

Raised Up to Raise Up

(Acts 14:19-23)

Introduction

1. Series: Jesus accelerates us by the Holy Spirit to grow deeper through His family, wider in our impact for the gospel.
2. Background: God's focused, intentional, missional movement of the gospel into the Gentile world (cf. Acts 1:8).
 - a. Paul & Barnabas' first mission through Cyprus & Asia Minor/Galatia
 - b. Previously: Paul heals a crippled man at Lystra, and the crowd begins to worship them.
3. Big Idea: When we're on-mission for Jesus & get knocked down, God raises us up to continue raising up others.

Get up because God is not done with you yet [Acts 14:19-21a]

1. [19-20] The missionary apostles face deadly opposition
 - a. [19] Religious folk from Pisidian Antioch & Iconium hear about their activity & come to Lystra to discredit them.
 - i. They speak against their character & their message about Jesus.
 1. "They are untrustworthy outsiders"
 2. "They are not gods, but came to mislead, confuse & blaspheme against your gods"
 - ii. Crowd turns from worshiping them to raging against them.
 1. They attempt to stone Paul to death & dishonorably discard his body outside the city.
 - b. [20] Barnabas & the new Lystran believers attempt to claim Paul's body.
 - i. But God has miraculously & sovereignly preserved his life.
 - c. Paul has 3 options to consider:
 - i. "I'm physically & emotionally crushed; I'm just going to lay in the pile of rubble & die."
 - ii. "I've suffered enough for Jesus; let's go home."
 - iii. Paul chooses option 3: Instead of giving up, he gets up.
 1. He returns to the city that just tried to kill him.
 2. Next day, he goes on with Barnabas ~35 mi southeast to Derbe. Why?
2. [21a] Paul loves Jesus & knows his purpose/mission in life.
 - a. He continues to preach about Jesus to the city, and make disciples (cf. Matt 28:19).
 - i. Disciple: Learner/follower becoming like their master.
 1. Knows Jesus & His teaching, and grows in obedience to them by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Paul knew his purpose, and so do you; there is purpose to your life
 1. Jesus didn't bring you Home after you believed/received Him, nor after being knocked down by opposition/trials, because you have a continuing purpose: To make disciples.
 2. Love people enough to give them the gift that matters most: Jesus.
 - iii. Paul knew that he would be knocked down at times (cf. 9:16); you will too, for Jesus.
 - b. If we still live, if Jesus raises you back up, get up because God is not done with us yet.
 - i. We may experience physical pain or mental/emotional anguish & want to give up, run or hide.
 - ii. Remember that in His goodness, wisdom & sovereignty, God has not taken you home yet.
 - c. Application: What is the specific purpose/mission, passion/burden, people Jesus has given you to serve Him?
 - i. Is that work done? Do you still draw breath? Then get up, God is not done with you yet.
 - d. Real life examples
 - i. Knocked down in ministry: Someone moves from "don't care" to "don't like you"; God is not done!
 - ii. Knocked down at work: If the job is hard, boring, or you want more money, those are wrong criteria to stay/go. Get up & make disciples; God is not done with you yet!
 - iii. Knocked down at home: Marriage/family falling apart; God is not done with you yet.
 - iv. Knocked down by own sinfulness/foolishness: Still breathing? God is not done with you yet.

Face opposition to raise up others [Acts 14:21-23]

1. [21b-22a] Return to face opposition
 - a. Derbe is the last city the Holy Spirit calls them to bring the gospel to on this first journey.
 - b. [21b] Instead of returning home via direct route, they return to Lystra, Iconium & Pisidian Antioch.
 - i. It would have been shorter & safer to travel southeast directly to Syrian Antioch (their home church).
 - ii. They intentionally return to the people & places that wounded them. Why?
 - c. [22a] To finish what they started: They continue strengthening, encouraging & equipping the new disciples.
 - i. It's easy to run, hide, avoid or check out when dealing with those that wound us.
 - ii. Despite immense opposition, there were responsive, new believers in each town (cf. 13:48; 14:1,9).
 - iii. But those new believers are discouraged as they also face opposition, trials & suffering
 - d. We must face opposition to raise up others in spiritual maturity.
 - i. That is disciple-making for Paul & for us as followers of Jesus.
 - ii. Paul & Barnabas return to encourage: To put courage from Jesus into them.
2. [22b-23] Three ways to encourage others
 - a. Encourage with God's truth/Word.
 - i. Discouraged new believers don't need false courage (e.g., promises of being healthy, wealthy, wise).
 - ii. They need courage based on truth:
 1. Yes, you will suffer; but Jesus is worth it.
 2. Teach how you can know/trust Jesus through promises/truths about Him & us in His Word.
 - b. Encourage with your pain story.
 - i. [22b] Paul teaches them not to be surprised by suffering
 1. Not that suffering for Jesus earns you an open door into Heaven, but the reality that if you love & follow Jesus, the path inevitably leads through gates of suffering.
 2. Paul is the living proof; his own story of pain is the testimony (cf. Gal 6:17).
 3. "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).
 - ii. Application: Encourage others to press on by sharing our stories of pain, and how Jesus was in it.
 - c. Encourage others to spiritual maturity (in Christ & as a church)
 - i. [23] Paul & Barnabas faced opposition over a long enough time (weeks, months?) to instruct, train & organize new believers to become new pastors/leaders in each town's church.
 - ii. At Lystra, Paul discipled a young, half-Jewish man (Timothy) who will later join his mission team & be appointed as a pastor (cf. 16:1; 1 Tim).
3. Application: In hurtful situations, under what circumstances do we return to face that opposition?
 - a. When there are others there in need of being raised up to spiritual maturity.
 - b. In hurtful situations, is there someone there who you connect with, who responds to Jesus in you?
 - c. Is there someone discouraged about life/Jesus, and can use your encouragement?
 - d. Is there someone there you can disciple to know Jesus/His Word more? Who you can give mentoring & guidance to grow up in spiritual maturity/leadership?

Conclusion

1. Picture that person in life who has hurt you (current or unresolved from the past).
 - a. Someone who has frustrated or wounded you from work, school, family/home, mission team or even church.
 - b. Natural reaction: Run, hide, avoid, check out.
 - c. Can be angry with others, or at God for allowing them to wound you, or can remember who you are in Christ, who God put into your life, what you are called to do.
 - d. Remember the promise you made to Jesus: All that I am/have are Yours; use me for Your glory.
2. Obstacle: There are times we don't want to get back up out of fear.
 - a. Fear of men, harm or pain: Fear for our safety, security & comfort, or for those we love.
 - i. [Prov 29:25] The fear of man is a trap/snare; it's harmful, imprisons & rules over us.
 - ii. Must decide if fear is going to be lord, or if Jesus is.
 - b. Must decide: Is Jesus really worth it? Do I really believe Him? Am I committed to take up my cross & follow?
 - i. Out of His mercy, Jesus has protected you enough to survive.
 - ii. He loves you so much, He suffered far worse for my sake at the cross.
 - iii. Do I love Him? Am I willing to be made more like Him, to suffer for His sake, & for those to come?
 - iv. Remember purpose: I love, serve & worship Jesus; I'm still here to do good for His Kingdom.
 - c. There will be times that you are knocked down, but not knocked out.
 - i. Jesus has raised you back up so you can raise up others.