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So let us take up our copies of the Word of God. And since we come first to hear his word read, let us stand together.

Acts 14 verses 21 through 28. Let us take heed of our hearts that we hear as an act of worship, because these are the words of God. And when they had preached, the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Theconium and Antioch. 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. So when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Panophtia. Now, when they had preached the word in Purgae, they went down to Italia from there.

They sailed to Antioch where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work, which they had completed. 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.

So they stayed there a long time with the disciples. Amen. The sins. This reading of God's inspired and authoritative word. We rejoice to know that he blesses also the preaching of it. Please be seated.

The entirety of the ministry in Derby is summarized in just a few words at the beginning of verse 21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples. Now that's interesting to us because in terms of amount of ink spilled for what is conveyed.

The Bible is a very economical book that all that we need for faith and for practice, all of the truth of God for us to know what we are to believe. And what duty God requires of us, could be contained in this one. Pretty small volume. Although that sounds a little bit odd in the ears of a Twitter generation, but it really is a small volume, considering what it contains.

And it's interesting when we see the difference in the way that the ministry to Derby is, is related as opposed to the ministries to Lystra, Theconium and Antioch. Where we had particular conversations, and events and detailed excerpts from sermons. And certainly there must have been many of those sermons.

And many of those interactions. The Lord could have given us much more detail than and when they had preached the gospel to that city, and made many disciples. There were many disciples made. And so there's there's much here, not so much that we would say that has left out.

But there is a shift and what the Holy Spirit gives us here. And the since is that as we have seen in the last several sermons, from the last several passages, that the Holy Spirit had zoomed in to give us a detailed picture as Christ built his church as God.

Used the Paul and Barnabas in the language of verse 27. As God, opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And God is still the one who uses those by whom, Christ builds his church. This is what the Lord Jesus is still doing. He is still gathering to himself.

Sinners for whom, he died and to whom he sends the good news of his salvation by the power of His, Holy Spirit to give them life and bring them to faith, make them right with God. Adopt them as God's children, sanctify them, prepare them. Fit them for glory. Jesus is still doing it And so we have appreciated at many points.

Some of the details in what the Holy Spirit has given us in the preceding passages so that we might too might look to the same God who is doing the same saving work for us by the same Christ and cry out for more of it. But now, as it were, the Spirit zooms out to give us more comprehensive picture.

He describes to us the the ongoing ministry, not just how people are brought to faith but how the Lord gathers and builds them up. We want to know as it were or the spirit tells us. So, we should want to know What is that ministry by which they're being brought to faith in Jesus Christ is now maintained and strengthened and continued.

Don't you? And I whom the Lord have has brought to faith and Jesus Christ. Want to know how he grows us, how He uses us. What now that we believe in the Lord? Jesus Christ. So how does Christ keep making disciples, not just converts, but how does the Lord into who's into whose care?

They are. Commended, at the end of verse 23, how does he do that caring? We believed in him and now we continue with Him but there is a manner in which he continues that work. And so the answer in the passage as we zoom out and we see what is probably a ministry of weeks or even months.

Summarized is first of all by a preaching, Second of all by this follow-up, the strengthening of the souls and exhorting them to continue and the organization of these, a churches, not just with local bodies of elders but with a regional body of elders from all the churches. And then we see more of an advanced state or stage or state of it as they return to Antioch.

And we remember that not too long ago in the book of Acts. Antioch was a brand new mission field too and now it has become ascending church and we can see what a further developed and all of this in the space of eight verses it versus which may take us two sermons, but we continue with God's help.

First to continue to consider that preaching is the way that this is done. When they had preached the gospel to that city, This isn't the first time we've had a, a phrase summary of the ministry of preaching. One of the places that the hopefully you still remember a fairly clearly is back in 11?

No, it's not 11. It's chapter 13, I believe. I don't know why it says 11 in my outline.

Nope, it is 11. Now, those who are scattered after the persecution that arose over, Steven traveled. As far as Phoenicia Cypress and Antioch preaching the word and then it describes what they did when they come came to Antioch. The men from Cyprus since Irene, who when they can't had come to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists preaching, the Lord Jesus.

