**By the Power of Jesus You Can Make It!**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Acts 14:18-22**

**Sunday Morning**

**December 8, 2024**

**Acts 14:18-23**

18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 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."

**1. Do you remember the last time you felt down or discouraged?**

**2. What caused you to feel this way?**

Saints, none of us want to experience this painful emotion, but so many situations in life have the capacity to make us feel hopeless and helpless.

Maybe we’re struggling with finances, health, a relationship, or a job.

Saints, sometimes discouragement comes because we feel rejected, mistreated, or shut out by other people.

Whatever the cause, the most important issue is how we respond to the situation.

Perhaps we’d like to give up and walk away or blame God or someone else, but instead of simply reacting to our distress, let’s consider how the Lord would have us respond.

**The apostle Paul is an inspiring example of someone who was down but not out.**

Saints, when he and Barnabas were in Lystra preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, they healed a lame man and caused quite a stir in the town.

**Acts 14:8-15**

8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them…

Saints, the people thought they were gods, and Paul and Barnabas had trouble convincing them not to offer sacrifices to them.

But when some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, they won over the crowds, who quickly turned on Paul and stoned him.

Supposing he was dead, they dragged him out of the city.

**Acts 14:19**

“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”

Saints, despite his obedience to God in preaching the gospel, Paul suffered tremendously.

He was in such bad shape that everyone thought he was dead. But the disciples stood around him—undoubtedly praying—and amazingly, Paul got up and entered the city.

**Acts 14:20**

“However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.”

He was down but not out. In fact, the next day he was able to leave Lystra and head to Derbe to continue preaching the gospel.

**What helped Paul and can help us get up, too, when we’re feeling down?**

Saints, Christ’s teachings were filled with words of encouragement

on various subjects.

**Paul’s Conversion**

Saints, no matter what he faced, Paul kept going because he never got over his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road.

**Acts 9:4-5**

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Saints, this was the turning point of his life, which radically changed his goals.

The light that flashed around him blinded his eyes and caused him to fall to the ground, but Jesus didn’t leave him down.

He told Paul that he was His chosen instrument to proclaim His name to the Gentiles.

After his sight was restored, Paul immediately began proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God.

Saints, whenever we’re discouraged, we should remember our salvation experience because that’s the point where we began a relationship with Jesus.

All our sins were forgiven, and our names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

No matter what we face in life, the remembrance of God’s gracious salvation encourages us to get up, praise Him, and continue serving Him.

**Paul’s Conviction**

Because he knew God’s purpose for his life, Paul didn’t stay down. He had been chosen and “appointed for the defense of the gospel”

**Philippians 1:15-16**

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

And through all his trials, Paul had also learned that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him.

**Philippians 4:13**

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Saints, we too have been called to be witnesses for Jesus and to represent Him with our lives.

This conviction, along with the assurance of His strength, helps us get up when we’re down.

Many times, God uses these situations to equip us to help others when they’re feeling discouraged.

**Paul’s Confidence**

Paul had complete trust in the Lord and the truths he’d learned from Him. In Romans 8:38-39 he had written,

**Romans 8:38-39**

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Saints, Paul knew that in his sufferings and trials—and even in death—he could conquer through the One who loved him.

**Romans 8:37**

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Saints, if we’ve been saved by Jesus, we have this same confidence.

Instead of staying down and feeling sorry for ourselves, we should remember God’s unfailing love and promises.

Since the Holy Spirit lives within us, we never have to pull ourselves up alone because He motivates and empowers us to get up.

**Paul’s Courage**

Saints, when Paul was explaining to the Corinthians that death would one day be swallowed up by life, he told them that the Holy Spirit was given to us as a pledge of this reality (2 Cor. 5:5-8).

**2 Corinthians 5:5-9**

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

Saints, that’s why stoning and possible death couldn’t get him down.

To die meant that he would be instantly present with the Lord. God doesn’t promise us an easy life without persecution, trouble, or pain.

However, the same Holy Spirit who gave Paul courage also dwells within us, enabling us to face whatever situations come our way.

**Paul’s Commitment**

Paul didn’t stay discouraged, because the Lord had given him a ministry to accomplish. He considered himself “under obligation” to preach the gospel because “it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:14, 16).

**Romans 1:16-17**

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Saints, like Paul, we too may face situations that get us down temporarily, but we have no legitimate reason to stay down.

Having been saved by God, we are now committed to live for Him for as long as He gives us life.

**Paul’s Companions**

Saints, when he was dragged out of the city after being stoned, his friends did not abandon him but came and stood around him until he got up.

The next day, Paul left to preach at another city, but he eventually returned to Lystra to strengthen these disciples and encourage them to endure tribulations as he had.

**Acts 14:21-22**

21 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."

Saints, we all need the encouragement of fellow believers who will help us get on our feet again so we can finish carrying out the work God has planned for us.

**What should you do when you’re discouraged?**

The next time you feel disheartened, remember that you don’t have to stay there. Then try modeling your response after the apostle Paul’s.

**Philippians 3:12-14**

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Saints, we sometimes think that we could never respond as Paul did, but the Spirit who motivated and lifted him to his feet is the same Spirit who dwells within us as well.

**In Closing**

**Romans 15:13**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Saints, Paul’s life is a pattern for us to follow. And in the same way, our confidence in the Lord in times of discouragement can become an example for other believers who are feeling down because of the difficulties they face.

**1. What kinds of situations cause you to feel discouraged?**

**2. How do you usually respond?**

**3. When you’re feeling down, where is your focus?**

**4. How would focusing on the Lord change your response to discouragement?**

**5. Who in your life has been an example of perseverance through hardship? For whom are you setting an example?**

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.”**