

Qualities of a Great Missionary, Part 3

Scripture: Acts 14:21–28

Code: 1749

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

In Acts 14 we have been following Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Previously they were pastors of the church at Antioch in Syria. The church sent them out under the commission and call of the Holy Spirit. They went to Cyprus first, and then began to tour Galatia. As they ministered the gospel to the Gentiles in order to expand the church, we find in their ministry features that indicate to us the factors of success.

A. The Basic Commission to All Believers

Jesus gave a rather simple directive at the very beginning of all missionary effort. He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). That calling of believers still stands. It is basic to the missionary effort. In Acts 1:8, just prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus said, "...ye shall be witnesses unto Me...." It wasn't an option; it was a statement of fact. Every Christian is giving testimony to Jesus Christ. The issue is, what kind of testimony? There is a basic commission given to every believer to bear the truth of Christ to the world.

B. The Bold Commitment of Dynamic Believers

The call still stands today. Obviously, Christ wants faithful Christians who will dedicate themselves to carrying out the Great Commission with diligence and success. But as you study the history of the church, you will find that it's always the minority that dedicate themselves, and the majority that don't. If we were to paint a portrait of the history of the church, we would find the foreground dotted with individuals, but in the background we would find a mass of faceless humanity. The commission isn't any different for any believer, but often in every period of church history, there are men and women who singularly dominate, and then there are the masses of Christians lost in the background.

It was one man, David Livingstone, who so greatly influenced the continent of Africa toward God; so much so, that Africa and Livingstone are almost synonymous terms. It was one man, William Carey, who was responsible for the redemptive transforming power of Christ being effectively presented to the teeming millions in India. It was because of one young man, William Booth, who gave himself completely to God's service, that there began in the slums of London an evangelistic movement known as The Salvation Army that encircled the globe.

C. H. Chapin said, "Not armies, not nations have advanced the race; but here and there, in the course of the ages, an individual has stood up and cast his shadow over the world." He's right. And the history of the church is no different. The history of the church is the history of individuals. The mass of the church sleeps, but here and there great men have changed its history for God. What is it that makes somebody dominate the foreground while somebody else gets lost in the background? What is the difference between the Christian who makes things happen and the Christian who doesn't know what's happening? What is the difference between the dynamic success of some Christians and the anonymity of others? I think the answer lies in Acts 14, and in many other places in the New Testament. In Acts 14 I have found at least eight qualifications for a successful missionary. If you want to be one, these are the qualifications; if you're already one, these are the qualifications that made you one. They are success factors that are illustrated by Paul and Barnabas. Paul dominates Barnabas in a sense, but both of them cast their shadows over the world--and Paul's shadow still lingers over the world. The world is still affected by what Paul has written. Flowing out of

this record of their tour in Galatia are some of the principles that signal their greatness. We have already discussed five, so we will review those and then discuss the last three. The first key to their success was...

I. THE MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

II. BOLDNESS (vv. 1-7)

III. DIVINE POWER (vv. 8-10)

Right in the middle of Paul's sermon, God interrupted him to heal a crippled man. Paul lived in the power of God--that's why his gifts were ministered so effectively. There is no substitute for ministering in the power of the Spirit. You learn early in the ministry that you can't function on your own strength. It is divine power or nothing. The Spirit is the energy of the Word. And Paul knew that. Everything he did, he did in the energy of the Spirit. He tried to communicate that truth to everybody. In Ephesians 3:16 he prays, "That He would grant you...to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Then he says, "...that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (vv. 19b-20). The power doesn't work until you're strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, not in your own strength. You can't minister in your own strength. The fourth feature of a really successful ministry is...

IV. HUMILITY (vv. 11-18)

After the power of God through Paul had been exhibited in healing the crippled man, the temptation of pride followed. The people of Lystra thought that the gods had come down as Paul and Barnabas, and they were going to worship them. Paul and Barnabas heard about it, tore their clothes, and screamed that the people were blaspheming. They didn't want any exaltation--they were humble. They didn't want anything for themselves, they were trying to turn them to God, not to themselves. Then they described the God of whom they spoke.

