

Sunday October 30, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. (Psalm 19)*

Almighty God, you are a God who made all things, for the benefit of your glory. In the beginning you made the world around us, and made us to have a special place within your creation. "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Lord, we live in a world where there are many distractions that draw us away from worshipping You. Thank you that even though we are disobedient you continue to love us as your children and continue to show us your mercy. We give you thanks and praise that because of your grace you have redeemed us and displayed a love to us that we cannot earn, and that is not deserved.. We give you thanks that through Christ's obedience, and His death on the cross , that the price for sin has been paid – once, for all so that what was once unclean can be made clean. Thank you Lord that through the resurrection of Christ and his defeat over death, we can be confident that those who place their faith in Jesus will also be raised to eternal life with You. Father God, we pray that as we continue to study your word in the bible today that we will have soft, teachable hearts that yearn to learn how you would have us live as your people. In Christ's name we pray, Amen

Song – Hear the call of the Kingdom

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDfuGb89x_8

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| <p>1. Hear the call of the Kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace</p> | <p>Chorus
King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name</p> |
| <p>2. Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us</p> | <p>3. Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him</p> |

Bible Reading – Acts 13:1-15, 38-52 (NIV)

¹ Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent

them off. ⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. ⁶ They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas & Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰ "You are a child of the devil & an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?" ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. ¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

³⁸ "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: ⁴¹ "'Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.'" ⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them & went to Iconium. ⁵² & the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Announcements

Welcome to the Parsons. Today we are fortunate to have Steven and Sandra Parsons visiting us. The Parsons are working with TEAM in Japan and are currently on furlough. Please consider getting their monthly prayer letter and praying for them or supporting them financially or even just encouraging them as they serve the Lord overseas. They will be speaking to us in our Family matters segment of all three services today as well as running a session on Tuesday night (6:45 dinner – bring something to share with everyone else, 7:30pm – missionary report) and Wednesday lunchtime. (12:15 lunch – bring something to share with everyone else, 1:0pm – missionary report). All welcome.

Focus for October – Training. Many thanks to all those who have run training sessions over the last three weeks or have come and participated in them. This is much to do for god's Kingdom and each of us have a role to play. Our hope and prayer is that these training times will encourage us all to do the things that god is calling us to do both at home, work, Church and in the community.

Upcoming Events

- Sat 5/11 Gala Concert. This year the money raised will be going to Destiny haven (a residential place of healing for women struggling with life controlling issues)
- Sat 19/11 Men's Breakfast (7-9am). At Webb Park, Redhead. Arrive 7am for a leisurely walk together followed by a BBQ Breakfast from 8am and then a testimony. \$5 pp. If coming please tell Colin Wright on 0414841 740 by Tues 15/11
- Sat 19/11 NSW State Moderator Visits Swansea Church Hall for morning tea 10-12am
- Sat 26/11 Gingerbread House Night. Numbers are limited. See Brochure for more details. See Linda for tickets by the end of this week.
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration. More details a bit closer to the time.

Resource. Unfortunately, Kit Barker has had to withdraw because of health reasons. So, it has been decided we will only have a one-day conference this year (Wed 16th November). It will still be on the book of Ezekiel but Stephen has stepped to talk about how to preach this book. This will involve a number of talks on Ezekiel but workshops on its key themes. More details go to hgm.org.au

Christmas boxes (Operation Christmas Child. Samaritans Purse). These need to be filled and return by TODAY. If you have any questions, please speak to Kathryn O.

Vanuatu. Our church is planning on running a short-term mission to Vanuatu early next year. The dates are expected to be 4th – 18th January. Our aim will be to help the local with a physical project that allows them to minister more effectively to their community as well as doing some teaching, training and kids/youth work. If you are interested in knowing more details please see Stephen. Numbers will need to be finalised by the end of November.

Kids Spot: Going to jail for healing a crippled man! Being told to not tell anyone anymore about Jesus! This is what Peter and John faced in Acts 4. We will be encouraged to stand up for Jesus and remember that there is only one name – one person – by which we can be saved: Jesus! Question of the week: When do you struggle to tell others about Jesus? Pray for each other this week for boldness to do so.

Prayer Points for 30th October 2022

Psalms 34:4 "I sought the Lord, and He answered me and rescued me from all my fears."

