

ACTS 14:21-28 - 15:1

A. *Paul and Barnabas began to **retrace** their steps.

1. Up to this time, when persecution came, Paul and Barnabas left. They shook the dust off their feet and

Acts 14:21-23 - And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Acts 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. Acts 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.

that pronounced judgment upon the rejecters. But here Paul does exactly the opposite and goes right back into the city that had just **stoned** him!

*From here on (II Cor. 11), it is as if Paul had a suicidal complex or **no** fear of death. Paul had a different perspective on life since he had been called up into **paradise**!

2. The first time through these cities, Paul did the work of an evangelist. He brought a number to faith in Christ and the gospel. Now, as he returns back to his home base, he had **not** forgotten all the new converts. They took steps to strengthen these babes in Christ so that they might endure the **satanic** evil system directed toward members of the Body of Christ.

3. Up to this point, Paul had shared the gospel of grace and especially how it dealt with the Jews. God's "now" grace gospel (not Law) indicted the Jews for their persistent rebellion and rejection of this **new** gospel.

*Not only had they rejected the Little Flock's prophetic kingdom message and offer, but now, they have also rejected Paul's new mystery gospel of grace message - **double** judging them!

4. But Paul here was focusing on not just provoking Israel to **jealousy**, but also showing the Gentiles that God was doing something special with them.

* So, as Paul goes back to these converts, he is edifying them and **firmly** establishing them in their faith and belief of Pauline truth (sound **doctrine**).

a) [Confirming the souls] was to stabilize them so that they would not be **shaken** when their faith would be attacked by the enemy of truth. Paul warns them that it is not always going to be easy, but tribulation is a **part** of the journey. Trouble is always coming to those who are in Christ - from Satan, their flesh, and the world's evil policy (II Cor. 4:4).

b. Galatians 1:4 - Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Colossians 2:4-7 - And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. Col. 2:5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. Col. 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Col. 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

*When one gets saved, that is not the end. It is the end of the old life, but it is the beginning of the new life that needs to be fed scriptural truth (Eph. 4:22-24). Doctrine is never to be separated from practice, nor vice versa.

- (1) Note: Romans 1:11-12 - For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; Rom. 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

*Paul wants believers to have the same mutual dispensational doctrine that can establish them. We are to stand on the same foundation of understanding.

- (2) Romans 16:25-26 - Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, Rom. 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

*Paul says we are to be "stablished":

one - [my gospel] - gospel of grace (D.B.R. alone)

two - [and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest...for the obedience of faith:]

**This goes with our church's purpose:

I Timothy 2:4 - Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5. In verse 22 [...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.]

- a. Paul is teaching that it is natural, the world being what it is, that believers will suffer as they live for Christ. God permits this to take place to help mature us and to keep us separate from the world.

II Thessalonians 1:4-6 - Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 1Thess. 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 1Thess. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

- b. When Paul mentions in verse 22 the "kingdom of God", he is not talking about the kingdom on earth that was preached by the 12. A literal earthly kingdom is true in the O.T., Four Gospels, and early Acts. But Paul's reference here about the kingdom of God is referring to the spiritual kingdom of God - the spiritual calling of believers to form the Church Body.

Romans 14:17 - For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

*As with Israel needing to be spiritually reborn, likewise we believers need to be spiritually born to enter into the spiritual world-kingdom of God.

Israel - John 3:3, 5 - Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Body - Colossians 1:13-14 - Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: Col. 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

- c. Also, the "kingdom of God" includes everything that is under God's rule and authority over **every** dispensation.
6. In verse 23, in order to help the believers to continue their growth, Paul appoints and ordains leaders in the churches to oversee the spiritual welfare of the assemblies. *It could be that Paul presided over formal elections and then he appointed the men elders by **vote** of the people.

**After fasting and prayer, Paul turns them over into the Lord's hands.

- a. Paul **often** fasted (I Cor. 7; II Cor. 6, 11). During the Dispensation of Grace, it is not a legislated religious rite as it was with Israel under Law (Lev. 23).
- b. Notice "the doctrine of devils" is to make fasting mandatory and **ritualistic**.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 - Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 1Tim. 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 1Tim. 4:3 Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

- c. But fasting can be good in a **voluntary** way. Note: Matthew 4:1-2 - [Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Matt. 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.]

