

Life Link

Video Illustration: All About Him

Slide Background: Encourage One Another Hands

Title: "Confirmation of The Church"

Big Idea: Jesus said to Peter that His church would be built on the solid foundation of Jesus (Matt 16:18). The church was to have a sure foundation, but what was is the purpose of the church., How was the church to exist and what are the members of the church to do?

Text Illustration: THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

In his book, *The Family of God*, Batsell Barrett Baxter says the following:

"There are some who think of the church as an organization like other organizations. It is true that the church is an organization, but it is not primarily an organization. Rather, it is a new way of life. Those who have the view that being a part of the church is like being a member of a lodge, a luncheon club, a political part, or even a business are seriously mistaken. Such people feel that they should give to the church the same kind of support and loyalty which they give to these other organizations. It becomes my church, as it is 'my club, or lodge, or party, or team.' The Christian's loyalty to Church, however, should be unique, for in reality it is a loyalty to Christ and His way of life. The church is like no other institution on earth and a person's membership in the church is like no other membership which he may sustain. The church is more like a vibrant, living organism, than it is like a cold, structured organization...

Some make the mistake of thinking that the church...exists for the entertainment and enjoyment of its members. On the contrary, the church exists in order that its members may have an intimate relationship with Christ and God, as well as a close relationship with mankind."

Read Sermon Text:

Acts 14:21-28 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. 24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples. NKJV

1. CONFIRMATION OF FAITH. (vs.21)

Acts 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, NKJV

After Paul's conversion experience Paul becomes an itinerant preacher and church planter who is working to spread the gospel to an infant church. Very little time has transpired between the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension the birth of the church occurred an infant church is emerging into to angry world. A world that has rejected the very idea of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

In Acts 14:21 the ministry that God has called Paul to is continuing the encourage and the faith of new born believers and through preaching of the word is bring into the church new converts. The church is growing and maturing as God uses Paul to spread the Gospel.

Acts 14:21-28

First they preached the Gospel and made disciples ("taught many"). It is difficult to understand how they got back into the cities from which they had been expelled, but the Lord opened the doors.

Second, they strengthened ("confirmed") the believers in the things of Christ and encouraged ("exhorted") them to continue in the faith. Continuance is a proof of true faith in Jesus Christ (John 8:31-32; Acts 2:42). Paul made it very clear that living the Christian life was not an easy thing and that they would all have to expect trials and sufferings before they would see the Lord in glory.

Third, they organized the churches (Acts 14:23-25). The local church is both an organism and an organization, for if an organism is not organized, it will die! Paul and Barnabas ordained spiritual leaders and gave them the responsibility of caring for the flock. If you compare Titus 1:5 and 7, you will see that is elder" and "bishop" (overseer) refer to the same office, and both are equivalent to "pastor" (shepherd). (from The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

Text Illustration: “The Story of Robert Moffit: One Convert”

I'm sure you've heard the classic story about the faithful pastor who was told by his superior that something was wrong with his work. The supervisor told him, “Only one person has been added to your church this year, and he is only a boy.” Later that day, heavy of heart, the pastor was praying when someone walked up behind him. Turning around, he saw the same boy—his only convert that year. The boy said, “Pastor, do you think I could become a preacher or missionary some day?” The pastor encouraged him to pray and seek God about it. The lad was Robert Moffit who was destined to open Africa to the Gospel of Christ. Years later when Moffit spoke in London, a young doctor heard him say, “I have seen in the morning sun the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been.” The young doctor, deeply moved by Moffit's message, was none other than David Livingstone. In 1840, he sailed for Africa where he labored for Jesus for more than three decades—all of this happened because a faithful pastor encouraged his “one convert.”

2. CONFIRMATION IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH (vs.22)

Acts 14:22 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." NKJV

Not only did Paul establish and encourage churches but he also encourage the fellowship of believers. The church faced great opposition. No matter where the Christian believer turned they faced opposition and persecution.

That persecution came in the form of rejection from the Jewish community, rejection and persecution from the religious zealots of that and the Romans. The church was under attacked and it needed to grow and mature into a fellowship of mature Christians.

Romans 10:17 reminds that "faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God". Paul continued to preach and teach the infant church. There is a old saying that goes this way "when the going gets tough the tough get the word", While it doesn't quite go that way that is what happened. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It gives us encouragement when we are downcast, and when we are lonely it provides us companionship. When life seems its darkest it will bring light to our soul. The Word unites all believers together through the 'Blood of Jesus". The Word reminds us that we are not alone but, Jesus promised that he would never leave us.

Acts 14:21-28 He used one approach with the synagogue congregations and another with the Gentiles. He referred the Jews and Jewish proselytes to the Old Testament Scriptures; but when preaching to the Gentiles, he emphasized the God of creation and His goodness to the nations. His starting point was different but his finishing point was the same: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He majored on establishing and organizing local churches. Jesus had the local church in mind when He gave what we call "The Great Commission" (Matt 28:19-20). After we make disciples ("teach"), we must baptize them (the responsibility primarily of a local church) and then teach them the Word of God. Merely winning people to Christ is but fulfilling one-third of the Commission! It takes the local assembly of believers to help us fulfill all of what Jesus commanded us to do.

He grounded the believers in the Word of God. This is the only source of strength and stability when persecution comes, as it inevitably does come. Paul did not preach a popular "success Gospel" that painted a picture of an easy Christian life.

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Text Illustration: BIBLICAL FELLOWSHIP

If the local church is going to develop the kind of beauty that God says is possible, that which will attract others to Christ, we much commit to becoming together, the kind of church Christ calls us to be. A church that is a biblical fellowship.

In his book, *Rediscovering Church*, Bill Hybels tells of a message by Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian, who said, "The only kind of fellowship many know in church is after a service when men stand around and ask each other superficial questions. Then they find their wives who are having similar conversations, and go home.

But biblical fellowship has the power to revolutionize lives. Masks come off, conversations get deep, hearts get vulnerable, lives are shared, accountability is invited, and tenderness flows. People really do become like brothers and sisters. They shoulder each other's burdens - and unfortunately, that was something that few of the people today experience growing up in church in America." (From a sermon by Dave McFadden, A Golden Lampstand, 6/8/2010)

3. CONFIRMATION OF HOPE. (vs. 22)

Acts 14:22 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." NKJV

Paul and Barnabas traveled from city to city, from house to house and from person to person preaching the "Good News" they encourage and gave hope to the hopeless.

Rom 12:12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; NKJV

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, NKJV

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; NKJV

This message of hope it is not something which is wishful but it is a confident expectation of the coming of our Savior, it is a message which is founded on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ. Peter reminds us that our future inheritance is reserved for us and it is secure by God, Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.

The message that Paul was preaching and teaching is a message that all believers need to hear again and again. We too need to be encouraged and strengthened for the days of trouble are approaching.

Text Illustration:

Elton Trueblood wrote, "It used to be that Christianity was a revolutionary faith that turned the world upside down. But today Christians sit in Sunday morning church services looking at their watches, wondering what time dinner will be served, or thinking about the kickoff. And we hope that church won't interfere with the things we would really rather be doing."

The hope of the church is not in better programs, better worship music, better preaching, or better buildings. The Hope of the church is Jesus! Jesus is the answer for the church, the answer for this nation, the answer for people. Is He your answer? Is He your hope, He is the answer.