

**October 7, 2020**

Words to encourage you now in Jesus' name.

Many Christians live with great uncertainty about their ability to speak the Good News of Jesus. There is not only a great reluctance but a palpable timidity when it comes to living their faith. This is not the way Christians should live. Remember, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). Let us read Acts 14:1-7.

*1 In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. 2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. 3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. 4 But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; 7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.*

The world is changing rapidly around us. Once it seemed everyone went to church. The church was the center of community. There was not much need to speak boldly in and of Christ since everyone was always involved in various church supported activities. This is no longer true. Therefore, Jesus' disciples need to remember or learn how to speak boldly relying upon Christ Jesus as they share God's Good News.

The aforementioned event takes place while Paul and Barnabas are on the first missionary journey. At this time they are in Iconium. Iconium is

modern day Qoniyay in the Anatolian region of Turkey. Paul and Barnabas were speaking boldly about Jesus and many believe but, many others do not believe. Those who do not believe seek to do harm to Paul and Barnabas. This is instructive for us today as well for not everyone will accept or believe about Jesus. Some will even have hostile reactions. We must remember that Jesus will divide people.

Christ divides people today just as He divided people in Paul and Barnabas's times. Jesus responding to a plea from someone in the crowd asking, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13), begins a series of teachings on all sorts of greed, a warning to be ready for His return, and the coming judgment declares, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division" (Luke 12:51).

Whenever words about Christ Jesus are spoken people will choose sides. They will either be on Christ's side or they will be on Satan's side. Jesus asserts, "The one who is not with Me is against Me; and the one who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). Every time people are introduced to Jesus they are compelled to make a choice. The choice which they make is the ultimate "either" "or" decision. For this decision will have either eternal blessing or eternal consequence attached to it.

As Jesus' disciples it is our responsibility to share Jesus. Every Christian who receives God's gift of grace also receives the responsibilities which come with the gift. Some of these responsibilities are to live in a fashion commensurate with what you say you believe; to spend time fellowshiping with other Christians, encouraging them to love and good deeds; sharing Jesus at every opportunity.

We are commanded to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20).

We are commanded, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). In Luke and Acts we are commanded to be Jesus’ witnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). In John we are commanded to follow Jesus (John 21:19 & 22).

We must learn to rely upon Jesus. Jesus instructs that apart from Him we are unable to do anything. That is, we are unable to do anything for the kingdom of heaven (John 15:1-11). We must abide in Jesus always. God provided several ways by which we can rely upon Jesus so that we may speak boldly. Prayer is one. When we pray, both individually and communally, we are able to hear words of direction from God.

Participation in church is a second way for us to learn to rely upon the Lord. When we belong to a church we have a ready support group that encourages and lifts us up so that we are better able and prepared for kingdom service.

Studying God’s word is essential in helping us to rely upon the Lord. Study is necessary so that we will know how to correctly handle God’s word and thereby share it effectively. Finally, accountability is a must. We should understand we are accountable for what we say and do to each other inside and outside of the church. We are ultimately accountable to God.

Let us turn to God fully surrendering all that we are to Him so that He may use us in His service. Then we will be able to rely upon the Lord and speak His words with all boldness. Let us pray.

*Sovereign Lord and Savior, thank You for the Holy Spirit who empowers us for service in Your kingdom. Grant to us wisdom and courage so that we may face the difficult days ahead through Jesus our Lord, amen.*

Remember, if God is for us who can be against us? Let us no longer be timid rather let us go forth in faith proclaiming boldly Jesus for salvation.

Until the nets are full