And so we have these three different very concise summaries of what the Christian ministry. Looks like it's preaching the Word which means it's preaching the whole of Scripture leaving.

Nothing out. You're remember hopefully back from when we were there in 110 11 19 and 20 the reminder from Acts 20 which is still coming up.

That if Paul had not preached, the whole Council of God, If he had withheld, anything from them, that was profitable, their blood spiritually. Speaking would have been on his hands as he speaks to the Ephesian elders there. And so preaching ought to be from all of Scripture. But what is it that we hear from molluscription to, especially the good news.

The gospel. The gospel of what God has done. The gospel of how we are brought into participation of participation in and receiving of what God has done and the gospel of the difference that that makes in our lives. Now don't get me wrong instruction of what we are supposed to do is not gospel, but the good news is that through what Christ has done and by His, applying it to us, by His Spirit, He does work.

Those things out in us. So we're not saved at all by works, but we are saved for works by grace. You have been saved and That not of yourselves. It is the gift of God for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus that we may walk in. Good works which he that forgot created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he prepared beforehand that we might walk in them.

And so the content of the preaching is the gospel or the word, or the Lord Jesus That which the Lord Jesus himself prayed, would continue to remember in the night that he was betrayed and he's praying for those who already believe and he's praying for those who will believe through the apostles and he prays sanctify them by your truth.

Your word is truth. And so the same word through which faith comes by hearing the Word of God, the Word of Christ is that same word which is able to save our souls. The implanted word James chapter 1 or equip us. For every good work as the Apostle writes to Timothy.

So that's the content of the preaching is the word when they had preached the gospel to that city. Notice the recipients, not all of them are going to believe. We've certainly seen that It depends as we've seen fairly recently in the text on, who has been appointed for salvation because only God can give the life by which someone has the ability to hear to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet the preaching is freely offered generally offered to the city as a whole. We ought to aim at full saturation of proclamation of the gospel. This is something that that we can be working on as a congregation thinking through the desire that no one would ever live within the vicinity of this church who has not heard God's salvation in Jesus Christ proclaimed to them, or at least had opportunity to read it taught to them or, or written to them.

That. If they do not hear the gospel, it will not be because they did not have opportunity. But because they rejected opportunity. As those in Derby, They preached the gospel to that city the recipient. And, of course, the point is not primarily that they would be left without excuse.

But because the God, who has given this gospel to preach, is the God who has planned the salvation of sinners, and he gives this gospel to preach because it is through the hearing of the gospel that He gives faith in. Jesus Christ and disciples are made. That's the goal.

Isn't it so much in just the first half of verse 21 there. When they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, In fact, for those who are called to this ministry. In this case, Paul and Barnabas they, they don't finish their work in Asia Minor, which they have completed and diverse 26, and hit the pause button on their preaching, until they get back to Antioch and Syria.

Not to be confused with Antioch and Pisidia where we've been recently. They don't hit the pause button on their preaching, until they get back and report to their congregations, to their sending congregation. Didn't you? Did you notice as we're getting there, the GPS or the, some of us are old enough to remember the triptych description.

Now after they had passed through Pasadia and they came to Pamphilia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Italia. And from there they sell to Italian. Wait a minute back up. How did it describe their passing through? Perga? Well preaching if they were there, they were preaching.

You remember that? Don't you on their way to Asia Minor where they landed on one end of the island of Cyprus and Salamis? And they went west through the island to Paphos. They preached their way through the island as they went. This is how Christ brings to salvation.

This is how Christ grows in, sanctification Christ. Himself is not only the one who is proclaimed in all of these things. But he is the one who is doing the proclaiming by his servants who are upheld by His Spirit. And so he gathers and builds his church especially by preaching and we reminded that just at the beginning verse 21 But there is follow up.

There is the continuing work and this is an important question. How will the work continue if Paul and Barnabas? Leave it. Don't we remember from Antioch? How? But once who, once there were so many converted that Barnabas found that he had reached really the limits of the what he, in sober judgment in accordance with a measure of faith that God had given him to use the language of Romans 12 assessed him, son.

Don't think of yourself more highly than you want me. Thought there is someone who God has called, who has gifts that are greater than mine and that are needful in this situation, You remember, in Antioch and Syria. How when things got beyond what wisdom said that he was able to do?