Whenever you start to get proud, you have to remember what you were. Isaiah 51:1 says to look "to the hole of the pit from which ye are digged." Solomon said, "...before honor is humility" (Prov. 15:33b). Whoever humbles himself, God will exalt (Js. 4:10). Paul expressed his attitude toward humility in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "For I am the least of the apostles...." That was not hypocrisy, that was the honesty of Paul's heart. You say, "Why would he feel like that?" Verse 9 continues, "...that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." He is saying, "I know the hole of the pit from which I came. You couldn't have been in a deeper pit than I was in. I was killing Christians. I am not worthy to be an Apostle." Then Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (v. 10). Everything to Paul was God. God took him out of the hole to begin with, and God ministered through him. Paul didn't want any glory, and neither does any successful servant of God.

There is a fifth feature that we studied, and that is...

V. PERSISTENCE (vv. 19-21)

Paul was absolutely unstoppable. The people of Lystra tried to stop him with about as strong an effort as is imaginable. Verse 19 says, "And there came there certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." Now you would think that would stop him. Not Paul. Verse 20 says "...he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe." How could he possibly rise up after being stoned, walk back in town, and the next day go to Derbe? And when he reached Derbe, he preached all over (v. 21). You say, "When does he rest?" He didn't know the meaning of the word. He was persistent.

Did Paul really die?

There is a big debate about whether Paul was really dead and was resurrected, or whether he was nearly dead and revived. I do not think Paul was dead. Some people connect this stoning with 2 Corinthians 12:2 when he said, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago...such an one caught up to the third heaven." They think that this happened after the stoning. I don't believe you can connect those two. There is no way you can connect them scripturally because they don't connect. You can only piece them together arbitrarily. Now, I will give you some reasons why I don't believe he was dead.

1. The Word "Supposing"

Acts 14:19 says, "...having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." The word "supposing" is the Greek word *nomizo*. It has two meanings. The first meaning is "to have a custom." In other words, "It was a custom to do this." The second meaning is, "to suppose something." It is very obvious when it is used to mean a custom, and when it is used to mean supposing...and it is also obvious from the context of any passage where it appears.

Now it was used to mean supposing many times in the New Testament. The vast majority of those times it means "to suppose something that is not true," and that is its use in the book of Acts. For example:

- a. Matthew 5:17 -- "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." The word "think" is *nomizo*. Jesus is saying, "Are you supposing that I came to destroy the law? Is that a right supposition? No! I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Again *nomizo* is used in terms of supposing something that is not true.
 - b. Matthew 10:34 -- "Think not [Gk. *nomizo* = 'suppose not'] that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Here again is an instance of supposing something that is wrong. The disciples were supposing that He came to send peace. He says, "No, I came to send a sword."
 - c. Matthew 20:10 -- "But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more...." Everyone received wages for their work, no matter how long they worked. The first workers supposed they would get more, but they didn't.
 - d. Acts 7:25 -- "For he [Moses] supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by His hand would deliver them; but they understood not."
 - e. Acts 8:20 -- Peter said this to Simon who tried to buy the Holy Spirit: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought [supposed] that the gift of God may be purchased with money."
- Acts 16:27; 17:29; 21:29; 1 Timothy 6:5 all use "suppose" in the sense of supposing something that is wrong. So verse 19 says, "...having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." The dominant use of the word is to suppose something that is not so. On the basis of that dominant meaning, it would seem that Paul was not dead. They just supposed he was.

2. If Paul Had Been Dead, the Word "Supposing" Would Be Unnecessary

The verse would then read, "Having stoned Paul, they drew him out of the city, because he was dead." The word "supposing" would be unnecessary if Paul had been dead. In fact, if it was a miracle of resurrection, then using the word "supposing" takes away the power of the miracle. You then could say, "It wasn't really a miracle, they only thought he was dead." So if the Spirit was trying to communicate that a miracle of resurrection had occurred, He would not have used the word "supposing".

