The first Journey of the Sent Ones, Acts 13-14. David Schmidt, Dayton, 2013

Thank you, Observations;

The last thing Jesus said before he left,

"Go into all world, make disciples of all the nations..."

Not entirely new, "I will be exalted among the nations" (Psalm 46)

Told to 11 frightened, confused followers. None were world travellers, passport.

And, Jesus did not stay around long enough to explain HOW to do it.

However,

What do we see 2000 years later?

- -Christianity, largest religion in world, in every country of world,
- -About 34% of World's Population say they are Christian.
- -Evangelicals now about 11% of World Population. Most are non-whites. Evangelical Christianity growing faster that Catholicism or Islam.
- -Rabbi in Jerusalem, "Do you know how intimidating it is for me that Christianity has grown every century for 20 centuries?"
- -Most missionaries now from Asia. Africa more Christian than Western Europe. In 20 years, the most Christian country in the world will be China.
- -Bible talks about the Power of the Gospel. And we are not surprised.

So, How is the last command of Jesus to be obeyed?

How are all the Nations of the world to become Disciples of Jesus?

Modeled in Bible, Acts & Letters to the Churches

Churches send out people, they tell others about the gospel, teach the new Believers, start new churches, help set up Pastors, and move on.

I call these people "Sent Ones." From Hebrew.

All believers are to tell others about the gospel, Missionaries are SENT OUT to another place to do it. Shaliach. "Sent Ones"

There are now more Sent Ones in the world today than ever before.

Because there is still a great need. Most are women.

Americans, yes, but more Africans, Koreans, Philippinos.

Turn to Acts 13-14.

The Journey of the First Sent Ones.

We see a Model of What our work will look like;

READ: Acts 13:1-5.....Acts 14:26-28...beginning and end.

Explain; Church at Antioch, 5 leaders, HS spoke to the people, to send out their Two Best People, Return and Report at the end of Chapter 14

So, What happened on the journey?

A Model of what Sent Ones and their Sending Churches should expect.

They went to Cyprus and Turkey. Some good things, some difficult things. To a wealthier region.

This journey reads like OUR lives. We will endure some good things and some difficult things.

All is advancing the work of World Evangelism, and all is in God's will.

We will therefore expect hardship, setbacks, success, failure, all mixed together.

I have noted 10 Experiences Paul & Friends went through.

This is typical, even now.

1. THE TEDIUM OF TRAVEL

To Seleucia, the coast nearby, then sailed to Salamis in Cyprus, 13:4.

Does travel still have a special Romance for you? Documents, paying, cabins, food, expenses, tips, customs tax, travel companions,

ILL: Ben; Soldier, Talks of Advancing, Attack, Flanking, But mostly Preparation, Training, Waiting.

Typical of journeys anywhere.

2. NEGATIVE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

13:4-12, Their first recorded engagement took place on the Island of Cyprus, where Paul curses a sorcerer, Bar Jesus, with blindness.

Sent People will be Opposed; They will make enemies. Oppositional People.

Jerusalem, Insane people, Disruptive and even dangerous.

When engaging people with the Gospel, it will happen. We do not bring religion, but Redemption. The initial realization of the Gospel message is offensive to the false World Views people have built in their minds.

In the First Century, More Pagan people in Mediterranean world than now.

The CHALLENGE of engaging a person, a culture that opposes the Gospel. Naturally we are inclined to want to disengage.

Any Believer: Easy to be absorbed in Activity and leave off doing what we should do.

Sometimes we lose that Sincere Desire to Engage the Enemy. Need to go back down the trail and find it again.

3. LEGAL TROUBLE

GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS

Roman Governor, "Sergius Paulus" (13:7), was checking out rumours and charges against Paul and Barnabas of disruption in the Jewish community.

He wanted to hear the missionary's message started with conflict with Bar-Jesus.

The first case of Sent Ones in legal trouble. And not the last.

Sent Ones should not be shocked when government wants to investigate us. The Gospel is the one reason in the world for Believers to disregard the Law.

We are called upon to pay more taxes, more customs, long interrogations,

In Israel, I have seen dozens of Sent Ones expelled from the country for legal reasons. True all over the Middle East and eastern Europe.

The Evil One opposes us. The weight of the World opposes the Gospel.

The longer we are Sent Ones, the more likely it is that these things will happen.

4. PROBLEMS TURN TO SUCESS.

First Believer! Sergius Paulus Came to Faith!

For us, the greatest opportunities emerge out of Problems.

- -Gulf War led to Jerusalem Church.
- -Second Intifada gave birth to a new congregation in the Judean Hills and the Rehovot congregation.
- -Sudanese Refugees resulted in a new congregation in Tel Aviv.

APP: Look for opportunities. When we see trouble, GO to that place!

5. CREATING JEALOUSY

People everywhere think of themselves as morally superior. Natural.

In Pisidian Antioch, Paul preached the COMPLETE GOSPEL in the synagogue

Acts 13:16-41, He explained prophecies, Jesus' life, death and resurrection, forgiveness and salvation.