He went and found Saul of Tarsus and brought Paul to Antioch. Well, now they're not just losing Paul, they're losing Paul, and Barnabas. So how is this ministry going to continue? Well, it continues through strengthening of souls exhorting. Them to continue and organized churches. Which means bodies of elders, and the local church, and a more general association of elders or body of elders in the broader church, or as we call them sessions, which is a word that just means sitting down.

It recognizes that the elders do not have authority in and of themselves, but as officers of a body of elders who sit together, that's where the word session comes from and Presbyteries, let's just comes from the word for elders. All of the elders in a region And we'll get there in a moment.

But there is necessary, follow-up, because Jesus is a complete Savior. And those who are brought to faith in Jesus Christ are then all then ought to be cared for by Christ in the way that he establishes in his word First. Then and verse 22, strengthening the souls of the disciples word means to increase what they have for leaning upon to increase as it were using anachronistic phrase.

They're structural integrity in order to make them more more firm in the faith. It is as if they are babies with undeveloped skeletal structures. And now God is forming and strengthening the bones infusing them together that they will be able to stand. Strengthening the souls of the disciples. If we love one another, we want one another to be strong.

We see this progression in Ephesians chapter 4, when it talks about Jesus having risen again from the dead and ascended into heaven, and giving gifts among men, and we gives us those gifts apostles prophets, evangelists those initial preachers, but also the shepherd. Teachers the pastor teachers in Ephesians chapter 4.

Why? Because every part of the body, every joint supplies, something, and every member has to do its share, and this is not going to work. If they are tossed to and fro theologically, if they're always wondering, well, what does this mean? Or what does that mean? Or someone comes along and says something that sounds really spiritual, but it's not theologically accurate.

And so, in the context there in Ephesians chapter 4 and I'm sorry, we're not taking the time to flip. You can, of course, can flip and and read these things. But in the context there in Ephesians chapter 4, he's he's strengthening the body. So that as the whole thing is knit together, it can grow up into Christ.

Well, there's an analogy in our own personal spiritual life too. You want to be a strong Christian. What does that mean? Does that mean that you you just have significant emotional feelings about Jesus? That never go away. Anyone who has tried that has ended up with, in one of two situations self-deceived or distracted.

Depressed And you should have expected that because there's an entire song prayer book in the Bible for believers who do not have these consistent. Emotional feelings that never go away but God strengthens his people through His Word, through building them up the word. And so this strengthening of the souls of the disciples comes, by way of exhortation, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and some of you who have your strongs or perhaps are looking at it in the Greek or saying, oh, that exhorting word.

That's that barakola a word that's that, that being called alongside for whatever is needed. That's the ministry that the Holy Spirit has and that has so many translations because there are so many things that believers need. And so it can mean comfort and help and rebuke, and encourage and charge.

And it means so many things. But it is especially a words word because it has God's Word that he uses to do all those things. And so the word saying actually is just supplied because this exhortation to them to continue in the faith consists primarily of this message. We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.

This is what strengthening of souls and exhorting or encouraging sounds. Like in biblical preaching, It is the notification that we are going to have many tribulations. You see what is necessary for our perseverance and that word continue. There is, It's a fine translation but the word that is behind.

It is not a word that means progress or something forward. It's a word that that implies more perseverance remaining standing. So the strengthening word and the continue word in verse 22, both have the sense of being strong to stand to remain to persist to persevere. And this perseverance. What is needed?

Most for the perseverance is the truth. And we would know that, of course, if we moved from Ephesians 4 where we were thinking about just a women ago, into Ephesians 6, when he says, now stand and having done all stand Stand. That's what the armor of God is for.

Now we want to attack and there is an offensive weapon that is probably used in self-defense and Ephesians chapter 6 because it's all about standing there. But all of the different parts of

the armor, aren't they different aspects of of truth? In fact, one of them is the belt of truth but another is the gospel.

Another is salvation other is faith which is being convinced about the truth. And so God's word is truth is especially that by which he makes you to stand. Now, think about if you've experienced this kind of anti-theological infection in the churches today, People say all doctrine divides. Yes, that divides truth from error.