3. The Holy Spirit Doesn't Minimize Resurrections

If this was a resurrection of the Apostle Paul, I think there would have been a lot more said about it than actually was. The book of Acts is dominated by careful explanations of miracle after miracle. For the Holy Spirit to perform a miracle like a resurrection and not make it clear means that the very purpose of the miracle has been disallowed. What is the purpose of a miracle? It is a sign that points

to the truth. But if this particular sign is a miracle, it is so small you can't even read it. The Holy Spirit is in the business of making billboards. If Paul had been resurrected, there would have been a lot more information. And Luke is in the business of making precise statements about miracles. The circumstances of the healing of the crippled man cover verses 8-10. You can believe that a resurrection of the Apostle Paul would take up a few more verses than that. You say, "Then you don't think it's a miracle." I didn't say that. I don't think it's a resurrection. I think it's a miracle when a man stoned one day is taking a thirty mile hike the next day. That's not a miracle of resurrection, but a miracle of restoration.

The Life of Robert Morrison

Robert Morrison of England set his heart on going to China as a missionary. He studied Chinese in London. In 1807 he came to New York to get a ship around the cape to China. But he couldn't book passage on a ship because China didn't accept foreigners, and nobody wanted to haul him around since they couldn't unload him in China. Finally, he did book passage and landed in China. He stayed in a French warehouse in the city of Canton, near the docks, for six months. During those six months he learned to cook Chinese food, to dress in Chinese clothes, and to adapt himself to the culture. He spent that time studying the Cantonese dialect. Preaching was illegal, but over the next months and years he gathered a little group of people around him, but never more than ten. In hiding and behind closed doors he endeavored to instruct them. Seven years after he landed in Canton he baptized his first convert. Now that's persistence. Finally working all day and all night, day after day and month after month, he finished translating the book of Acts into Cantonese and succeeded in having it printed. But an argument arose among the Christian craftsmen. Their fight was so blatant that the authorities found out about it and put a stop to all the printing. All of the effort of those months was halted. Morrison was forbidden from all future printing and preaching.

You say, "What did he do?" He persisted--just what he should have done. He stayed on the job because he believed God was in it. He mastered the language and translated the entire Bible into Cantonese--a massive work. He also completed a six volume Chinese- English dictionary so that missionaries would not only have the Bible, but the dictionary to learn the language. All of that happened in the early 1800's. After twenty-seven years of loneliness and self-sacrificing persistence, he paved the way for every missionary since then who has ever given the gospel to a person who spoke Cantonese. Today there is an academy in Taiwan called Morrison Academy. He has not been forgotten because he was persistent. He never preached to big crowds, but he was persistent.

Paul was persistent. The key to persistence is maximizing every opportunity. You may be moving along with opportunity after opportunity and then you are faced with an obstacle. What happens? Well, behind every obstacle is an opportunity, and you need to determine if you want the opportunity badly enough. If you do, you will push through the obstacle. Persistence is buying up every opportunity. In Colossians 4:5 Paul said, "...redeeming the time."

What do you do with your time?

Suppose that you lived approximately seventy years. Now if you added it all up, how would that life be broken down in terms of total time spent? Three years would be spent in school, eight years in entertainment, six years in eating, five years in transportation, four years in conversation, fourteen years working, three years reading, and twenty four years of sleep. How much time is left for God? If you came to church every Sunday for the service, prayed for five minutes in the morning, and read your Bible five minutes at night, in seventy years you would have given God five months. That is not much, is it? What are you doing with your time? How persistent are you in maximizing every

moment?

