

ACTS 14:21-28 FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUES: THE MINISTRY OF CONFIRMATION

While in the vicinity of Lystra-Derbe, the Apostle Paul most likely stayed in the home of Lois and Eunice, the Grandmother and Mother respectively of Timothy, all of whom received the Gospel at this time (compare Acts 16:1, II Tim. 1:5, 3:15). Here Paul decides that he and Barnabas should retrace their steps rather than continue on the road that led directly to Antioch of Syria, their home base (through the Cilician Gates, through Tarsus, etc.).

14:21-23 The Missionary Heart: Confirming, Exhorting, Stabilizing Believers

v. 21a Fulfilling the Great Commission in Derbe

“after preaching the Gospel” - εὐαγγελίζομαι/euaggelizomai (aorist active participle)

“after discipling many” (KJV, “taught many”) – μαθητεύω/matheteuo (aorist active participle)

Paul and Barnabas were not superficial in their approach, they followed-up the Gospel with doctrinal truth that would anchor the believers in the faith.

v. 21b Operation Perseverance: “they returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Pisidia).”

Remember, they had been forcefully expelled from these cities, Paul even stoned and left for dead at Lystra. Why did they return? See v. 22.

v. 22,23 Operation Confirmation: The CONFIRMATION THAT COUNTS! Note four things that Luke highlights in verses 22 and 23.

1. Need for Strengthening: “they returned (with the purpose of) confirming* the souls of the disciples”

*episterizo = to render more firm, to stabilize, to strengthen. Paul purposefully returned to these cities to settle, confirm and strengthen the believers in the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ. As then, so now.

2. Means of Strengthening: “by exhorting them to abide in the faith.”

Young believers need encouragement; Paul sought to meet that need. Remember, he and Barnabas had to leave these places very suddenly, and he left with great concern for them. He now follows –up on that concern (see I Thess. 3:1-8 for an clear expression of Paul’s passionate concern for believers).

3. Testing of the Faith: “that through many tribulations (stresses, afflictions) it is necessary* for us to enter the Kingdom of God.”

*δεῖ/dei = logical necessity, the inherent result of the nature of things (used 25 times in Acts).

The point is this – by virtue of the fact that the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, is now rejected by the world system, his subjects should expect similar treatment; the same idea as “the cross before the crown” as in Rom. 8:17, II Thess. 1:5; II Tim. 2:12. The Church is in the Kingdom, but the Church is not the Kingdom. The universal rule of God receives antagonistic responses from unbelievers; followers of the Lord will receive similar responses.

(OVER)

4. Method for Continued Leadership (Elders):

- ***“they (Paul and Barnabas) appointed (KJV, ordained) elders (plural)”***
- ***“to them”*** – to the believers in each city
- ***“in every assembly (church)”*** – Each church was autonomous; each responsible for its own government; each had its own elders to guide.

How do the Baptists interpret this verse? Does this square with scripture?

- ***“and after praying with fasting; they (Paul and Barnabas) committed them (the elders and the believers) unto the Lord on whom they believed (perfect active indicative).”***

14:24-46 End of the First Missionary Journey

Paul and Barnabas slowly work their way back through the provinces of Pisidia and Pamphylia (south), then on to the city of Perga preaching the gospel as they travelled. We are not told of any responses. From the seaport town of Attalia, they embark by ship for Antioch of Syria where their journey has originated. Luke highlights the original commitment of the church to the grace of God!

14:27-28 Report to the Church at Antioch

This was a momentous occasion for all concerned!

- The report was to the entire assembly, not just the elders. Since the journey took minimally 2 years, there was much to cover.
- The report magnified what God had done with Paul and Barnabas.
- The report gave God the glory for opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.

FOUR CLEAR RESULTS OF PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

1. The heathen in large numbers in Graeco-Roman cities were very open to the Gospel.
2. Spreading the Gospel in the Graeco-Roman world was not without severe opposition, most at this time from antagonistic Jews who resisted the gospel of grace.

Did some of the persecutions and trials mentioned in II Cor. 11:23-33 happen on this journey? See also II Tim. 3:10,11.

3. Paul emerged as the chief spokesman and leader of missionary activity among the Gentiles.
4. The legitimacy of Paul’s mission and message to these Gentiles will be called into question at the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15.