Praise God. Sign me up for some more of that. Oh, it's so contentious. Well, it's only contentious if we don't all come to the same mind, But if it's God's way of making us those who agree with one another, if it's God's way of strengthening us, then trying to have peace to find as the absence of conflict, rather than peace to defined as unity of mind in Christ.

Jesus is going to have this horrible side effect which is literally spineless Christians the finalist. Christian isn't just someone who is unable to stand up to someone else. It's someone who's unable to stand up at all. Haven't you children? Who have studied your bodily systems, one of the first things you learn, you get to the skeletal system.

This is why we have bones, so we don't end up little human versions of jellyfish. And all of our organs are collapsed on each other. And we're unable to function and die. Yeah, thank God for bones. Well, The Word of God, the doctrine of the Scripture or the bones by which God enables his people to stand.

So it is a very clever strategy of the devil in a very sad capitulation of the church that we are in Parised of theological richness and carefulness and detail and precision and conviction. Yes, it must be done with humility because we are subject to God's Word and we air in many things and we need continually to be corrected and to grow, But to say, oh well, we don't have humility.

So we shouldn't try it all. Is it not just to play the into the hands of the devil. And so, the strengthening of the souls and exhorting to them to continue and what is most necessary in truth? What is most necessary for this perseverance? The standing. This remaining is truth First.

It's a truth about a communion that we have with one another by our union with Christ. Notice that it's not saying you or y'all third-person plural must continue or sorry must through many tribulations under the kingdom. It's we First person and includes Paul and Barnabas themselves. Isn't this marvelous for the ones who are about to lose the apostolic ministry of Paul, the speaker who ends up getting called Hermes, and Barnabas the encourager.

The strong one who had ended up getting called Zeus, and they're horrified by that wicked idolatry. There are about to lose Paul and they're about to lose Barnabas and Paul. And Barnabas are saying we're getting to. We're entering the kingdom through many tribulations, too. The Lord isn't sustaining you through us.

He sustaining us through his word. He's going to sustain you through the same word too. We're all dependent upon Christ. The and the grace of God in Christ Blessing for us who have only curse Strength for those who in ourselves have only weakness life. For those who from ourselves would have only death goodness in and from those who from it, in ourselves would only have wickedness, no ridiculous, religion of the triumph and goodness of the human spirit.

Here We must. We must through many tribulations into the kingdom of God. So there's a communion that they will have because even though Paul and Barnabas are going to be an Antioch and Syria and all of these new believers are going to be in Asia Minor, they're all going

to be going through tribulations and going to the same kingdom by the same grace, which God works through the same word.

This is one of the things that gives us an immediate fellowship with a genuine believer. We find from anywhere in the world. And what seems like another life. I used to do some traveling and interact with pastors and elders from indigenous Reformed churches, all over the Muslim Majority world and it was so immediate and profound the fellowship and unity.

We had when we're committed to dependence upon the same Savior, who had not only died for us and redeemed us to himself, but he was the one who was sanctifying us, he was the one who had enabled our service. He was the one who'd perfect that work, and we would all be glorious like him together in the last day, and we have the same Bible.

And in that case sprays God. So much of the same doctrine. If they're a real Christian. You can agree about Jesus and you can start from there. And reformed theology is really just the practice of working out from the rest of Scripture who Jesus is and what Jesus has done in its connection to all other theological questions.

That's all it is. It's just being thoroughly biblical and finding that everything is connected to who Jesus is and what Jesus has done and that that has a multitude more implications than most people have ever realized. And so there's this, there's this communion that we have this fellowship that we have, as we seek to grow and persevere by God's grace through.

God's means We in verse 22. What a glorious word in English, it's not even a whole word in the Greek. It's just a form of the verb. We must through many tribulations truth about what to expect along the way. Oh, if you become a Christian, this is what we got in youth group growing up not that this is necessarily endemic to youth groups.

Well, it might be endemic, I don't know. Is it pandemic? I don't know. Don't always happen if you're in a youth group. But we were told how, if we were just consistent Christians, we'd have fantastic marriages because, you know, we, we waited no. Talk about the care of the soul, the care of the heart, the care of the mind.