The sermons of Acts remind us how clear the Gospel is.

13:44-49, When great numbers of Gentiles turn out the next Sabbath to hear him, the Jewish elders were jealous and hostile.

ILL: In Israel, we encounter much jealousy that Gentiles, or worse, Messianics would claim to be close to God.

We are called upon to tell the GOOD NEWS with humility.

6. CHANGING STRATEGY

13:50-52, After the Jewish Rejection, Paul declared his intention to go directly to the Gentile community with his message of salvation.

The Jews persecuted the missionaries. Paul and Barnabas were forced to leave.

But they leave behind a young church and their message swept through the region. .

And Paul's strategy changed focus to the Gentiles.

APP: A lesson to concentrate our efforts on those who are ready to respond.

Have you ever started out with the certain strategy, and then changed your plans?

We made a strategy in 1987, but changed it.

We joined the larger region team in 1994 and changed our strategy.

We have changed our strategy several times since,

But our purpose has not changed.

"To facilitate a church planting movement across Israel"

They had a CLEAR, STRONG DECLARATION OF PURPOSE AND PRICE

14: VS 22, Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God.

7. CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

The Team started out with Saul listed as the fifth of five,

Then "Barnabas and Saul"
Then it became "Paul and Barnabas"
Then it became "Paul and his companions."

Paul emerged as the leader of the Sent Team. This was the natural way the team developed

Sent Ones are constantly appointing new leadership.

It is recorded here in 14:23, they appointed Elders in every church. These men were probably only saved a matter of weeks or months.

Jerusalem Pastor, Age 25, Judean Hills Pastor, Age 27,

In our region, New Regional Administrator, the youngest man at the table!

May we always be willing to do this. May the Lord bless us when we do.

We do not hang on to any position, to any role.

Our purpose is to do the work of the Gospel.

8. ATTRITION,

THERE WAS A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN TEAMMATES,

Resulting in Attrition. IE; John Mark joined the Team, and then left the Team.

(Acts 13:13, John Mark left, Paul separated from Barnabas over this later in Acts 15)

Paul, lost 33% of his team on their first journey.

The work of World Missions is practical & realistic, with fallen, redeemed people.

Our Region now, lost many people in the last few years.

Not to do with what we believe, but with different ideas of how to proceed.

If people join together, there will be disagreements. Even spiritual people.

If the disagreements are resolved, this is good, but it may not turn out that way.

9. FAILURE

They sailed from Cyprus to Asia, They kept moving...

13:14-43, Received well at Synagogue on first Saturday, Rejected second Saturday. (13:44-52)

The First Major Failure of the Journey

Sent Ones require the ability to get up after disaster and by faith engage again.

This can only be done with a Spirit filled life.

14:1-7, Paul and Barnabas continue their swing through Asia Minor.

They visit Iconium, where the Gospel message again creates such dissension that Paul and Barnabas are forced to flee.

I added up all that happened on this first journey.

It looks to me like about 80% of this first Missions Journey was failure.

So why do we expect something else when we head out?

ILL: I have an inventor friend. He has a laboratory with 6 employees. He works with Israelis sometimes. He has made his living from inventions for the last 30 years. I asked his about success, 20%, 10%, NO, No, less than 5%.

Still, we can expect Sent People to keep repeating initial success? Not always!

10. BEING MISUNDERSTOOD.

In Lystra and Derbe the two are mistaken for pagan gods.

They barely keep an enthusiastic crowd from offering sacrifices to them when Paul healed a cripples man. .

Zeus and Hermes were worshiped there. The people though Paul & Barnabas were those gods and wanted to worship them!

Sent Ones are sometimes misunderstood.

People thought they could give them something that they could not.

APP: sometimes people want power, money, green card, etc.

I wonder, Antioch Mission Board? Q, "What were you telling these people that would make them think you and Barnabas were gods?"

Misunderstandings can turn Violent.

We have a case of ATTEMPTED MURDER

Some people who followed them from Antioch and Iconium just to hinder their work, succeed in turning the crowd against them.

14:8-20, Paul assaulted and left for dead.

The work of the Gospel turned VIOLENCE. The gospel is Divisive.

Jesus said that He did not come to bring Peace, but a Sword, to divide parents, children, siblings.

If we succeed in our work, we will break up families and communities.

So, why are we shocked at opposition? Why are we surprised at violence?

Despite the hazards, there are now a "large number of disciples."

The Muslim world will not be won without physical sacrifice on all levels, and the world will not be won without sacrifice on all levels.

CONCLUSION

They made the return journey home, the direct short way.

14:21-28, Finally, they return to their sending church and report how God has opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

They told their sending church what had happened. What God had done.

Spent a long time with them.

As Sent Ones, our first line of Spiritual Authority is our Sending Churches.

This is why we came back and Report, to be accountable to those who Sent us.

One of the sweetest parts of being a Sent One.

And, the Holy Spirit guides us

Rom. 8:14, "As many as are led..."

In the midst of difficult choices, we are sensitive to the Spirit,

Expecting Him to give us a sense of peace when we are moving in God's chosen way.

PRAY...