

Challenges Happen when the Training Wheels are Removed 14:21-15:11

vs. 21, Derbe -> preached the gospel and made many disciples.
Each place people are responding to the good news!

Paul and Barnabas make a strategic and intentional decision to retrace their steps. They understood and accepted the risk.

Lystra - Iconium - Pisidian Antioch

- They love the church.
- They love to reflect on the movement of the gospel.
- They love to share stories of good news reflecting the glory of God.
- They are a champion of joy.

vs. 22, Strengthening the disciples by encouraging them.

- Continue in the faith.
- Hardships are normal and expected.
- The kingdom of God is worth every obstacle.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. **13** Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,

vs. 23, Communities of faith had been started and were growing. House churches were scattered throughout the region. It was necessary for leaders (elders) to be appointed.

Proverbs 29:18 Without revelation (vision) people run wild,
but one who follows divine instruction will be happy.

Administer / Care / Lead

Prayer is involved. Laying on of hands (trust, commissioning, connection).

The Spirit empowers the church.

Jesus is Lord. He calls, equips, gifts, warns, rebukes, and encourages.

Side Note: The assumption is that elders consisted of local leadership who already had the trust of their community (age & wisdom).

What stories had been shared? What habits had been modeled?

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. **44** Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

- This is the good news. The age to come has begun. Jesus is alive. He has ascended into heaven and he intercedes (Romans 8:34) as our advocate (1 John 2:1) with the Father.
- This is followed by kingdom living (common life, prayer, breaking of bread).

Question: Is your daily faith experience (your relationship with Jesus) characterized by truth, prayer, and breaking of bread? Are you experiencing the joy of commonality in the beauty of diversity?

To be a **person of the good news** means.

1. I trust Jesus because I know I have sinned.
2. I trust Jesus because the very best moral instruction or religious system will not free me from sin.
3. I trust Jesus because God has spent centuries putting into place a reliable provision for forgiveness only found in Jesus.
4. I trust Jesus because he is God.
5. I trust Jesus because of the resurrection.
6. I trust Jesus because it can't be earned, it is the grace of God.
7. I trust Jesus because I have everything to gain if I do and everything to lose if I don't.

God's generosity is on display!

11:23 When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts,

13:43 After the synagogue had been dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking with them and urging them to continue in the grace of God.

vs. 24-26, More travel and eventually arrive in Syrian Antioch

vs. 27, Listen to these stories of transformation.

- Your prayers were answered.
- The power of God moved and worked.
- Hearts, minds, and bodies were healed.
- The door of faith has been opened to the Gentiles.

Romans 3:30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

15:1-5, Controversy, questions, more travel, more encouragement, more joy, followed by controversy.

vs. 5, Believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees.

- Circumcision matters because Moses said so (1500 years ago).
- And it started with Abraham (2000 years ago).
- People have given their lives to keep the laws and customs.
- This is the mark of God's people.
- This is the sign of the covenant. Do you not read your bible (Torah)?

Question: What is your posture in moments of strong opinions? Are you active in becoming a learner, a seeker of truth, and an individual who seeks understanding? Are you resistant to change? Do you seek and value the wisdom and perspective of others (who view the world differently)?

We are not going rogue. This has been the plan of God all along!

vs. 7-11, Peter -> I have experienced this paradigm shift.

- God allowed me the privilege of encountering Cornelius and his household.
- God showed his approval by giving them the Holy Spirit. He made no distinction between us and them.
- Hearts are cleansed by faith.
- Do not add to the work of Christ.
- We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus. (vs. 11)

We can not meet the requirements of the law. Salvation is through grace by the work of Jesus! (Romans 7:4-6)

Question: How is each breath you take, each thought you ponder, each decision you make, each conversation you have, each moment you serve by grace through faith?

Not only are we good news people. We are grace people and faith people.

In case you care: Chronology

- 3 years after Paul's conversion he travels to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18). All agree this is discussed in Acts 9:26-30.
- After 14 years Paul returns to Jerusalem along with Barnabas and Titus (Galatians 2:1).
- According to Luke's narrative in Acts, when did this happen? Many scholars, archaeologists, and historians connect Acts 11:30 to this visit fitting with Galatians 2:2 (according to a revelation / Agabus famine prediction). In addition, the meeting with recognized leaders was private.
- Following this timing means that Galatians was written before the Jerusalem counsel in Acts 15. It also gives us stories associated with the Galatians (the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe).
- The agitators would have come in quickly after Paul had left them.
- Toward the end of the considerable time spent (vs. 28) Peter showed up (Galatians 2:11).
- Which means that Acts 15 was Paul's third visit to Jerusalem.