Pray for Iran: 1. Pray for comfort for Iranians, both in the country and around the world, who are hurting and grieving over what is happening in their nation. 2. Pray for the church in Iran to declare with one voice, louder than ever, that 'Jesus is Lord' and that truest freedom is found in Him. 3. Pray for an end to the injustice and oppression perpetrated by Iran's government, and that all people in Iran would experience freedom through Jesus' resurrection life.

Pray for revival: Ask the Lord to revive us. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and give strength and comfort to the weary. Pray for those struggling with anger, sadness, dissatisfaction and despair. Pray the Lord would draw near to them and instill in them the hope of trusting in Him. We are prone to become hard - pray the Lord would make us soft. We are prone to despair - pray the Lord would give us hope.

Bible Reading – Acts 14:1-28

14 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. ⁴ The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵ There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. ⁶ But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷ where they continued to preach the gospel. ⁸ In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking.

Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed¹⁰ and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting:¹⁵ "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them."¹⁶ In the past, he let all nations go their own way.¹⁷ Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."¹⁸ Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.¹⁹ Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer & fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia,²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Song – Facing a Task Unfinished

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOpt_bulJxY

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| <p>1. Facing a task unfinished
That drives us to our knees
A need that undiminished
Rebukes our slothful ease
We, who rejoice to know Thee
Renew before Thy throne
The solemn pledge we owe Thee
To go and make Thee known</p> | <p>3. We bear the torch that flaming
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose
Ours is the same commission
The same glad message ours
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers</p> |
| <p>2. Where other Lords beside Thee
Hold their unhindered sway
Where forces that defied Thee
Defy Thee still today
With none to heed their crying
For life and love and light
Unnumbered souls are dying
And pass into the night</p> | <p>4. O Father who sustained them
O Spirit who inspired
Saviour, whose love constrained them
To toil with zeal untired
From cowardice defend us
From lethargy awake!
Forth on Thine errands send us
To labour for Thy sake</p> |

Chorus: We go to all the world
With kingdom hope unfurled
No other name has power to save
But Jesus Christ The Lord

Sermon – A heart for mission! (Stephen T)

William Carey is known as the “the father of modern missions.” Of course, he wasn’t the first of the modern missionaries, there were many who went before him including Richard Johnson who came to Australia with the first fleet as chaplain to this new colony. But in 1792 Carey, as a young Baptist pastor, published *“An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.”* In this pamphlet Carey argued that it was the Churches responsibility and all those who were in Church to be involved in the great commission. That we should expect great things from God as we went out and proclaimed the gospel to all the nations.

He then set up the Baptist Missionary Society and just the next year he became the first Baptist missionary of the modern era when he went to India to preach the gospel. After seven years there he had not seen one person converted to Christ. But he persevered and during his life he saw not only native Indians coming to Jesus but missionaries being sent to the four corners of the earth.

Slide 2

Paul and Barnabas were Carey’s ancient equivalent. Then were in fact “the fathers of **all** Christian mission.” And we get to see the first steps this morning in Acts 13, where the Church of Antioch sends out the first missionaries ever. And you have to say that it’s a bare-knuckle ride for Paul and Barnabas. One where they will be worshipped as gods and stoned as charlatans. Where they will see both success and failure. But it is a path that millions of missionaries have travelled along ever since.

Slide 3

The missionary to India and Persia, Henry Martyn once said *“the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we must become.”* That’s a challenging thought, isn’t it? For it means that if are to be God’s people in this place we need to be people who are actively part of God’s mission to the world. Well let’s see how the beginning of world mission all began.

Slide 4

1. They listened (13:1-3)

¹“Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Now it would seem that the Church at Antioch was humming along nicely. Now we see why. In its leadership they have a truly diverse & wonderful ministry team. Barnabas, we know he was a good man headed the team. Then Simon, mostly likely a black African, Lucius from Cyprus, Manaen who had an aristocratic background & the multi-talented Saul from Tarsus.

And chapter 13 says they were a team that depended upon the Lord for they worshipped Him. They fasted so they could spend more time looking to Him. They prayed because they wanted these communication channels to be always open to Him. And it was! Because the Church recognised that God was calling them to release Saul & Barnabas.

Now it seems like God is asking them to send out their best people. Not the ones that they could do without. Not the ones on the fringes of the church but the key players. You see the Kingdom of God needs to be expanded. The world is to be won for Christ. The purposes of God are yet to be fulfilled. And so, this Church is willing to listen to this call of God. And its willing to make some huge sacrifices. They will give God nothing but their very best.

