

Extreme Reactions & Many Tribulations

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Gene and Erna. Thanks, David. It's a wonderful song. What a joy it is to sing of the hope, the real hope that we have.

Something I've experienced recently is as Thomas McNeil, the pastor at Calderwood, has taken over from John, and I was speaking to John the other night, and the funerals are coming in by the dozen, it seems.

It's like the opposite of the film, Four Weddings and a Funeral. It's more like Four Funerals and a Wedding. And I said to John, I bet you don't miss the amount of funerals that you do.

And Thomas has been doing a number week in, week out. But it's something, you know, and I'm sure you've all experienced it, when it's a Christian, and when you're a Christian, there is a real living hope, isn't there?

Paul says, we do not mourn like those who do not have hope. The hope that we have is real, and it's a wonderful thing. So thank you for choosing that song. Well, this morning we're continuing in Acts.

[1 : 17] We're in Acts 14, and I'm going to be reading from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. Acts chapter 14. And really the idea of this is Paul himself, as an apostle, as an ambassador of Christ, is a letter that God is sending to various different peoples.

and really we see varying responses as to how people receive that letter. Acts chapter 14 from verse 8.

Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking, and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet.

And he sprang up and began walking. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying, in Lycionian, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifices with the crowds.

[2 : 58] But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of like nature with you.

We bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

In past generations, he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness. For he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city. And on the next day, he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

[4 : 33] And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they passed through Pisidia, came to Pamphylia.

When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Atalia and from there they sailed to Antioch where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

When they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles when they remained no little time with the disciples.

We pray that God would bless the reading of his word. Amen. Well, back in Mark chapter 4, there was a parable that Jesus told about a man sowing seed on many different types of ground and with different levels of effectiveness on the different types of ground.

Also in Mark chapter 4, there's another parable that Jesus told of a man who scatters seed, he sleeps and rises and the seed sprouts and grows though the man does not know how.

[5 : 56] The man simply scatters, sleeps, rises and if there's a harvest he brings it in. You know, one of the interesting things about both of these parables that Jesus told is that the sower knows nothing of the ground.

The sower doesn't know what condition the ground is in. his role is simply being faithful to sow, to scatter the seed far and wide when he should and in being faithful to reap the harvest when it comes.

You see, in the first parable there seems to be some quick results but not every response indicates that it will be fruitful and it will last. And in the second parable the true nature of growth is a complete mystery to man.

And so he doesn't grab the sickle until the harvest is ripe and ready. You see, I've often found that Christians can get very uncomfortable if one was to suggest that another who's left the church perhaps might not have been a Christian in the first place.

You know, we can't judge that. How should we know? There's a right sense in being uncomfortable about that but I think as well that we often end up doing that for people coming into the church in the first place.

[7 : 20] You see, we're understandably keen to tell someone that they're forgiven, that they're saved. But can we at times be too hasty in pronouncing someone as a Christian before it's evident?

Is that not a little like drawing early conclusions on seed that might be quickly sprouting up because the ground is rocky and there's no depth of the soil?

Or is it perhaps like putting your sickle in for the harvest when the grain is not yet ripe? We just don't know. All that's just to say that how a thing begins might not indicate how it ends.

The nature of growth is mysterious to us and we are quite unaware of the ground before we sow the seed. We are just to scatter far and wide. You see, our confidence is not in how we think the ground is.

That's not what our confidence is in. Nor is our confidence in how we think growth works. It's a mystery to us but our confidence is in the seed itself. To scatter far and wide the word of God knowing that it will not return void.

[8 : 38] Knowing that the power is in the word of God. Our confidence must be in the seed itself and in the one who brings the growth. And so at this point that's to say that Barnabas and Paul's journey they've just narrowly escaped being stoned in Iconium and they've fled to Lystra and they have no idea what the ground is like in Lystra but they do what they always do.

They scatter the seed. Preach the gospel. They speak to the people regardless of what they know about their background. And as it happens there's a man who is crippled standing standing before him is Paul.

Previously in Iconium Luke noted that the Lord bore witness to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done by Paul and Barnabas.

You see Jesus had given them miracles from their hands to attest to the words from their mouths. So when Paul sees that this crippled man has faith he's confident that Jesus would heal him if he commanded the man to stand.