It just, you know, gritted our teeth and clung on for dear life as our hormones raged for however many years, it would be until we could get married, but you're gonna have a fantastic marriage if you learn to just rage with lust and not do anything about it for a while, you're gonna have a fantastic finances.

If you learn how to work hard and spend little and yeah, that works to some extent, everybody will love you. If you just become so much more like Jesus and you're gentle and kind and never offend anybody like Jesus, never offended anybody and the whole world learned how likable he was, and if you're likable, they'll they'll think Jesus is likeable too.

And they'll get saved because of how likable you are. And so we had this ridiculous picture paint it of how prosperous our life would be in material things and emotional things, and career things, and relational things and even spiritual things. It's just we became a Christian. But the way the apostle encourages people is saying through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God or at the end of Philippians chapter 1 you know, rejoicing that it has been granted to you for the sake of Jesus Christ to believe in him.

No, it says, not only to believe in him but to suffer. That's the invitation of the gospel. Yes. It's an invitation to be joined to God, the son who became a man to redeem sinners. Because this is what the love and wisdom of God, had defies from real world, but the world began, but it's also an invitation to suffer with him.

And if you don't hear come suffer with Jesus Christ have as we have been reading and singing from Psalm 69, the reproaches of those who were approach him to fall upon you too come be as as sheep for the slaughter and killed all day long. Knowing that that can't separate you from the love of God.

That is in Jesus Christ. That's the truth. And Christ is not just worth it, But the eternal and weighty glory that is in him and will be revealed in all those who are joined to Him. Makes all of the afflictions by comparison light and momentary light and momentary, says Paul.

It's beaten with raw. I mix up the 39 lashes and one of them's five times, one of them's three, I think the 39 lashes is three times, you know, shipwrecked a couple times and night in a day at sea, we just finished, reading about him, getting stoned, and the stoning just stopped because They thought he was dead light and momentary.

Why? Because of the greatness of the glory of Jesus Christ to whom you get joined by faith and you don't just get His blood, can't it against your sin, praise God. And is righteousness as your right standing, with God. Praise God. But you become an adopted son, an heir of heaven to whom everything belongs which belongs to him by, right?

And by wage he worked for it and he earned it as our mediator, but it also belongs to us and fellowship with him. It's not just like He gets everything and gives it to us. That would be so small. The reality is when you get him you enjoy everything with him and like a wife who has waiting for the return of her husband and there's so many things that she enjoys it.

She just thinks would be so much better if he were here. What does promised for the believer? Is that it will be with him and that will be the greater glory than the everything that we enjoy with him. And so truth about what to expect along the way. Truth about the destination so much, we want to do here.

We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is something we pray for that. The Lord will bring the kingdom of God, is something that expands by the preaching of the gospel, But the kingdom of God is not something. We bring It has not something that we extend.

It is something that we enter and he's not talking to those who have, not yet been justified to have not yet believed, in that case. Is he Talking about those who have already believed and yet our hoping to come into the final and perfected and fullness of the enjoyment of all that Christ's kingship.

And rule means We're very careful of any gospel that talks about building the kingdom or extending the kingdom. As if it's something that you go through in this world as opposed to tribulations or that you get to in this world despite tribulations. No, that something we enter after those and by means of those tribulations, there's so much more to do that.

The kingdom concept is enormous but that detail in this passage is there as important. But then there's the certainty that you will enter. You may be a minority, you may be a minority of one or two where you are like those in Revelation. Chapter 12, love not their lives, even unto death.

But they overcome is, I wait a minute. How did they overcome? I thought they died the overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony and it is in the appearance of the lamb in the sky that they Finally come into their full entrance. But here, there is certainty.

We spent a lot of time on the word. We we need to spend a little bit of time on the word must because there's a tiny little word in Greek. That means something that is absolutely necessary. It is impossible that it will not happen. It's a fairly common word, but sometimes it shows up in interesting places and the spirit teaches us so much like when when Jesus is coming from Galilee, Galilee to Judea in John chapter 4 and it said, he must go through some area and it's that same tiny little word, as the word must that we have here.

You say what do you mean must go through Samaria. We know what Jews did? They went around Samaria and go through some area. Well, the must was because of the ministry that he had to do at that. Well, and then to that city of people who were, who were ministered to through the witness of the woman, There are things that are necessitated by the decree of God and they're absolutely certain People say there's nothing certain, but death or tech and taxes.

Well, one day taxes will be gone and not everyone will die. What is certain is that those who begin by faith in Jesus Christ will enter the kingdom of God. There's no such thing as someone who the Lord decided to save and loved and plan to save and sent Christ for, and then Christ paid for them on the cross.

And then, they are brought to faith by the spirit, resurrecting them spiritually, so that they have life from which to believe, and they believe in Jesus Christ. And then somehow the whole thing goes off the rails, How powerful do you think we are?

No, we must enter the kingdom of goddess. You know, the person who knows that he only has to go through this for a little time. Like the child, who is receiving discipline of some kind of doesn't matter what the discipline is. Unless you know they have the the sort of apparent who needs to be locked up or probably executed They know that the discipline is coming to an end and you can do one of two things.

In that case you can grit your teeth and get through it. Which I don't think is what he's encouraging the people here to do. Or you can say this is a pointed for specific amount of time for my good and I come out on the other side, better than I did on the way in.

That's by the way. I don't care what the discipline is a children. If it's if it's the rod, if it's whatever timeout is saving you from screens for a while and discipline that's a rescue operation. But whatever it is take advantage of the time of the discipline that you have.

Because as you learn to respond, to the discipline of your, your father, lowercase F, or your mother on earth, you will be building a habit of receiving, the pain, that comes and fatherly, goodness from your father capital, F and Evan. And when you go through many tribulations, you'll not think oh well the world is getting the upper hand.

What a bunch of rubbish even Satan never has the upper hand And oh well Job didn't know that Satan wasn't fault. I didn't matter God is involved. He wanted to know what God was doing and so you can build that habit of responding to all of the pain, through which the Lord's lovingly brings us Remember what we're reading in the second half of Psalm.

69, the wicked who were attacking David. He's saying, you know, there are piling on to the one you and he's talking to God. You wound it. The one you struck. You see God, God, strikes and love. He is a good father and there are none of his true children without disciplines as Hebrews.

Chapter 12, doesn't it?

It doesn't mean that there aren't evil people, who mean it for evil, They might even be your own brothers as it was saying in Genesis 50. But it means the primary response needs to be the

God, who means it for good. And if you are, if you are a child who has parents, who discipline you for good, then you can make use of the analogy that the Lord gives you in Hebrews chapter 12 and you can learn to benefit from tribulation, that is time limited because, you know, it's going to end.

We must enter the kingdom. We must it's absolutely certain. These are not just light affliction. They are momentary afflictions.

Or the follow-up included. Not just the strengthening of souls with this. This exhortation to persist, or persevere or continue in the faith by way of truth. That is told truth that includes our communion with one another because of our union with Christ, what to expect along the way, the many tribulations, the truth about our destination that we are coming at last to enter the kingdom of God and the certainty of success that wonderful word must.

But the follow-up included People who are going to be teaching and helping them in these things When Paul and Barnabas were going because the Lord Jesus in heaven, oversees us and instruct us in shepherds us through redeemed, still sinful men on earth, and the wonderful truth is that it's the Lord Jesus in heaven who is doing.

So So when we get to the end of verse 23, if we get to the end of verse 23, They commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Well, what does commending them to the Lord look like? Well, It looks like the follow-up that we have heard discuss so far, but it also looks like a pointing elders, plural in every church Sessions and Presbyteries bodies of elders, plurality of elders in the local church and as we'll see, especially in the moment, the general body of elders.

Also in the region, Lord helping us. If we can finish today, the next week will be in chapter 15 and visit the first Synod or council or General Assembly whatever word we want to use for that. This is Christ's idea.

Disappointing is the final step of the strengthening Paul and Barnabas are about to depart and the apostolic stage or the evangelist stage of the church planting stage. Would come to a close? Does that mean that the means that we have been hearing by which Paul and Barnabas minister to them, was that going to come to an end?