*Jesus' 40 days and 40 nights were not commanded in the scriptures, thus it was not a religious rite or ritual.

- d. Fasting's meaning given to us about Paul:

- (1) It is a voluntary abstinence of **food**, for a time, in order to give attention to something special with the purpose to accomplish a specific outcome. It is a voluntarily chosen action on the part of the believer, in hopes of making a **proper** decision. One's mindset is totally focused upon God and the situation.
- (2) * The believers here were praying with much **intensity** about what was going on concerning
* the election of the elders, and that had their complete attention to complete this task for
* their church. Nothing else at **that** moment was as important (not even food).

B. Paul and Barnabas return to their home-sending church at Antioch.

Acts 14:24-28 - And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Acts 14:25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: Acts 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. Acts 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. Acts 14:28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

1. As Paul and Barnabas continue their retracing, encouraging, and teaching those who had been saved, they help appoint leaders in the churches. They, after a long journey, finally make it home to Antioch, from where they had been **sent**. As the church is called together to hear about Paul's and Barnabas' missionary journey, they are told how wonderful God had been to them - what a **reunion**!
2. Don't miss the **important** truth here. It is not just that God had saved some Gentiles. But the important thing here is that Gentiles are being saved entirely **apart** from Israel's covenants and promises.

****Remember:** Ephesians 2:11-13 - [Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; Eph. 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

*This was the first time Israel, as a nation, was turned away and the door was open to the Gentiles. From now on, the Jew must come in on the **same** basis (Gospel of Grace) as the Gentiles, entirely **apart** from their covenant privilege or favoritism.

3. It is also significant that Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and **not** to Jerusalem. Antioch, in Gentile territory, was now the base or **center** of operations. This again shows the transition taking place and proves again that their ministry was separate and **different** from the 12.

*Paul's commission to go to the nations - Gentiles had already begun to **supersede** the 12's commission.

Acts 9:15 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

4. As we have seen from the Jewish-led persecution, the Israelites have wanted to keep this door of grace salvation **closed** and would not enter themselves!

*As Paul and Barnabas have shared about their missionary ministry, they now take a furlough to **rest** up before going on another journey.

C.

The Council At Jerusalem: 1. As Paul and Barnabas rested, certain Jewish men came to Antioch and began teaching that the Gentile believers could not be saved **unless** they had been **circum-**

Acts 15:1 - And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

cised according to the Law of Moses.

*These Jewish men were not **un**regenerate sinners, but believers in the resurrected Messiah (vs. 5, 24, Little Flock). These faithful Jews, who loved God, were **con**fused over a great multitude of Gentiles coming to faith without circumcision. In their minds they could not understand, "How could this be, it has never been this way before?"

2. Understand that for **1500** years, Israel had lived as the only channel to salvation and part of that was the **covenant** of circumcision.

Genesis 17:11-14 - And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen. 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed. Gen. 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Gen. 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Exodus 12:48 - And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

Ezekiel 44:9 - Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel.

John 7:22 - Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

Luke 2:21-22 - And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

- a. * It must have been a shock for these Jerusalem believers to hear that circumcision was **no** longer * necessary and that the Gentiles, uncircumcised, could enter into a spiritual relationship with * Christ. It can't be!
 - b. These believing Judaizers were not **un**scriptural - they were **undispensational**! What they knew and taught could be found in scripture, or taught by the 12. However, they did not know the **further** revelation given to Paul. New revelation (**progressively** given) **super**sedes.
3. These Jewish men, by doing/saying this in verse 1, were trying to bring those saved by pure grace of the gospel **back** under the Law and kingdom program to Israel. That would pervert the true and only gospel that saved (Gal. 1:6-9).
 4. To add further insult to truth, what they were **im**plying was putting Paul's apostleship and commission **up for question**!
 5. Also, this problem came about because these Jerusalem believers, with**out** approval or instruction, took upon themselves to go to Antioch to **cor**rect Paul's message of grace alone for salvation.

Acts 15:24 - Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment: