



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: Broken and Sent

Date: 7/12/2026

Big Idea: God uses what broke you to build someone else up.

At the end of his first missionary journey, Paul makes a deliberate decision that reveals everything about how God works. From Derbe, there was a shorter road home that bypassed every city where he had faced opposition. He does not take it. Instead he turns back through Lystra - where he was stoned and left for dead - then through Iconium, then through Pisidian Antioch. The reason is right there in Acts 14:22: to strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith. Three things Paul does in this passage show us how God uses what breaks us to build others up.

He Went Back for Them

In every city Paul returns to, there are new believers living under the same hostility that nearly killed him. They are young in their faith, under real pressure, without much support. Paul understands that turning to Jesus is the beginning, not the finish line. So he goes back - not from a safe distance, not talking theoretically about hardship. He has personally experienced the cost of the mission in those exact places. He knows what Lystra feels like. When he shows up to strengthen these believers, he is not handing them a pamphlet. He is handing them himself - a man who has already been through what they are facing and kept going.

Jesus told Peter in [Luke 22:31-32](#) that after being sifted, Jesus prayed that Peter would turn and strengthen his brothers. The sequence matters: sifted, sustained, then sent to strengthen others. The breaking was part of the preparation. [2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#) puts it plainly - God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. The question this puts in front of you: what have you been through that you have been treating as something to get past, when God may intend to use it to reach someone else?

He Prepared Them to Endure

Paul does not sugarcoat what awaits them. **Acts 14:22** records his words: **we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God**. He is not saying suffering earns salvation - he is saying that for those already in the kingdom, **the road through this world includes real difficulty**. That is not a sign something went wrong. That is just the road. If you are new to following Jesus and things have gotten harder since you started - if relationships are more complicated, if standing for what you believe is costing you something - that does not mean you made a mistake. Jesus told his disciples plainly that in this world they would have trouble. Then Paul goes further. Verse 23 says he appointed elders in each church and committed them to the Lord. You do not build organizational structure into something you expect to collapse. Appointing elders reveals confidence - it says this community is real and it is going to continue. Paul is not just trying to keep these people alive short term. He is setting them up to keep standing after he is gone. And then he releases them. He commits them to the Lord - an intentional act of trust - because the church does not survive on his effort. It belongs to Jesus.

He Gave God the Glory

Acts 14:27 closes the loop on the entire first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, gather the church, and give their report. And notice how they frame it - they reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Not look what we built. Not look what we survived. God did this. God opened the door. That word opened matters - a door God opens is not something you force or manufacture. People did not reason themselves into the kingdom. The missionaries did not construct the perfect argument.

God opened the door and people walked through. But he opened it through people willing to go, willing to suffer for doing good (1 Peter 3:17), and willing to go back into hard places for someone else's faith. God's sovereignty and his people's obedience are not in competition here. God opens, his people walk through. God builds, his people serve. And then they come home and give God all the credit. The big idea - God uses what broke you to build someone else up - is not really about you. It is about what God does through you when you are willing to go back.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Paul deliberately went back through cities where he had been opposed and nearly killed. What does that kind of intentional return say about how he understood his calling - and what does it challenge in the way you respond to difficulty?**
- 2. Second Corinthians 1:3-4 says God comforts us so we can comfort others with that same comfort. Is there something you have walked through that you have been treating as something to get past rather than something God wants to use? What would it look like to bring that into your ministry to others?**
- 3. Paul told the new believers they would face many hardships on the road of following Jesus. How does that kind of honesty - rather than promising ease - actually strengthen faith rather than discourage it?**
- 4. Paul appointed elders and then committed the churches to the Lord. He did the work and then released the outcome to God. Where in your life do you need to do the same - work faithfully and then trust God with what you cannot control?**
- 5. Paul and Barnabas came home and reported what God had done - not what they had accomplished. How do you stay in the habit of giving God credit rather than taking it, especially when you have worked hard and things have gone well?**