And the answer is no, as we're going to see when we get to chapter 15, the apostles on elders are already co-ministers in the congregations that are in Jerusalem and delegates. From among both common, sit in that counsel. And so the ministry that Paul and Barnabas have been doing in these four cities and the congregations in these four cities in Asia, Minor.

It's not going to stop when they leave because they are appointing elders in every city to continue that ministry. What that means isn't. You could take. Thank thankfully, we can just say Presbyterian, or Reformed Presbyterian, or we can borrow the name of a trust. Another Presbytery that associate Presbyterian in the Reform Presbyterian.

Say associate Reform Presbyterian and it starts to sound long. But really every name that churches use you would need to include in order to fill out the fullness of that name. Now, we have the Hopewell Apostolic associate Reform Presbyterian Church. Why? Because the elders where Christ's appointed way of continuing the same ministry that the Apostles did Apostolic church is not one that says, we have rejected.

All the stuff that man says came from man. Well, man says, stuff came from man because they don't want to obey it. You give your child a command about, you know, the that Christ to has

given. And they know that it's from Christ. Or maybe they don't but they want to see you as the origin of those instructions so that they can feel better about rejecting and rebelling.

Well, elders are Christ's idea by his apostles, unless you think it just rests on this. And if you get to Thursday's Hopewell at home and apologize on behind, so we didn't get all the devotional written in time to include in the booklet this week. First Timothy, 3 starts out with this is a faithful saying, as he's giving Timothy, the means by which to bring Reformation in the church in Ephesus in the congregations and in Ephesus.

He says it is a point of necessary doctrine that you have elders of these characteristics who do this work. And this letter, We live in an age in which there are, there are so many ways in which churches are structured, that we think you know, God must be agnostic or ambivalent or maybe not care.

So much about how it's done. No. And in this prototypical foundational, example of how the ministry continues when the apostles are done here. And first Timothy 3 where it emphasizes that Presbyterian church, government is a point of doctrine. We find out that Christ has a way of leading his church.

It's his idea, not men's idea, It's not some guys who figured out over time how to conspire to consolidate their control.

Lots of sinners have been elders in Christ's church and loved to control things but that's not where the idea of eldership came from The elders. He did that were abusing something that Christ invented.

So we see the Lord establishes a way of maintaining to his people. The same ministry that the apostles had begun by which he strengthens. Their souls verse 22. And so you know you meet someone who isn't Presbyterian, you're talking about your churches. And oh, well, what does Presbyterian mean?

It means that government by elders and and they say, oh Well why do you have elders? You say because Jesus wanted me to have a strong soul, That's why you have elders.

Notice that it's multiple elders. When they had appointed elders, plural in each church or in every church, the authority is not invested in any single, man. This is one of the things that's wrong with what's called Episcopacy. It's not a bad word, it just means rulership or oversight. You see in some, some translations, the word, overseers or rulers in the church.

And It's the word Episcopas from which Bishop comes is just noticed that. Every elder is a pastor is a, is a, is a bishop, as a shepherd, teacher in the church. But this idea of having hierarchy in which you have authority invested in one man, the apostles, very specifically avoided that here, didn't they?

Because they have appointed multiple elders in every church. So, that rather than the authority being invested in an individual, it would be in an office and not in one officer by himself. But as a member of a body or a group of officers, This is why it's the session that has authority over you and not any one individual elder or pastor and himself.

Christ is the one in whom all of the authority resides And so you have what we call the plurality of elders, but it's not just plurality in a single congregation. There's a Presbytery here. Him probably would have been much easier for Paul and Barnabas. If as a move from one city to another as they're going to move on to the next city, they would appoint the elders in that city then.

But what happens in a situation like that, Then you get the same sorts of mistakes that people make with The next chapter, Lord helping us. Well, we'll we'll push through Lord helping us. We'll hear next week and they say oh well the Jerusalem church was above the other churches.

No God. Just got done the Holy Spirit. Just got done, making it clear that none of the churches are above one another. He waited until they were going to ordain the sessions of each of these church. The ordained them all at the same time, so that none of these four cities are or however many congregations they had in these four cities.