And so it happens and suddenly the people heard it and they saw it and they began to say in their own language that the gods have come down to them and they begin to offer they begin to arrange to offer sacrifice to them.

[10 : 10] Now it would be easy to think at this point that maybe it will go a bit differently in this town than it did in the one previous. I mean they were chased out of Iconium the people were trying to stone them but now in Lystra the people think they're gods surely this is going to go differently than it did in Iconium.

But whether or not Paul knew there was a reason that people reacted this way. You see people have all kinds of superstitions and baggage that will affect how they understand and interpret things.

A little bit of background on Lystra as it turns out the people of this place would be aware that 50 years prior to this happening 50 years prior to this to Paul's visit there's a Latin poet called Ovid who had narrated a local legend in his Metamorphosis and in this local legend that Ovid had narrated Jupiter and his son Mercury which is Zeus and Hermes to the Greeks well they visited this area disguised as mortal men.

This was a legend that the people would know about that Zeus and Hermes had previously visited this kind of area Phrygia actually not far away from here that Zeus and Hermes had visited there disguised as mortal men and they were trying to find hospitality but they kept on being rejected rejected a thousand times it says until they found lodging with an old couple and so these gods disguised as men rewarded this old couple for their hospitality but they also destroyed the homes of those who rejected them.

It's very likely that at this point with this legend in mind the people at Lystra seeing Barnabas and Paul doing these kind of things would conclude again this is the same gods they've come back down they've come back down to visit they're disguised as mortals and there's no way they would want to suffer the same consequences as their neighbours in Phrygia so they get busy organising a sacrifice you see how were Paul and Barnabas to know the ground that they were sown into how were they to know how these people would react I don't know if Paul would have known about this local legend or not but certainly these people jump to conclusions and think this is happening again and so they want to offer hospitality they want to offer sacrifice they want to be on the right side of things at least that's the way it looks right now but the people the people begin to to chatter in their own language and I imagine it would have been quite confusing they get vocal about it in

[13 : 22] Lassionian verse 11 and it seems like it's only when a priest of Zeus comes with decorated bulls to sacrifice that suddenly Barnabas and Paul realise what's going on and when they realise what's going on they tear their garments they try to stop it as best they could the people have just drawn the completely wrong conclusion and Paul tries to help them in a way that they will understand yet without being able to stop them offering sacrifice you see if you were in this place what would you do what would you do in this situation if people were suddenly rushing to you and hailing you as a god it might seem nice for a moment certainly for Paul who had been chased out of the previous town and tried to stone him you might think that it might seem nice but imagine that Paul and Barnabas would be absolutely appalled you see we've already seen a similar situation in Acts before

I want to remind you again that this theme in Acts of authenticating Paul as a true apostle not merely for the sake of Paul's reputation but Luke wants to authenticate Paul he wants to show Theophilus and any reader that Paul was a genuine apostle and it's not just for Paul's reputation but it's for the sake of the gospel that Paul preached it's for the sake of the disciples that Paul made it's for the sake of the churches of Jesus that Paul established and it's for the sake of the Lord that Paul proclaimed you see Luke is concerned to show that the gospel that Paul proclaimed is the true gospel The churches that Paul planted are true churches.

The disciples that Paul made are true disciples of the Lord. And the Jesus that Paul proclaimed is the true Jesus. Even today there are people trying to discredit Paul.

Even today there are people that are trying to separate Paul from the apostles. Or separate Paul from Jesus. Saying that Paul didn't teach what Jesus taught. People are even doing that today.

But remember. Remember when Paul first went to Jerusalem. After his conversion. And that the apostles were suspicious of him.

[15 : 48] They were unsure of him. Can you remember who it was that convinced him that he was genuine? Well it's his friend and brother here Barnabas. Barnabas convinced the apostles that Paul was truly saved.

Paul was truly converted. He wasn't a spy. Paul wasn't undercover to find the apostles. Nor was he undercover to change their teaching. Barnabas was the one to reassure them.

And yet people. As evidence. Still need reassured that Paul is genuine. Particularly in this part of Acts. We begin to see why someone like Theophilus.

Would need to be given certainty about the things that he's been taught. Because there's people within this story. Because there's people within this story. If you look at verse 19. There's people within this story.

Who are actively pursuing Paul. To discredit him. And tear down whatever he built up. These people are the Jews. The unbelieving Jews.

[16 : 52] So we can see in this account. That Paul shares. The same kind of experiences that Peter has. You see maybe Theophilus had this in his mind. Maybe. People later on down the road.

Had this in their mind. If Jesus is the true Messiah. Then why did the Jews reject him? If Paul is a true apostle. Why did the Jews reject him? If the work that Paul was doing.

In the gospel that he was preaching is true. Then why are the Jews saying that it's not true? Well.

Luke is concerned to show us. That this is just what happens. With the unbelieving Jews. It's what has always happened. You see Paul. Is being shown here. To have similar experiences.

To Peter. Because their common experiences. Speak of a common denominator. The Lord Jesus. Being behind both of their ministries. In our account.

[17 : 52] Paul commands. A man who is crippled from birth. Just as the man. In Acts chapter 3. Who Peter commanded. Was crippled from birth. Lame from birth.

And remember Peter said. After this. He said. Why do you wonder at this? As though by our own power. We've made him walk. Well similarly. Paul says. Why are you doing these things?

We also are men. Of like nature with you. Same experiences. Same Jesus. Similar also to Peter. When Peter. When Peter told Cornelius.

When Peter told Cornelius. Stand up. I'm just a man. Just like you. Paul refuses. To be worshipped. And so in this case.

Paul is very like Peter. Both his experience. And his attitude. But there is another. In the book of Acts. Who Paul is really not like.

[18 : 47] We've seen this situation before. When the people start saying. That this man is a God. Remember Acts chapter 12. The last time we heard of a man.

Being called a God. It was King Herod. King Herod was told. That he had the voice of a God. Unlike Peter. Who refused it.

Unlike Paul. Who refused it. King Herod lapped it up. And he suffered the consequences. God struck him down. Immediately. He died.

You see. Interestingly. The focus isn't on. Just how bad it is. For people. To have. That attitude. Of attributing to man. What only belongs to God.

But more than that. How bad it is. That a man should accept. Such worship. You see. Peter and Paul. Certainly did not accept this. But Herod did.

[19 : 40] And was struck down. And I don't think. There's any sense. In which Peter or Paul. Would have enjoyed. The thought of being called. Gods. Or worshipped. To them.

Not only was such pride. Dangerous. But having come to know. The only true God. They could not even. Entertain for a moment. Such blasphemy. In fact.

That is likely. One of the. Things that drove. Paul to persecute. The Christians. In the first place. Because he didn't understand. Who Jesus was. And it was blasphemy. To attribute to a man.

What only belongs to God. To God. And so we see this. Particularly in the Jews. Who know there's only one true God. They are not going to accept.

A man claiming to be God. Never. Peter and Paul didn't. King Herod. And his pride did. And was struck down. And there's one person. One exception. In the whole of history.

[20 : 38] To this rule. One man. Who accepted. Such worship. And who was never struck down. For it.

The outlier. Is Jesus himself. A true Jew. Of all people. Could not entertain. For a second. A man receiving worship. Or being called God.

But not only. Did Jesus disciples. Worship him. But he himself. Accepted such worship. Unlike Peter and Paul. He did not rebuke. Such worship.

And yet. Unlike Herod. He was not struck down. For accepting such worship. Because he himself. Truly is God. And while Peter and Paul. Are both doing.

Similar miracles. To Jesus. Both Peter and Paul. Rebuke people. Who try to worship them. Whereas Jesus did not. Because Jesus is God. And both Peter and Paul.

[21 : 34] Are not merely doing things. Like Jesus. Rather. Jesus is doing things. Through Peter and Paul. The common denominator. Is Jesus himself. He is always the one.

Doing these things. Just as he came. To his own people. And they did not receive him. As they hated the master. So they hate the servants. You see.

In the space of just one verse. Luke records. How people went. From calling Paul. A God. And offering sacrifices. To then dragging him. Out of town. And attempting to murder him.

We don't know. What the Jews said. We don't know. What they did. To persuade the crowds. But most likely. Involved. Trying to discredit Paul. And trying to discredit.

The gospel. And trying to discredit. The Jesus. That Paul was preaching. Again. That's why Luke. Is writing to Theophilus. How can he be sure. That this Jesus. Truly is the Jewish Messiah.

[22 : 31] When he has heard it. Through Paul's ministry. Which was rejected. By the Jews. Why would the Jews. Reject their own Messiah. Is Paul.

Way off here. Is Paul. Just preaching. A false gospel. Well. As much as Luke shows. That Paul is like Peter. In this moment. Luke shows.

That Paul. Is just like Stephen. Stephen. Back in chapter 7. Was stoned. By the Jews. And he was stoned.

Shortly after revealing. The true history. Of the Jews. And their unbelief. You see. In that moment. People like Theophilus. Can have.

Confidence. And assurance. That Jesus truly. Is the Messiah. Why would the Jews. Reject him. Because the Jews. Have always rejected. The prophets. That God has sent. The Jews. Have always rejected.

[23 : 27] God. Jesus. Is the true Messiah. And Stephen. Was killed for it. Stoned. You see.

In chapter 7. It says. That Stephen. Was cast out. Of the city. And stoned. And in this chapter. Paul is stoned. And dragged out. Of the city. Very same thing. And I'm sure.

At the time. If he had time. To think. He would have thought. Of Stephen. And this. I mean. It makes you wonder.

Would the Christians. Who were hurt. Who were affected. And offended. By Paul. Killing Stephen. Would the Christians. Have thought. Serves you right.

Would they have thought that. You get your comeuppance. This is what you deserve Paul. Is that what they would have thought. Or rather.

[24 : 27] Would it be that this is a picture. Of what true discipleship is like. Just as they killed Jesus. Just as they killed Stephen. Just as they killed James. The apostle. Trying to kill Paul.

Actually. This shows. That Paul is on the right side. Of things now. If Paul wasn't a true convert. This would never have happened. And after the fact.

If Paul wasn't a true convert. He never would have continued. The fact that Paul continues. After this. Is unbelievable. From one extreme.

To another. Being called a god. One minute. To being killed the next. And the really sad thing is. That the Jews. The Jews were supposed to be a light. To the Gentiles. A light to the world.

They were supposed to bring the knowledge of God. To the nations. And they were doing the absolute opposite. You see the Gentiles are. Are receiving this.

[25 : 25] And the Jews come to try and stop them. It's the very same thing we saw in Acts chapter 13. Remember. Sergius Paulus. The proconsul of Cyprus. He was very keen to hear the word of God.

But it was Elemas. It was the Jewish false prophet. And magician. Who tried to stop him. From hearing about the one true God. It's so backwards. It's backwards.

And it's the same thing. That's going on here. And as well. The sad thing is. That the people. Who have enjoyed the rains from heaven. And fruitful seasons.

The people. Who have been satisfied in their hearts. With food and gladness. Cannot get to a place. Of giving thanks to the God. Who gave them all of these things. You see.

Isn't God due. Such praise and thanks. For all that he's given us. Isn't that part of why the gospel. Should go out to all nations. Not just for us. It's not just about us.

[26 : 24] And for our own salvation. But so that God has given the glory. And thanks that he's due. And Paul goes on to write this. Doesn't he. In 2nd Corinthians 4. 15.

He said. As grace extends to more and more people. It may increase thanksgiving. To the glory of God. Surely that's the reason. For evangelism. For outreach.

For sharing the good news. With others. Because it will increase thanksgiving. To God. Not that God needs anything from us. God doesn't need anything from us. But he's due it. And more than that.

It is genuinely good news. That we can know the true God. Who gives us life and breath. And all that we have. Don't you want to know the one. Who gives you all these things. No.

Don't you want to know the one. Who gives you life. Don't you want to know. The one who is responsible. For every breath that you take. And so this is what Paul highlights.

[27 : 22] You notice how Paul preaches. This way to the non-Jews. The gospel doesn't change. Although Luke doesn't record everything. That Paul says. We can be confident. That Paul spoke about Jesus.

We can be confident. That Paul didn't change the gospel. But he didn't set the gospel. In the context of the Old Testament. Like he did with the people in chapter 13. Because here the people are not Jews.

