

056 - Strengthening the Churches - Acts 15:36 - 16:5 2013-02-03

Call to Worship: Psalm 27:14

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 26:1-4

Sermon: "Strengthening the Churches" Acts 15:36 -16:5

Benediction: 1 Peter 5:10-11

## INTRODUCTION

We continue today in a theme raised last time---Strengthening or Confirming the Churches

Is this an important enough matter for Luke to go on about? For me to go on about? To occupy our time and our minds another week?

Does the army and do the marines spend any time on strengthening the soldiers? Why?

-because if the army loses the war, the people will be conquered

Does a builder concern himself with strengthening a building? Why?

-because if the structure falls, it will be the ruin of many people

Does a seamstress concern herself with strengthening the seams of a dress? Why?

-because if the seam fails, the person wearing it will be exposed to embarrassment and the elements

Does a computer programmer writing anti-virus programs concern himself with strengthening his program against hacking? Why?

-because if his program fails, the people using his program will suffer harm and loss

Does a Christian have interest in spending any time strengthening God's churches?

Why?

-on a positive note: 1 Timothy 4:16

1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

-in the way of a dire warning: Revelation 3:1-5

I. Paul Purposed to Strengthen the Churches (Paul's Stated Purpose: "see how they are doing")

-we know just from the nature of things that he doesn't mean just check to see how they are doing;

-a commander does not check on how the defenses are just to check

-a teacher does not check on whether the students know their multiplication tables just to check

-these things are done to find out where the weaknesses are, so as to strengthen those places that are weak

-we also know something about Paul and Barnabas already, because we studied their first missionary journey; from what we know about them, we know that Paul doesn't

mean “merely see how they are doing.” Remember what happened?

-in Psidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had been run out of town

-in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas had fled from an attempt to stone them

-In Lystra, Paul’s enemies from Antioch and Iconium came and finally succeeded in having Paul stoned

-after this, Paul and Barnabas preached in the city of Derbe, and then what did they do?

Acts 14:21-23 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 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." 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

-so we know that Paul, when he says, “see how they are doing,” means “see where they are strong or weak, and strengthen them according to their needs”

## II. Paul Encountered Difficulties in the Process, but Went On Strengthening the Churches

### A. Conflict among the ministers (37-41)

1. there was a conflict, seemingly involving Barnabas’ loyalty to a family member (col 4:10)

APPLICATION: let us defer to the judgment of other regarding our own kin

2. Paul was not deterred, but went on strengthening the churches of Syria and Cilicia

### B. Unnecessary scruples (1-3)

1. there was a promising young man, Timothy

2. his father was a greek, his mother a Jew

3. the Jews wherever Paul went would not have tolerated such a person uncircumcised

Romans 15:1-2 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (2) Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

## III. Paul Gained New Partners in Strengthening the Churches

A. Silas---a man already established as a gifted preacher, even a prophet, now brought into missions work

B. Timothy---a young man of good reputation

## IV. Paul Strengthened the Churches Through Teaching and Preaching the Word of the Lord (4)

## V. These Churches, So Strengthened, Increased in Number (5)

The rest of Paul's idea, unspoken here: "and strengthen them"

verse 41 "strengthening the churches"

verse 5 "the churches were strengthened in the faith"

Acts 18:23 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Romans 1:11 (ESV) For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you--

Henry:

he would visit them that he might acquaint himself with their case, and impart unto them such spiritual gifts as were suited to it; as the physician visits his recovering patient, that he may prescribe what is proper for the perfecting of his cure, and the preventing of a relapse.

Dealing with conflict among the workers

Let us not cause these kinds of conflicts in God's church

If we experience these kinds of conflicts, let us not despair, but trust in God's sovereignty

Adding workers

Accommodating unnecessary scruples

Delivering established doctrine