You will have to give an account for your idle moments. Romans 13:11 says, "And that, knowing the time...." Paul lived like Andrew Marvell who said he could hear "time's winged chariot hurrying near." Paul was racing time. I imagine he lived his whole life looking over his shoulder, keeping a step ahead of time. Romans 13:11 continues, "...that now it is high time to awake out of sleep...." Some Christians are as good to God asleep as they are awake because they are spiritually asleep. So when they are physically awake, they are spiritually asleep. Paul says, "...it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11b). In other words, in terms of the future aspect of salvation, Christ's coming is nearer. Paul continues, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12). Time is chasing. There should be no more wild parties, drunkenness, a desire for forbidden beds, shamelessness, strife, and envy (Rom. 13:13). It's time to get rid of all that. James said, "...For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Have you ever seen the vapor rise off a boiling tea pot? Your life is like that.

The qualifications we have discussed are the ministry of gifts, boldness, divine power, humility, and persistence. Now let's look at...

VI. FOLLOW-UP (vv. 21-23)

Effective Christian service also consists of a commitment to follow up what you begin.

A. The Mission of Follow-Up (v. 21)

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch."

They could have returned from Derbe straight to Antioch of Syria. But they returned through every city they had visited, retracing their steps. Why? They believed in follow-up. The purpose of the great commission is not solely to make people Christians, it's to make them disciples--mature disciples. It was dangerous for Paul and Barnabas to return to those cities. They had been kicked out of each of those cities, so they were taking their lives in their hands. But they believed so much in follow-up that they were willing to do it. They went back to those towns fearlessly because they believed in follow-up. Sure it was dangerous, but it was more dangerous for those new babes not to have milk, so they went back. Don't ever lead anyone to Jesus Christ that you are not willing to nurture.

B. The Make-Up of Follow-Up (vv. 22-23)

Now what is follow-up made up of? There are four timeless things that you need to lean on if you are discipling someone.

1. Confirmation (v. 22a)

"Confirming the souls of the disciples..."

The first aspect of good follow-up is confirmation.

a. The Support of the GospelThe word "confirming" comes from the Greek word episterizo which is made up of epi meaning "upon," and sterix meaning "a prop" or "a support." Paul and Barnabas went back to prop up the disciples. Episterizo is used four times in the book of Acts for propping up new believers (Ac. 14:21; 15:32, 41; 18:23). Literally it means "to strengthen." They helped the disciples to stand on their own and to be strong.b. The Sacrifice for the GoalThat is the goal for every Christian minister. If a person has any other view of the ministry, it's the wrong view. We say, "Isn't it amazing how brave Paul and Barnabas were? They were willing to give up their lives to carry the gospel." But have you ever known anyone willing to give up his life for follow-up? They did. They went back to the cities, and it would have been hotter for them than their first visit. It would have been very easy for them to say, "They are already saved, let's play it cool. They are going to get to heaven." They were so committed to follow-up that they would spend their lives if need be. That is some kind of commitment. I find that there are many people burdened over leading people to Christ, and willing to give their lives to preach the gospel, but I don't find too many people giving their lives

to follow-up the saints. Paul and Barnabas were willing. Ephesians 4:12-13 says that the work of the ministry is to perfect the saints that they might grow up into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Epaphras spent all of his time praying that the saints might grow up (Col. 4:12). Peter says, "But grow in grace..." (2 Pet. 3:18a). Every minister should concern himself with the nurture of the believers. c. The Strength for Growth What is the one agency that gives spiritual strength? The Word of God. 1) 1 Peter 2:2 -- "...desire the pure milk of the word, that ye may grow by it." 2) 1 John 2:14 -- "...I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you...." That's the key to strength. 3) 2 Timothy 3:16-17 -- "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." When Paul and Barnabas went back and confirmed the believers, they didn't just conduct a little service, they taught the Word. They gave them props. The second aspect of follow-up that every Christian servant needs to remember is...