So they wouldn't have a clue. About the Old Testament. They wouldn't have scriptural categories. To hang the gospel on. So instead Paul couches the gospel.

In their context. He uses creation. He uses what made sense to them. To make sense of the gospel. And we'll see this again. In chapter 17 in Athens.

But suffice it to say. We need to. We need to meet people where they are. Don't we? No sense in talking. About the Old Testament.

[28 : 20] To someone out there. Who doesn't even know. What the Bible is. They're not going to make sense of Jesus. By the Old Testament. In fact. It's going to be the opposite way. They're going to make sense of the Old Testament.

Through Jesus. You need to meet people where they are. We need to speak to people. In categories. That they are familiar with. And so whenever Paul went to the synagogues.

He did use the Old Testament. He persuaded the Jews. From their own scriptures. That Jesus was the Messiah. But whenever he went to non-Jews. Who didn't know that.

He would use what they did know. As a starting point. Creation. And that's not to say. That it should stay there. No. They should get to the knowledge. But you must start where they are.

And that is what Paul talks about. In Romans chapter 1. Isn't it? That even those who don't have the law. Who don't have the written revelation from God. They have been given creation.

[29 : 17] Which declares the glory of God. No one is without excuse. Because creation. The things that have been made. They reveal his eternal power.

And divine nature. They make known God. Through the things that he has made. We cannot assume that people know anything about God. Or that they know anything about Jesus from the Old Testament.

Unless they're a Jew. But we can assume that God has given revelation. To every man. And we must start with that. But something we see in Paul.

And what he is doing. Shows us something of God. You see Paul is not dead like the people suppose. And I personally don't think that there's a miracle here. But that Paul was in a severe state.

Such that they supposed that he was dead. But with some care from the disciples. He didn't die. There are many things that cause people to stop following Jesus.

[30 : 17] Many things much milder than this. And I wonder what that says about faith and conviction. What is it that keeps Paul going? Why after being stoned.

And nearly dying. Does Paul keep going? Why does he go to the next town. And preach the gospel? Why does he even go back. To Lystra. And Iconium.

And Antioch of Pisidia. These places where he was chased out. And persecuted. Why does he go back there. To strengthen the churches. What is it that keeps him going? That not only keeps him believing.

But keeps him working. Why does he do that? Well I think we find an answer in 2 Corinthians 12. Jesus himself said to Paul. My grace.

Is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Or to put it another way. Paul himself says. In Philippians chapter 4. I have learned that I can do all things.

[31 : 19] Through him who gives me strength. I think it's not only the experience of an apostle. I think it's the experience. Of anyone who belongs to Christ.

Any one of us. His grace. Is sufficient for us. And his power is made perfect in weakness. We can do all things. Through Christ who gives us strength.

He is the one who keeps us going. He is the one who gives us strength when we're weak. His grace is our sufficiency. In the midst of trials and tribulations.

And I think what this shows. Is not just Paul's commitment. It doesn't just show Paul's commitment to Christ. Or his commitment to letting people hear about the good news.

But really. In the power of Christ. It is indicative of the commitment of God. To save people. Think about that illustration of the letter.

[32 : 16] That Paul is a letter to God. Paul is a letter from God. To these people in Lystra. And what do they do with the letter? They stone the letter. What does God do?

He empowers Paul to keep going. You see. God is rejected. Time and time again. It's a pattern of the Bible. God does something incredible.

Something amazing. Something wonderful and beautiful. Something powerful and majestic. And loving and kind. God does this. People reject it. And God does it anyway.

And people reject it. And God does it. And God keeps doing it. And God is persistent. In his pursuit to save people. God is persistent. In his love.

To bring people to a knowledge of himself. To bring people forgiveness. We see his persistence on the cross. A letter to the world.

[33 : 18] Even after all the prophets were killed. Even after God's own son being rejected and crucified. God continues to send. He sends his spirit to fill his people.

So that he can send his people. And keep sending people. So that more and more people might hear the good news of salvation in Jesus. So that more and more people might turn from these vain things.

To the living God. Who supplies all our needs. So that thanksgiving can increase to the glory. Of the one who gives us life and breath. And all that we have. And in Christ.