Slide 5

So, they send out Barnabas and Saul. And we read from verse 4 *“that the two of them, were also sent on their way by the Holy Spirit”* This is God and man working together. In partnership. This is not just one

person getting an individual call for Christian service. It is not just a Church meeting making a decision. This is God and man working hand in glove.

And so, the people in the Church lay their hands on these two missionaries not because they are ordaining them into service but because they are identifying with them. Barnabas and Saul will go and preach but the Church at Antioch will stay and pray and provide. Yes, Barnabas and Saul's responsibility is to go onto the front lines but the ones in the Church are in the back office. Barnabas and Saul will go over the cliff but the Church will hold the rope.

Slide 6

Friends, this is a model for us today. We are to be a worshipping community, a praying community, even a fasting community as we put aside the physical things that we value in order to prioritise the spiritual things that God values. And we need to be willing to send out our best people to short term missions but also to long term ministry projects. And we need to support them physically, financially and prayerfully.

In a way you and I have sent Steven and Sandra to Japan, so are we doing a good enough job supporting their costly decision to go? In a real way we sent Josh Montzka to Melbourne to work for Power to Change, are we still committed to holding the rope while he does the dangerous work of serving the Lord in the digital space? The Applebys & Lukins have been overseas and seen health issues with their parents and their kids come back to Australia to study and get married. How have you and I supported them during those challenging times? The Webbs & all our other missionaries have been trapped away from home during COVID. Did we give them much thought or were we consumed by ourselves during that time?

Slide 7

2. They listened and secondly, they proclaimed.

⁴ *"The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper."*

For the next two chapters we see that these two missionaries travel from place to place and what do they do there? They proclaim the word of God (13:4), they teach about the Lord (13:12), they present the message of salvation (13:26), they preach the good news (13:32), they share with others the grace of God. The heart of what they do is to pass on the message that has saved them because they want all people to be saved.

And they go firstly to Cyprus which in one way seems a strange place to start. Now Cyprus isn't Rome. It wasn't the equivalent of the modern-day London or Paris or New York. It was like Norfolk Island, a backwater, with no more than a few thousand people there. But it was the place that Barnabas grew up and so a culture that he knew very well. And while they were there, they got the chance to preach to the proconsul in charge of the whole island, Sergius Paulus. And here we see that the gospel presented was both verbal and visual.

What changes Paulus' heart is the teaching about the Lord that he sees in word and in sign. In what was said about Jesus and the power of Jesus that was displayed by these two missionaries. So yes, the word is central to what Barnabas and Saul do but like the ministries of Jesus and Peter before him, these representatives of God also have power to do miracles which show the audience the power of God that matches the gospel of God. And God draws the proconsul to Himself, the first completely Gentile convert that we have met.

Slide 8

After that Barnabas and Saul proclaim the gospel to the Jews in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. And Luke gives for us almost a full script of what Paul says because I think he wants to show us what sort of gospel Paul preached to the Jews. Paul starts with some common ground, God's dealing with the Jews in

the Old Testament. He builds repour. He points to God grace. God chose our fathers (17), he endured their conduct (18), he overthrew seven nations (19), he gave them judges, then Saul & then David, a man after God's own heart.

This is Paul's launching pad. God is a gracious God. So much so that he has now brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus as he promised. This Jesus was wrongly put to death by the people of Jerusalem and their rulers yet by doing that they fulfilled the words of the OT prophets. But God again showed his grace by raising this Jesus from the dead. And then he quotes three OT passages to highlight that this too was in accordance with the Scriptures.

Paul brings it home. Each one of us have a choice. We can receive forgiveness for our sins because of Jesus' death & resurrection or we can continue to live under the law of Moses, burdened & unforgiven. It all depends upon what you do with God's chosen messiah Jesus!

It is a bit like one of those puzzles. You get a picture and you have to see how many keys are hidden in that picture. Well Paul is saying to a Jewish audience, look, here is your OT and if you look closely, you can see Jesus is in it everywhere. For it is all about Jesus. So, I am calling you to put your trust in this Jesus. Now. And we see that this message about Jesus divides the audience. Some want to hear more about it and others stir up trouble.

Paul and Barnabas are expelled from the city and they move on to Iconium and then Lystra each time because the good news they preach is good for some and unacceptable to others. And then Luke tells us about a third major incident of Paul and Barnabas preaching the message of salvation and this time it is to a fully Gentile audience who are amazed at their power to be able to heal a lame man who had never walked in his life.

