

Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word

Speaking to a Pagan Culture, Part 1

Acts 14:1-28

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, Oct. 6, 2019

I. You Need to Be Absolutely Clear that Salvation is By Grace Alone and Not Works

Acts 14:3 "Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace..."

This message of grace was just as hard for them to grasp in that day as it is for us today because it's our human nature to be wired for achievement, earning, and working.

Paul himself uses the word 'mystery' 6 times in his letter to the Ephesians because he's explaining the incredible implications of this Gospel of grace! [1:9;3:3,4,9;5:32;6:19]

The gospel is not mysterious because it's so hard to understand. It's mysterious because it so foreign to us. It's unexpected, unmerited, and free. No other religion is like this!

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

II. You Should Expect Hostility and Opposition in the Midst of Great Opportunities

A. The Hostility Today is No Greater than It's Ever Been

Acts 14:2 "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren."

The hate, slander, and misrepresentation that we feel today is not a new thing, but an essential thing that we must go through.

Acts 14:22 "... We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

I Thessalonians 3:3-4 "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..."

The Bible teaches us that hardships and adversity are what grow us and make us more like Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Everything starts to make sense if you keep God’s goal in mind and eternity in view! His goal is not to give us our best life now, but to make us more like Christ.

If we believe the meaning of life is our happiness, then suffering has no part in our story and can only be seen as an interruption that has no value or meaning.

Not everything *is* good that comes into our lives, but God promises to work all things together *for* good.

Romans 8:28-29 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

B. The Opportunities Are Still Often Found in the Context of Opposition

Great opportunities are often found in the midst of opposition - not outside of it.

I Corinthians 16:8-9 “... I will stay on at Ephesus... because a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

When God opens a door for ministry, it’s often really hard – because our enemy will come against you when you start to do anything for the Lord.

Don’t decide whether or not God opened a door based on how easy it is to get through it or how easy things are on the other side!

If your goal in life is to avoid opposition and resistance, you will seldom see great opportunities for ministry.

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Luke 9:22 “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”