God gives us eternal life. Yet does not remove us from the earth immediately. But uses our mortal bodies. To show the world over. And over.

And over. That he will sacrifice himself out of love. To save the world. You see that Jesus will give his life willingly. Shows the commitment of God.

[34 : 15] And that likewise his followers will give their lives willingly. So that the world might turn from darkness. To know the true and living God. You see God. Through his son.

Through his people. Through his spirit. Has shown the world that he is committed to saving them. Even if it causes him the death of his son. And even if it causes him the death of a thousand of his people.

He will keep sending letters to the world. To give them the good news of Jesus. And we don't need to worry about our bodies. God has that sorted.

You see the kingdom of God has been made both possible. And free for us to enter. But one way or another. We will lose our bodies getting there. Through many tribulations we enter.

That's what Paul says. It's not the cost of our entry. But it is the nature of our citizenship. Just as it was the way of our king. Yet at this moment Paul can say this.

[35 : 21] Paul can say these things. Battered and bruised. But not yet dead. You see while we can be assured of God's grace. Keeping us going. We can be assured of God's timetable.

No matter what we face. See maybe some of you here. Have yourselves. Or know someone who has been right up to the edge. On the brink of death perhaps.

I know many people that have. Some go there. And they die. God takes them. Others go there. Many times over. And are still living.

See it's not as if God loves one more than any other. But God has a timetable. And if it's not his time. Then it's not going to happen. For Paul. It's not going to happen.

God has a work for Paul to do. God has more letters to send the world. So you can stone Paul all you like. You can read. Second Corinthians. And look at all the.

[36 : 18] The trials and persecutions of Paul. Many than one man can. Many than one man should be able to handle. Being flogged. And beaten. And stoned.

And shit wrecked. Yet. If it's not on God's timetable. It's not going to happen. Same thing happened in Luke chapter 4.

If you remember when. When Jesus went back to his hometown. The people received him at first. But then they rejected him. Can you remember. They tried to drag him out. To a cliff.

To throw him off. And he stopped. And he walked right through them. Went away. No one gets to decide. How Jesus dies.

But him. They don't get to decide when it happens. They don't get to decide how it happens. And it's the same with you and me. The world doesn't get to decide how we die.

[37 : 12] And when we die. Look at Paul. They thought he was dead. Should have been dead. If it's not on God's timetable. It's not going to happen. The world doesn't get to decide.

We are in the hands of God. He is in control. If it is good to him that we should live. Then live we will. And if it's good to him that we should die. Then all the better.

We will go home to be with our Lord. For Paul there is more to be done. And Paul doesn't just leave a trail of terrified believers in his wake.

No. He returns to every place that he has been. Returns to every place that he has been persecuted. So that he can establish churches. In the words of Roland Allen.

A late Anglican missionary in North China. He says this. That Paul leaves each church with three things. From our passage. Number one. Apostolic instruction. He goes to the churches.

[38 : 11] Strengthening the souls of the disciples. Encouraging them to continue in the faith. With many words. Apostolic instruction. And he leaves them secondly with pastoral oversight. In every place he appoints elders.

In every church. He leaves them with leaders. Who can look after them. And thirdly. He leaves them with divine faithfulness. In every place.

With prayer and fasting. He commits them to the Lord in whom they have believed. And that is how it truly is for us. Isn't it? We are devoted.

Like in Acts chapter 2. To the apostles teaching. We have been given the gift. Of leaders. And men. Faithful men and women.

Throughout the ages. Who oversee. And care for us. But most importantly. We have the faithfulness of God.

[39 : 11] To look after us. And to keep us. We have the faithfulness. So when Paul returns to his own home church. They declare all that God has done. And they rejoice together.

In it all. And so. Let us do likewise. Let me read from.

Let me read from the letter. Of Jude. An appropriate word. When thinking about divine faithfulness. It is Jude.

The brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who says this. After all these things. Now to him. Who is able to keep you. From stumbling. Him who is able to present you.

Blameless. Before the presence of his glory. With great joy. In his timetable. To the only God. Our saviour. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. Be glory. Majesty.

[40 : 10] Dominion. And authority. Before all time. And now. And forever. Amen.