They believe Barnabas must be Zeus and Paul, Mercury. And so, they offer sacrifices to them & Paul tells them to stop and attempts to preach to them the gospel. Once again, he starts on common ground but this time, he doesn't start with scripture but creation. God's grace found in creation. God has provided you with food & your hearts with joy. He has been kind to you by sending you rain and allowing you to produce crops. But before he can move from God's grace in creation to God's grace in Jesus, Paul's preaching is cut short. And we find out there is nothing so dangerous as a worshipper spurned. And they go from worshipping Paul to stoning Paul.

But throughout these chapters you see that Paul's emphasis is on preaching Jesus. To the Jews and the Gentiles, it's all about Jesus. We are to start with some common ground. We point others to God's grace. But the heart of his message is Jesus. His death & resurrection. Jesus brings God's grace to the world. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

Slide 9

That is what the Church is to proclaim. That is the good news that our world needs to hear. It was in Paul's time. It was in William Carey's time and it still is in our time. We have no authority to change the message. We can change the starting point and in fact we might start in all different places to find common ground with the people around us. But we can't change the ending point. Jesus. Faith in Jesus. God grace found in Jesus.

Slide 10

3. They listened, they proclaimed and thirdly they were opposed.

For just as Newton's third law of motion states "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" so the history of the Church also shows that great spiritual advances almost always meet with great spiritual opposition. And throughout their first missionary journey Barnabas and Paul meet opposition from within and from outside.

Going back to their time on Cyprus, we see that Sergio Paulus is interested in the good news of Jesus but Satan works in the heart of Elymus the sorcerer to try and deceive the proconsul and keep him from coming into the Kingdom. You see when we preach the gospel, we almost always do it on foreign ground. Satan has the home ground advantage and will pull out everything from his bag of tricks to try and keep people away from God.

Slide 11

Including causing divisions in the missionary team. You see as they move from Cyprus and onto Pamphylia, we hear that John left them to return to Jerusalem. Now it's just a throw-away line and easy to skip over. But in Acts 15:36 Paul and Barnabas have a disagreement over what has happened. You see they are about to go on their second missionary journey & Barnabas wants to give John a second chance and Paul doesn't want to take him because *"he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the world."*

John had gone AWOL. John couldn't stand the heat in the kitchen. John had left them in the lurch. You see sometimes the problems concerning the work of missions is not the outsider but from the insider. Not from the world but from the Church.

Slide 12

Before Carey went to India, he was speaking at a meeting of ministers about the need for world mission and one of the senior men, Dr Ryland said to him, "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine." And in every generation and probably every Church, the role of missions, the urgency of mission, & the support of mission is not universal accepted. Friends often the opposition to mission is from us. Our lack of vision. Our desire for comfort. Our lack of generosity. Our desire to ride our own hobby horses rather than get on God's hobby horse.

Slide 13

Later on in our chapter we see that there is also opposition from Jewish synagogue leaders.

⁴⁹*"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region."*

You would think the Jews would love the good news that has at its heart the God of the Old Testament. But they don't. They are blinded by their own religion. They are unwilling to look deeply into what is being preached. And like Saul used to be they responded with violence. They are determined to get rid of these heretics at any cost. They were even willing to travel to the surrounding towns to whip up opposition to wherever Saul and Barnabas went next.

And lastly, we see opposition from the Gentiles in Lystra. But notice the opposition comes in two forms. In worship and in persecution. Firstly, they offer worship to Paul & Barnabas. They confuse the message with the messenger. They fail to see that the power came from the gospel of Jesus not the ones who were preaching about the gospel of Jesus. You see if Satan can't derail the Christian witness through persecution, then he will try to derail it through praise. But Paul knows to treat him as a god is as bad as treating him like a dog.

Which they do almost immediately after that. The mob turns from praise to persecution and they stone Paul, leaving him for dead. But he wasn't really dead. And so when the disciples gathered around him, he gets up. He goes back into town and then moves to the next town and preaches the gospel. For Paul is learning there is a cost to preaching the gospel.

Slide 14

This is how Kent Hughes puts it. *"There is a cost to sincere service for Christ. Never share your faith and you will never look like a fool. Never stand for righteousness on a social issue and you will never be rejected..."*

Never practice honesty in business and you will not lose the trade of a not-so-honest associate. Never reach out to the needy and you will never be taken advantage of. Never give your heart and it will never be broken. Never go to Cyprus and you will be subjected to a dizzy, heart-convulsing confrontation with Satan."

