

**Acts 14:20-26, Confirmation**  
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**A. Overview**

End of first missionary journey, begun in ch. 13. Emphasize

1. The personal qualities of the apostles;
2. how they built up and established the believers.

**B. 20-21, 24-26, Personal qualities**

1. Perseverance: note the distances they covered, probably on foot. (These are given as the crow flies; actual walking distances as much as 1.5x). Total over 550 miles, from Ann Arbor to the Atlantic Ocean.
  - a) Attalia - Perga 12 mi
  - b) Perga - Antioch 100 mi
  - c) Antioch - Iconium 100 mi
  - d) Iconium - Lystra 20 mi
  - e) Lystra - Derbe 52 mi
2. Courage: Return to cities where persecuted
  - a) Change of magistrates?
  - b) Focus on believers rather than public preaching?
  - c) Trust in the Lord!
3. Zeal: Continued Evangelism, even on the way home.
  - a) On to Derbe, 20, in spite of regular persecution.
  - b) Back to Perga, 25  
May not have been able to evangelize here on the way in, due to distraction with the John Mark break-up.

**C. 22-23, Building Up the Churches**

They gave personal encouragement to the believers, but could not stay permanently, so made provision for local leadership.

1. 22, directly encouraging the believers. Two points of exhortation:
  - a) "continue in the faith," = Col. 1:23. Other "continue in"'s: 13:43, "the grace of God"; Rom. 11:20, "goodness"; 1 Tim. 2:15, "faith and love and holiness"; and more generally, John 15:4, "abide in me," 1 John 2:28.
    - 1) We often emphasize, correctly, the importance of the single decision to repent of sin and receive Christ.
    - 2) It is also important to emphasize the need to persevere in the faith. Day after day, we make hundreds of decisions in our lives. Abiding in Christ is evaluating each of these in light of our Lord's will, and choosing with him.

- 3) Such perseverance is not works salvation, but the true evidence that we are indeed God's children.
- b) "much tribulation." 2 Tim. 3:12, "they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." John 16:33, "In the world you shall have tribulation."

Particularly appropriate to these infant churches, who had witnessed Paul's rough treatment, and probably caught some of the sparks themselves.

- 1) Christianity does *not* promise immunity to suffering.
  - 2) It *does* promise God's strength and provision through it, and his sovereign purpose to guide it.
  - 3) This is what makes perseverance (previous verse) so challenging, and such a good evidence of the Spirit within us.
2. 23, providing local leadership to carry on indirectly.  
Issues in selection of elders

- a) Subject is "elders." This is one of three titles for the leaders of a local assembly, each with different emphasis. Counts show # of times in NT the title is used of the leader of a local assembly.
  - 1) Elder -> experience and maturity (19x)
  - 2) Pastor -> teaching (1x)
  - 3) Overseer ("bishop") -> authority (4x)

Today we think first of "pastor," and some churches emphasize "bishop," but the title emphasized here and throughout the NT is "elder." Believers have different levels of maturity, and the more mature have a responsibility to care for and guide the less experienced. Qualifications are first of all experience and maturity, not Bible school; function is first of all to encourage and guide, not give lectures. One would not expect to find in these synagogues formally trained rabbis with credentials from Jerusalem (like Paul); one *would* expect to find devout Jews and proselytes who knew their OTs and had experience living with the Lord.

- b) How selected?
  - 1) Verb here is "selected," not "laid hands on."
    - a> Literally, means to "elect."
    - b> However, used in Greek of this period to refer to God's selecting someone for a position or task, so notion of popular choice not necessary.
    - c> Also, natural subject is still the apostles, not the disciples (taking *xeiro-* as parallel to the two preceding participles).

- 2) Three other examples offer useful comparison:
    - a> Acts 1 (Matthias)
    - b> Acts 6 (the Seven)
    - c> Acts 13 (Barnabas and Saul)
 Observations:
    - a> The people may choose, but need not (13), but there is always authoritative confirmation.
    - b> Prayer in all of these, but only in ch. 13 associated with fasting, suggesting that P&B are following the custom of the church in Antioch, which would also suggest less emphasis on popular nomination.
  - 3) Instructions to Titus and Timothy presume that the missionaries have authority in this area (Titus 1:5 "appoint elders"; 1 Tim. 5:22 "lay hands suddenly on no man." No mention of congregational choice.
  - 4) Synthesis
    - a> Popular nomination is permitted but not required.
    - b> Approval by those with responsibility is required.
- c) Ceremonies attendant:
- 1) Prayer always.
  - 2) Fasting here and ch. 13.
  - 3) Laying on of hands in 6 and 13.

**Summary:**

1. The characteristics of the apostles should be ours today: perseverance, courage, and zeal in the work of the Lord.
2. Beyond evangelism, we need to show the same concern they did for building up young believers, both by direct encouragement and through godly leadership.

**Hymn:** Psa. 126 (from the Bible)

**Analysis**

21-26, Return Trip--confirmation and continuing evangelism

- A. Lystra, Iconium, Antioch: establishing the believers
1. 20 kuklwsa/ntwn de\ tw^n maqhtw^n au)to\n a)nasta\s ei)sh^lqen ei)s th\n po/lin.
  2. kai\ th^| e)pau/rion e)ch^lqen su\n tw^| Barnaba^| ei)s De/rbhn.
  3. 21 Eu)aggelisa/menoi/ te th\n po/lin e)kei/nhn kai\ maqhteu/santes i(kanou\s u(pe/streyan ei)s th\n Lu/stran kai\ ei)s )Iko/nion kai\ ei)s )Antio/xean,
    - a) 22 e)pisthri/zontes ta\s yuxa\s tw^n maqhtw^n,
    - b) parakalou^ntes
      - 1) e)mme/nein th^| pi/stei, cf. 13:43
      - 2) kai\ o(/ti dia\ pollw^n qli/yewn dei^ h(ma^s ei)selqei^n ei)s th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^. *Thus certain aspects of this kingdom are yet to be realized, at the Lord's return.*

c) 23 xeirotōn hōsantes de autōi kat' ekklesiān  
presbutērous proseucha menoi meta nhsteiwōn pareqēntō  
autōu sō twō kuriō eiōs o pēpisteuō keisan.

- B. 24 kai diēlqōntes thn Pisidiān hēlqon eiōs thn Pamfūliān,  
1. 25 kai lalhōsantes en Perghē to nōgon katebhsan eiōs  
Attaleiān. *Perga was the site of John Mark's departure inbound,  
13:13; perhaps the internal strife had lessened their opportunity  
for evangelism*
- C. 26 ka)kei qen apepleusan eiōs Antioxeiān,  
1. o qen hōsan paradomeōi thō xariti tou qeou eiōs to  
ērgon o ēplhrōsan.