

LAST GREAT DAY MORNING 2015
ENCOURAGEMENT AND THE KINGDOM
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One day in the future ... the Kingdom will be a reality. But ... until then ...?

Acts 15:36-41

Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." Now

Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, **strengthening the churches.**

("Strengthening the churches" = rendering them more firm)

They were like us ... facing an unhelpful world. So Paul went back to strengthen the churches. Encourage them. They would have had difficulties like us ... maybe even more so living under the Roman government.

Acts 16:5

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The churches were made firmer ... made more sure. It is necessary to encourage people. We need to go back over things we have been taught ... things we have learned.

2 Peter 1:10-14

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, (human flesh) to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

Stir you up ... encourage you ... remind you ... repetition. People can lose heart .. be worn down. People need this encouragement ... need to be stirred up. It's not so much that we need new revelation. No!! It's what we do with the existing revelation. We have to go back over what we already have learned.

2 Timothy 1:3-7

I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (WE have to continually stir up the Holy Spirit in us ... "rekindle, fan the flame" ... Amplified Bible)

Don't let the flames go out. The Amplified says, "rekindle". Fan that gift into flames!!

The Kingdom, we know, is real. Closer than when we first believed. It's nearer ... but it may not be near enough for some of us who are alive today. It's our responsibility to stir ourselves up.

"Believe" is a doing word ... we should be engaged in action.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: (times of stress) For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

2 Timothy 3:5. NET

They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power. So avoid people like these.

2 Timothy 3:5 NLT

They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

2 Timothy 3:14

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

It's a long race ... the Christian journey.

John 8:30-32

As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "**If you abide in My word, (continue)** you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (The truth that you know)

Acts 14:19-22

Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around

him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 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." (difficulties will come our way too)

Acts 14:22 NET

They strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "We must enter the kingdom of God through many persecutions."

When we pay attention to The Word of God ... two things happen.

1. Faith comes

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

2. Satan comes

Mark 4:14-15

The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. (Satan comes immediately ... if not sooner!! They don't continue!!)

Mark 4:16-20

These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of

riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (They didn't stir themselves up. Eventually ... the growth is choked!) But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

So ... we can't be surprised that when The Word comes ... satan comes!!

Acts 13:38-44

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man (talking of Jesus) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes (that He is The Messiah) is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, (a warning coming along) lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

'Behold, you despisers,

Marvel and perish!

For I work a work in your days,

A work which you will by no means believe,

Though one were to declare it to you.' "

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to **continue in the grace of God.**

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

We need to continue. We need to pursue this. To continue is one of the keys to our calling. Keep on going ... keep on going. Don't let anything distract us.

Acts 11:21-24

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-7

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, (All of us need encouragement) that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you— therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, (hold fast ... don't change) for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, (We need to encourage one another) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24 NET

And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works,

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, (Comfort = Encouragement = PARAKALEO = one who comes alongside to help you) that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. (Amplified Bible ... we were so utterly and unbearably weighed down and crushed that we despaired even of life [itself].) Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

None of us is an island. We need to help others ... and we need them to help us.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (We should have a hope of a great way out. God shows us the way out)

1 Corinthians 10:13 THE MESSAGE

No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are not really on our own. God The Father is with us. Jesus is with us. We should be encouraged and be encouraging others.