

ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

MISSION COMPLETED - HEADING HOME



Acts Series #32

Acts 14:21-28

Message #32

“MISSION COMPLETED – GOING HOME” (Acts 14:21-28)

This passage brings a close to what is commonly called Paul’s “First Missionary Journey”. Seeing it is a little while since we touched bases with Paul and Barnabas, let’s just quickly refresh our memories.....



In **Acts 13** we see Paul and Barnabas (along with John Mark) commissioned by the church in (Syrian) Antioch for an evangelistic mission. They set sail for Cyprus where they proclaimed the Gospel throughout the island. They then sailed to Perga (where John Mark left them) and then they travelled to (Pisidian) Antioch.

In Antioch the message they preached had great impact; so much so that the leaders of the city stirred up opposition to them and they were kicked out of the city. They then moved on to Iconium (**Acts 14**) where they boldly proclaimed Christ as the Messiah. They fled from Iconium when they heard of a plot to kill them.

From Iconium they went to Lystra. Here, once again, Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the Gospel boldly and with a miraculous healing. This healing (**Acts 14:8-10**) resulted in the population of Lystra thinking they were two of their gods come to visit them which, in turn, gave Paul and Barnabas further opportunity to witness to the one true God (**14:14-18**). However, antagonists from Antioch and Iconium caught up with them and turned the people of Lystra against them. So agitated were they that they stoned Paul and left him for dead outside the city. Thankfully, the believers in Lystra assisted him back into the city and he recovered and rested there.

Then Luke simply says “The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.” (**Acts 14:20**). And that’s where we pick up the story once again.

Read ACTS 14:21-28

Luke doesn’t say much about their time in Derbe, except that they preached the Gospel and that many people became disciples (followers of Jesus). That’s it.

And then he records that Paul and Barnabas retrace their steps, visiting each of the towns where they had planted churches.....Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

This seemingly simple section of Acts glides over the incredible courage of Paul and Barnabas. They went back to the very towns where the people had reacted with great hostility and violence to them!

Perhaps they went at night?...in disguise?...with false passports?

We don’t know how, or when, they went back to these towns, but Luke does give us insight into WHY they went. It was not with the same evangelistic focus like before, this was more a pastoral care for the new believers and young churches focus.

Acts 14:22-23 gives us four reasons for their return:

- To strengthen the disciples
- To encourage the disciples
- To warn the disciples
- To organize the disciples (and churches)

It was hard for Paul and Barnabas to go back to the same towns where they had been so badly treated. Where is the hardest place for you to be a Christian? Why?

1. To Strengthen the Disciples

This should be a major focus of every pastor and church. Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

One of the most important ways to strengthen your faith is through the Word of God. We are to read it, study it, meditate upon it, memorise it and apply it.

How is your faith strengthened through the Word of God?

Do you follow a particular devotional/study method or process? What works best for you to get the most out of God's Word?

2. To Encourage the Disciples

Of course, Barnabas was gifted in encouraging; he was known as the "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36-37). But we are **ALL** called to encourage one another in the faith (see **Romans 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14** and **Hebrews 10:25**).

Can you think of a time when you were blessed by the encouragement of someone else?

Do you find it easy to encourage others? Why/Why not?

Why do you think is encouragement so important in the church?

3. To Warn the Disciples

Paul and Barnabas spoke of how followers of Jesus have to "endure many hardships". Of course, they had already seen this first-hand with the way that Paul and Barnabas had been treated even in their own town. This could have been a time of anxiety and fear for these early believers.

(See John 16:33; 2 Timothy 2:3; 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10)

Does the thought of persecution, or suffering, for your faith concern you?

Have you had experiences in your life of suffering for your faith? Have you discovered there is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus Christ? What was your experience like?

4. To Organize the Disciples/Churches

Paul knew that the Christian faith is lived out in community ("*better together*") and, therefore, there needs to be some structure and leadership for it to function effectively. So they appointed elders in each of the churches (after prayer and fasting).

Why is it important for churches to pray for their leaders?

And, then, after all this, they went back to Attalia and set sail for "home" (Syrian) Antioch.

What has impressed/impacted you the most from this First Missionary Journey? Why?

