

Call to Worship: Psalm 31:23-24

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Sermon: "Continue in the Faith" Acts 14:19-22

Benediction: Galatians 6:9

Acts 14:19-22 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. (20) However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. (21) And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Today we see how believers in Jesus Christ are pressured to abandon the faith, to fall away from following Christ. Those who have said they are Christians are pressured to deny that profession, to show by their falling away that they never really did love the Lord Jesus. But we also see how the Lord graciously provides for Christians to be strengthened, so that instead of falling away, we may continue in the faith.

I. Pressure to Abandon the Christian Faith Can Be Extreme (verse 19)

A. The same people who used to embrace Paul in nationality and religion became his enemies (verse 19)

1. Paul was a fellow Israelite with these people, and he used to be one of the leaders of their corrupt religion; remember that he was a zealous Pharisee
2. As long as Paul was with these people in their corrupt religion, they loved him
3. But when he came to see his religion as corrupt and insufficient, and came to trust in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, and when he preached to them that their old religion was corrupt, they treated him as an enemy
4. They had run him out of their cities, but were not then content; instead, they followed Paul and Barnabas to cause them trouble

B. The same people who had wanted to worship him as a god formed a mob and stoned him

1. When Paul and Barnabas seemed to affirm them in their false religion, they treated them as gods
2. But when they preached that their religion was all wrong, and that they needed to worship the one true God, they turned on them

C. Paul's enemies and those they persuaded went all the way to killing him

D. They so despised Paul that having stoned him to death, they dragged him out of the city and left him

E. APPLICATION

1. How strongly have you felt the pressure to abandon the Christian faith, to turn your back on the Lord Jesus Christ? This pressure is like salsa, in that it comes in mild, medium, and hot.
2. You don't know what degree of pressure you will feel during your life; Paul and Barnabas lived for several years in the happy, comfortable fellowship of the church in Antioch, and the pressure to abandon the faith was extra mild; but when they were sent off to do the Lord's work as missionaries, they felt the pressure get very hot

II. The Lord Provides Means By Which a Christian May Continue in the Faith (there are more, but here are two)

A. The example of Christ's apostles

1. Paul got up and went right back into the city (20a)
2. the very next day he and Barnabas went on to the next city (20b)
3. they continued doing the very thing that had gotten Paul stoned
 - a. that is, they preached the gospel (21a)
 - b. because this is what Christ commanded them to do
 - c. and because this is what people need
 - d. in this city things were different
 - i. many people became disciples of Jesus Christ (21b)
 - ii. there was no persecution
5. they so cared about their fellow Christians that they risked their lives to strengthen them (21c-22a)
6. APPLICATION: How do you receive this kind of strengthening?
 - a. from the reading and studying of the scriptures, where their example is recorded
 - b. from seeing how other Christians live, as they follow the example of Christ's apostles

B. The teaching of Christ's apostles

1. "continue in the faith"
2. "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." Why?
 - a. It is a gracious gift of God to us that we may see something of how perfectly good He is; for us to see that, He has allowed the devil, the world, and our flesh to become very, very bad; the more we suffer the opposition to our faith in Christ from the devil, from the world, and from our own flesh, the more we will know the goodness of God, and so love Him and worship Him

 - b. It is a strong temptation for us to love this world and the things of this world instead of loving our Lord Jesus Christ; when this world is treating us well, and we have what we want of the things of the world, our love for the world is reinforced; but when this world treats us badly, and when the things of this world break down, or when we can't get what we want of the world's things, the Lord is turning the affection of our hearts away from the world and to Himself
3. APPLICATION: How do we receive this kind of strengthening?
 - a. from the reading and studying of the scriptures, where the apostles' teaching is recorded

Paul's countrymen, with whom he had shared a corrupt, insufficient religion, had stoned him
But foreigners, who were fellow believers in Christ, gathered around him
God gave Paul the strength to rise up from his horrible ordeal

God gave Paul the fortitude to go right back into the city
Paul and Barnabas left that place, but only to go to work in another place

Verse 21-22

JRY:

When Paul and Barnabas went to the next city, what do you suppose their method was?

-of course it was the same as always---they preached the gospel

In Derbe, they were able to make many disciples

Then they passed through the cities they had visited previously to strengthen the new disciples

They exhorted the disciples to continue in the faith

-We are entering the kingdom of God through faith in Christ

-But the way into it is through many tribulations

-Then we will enter it

Poole:

being by the power of God suddenly restored to his strength again.