different methods but never change the message.
- D. The Gospel demands a response because it is divisive.
- E. Gospel messengers are called to faithfulness with God producing results because spiritual ministry is His work.
- F. Cross-cultural ministry requires those willing to go and those who will support those who do go.
- G. Missionary work is not just evangelism but discipleship, as well.
- H. The message of the Gospel is all about Jesus Christ Who alone gives access to God.