2. Exhortation (v. 22b-c)

You can't just stop with doctrine. You don't say, "We've had our doctrine for this morning. Good-bye," you say, "Now what are you going to do with the doctrine?" Then you can charge them.

a. The Principle of Exhortation (v. 22b) "...and exhorting them..." The word "exhorting" is *parakaleo* in the Greek and means "to push a person toward a certain kind of conduct." It is like saying, "Here are the facts, now go do it!" In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 Paul says, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only but our own souls...." Part of follow-up is giving yourself. Verse 9 says, "...our labor and travail; for laboring night and day...." It was painful work--excruciating and agonizing. Verse 11 says, "As ye know how we exhorted and encouraged and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy..." (vv. 11-12a). Exhortation is teaching's companion. In other words, here is the doctrine, now go do it. If you were to examine my messages, you would find that they are made up of two things, teaching and exhortation. I give a principle and then I usually tell you to go do it. That's a part of follow-up--exhorting and urging believers to a certain conduct. b. The Purpose of Exhortation (v. 22c) In Acts 14:22 there are two things that the believers needed to be exhorted to do. These things are basic to any follow-up we do today. 1) "...to continue in the faith..." Whenever somebody first hears the gospel and the seed is planted, what is lingering nearby? The birds to take the seed (Mt. 13:4). Satan wants to snatch the seed. How can you determine a true Christian? He continues. Paul says, "I want you to continue. I want you to be true Christians." So many people hear the gospel but fade out. That's tragic. Paul says, "I exhort you to continue in the faith." Whenever you lead someone to Jesus Christ, there should be constant challenging and encouraging. If you are a new Christian, there may be some things that haven't changed, and certain things you expected that didn't happen, but continue in the faith and God will vindicate Himself. Believe Him and remain--be an abiding branch. Jesus says, "If you continue in My Word you prove that you are for real" (Jn. 8:31). Continuing is so important. First John 2:24-25 says, "Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." In other words, eternal life is for those who continue. Those who continue to hold on to the Word don't let Satan snatch it away. You need to say to a new Christian, "You can have all the doctrine in your head, but you still need to hold to the faith." Jude said, "...ye should earnestly contend for the faith..." (Jd. 3). Satan tries to snatch it away from new babes. 2) "...and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." When someone becomes saved, suddenly he realizes that he is in a war. Satan hits him from every angle with problems he can't even believe. All sorts of things begin to trouble him. As a result, when dealing with a new Christian, you must immediately exhort him to anticipate tribulation (Gk. *thlipsis*). You need to say, "Get ready my friend. Satan's coming, and he's

going to unload on you." I don't think we are being fair with new believers if we don't tell them that. They need to be exhorted that tribulation is part of salvation. Paul says, "...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). If you are a Christian, you are going to contend for the faith. When you entered God's kingdom you became an enemy of Satan's kingdom. There's a war going on and you're in it. The entire world system is against the kingdom of God. When you entered the kingdom, you became one of the enemies of Satan and his hosts. People need to be exhorted to hang onto and continue in the faith. From God's standpoint, salvation is eternally secured by sovereignty; from the human viewpoint, it's secured visibly by continuance. So Paul says to continue and then get ready for trouble because it's going to come. If you don't have trouble, you won't have victory. Who wants to live a life where there is no victory? You say, "But then there are no battles." That would be dull. There must be a contest if there's going to be a winner. Follow-up that is effective demands not only confirmation and exhortation but...

3. Organization (v. 23a-b)

If you have led several people to Jesus Christ, you not only want to deal with them as individuals, you need to deal with them as a group because they are a group.

