"NO EASY ROAD"

ACTS 14 (key verse - v. 22)
9-20-2026

INTRODUCTION: V. 21-22

***The pathway to God's kingdom is often paved with thorns (It is no easy road).**

3 Tribulations (pressures) you may face if you take a stand for the Gospel:

Along the pathway some may:

I. MISREPRESENT YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 1-7)
(Are you willing to endure the pain of verbal affliction?)

A. Because of the Gospel you may be talked about (v. 1-3)

B. Because of the Gospel you may be a cause of division (v. 4-7)

Along the pathway some may:

II. MISUNDERSTAND YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 8-19a)
(Are you willing to endure the pain of emotional affliction?)

A. On the one hand, some may think of you as a "god" to be worshipped (v. 11-18)

B. On the other hand, these same people may think of you as a criminal to be punished (v. 19a)

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III. MISTREAT YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 19a-20)
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INTRODUCTION: The Gospel – A cause worthy of any tribulation we may have to endure for believing it. Jesus – a Savior worth suffering for!

V. 21-22

Never lead a new convert to believe that the Christian life is without conflict; smooth sailing; "peaches and cream"; no trouble.

It is not! (cp. James 1)

Because you are saved, it doesn't mean you have no more load to bear; it means that Jesus is there to bear it for you.

We can praise God that Christ's "yoke is easy and His burden is light."

However, while our backpack is light, our journey up life's mountain may be steep, slippery, and thorny at times (cp. Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress).

After Paul and Barnabas finished thier first missionary journey, they retraced their steps (went back the way they came) and followed up on their converts.

Cyprus to Pamphylia to Antioch in Syria to Lystra to Derbe; then back to Lystra to Antioch in Syria to Pamphylia then home.

"Confirming the souls" = strengthening their minds and hearts.

"Exhorting them to continue in the faith" = encouraging them to remain true to the faith, to continue in the faith.

NOTE: "Continuance is a proof of true faith in Jesus Christ" (Wiersbe, p. 18).

Jn. 8:31-32 - "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Acts 2:42 - "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

A genuine believer will "endure to the end."

V. 22 - "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

"Good News/Bad News"

Paul preached the Gospel - meaning "good news."

"Paul did not preach a popular `success gospel' that painted a picture of an easy Christian life." (Wiersbe, p. 20)
It seems, in this world at least, with good news also comes "bad news."

Just as salvation is a gift, so is suffering (Phil. 1:29).

The good news is that salvation is for all; the bad news is that not all want it.

The good news is that salvation is free; the bad news is that Satan is mad because you have received it.

The good news is that we have received an undeserved inheritance; the bad news is that until we are in our estate, there may be some conflict with others whose names are not in the will.

The good news is that Christ gave His life for you; the "bad news" is that you may have to give your life for Christ.

"Tribulation" = pressure, trouble, affliction. (Paul is not speaking of the 7-year Tribulation, but of tribulation in general).

1. Tribulation is for all - "We" - Paul included

2. Tribulation is unavoidable - "Must" - it is necessary (to one degree or another, a real believer will have opposition).

   If you are living for Christ and most of the rest of the world is not, conflict is inevitable.

Christian	C O N F L I C T	Unbelever

With movement comes friction, friction causes heat, heat causes fires (we even see this in nature - EX: thunder and lightning).

3. Tribulation is the pathway to the door of the Kingdom. "Through" - διᾳ - by means of.
The Kingdom we inherit freely, the path we trod until we get there has "tolls" to pay; The World charges tolls.

The way to salvation is easy, the life of salvation is not so easy.

Heaven above is a pleasant hope, the earth below is filled with trouble.

V. 22

4. Tribulations come in quantity - "Much" (they don't come one to a package).

5. Tribulations are temporary - We will one day leave the winds and storms of this life and enter the door leading to the warm, peaceful, pleasant kingdom of God.

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I. MISREPRESENT YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 1-7)
(Are you willing to endure the pain of verbal affliction?)

A. Because of the Gospel you may be talked about (v. 1-3)

The unbelieving Jews agitated, irritated, or riled up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds with false words about Paul and Barnabas, and others who believed.

V. 3

NOTE: The bold response - Paul and Barnabas stood their ground. They didn't sit down with the unbelievers and compromise their convictions for the sake of peace.

As a new believer, I thought that everyone would gladly accept the Gospel I had accepted. I found out differently

Not only was my Gospel rejected, but so was I by many. I was spoken against: "Virgin Vinny"; "The Preaching Printer."

But this did not stop me from sharing it.

Mt. 5:11, 12 - "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you false, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so

persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

B. Because of the Gospel you may be a cause of division (v. 4-7)

When you tell others the truth about God and His grace, some will agree and some will not; some will be for you and others will be against you.

Just as a neutral attitude toward Christ is impossible, a neutral attitude toward a Christian is impossible.

Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against Me" (Mt. 12:30).

and

"He that is not against us is for us" (Lk. 9:50).

John 15:18 - "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

We will not have peace with everyone until the King returns and sets up His kingdom (Is. 2:4).

Until we enter the doors of Christ's kingdom, there will be tension and division (SEE Matt. 10:33-40; Cp. Luke 12:49-53).

