

August 1, 2021
 La Jolla Christian Fellowship
Paul's First Journey. Ep.8 The Return
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ACTS 14:21-28

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 and 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.

Vs. 22b ***"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."***

The apostles' advancement of the kingdom of God during the first missionary journey was rooted in virtue.

Chastity	Temperance	Charity	Diligence	Patience	Kindness	Humility
Lust	Gluttony	Greed	Sloth	Envy	Wrath	Pride

John Mark departs: Acts 13:13 *From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.*

If we are to be a kingdom bringing people, we must be prepared to meet the enemy of our souls on the field of battle that is the life you call your own.

The Return Trip to Antioch in Syria. Acts 14:22-26

- They revisited Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. Acts 14:22-24
 - **Perseverance:** Paul and Barnabas were willing to return to places where they faced severe opposition.
 - **Fruit:** When they returned, they found churches planted in those places.
 - What do you find when you return to a place of previously severe difficulty?

Two major things were accomplished on the return journey:

1. **They strengthened the disciples.** Acts 14:22 – *"Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" Exhorted them to continue in the faith.*
2. **Appointed elders in every church."** Acts 14:23 – *"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."*

Summary: From Antioch in Syria to the turn-around point at Derbe, Paul had traveled approximately 604 miles, of which some 240 miles were by water. The first missionary journey

covered a total of some 1,208 miles wherein Paul and Barnabas established more than a dozen congregations. In all, they had been gone a little over two years.

The Journey Revisited: 2 Timothy 3:10-12 *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, "persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

"Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality." - C.S. Lewis

Small Group Questions:

1. What hardships might a modern believer face?
2. The apostle's journey was rooted in virtue. What virtues do you see as fundamental in your life?
3. The apostles revisited the places where they experienced severe hardship. Why would they return to those places?
4. The apostles exhorted them to continue on in the faith. How do we exhort others?
5. How do we develop virtue in our life?