a. Carrying out God's Design (v. 23a) "And when they had ordained elders in every church..." Paul and Barnabas not only cared about confirmation and exhortation, but they also made sure that they took care of organization. The Lord expects things to be done decently and in order in the church (1 Cor. 14:40). The Lord has designed that the church be ruled by men called elders, and served by men called deacons and women who function as deaconesses. Those are the people who are to be the leaders of the church. That is the design of God. Paul and Barnabas carried out God's design-- they ordained elders in every one of those churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. That reveals the extent to which Paul remained and taught those people, because they had to be mature enough to be recognized as elders according to the qualifications of the Scripture. 1) The Rule of the Elders Elders are to rule in the church. The question is often asked of me, "What kind of church government do you believe in?" I believe in the kind of church government where the elders rule the church. That doesn't mean that they dictate, but that they are sensitive to the people and answerable to God. 2) The Recognition of the Elders Paul and Barnabas did the ordaining of those elders. In the early church, the Apostles and evangelists made the selections. Paul wrote to Titus and said, "...ordain elders in every city..." (Tit. 1:5). Paul and Barnabas found those men that they felt manifested the most maturity, and then they presented them to the people for their approval. I believe that is how the church should be handled. The leadership in the church should be selected by the evangelist who founds the church (in the case of missions), or by the pastor (in the case of an ongoing church). They should initially select men who qualify biblically, and then present those men for the approval of the people. I believe that is what is indicated in Acts 14:23. 3) The Responsibility of the Elders Elders have a tremendous responsibility. a) They are to watch out for the souls of the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). b) They are to rule (1 Tim. 5:17). c) They are to labor hard among the flock by working diligently and buying up time (1 Thess. 5:12). d) They are accountable to the Lord for what they do with the flock (Heb. 13:17). e) They are to pattern their lives after Jesus, being firm but gentle. f) They are to teach the Word and feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). g) They are to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and then be patient with everybody (1 Thess. 5:14). It is not an easy job. Pray for your pastors and your elders. b. Concentrating on Prayer (v. 23b) "...and prayed with fasting..." Ordaining elders is serious business. Hosea said, "...like people, like priest..." (Hos. 4:9). Implied is that no one ever goes higher than his leadership. So Paul and Barnabas "prayed with fasting..." That is concentrated prayer. I think fasting truly becomes what God intended it to be when you are so lost in prayer over some spiritual battle or some spiritual issue that food becomes insignificant. Paul and Barnabas poured out their hearts before God in prayer because they knew they had a critical decision to make in every town they went to. If they chose the wrong leadership, Satan could destroy what they had begun. So follow-up demands confirmation, exhortation,

organization, and...

4. Commendation (v. 23c)

"...they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

The last thing in follow-up is commendation. When you have done everything you can to follow someone up--you've given them doctrine, exhortation, and organization--you finally have to say, "Lord, they are Your problem." I have spent myself on some people, but then I have said, "God, I've done everything that I can do. I'm giving this one over to the Head of the church, Jesus Himself." You have to do that. Paul spent three years teaching doctrine to the Ephesians. He says, "For three years I've fed you doctrine; I've exhorted you; I've loved you; I've cried for you; and I've warned you." As he was ready to leave he said, "...I commend you to God..." (Ac. 20:32). I am glad that the final part of follow-up belongs to God. I would hate to have it end by saying, "Now if you haven't done what needs to be done, you're going to get struck by a divine lightning bolt." The final disposition is God's, just give them over (Gk. paradidomi) to God.

The seventh characteristic for an effective missionary is...

VII. COMMITMENT (vv. 24-25)

"And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia."

You say, "They must have been tired." They were tired, bruised, and weary. They were wiped out physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It was unbelievable what they had gone through in a year and a half. But as they arrived in Pamphylia, and before they went the last eighteen miles to the little port of Atalia, they preached again. You say, "They are out of their minds. Why don't they take a rest?" They were committed to preaching the Word.

People will say to me, "Why do you study? Why do you expend yourself? Paul said that he didn't want any glory for what he did. He didn't have a pious attitude. In 1 Corinthians 9:16 he says, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Paul says, "I preach the gospel so I won't have to live with a messed up conscience. Don't pat me on the back; I do it because I have to. God called me to do it." That's the test of your commitment--not what you do when you're healthy, relaxed, and fresh, but what you do when you're wiped out. There are some people looking for the littlest excuse to get off the hook of doing what they know they ought to be doing. Not Paul and Barnabas. They had every reason not to preach in Perga, but their commitment said, "I don't care what state I'm in, I'm going to do what God has called me to do."

The last of the eight qualities is...