None of us want to be talked about or be a cause of division, but this may be the price tag for standing up for the truth.

I'm not saying we should be contentious; nor should we look for trouble (like so many who supposedly are standing for the faith today).

Trouble will come without your looking for it, if you do what is right.

What I'm saying is: When trouble does come, be a Daniel who responded in wisdom (Dan. 1); be like the 3 Hebrew boys who would not give in to Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow to an idol (dan. 3).

*We cannot be two-faced (act like a Christian when around Christians and like the world when among the lost).

*We cannot compromise (bend on our convictions to avoid trouble; please everyone) ILLUS: spineless, no back-bone hotdog.

V. 5, 6

When Paul and Barnabas heard that a plot had been made to mistreat and stone them, they obeyed the Lord's advice in Matthew 10:23 - "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say until you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

Along the pathway some may:

II. MISUNDERSTAND YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 8-19a)

(Are you willing to endure the pain of emotional affliction?)

A. On the one hand, some may think of you as a god to be worshipped (v. 11-18)

The ironic thing in verses 8-19 is that Paul and Barnabas--who were at one moment objects of worship (v. 8-18) were at the next moment subjects for stoning (v. 19a).

Either the world will give us praise we don't deserve or punishment we don't deserve - anything to avoid their need for Christ.

ILLUS: How I had a woman (my mother's Avon lady, Marian) try to convince me that I was not a sinner, but a perfect "saint." She actually became angry when I denied this and told her how I had realized that I needed Christ. Why was her reaction like that?

Because she knew that if I needed Christ, then she did also, and she didn't want Him.

V. 12

Jupiter = Zeus - the chief God of the Greek pantheon

Mercurius = Hermes - the spokesman (orator) for Zeus, his interpreter.

Lost men are quick to worship anything and everything except the true God.

They are more willing to worship man than God (EX: pope, Virgin Mary, Patron saints).

They are more willing to worship an inanimate object (the rock in the Dome of the Rock; a statue, a relic) than God.

V. 14

"Rent their clothes" = a sign of mortality and grief. Tearing at their clothes to show how they were grieved at the suggestion that they were "gods."

They expressed "revulsion at a blasphemous attempt to regard men as divine" (Marshall, p. 237).

They showed they were men who mourned, and felt sorrow over the blindness of these pagans.

V. 15

The temptation might have been to accept some praise (some acclamation and fame) from the people, and then use this as a platform to present the Gospel.

EX: of people who think the way to win the world to Christ is to get "a name for yourself," then use your popularity to spread the Gospel (ex - sport figures, rock musicians).

Paul and Barnabas preached:

1. The truth about man's mortality (v. 15a)

2. The need for repentance - "Ye should turn..." (v. 15b)

3. The fact that God is creator (v. 15c)

4. The fact that God is patient (v. 16)

5. The fact that God is provider (v. 17)

B. On the other hand, these same people may think of you as a criminal to be punished (v. 19a)

No doubt, if Paul and Barnabas would have received the worship, the pagan crowd would not have allowed Paul to be stoned. However, because he pointed men to the true God, they agreed that he should be killed.

Why? Because they wanted nothing to do with God.

When people respond negatively to the truth you present, you can at times wonder, "Is it worth it?"

But in this world, not everyone will understand what we are saying. They are blind, chained to sin, under the control of Satan.

You will have to go misunderstood; the lost will not be able to "figure you out."

EX: How people often wonder what makes a believer "tick." "Why is he that way?" they ask. "I can't understand him anymore." "I can't figure him out," they say.

ILLUS: of a Catholic's reaction to a saved son's zealousness and changed life. ("Catholic Standard and Times" 1/23/86)

Along the pathway some may:

III. MISTREAT YOU, BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL YOU STAND FOR (v. 19a-20)

(Are you willing to endure the pain of physical affliction?)

For over 200 years (since 1776), we in America have enjoyed religious freedom that was unknown to every other time period since Christ.

We have no comprehension of what physical opposition is.

However, don't be surprised when affliction comes.

I Pet. 4:12 -"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"

A true believer will accept affliction for Christ - EX: Peter (Acts 5:41, 42 - "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they cased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.")

A half-hearted believer will not accept affliction for Christ. EX: stony ground (Mt. 13:20-21 - "But he that received the seed into stone places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

CONCLUSION:

What will you do when:

1. Your labor seems unwanted and unappreciated?

2. Your labor seems useless (vain)?

3. Your labor seems too costly?

Will you quit laboring? Or will you realize that conflict is part of being a soldier for Christ?

As long as we live in this world and stand for the Gospel of Christ,

--we cannot please everyone
--we cannot convince everyone
--we will not be treated right by everyone

Because you are a Christian, there is a cost to pay and there is a cross to bear.

Are you willing to pay the price?

Are you willing to bear the humbling cross?

If you are not, then you do not love your Savior like you should. Maybe you love the praise of men. Maybe you love the comforts of this world.

"Am I a Soldier of the Cross" -

> Am I a soldier of the cross? A foll'wer of the Lamb?
> And shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His name?
>
> Must I be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease,
> While others fought to win the prize and sailed thru bloody seas?
>
> Sure I must fight if I would reign--Increase my courage, Lord!
> I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, Supported by Thy Word.