And I might add never join in a Christian work and you will never be deserted by others. Never talk against someone's religion and you will never end up being stoned. But never preach the gospel or be involved in mission and you will be found unfaithful to our Lord!

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4. They were opposed but they continued to persevere

Opposed in Cyprus so they move onto Pamphylia. Deserted in Pamphylia they continue preaching in Pisidian Antioch. Expelled from the region they move onto Iconium. Plotted against in Iconium they continue to preach the gospel in Lystra. Stoned in Lystra, Paul gets back up and goes back into the city. Before walking 90 kilometres to Derbe.

What supreme bravery. What a witness. This was more effective than a thousand sermons. Paul, caked with blood and dirt, must have been quite a spectacle. But nothing could deter Paul & Barnabas from bravely preaching Christ. What an example for us to follow. Any one of these things could have gotten the better of them but they are not defeated, they instead speak of the victory they have in Christ. They are not angry, instead they talk about the kindness of God. They are not frustrated instead they continue to share the grace of God

It takes bravery to be a Christian. It takes guts to serve the Lord. It takes courage to share your faith. It takes supernatural strength to keep on following Jesus. For even that is not something we can do by ourselves. We need the Lord every hour. We need his help, his strength, his words, his actions, his holy spirit. And we are promised all of these things. Yes we can live timid lives in our own strength. But to be obedient to the calling of the Lord. At home or overseas. At work or at school. Young or old. That is going require the Holy Spirit.

Do you know that from Derbe, they could have continued down this road, the via Sebaste and taken the easy route back home to Antioch but instead they turn back and go over the mountains again and go back the way they had just been. Because lastly, they wanted to

Slide 16

5. They strengthened the believers.

You see they didn't want to just win converts they were in the business of making disciples. So Paul and Barnabas *"returned to Lystra, Iconium & Antioch,"²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"*

That's the first way to strengthen Christians. They taught them the faith. They told them the truth about what Christian discipleship looks like. It is not a bed of roses. But it is the life that God has made you for. So, they taught them with words and later would write letters to them to ground them in the faith. Then secondly, they organised pastoral oversight for them

Slide 17

²³ *"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church."* Yes, they were all new Christians but some stood out as leaders. And the Church is both an organism and an organisation and so they set up a group of shepherds who will look after the sheep. And lastly *"with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."* They place them in God's hands. they commit them to God's Holy Spirit. They from now will take a hands-off approach but God will never take his hands off his children.

Slide 18

Then they go back to Antioch and report back what has happened over the past 2 years. And they don't primarily talk about the stoning or the persecutions but they *"reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles."* God had done a mighty work. So, God should get the glory. God should get all the glory.

Slide 19

Now was the Antioch church weakened by sending out maybe their two best people? No not at all because God hadn't left them. Instead, they were encouraged and strengthened by hearing what God had done through Paul and Barnabas, actually what God had done because they all had stepped out in faith. God had enlarged the kingdom. Grown the number of servants. Strengthened the Church. Given them more to praise him for.

Slide 20

Today Steve and Sandra have come back to report what the Lord is doing not just in our region but in far off Japan. We might have had a small part to play in this work of God but we get to share in the joy of people being saved, churches being planted, disciples matured & that is just the start. The gospel has to go to all the world & we have only just begun. Roll up your sleeves, friends, for God is calling us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Song – Servants of the Gospel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efUcfkEjmwE>

1: Though we were undeserving
Christ died to wash us clean
He bore the Father's anger
While nailed upon the tree
In darkness and in turmoil
The judgment fell on Him
Bringing us forgiveness
That new life might begin

2: The grave could not contain Him
From death the Son broke free
Exalted by His Father
To rule eternally
And in His grace He calls us
To be His chosen church
As His holy temple
His priests to all the earth

Chorus: As servants of the gospel
Christ's work we carry on
That through our prayer and witness
By grace we might win some
We call on every nation
To turn to Christ the Lord
Refuge in His mercy
And marvel at His love

3: Marked with His Holy Spirit
And guided by His word
Christ gathers us together
Prepares us for good works
And so with grace apportioned
We serve each others needs
Sharing in each blessing
And helping in our grief

Benediction.

"On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27)