**The Outsiders:** Four Essential Perspectives For Perseverance

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| 01.17-18.15 | MHC | Acts 14:8-28 | You must have F, C, D and I to persevere | 30 Min |

**Introduction:**

Attn: Dar Merrill – a man that was faithful until the end. Perseverance in faith.

Relv: We all want our life to count; no one wants to waist life; only 1 life; search for signif

Them: **My life endurance statement: A long obedience in the same direction.**

* **1 Peter 1:3-8** (read)—a statement about the virtues necessary to make it for the long-haul. He gave us the **power** needed for endurance in **godliness** and to know Him.

Struct: **We will follow Paul’s first Missionary Journey.** 4 Essentials for Perseverance

**Read Acts 14:8-18 on Page 923.** Take a bible with you if you don’t have one.

1. **FAITH to trust God with the outcome (8-10)**

* **Lystra, 18 miles to the southwest of Iconium**. It was a rather insignificant village, yet a safe place with people—all the cared about was reaching ppl w/ the Gospel.
* **Left Iconium b/c of danger of being stoned**. Not a sin to avoid persecution, only wrong to crumble under it. They kept preaching the good news (3x – vv. 7, 15, 21)
* **Crippled man was enthralled with Paul’s preaching**:
  + Notice the severity of his crippling: (1) **No movement in his feet,** (2) **Crippled from birth**, (3) **Had never walked.** No wonder this was amazing!
  + Then suddenly at Paul’s command, “**sprung up and began walking**” is amazing! Don’t pass too quickly; this is a true miracle, only enabled by faith.
  + In Acts and in Gospels it is almost **always necessary for faith to be present**.
  + The man had a choice: Paul told him to “**Get up**” and **he immediately jumped to his feet.** His faith was made clear by his quick obedience.
* The man’s faith and Paul’s faith stands out to me: **there was no hesitation in obeying the prompting of God.** Paul “Looked intently at him and saw faith.”
  + An outflow of Paul’s faith was to notice other’s needs more than his own agenda, popularity or safety. No thought of “this may be weird” or “What if…”
  + The man got up without hesitation: This kind of faith is necessary in all of us.

App: **It is not that we need great faith; we need faith in a great God**.

1. **COURAGE to keep the faith in the face of trial or danger (11-18)**

* P&B had courage to: (1) not take credit, (2) call them to the Gospel, (3) face death
* V. 11 - There was **immediate amazement** by all the people that saw this miracle. Their amazement made them praise as the knew, see them as a god and not a man.
* We are told that they cried out in **Lycaonian.** Luke mentioned this for two reasons:

1. Paul and Barnabas were **now reaching different people with the Gospel**.
2. They **probably didn’t understand what was happening** and how the people were praising them until v 14 when they tried to sacrifice to them.

* **Being called god was something to take serious**: rmmr what happened to Herod
  + **Zues** OR **Jupiter** **–** the greatest of the Greek gods, father of other gods & men.
  + **Hermes** OR **Mercury**– this was the son of Zues (by Maia) and was know for being the messenger of the gods because of his eloquence.
  + Some believe that they may have thought **Barnabas was Zues**, perhaps because of his size and stature and that **Paul was Hermes because of his eloquence**.
* The oxen they brought would have been adorned with garments, plants, garlands etc. ready to be scarified. **You can almost imagine the scene**. Finally P and B clue in:
* Paul and Barnabas **tore their garments** as a sign of seriousness to the devastation of their soul that they were being considered gods. No accepting it, glory only to God.
* R**ushing out into the crowd** was a way to say, we are common, just like you. Don’t count us as divine; we are simply trying to show you God. High plc to common plc.

**Courage to preach the Gospel:** (Courage is grace under pressure - Hemmingway)

**In verse 15 Paul began to speak to the people, he was doing two things:**

1. He is calling them to leave the **vain things** and turn to a **living God.**
2. Then he starts with the basics about God – Genesis 1:1 kind of things.

Vs 16 - God **allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways** but now he was calling all men to believe in the gospel. This is now all men would be held on account for faith.

* Notice his courage and cleared-headed thoughts: in v 17 Paul makes a case for God’s goodness and said that is was **satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.** He uses the common grace to call them to Gospel. Similar to **Romans 1:20-23** (read)

**Courage to face their enemies:**

Vs 18 - **Jews came from Antioch and Iconium** to hunt down the Apostles and make sure they were stopped. They would have traveled over 100 miles (161 km) to get there

* ILL: This is the **same distance from south side of Denver to Pueblo**. No flights, greyhounds, train, car, bike or taxi. 4 marathon lengths. Dedicated opposition.