VIII. PRAISE TO GOD (vv. 26-28)

A. The Return to Antioch (v. 26)

"And from there they sailed to Antioch of Syria, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

Nobody in Antioch had heard from Paul and Barnabas for a year and a half to two years. They were two of the most beloved people in the church. When they arrived, they probably looked scarred from the beatings with rods and whips, and the stonings they had suffered. But what a joyous time they probably had. B. The Review At Antioch (v. 27)

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they reviewed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

They saw themselves as tools, and God as the master carpenter. All that God ever wants anybody to do is be there, and He will do it all. It is when you start trying to do it in your own energy that you get things messed up. C. The Rest At Antioch (v. 28)

"And there they abode a long time with the disciples."

Paul and Barnabas remained and picked up their pastoral duties. It was during that time that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians.

Fulfilling the Fight of Faith

Acts 14:26 says, "...they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." God said to go do it, and they did it--they fulfilled it. Most Christians don't do what God says to do. But there are some Christians in the history of the church who have done it. At the end of my life I would like God to say, "You did it. I gave it to you to do, and you did it. Well done." That's what I want to hear. Paul came to the end of his life and said, For now I am ready to be offered....I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6a, 7). If we all did it, imagine what would be accomplished.

Whatever God has called you to do, will you do it? But you need these characteristics: the ministry of your gifts, boldness, divine power, humility, persistence, follow-up, commitment, and a heart that gives Him all the glory.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the basic commission that has been given to every believer?
2. In the history of the church, what types of people tend to dominate and influence its direction?
3. How did Paul express his humility in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10? To what did Paul credit his apostleship?
4. What are three solid reasons for believing that Paul didn't die when he was stoned in Acts 14:19? Explain the significance of each reason.
5. How is the word supposing used the vast majority of times in the New Testament? What is the meaning of this word in Acts 19:14? Based on that meaning, was Paul dead?
6. Why did Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch through all of the cities that they had been thrown out of?
7. What are the four things that follow-up is made up of?
8. What does the word confirming mean? How does it apply to following-up a new believer?
9. To what extent should every Christian be willing to go to follow-up a new believer?
10. What provides spiritual strength? Support your answer.
11. What does the word exhorting mean? How does it apply to following-up a new believer?
12. According to Acts 14:22, what two things did the believers need to be exhorted to do?
13. How does a believer prove that he is a true believer (see Jn. 8:31)?
14. What will happen to every Christian who lives a godly life? Why (see 2 Tim. 3:12)?
15. From God's standpoint, salvation is eternally secured by _____; from the human standpoint, it's visibly secured by _____.
16. Who should rule in the church? How are these men to be chosen as being fit to lead? What are their responsibilities?
17. What did Paul and Barnabas do in order to make the critical decision in selecting elders?
18. What is the true test of your commitment?

Pondering the Principles

1. What do you do with your time? This week, keep a time chart. Write down everything you do each day. Determine how much time you spend eating, sleeping, working, talking, being entertained, and worshiping God. At the end of the week, determine how much time was spent that was unnecessary. In other words, how much of that time could have just as easily been given to God? How much of your time are you being faithful to redeem? What improvements should you make? Be faithful to follow through on those improvements.

2. Analyze your past practice of follow-up of new believers. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate your follow-up in these four areas: confirmation, exhortation, administration, and commendation? How have you confirmed new believers of their faith in the past? As a result of this study, what will you do differently? How have you exhorted new believers in the past? Have you stressed to them the importance of continuing in the faith? Have you warned them of impending tribulation? Based on this study, what do you need to change in your exhortation? Perhaps you have had the opportunity to lead several people to Christ. Did you organize them as a group during your follow-up? What are some ways that you could effectively organize a small group of new believers? In the end, have you ever commended those you followed up to God? Why is that commendation so important? Be sure to plan ahead when you are going to follow up a new believer. Use what you have learned from this study in that plan.

3. If the Lord were to take you home to Him today, would you feel that you had accomplished the ministry that He has given to you? Why or why not? If not, what things might that indicate about your involvement in that ministry? If you think that you haven't given the time or commitment to your ministry as you should, how will you go about changing that in the future? As a reminder of what your goal should be, memorize 2 Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day...."

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