App: **What do you do when life falls apart?** Freak out or face the problem? Dad landing w/o gear | hear as kid | Wheels | Freak out or land? **Faith enables courage**

Read Acts 14:19-22

1. **DETERMINATION to overcome obstacles and opposition (19-22)**

**The perfect storm started to brew**: the local pagans were now being offended b/c they did not accepting the sacrifice, and the out-of-town Jews wanting to shut them down.

* They **stoned** Paul b/c he was the primary mouthpiece of the missionary duo. Paul referred to this later in 2 Cor 11:25, saying “Once **I was stoned**.”
* What a crazy turn of attitude in the crowd – they go from wanting to praise him and sacrifice to him to now stoning him and wanting him dead. Wow.
* The stoning would have so brutal that they could see no sign of life in Paul. **They even supposed that he was dead.** They **dragged him out of the city** to die.

The **disciples gathered about him** and wiped the blood, prayed and cared for him. The disciples would have been the small contingency of believers that were there in Lystra. They were risking caring for a man that had just been stoned. They prayed and Paul stood

* ILL: this has “Unbroken” feel to it. Like the story of **Louie Zamperini** in “Unbroken”— showed determination and God’s favor on His life.
* He gest up the next day and just starts walking with Barnabas to the next city of **Derbe.** Remember, he was supposed dead ness than 24 hours previously.
  + Derbe, 60 miles south from Iconium. Farthest point in Paul’s 1st journey.
  + They saw great fruit of their preaching **the Gospel** in Derbe: **many disciples**.

**BUT GET THIS DETERMINATION**, after doing fruitful ministry in Derbe they returned to **Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.** These were the cities that stoned him (Lystra) or threatened to (Iconium) or where he Jewish leaders came from (Antioch).

* **It is amazing that he went back to the place where he faced great persecution**. It showed that he had (1) guts – courage, and (2) he trusted that God was protecting his life and would take it when it was to be taken.
* **Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Christian life is promised to be a comfortable one.** There will be “Trials of many kind” 🡪 we must have F, C and D.
* **PER – SEVERE**: Prefix, *per*, means “Through” coupled with *Severe.*

**As he traveled, his mission was to preach to the lost and encourage the saved**. No surprise that the disciples encourage them **to continue in the faith** and to accepted fact that **they would go through many tribulations** to enter **the kingdom of God.**

* They understood that the **kingdom of God** was their reward for faithfulness.
* But also that following Christ was not easy. They preached: “No cross, no crown”
* Similar to what Paul wrote to Timothy, “**[11] The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; [12] if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; [13] if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.” — 2 Timothy 2:11-13**

APP: Let me be clear about something – Paul and the Bible doesn’t paint a picture that following Christ is going to be nothing but marshmallows and gummy bears.

* AS he traveled, he was not giving a prosperity message or a “Your Best Life Now” message (by Joel Osteen). It was more like, “Your Worst Life Now…but just wait.” Their hope was not in this world but in the things to come. They held to the presence of God in this life, but were excited to be with him for all of eternity.

(trans) They accepted call to discipleship: follow JC and pass on the faith – intentional.

Read Acts 14:23-28

1. **INTENTIONALITY to invest in other and multiple our faith (23)**

* V.23 - One of the greatest ways they encouraged believers was to make provisions of leadership for them. Ill: Prayer and passing the BATON in my life. Same thing here.
  + They were **committed to the Lord** after much **prayer and fasting.** The installation of church leadership was taken very seriously, as it should be.
  + They invested intentionally in leaders so the church would continue to multiply.

vv. 24-28: Their travel and return for the missionary report to those who sent them:

* **Luke is good at mentioning where they got on and off of land** and in order to give points of ref for their journey. 1st missionary journey of Paul (use your maps!)
* **The church was probably very excited to see Paul and Barnabas** return. Most likely this was **about a year after they had sent them**.
* **It should be noted the key of their meeting was praising God** for what He did.

**The Outcomes of our Efforts Belong to God**

* **Everything we do is unto the Lord**: Pastor, plumber or pediodontist – we all work for God and trust him with the outcome and give him praise for accomplishments

Grace in our life (26)

The grace they were given is refereeing to the commissioning in 13:2, “**[2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2 ESV)**

Salvation of the lost (27)

The idea of God **opened a door** for the Gentile believers was an expression Paul used elsewhere (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). This is a gracious statement of God to those who were once far from him.

Praise for His work (27)

Conclusion: If you are going to live **a long obedience in the same direction**, and hear, “Well done, Good and faithful Servant, you may enter the joy of your master” then you must have FAITH, COURAGE, DETERMINATION and INTENTIONALITY.

Communion: The Gospel is our hope, our strength and our reward.