Not just four congregations. Probably the churches used in a corporate sense too. Not just for a particular congregation that none of these would be seen as having primacy over any of the others because they were all ordained and installed at the same time. And so this this Presbyterian mode of government in which they're not just elders, who lead and govern and teach and shepherd, pastor together in the local church, but that the churches in a region have one another's elders.

As resources unto one, another Under Christ, that's something that's established by waiting until the end of the missionary journey to do all of the elder appointments at the same time.

And so no single session, or even city of sessions was above the others. Why? Because the establishing of elders sessions and Presbyteries is not entrusting ourselves to men, but to the Lord. Once you remember how in 1st Peter 5 and he talks to the elders about how they are to do the ministry that they have been called to in shepherding and and then he talks to those who are under the elders and he says you younger ones, but it means not the elders and submitting to the elders.

And that's the context in which you as he tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, not the mighty hand of your elder. He doesn't have a mighty hand but it's under God's mighty hand that you humble yourself. Casting all your cares on him because he cares for you and that's the whole point of the elder thing.

It's how he cares for us. So it doesn't say. So, when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the elders whom they had appointed. So the commended them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. And so when we follow Christ's way of church government, we're not entrusting ourselves to men.

We're entrusting ourselves to the Lord. First of all, as we've been hearing, it says, own design. Second of all, as we see when this new sessions and elders, and Presbytery to, to congregation and congregations, relationship is being established. It's done with prayer and fasting. We desire that those who lead in the church will be faithful.

We desire that those who are led would be faithful and being glad as well, but we know that both their faithfulness and the people's faithfulness generally comes not from their own self, but from God's faithfulness. And since it all rests upon him we pray to Him for it And in this particular case it's not just prayer but his prayer with fasting, it's very convicting and we recently had I think the second Well actually I wasn't a church-wide fast.

It was the fast proclaimed by the governor and some of our families did it together. What is the second fast that we've had since Since we, since our family got here, five years ago, but as we've been going through acts, these congregations, are constantly praying with fasting, They're praying and fasting in chapter 13 before the Holy Spirit said to set apart Paul and Barnabas.

And then after the Holy Spirit had already identified you who whom they were going to send, they prayed with fasting before they sent them. And now Paul and Barnabas are leaving these men, whom they have appointed an entrusting and commending them into the care of the Lord, and there's prayer with fasting.

And what does fasting do fasting and we won't finish. We'll take verse 26 with the passage and move on into 15 next week fasting makes the praying into your whole life. You know, we're designed to need food. We're commanded to pray for daily bread. You don't have to ask someone if they're Internet intermittent fasting.

Because if they are, they'll tell you or keto, or paleo or whatever, yo waiting for the Oreo diet, Would you don't have to ask them about that? Why because what you eat, and how you eat and how often you eat? As such a significant part of your life? Because because you and I are so weak and creaturely that when we add fasting to prayer, it takes the praying that we're doing and it makes the whole of our life and engaging of God in neediness and weakness and confession and sinfulness and knowledge that he is almighty and good.

And He will do it. Fasting isn't a state of advanced weakness. I mean, it might be. So physically, it's a, it's a stage of advanced dependence on God's strength. This is tied in the text to commending them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. We need him more than food.

It's volunteering to have the mind of Christ in the first temptation where he hadn't eaten for 40 days and Satan comes and he and he implies that. The Father is not really treating him. Like a son. If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

And Jesus says every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is more necessary and vital to me, Even as his word says, it's quoting from the scripture of course than food is.

Heightened engagement of God by the whole person in the whole life. We ought to fast more Jesus said we would fast when he was gone.

Express our dependence upon him and our confidence in him and renounce confidence or ability in ourselves. So that even as we use, His means, We're using them because they're his and we're asking Him to use them in us.

With amended them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. In other words, they'd already trusted Jesus for their forgiveness and for their salvation. And they're having this word-based theologically rich, elder-led sessions. Having Presbytery acknowledging structure and ministry of the church was a continuing to trust in Jesus. They commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

If you trust in Jesus, for your forgiveness, for your right standing with God for your adoption. And if you don't Then you are not forgiven and you are not right with God and you are not His child. No matter what you hear said, this poor deceived world. But if you do trust in Jesus for your forgiveness and your justification, and your adoption, And if you are trusting in Jesus that He will finish the work that he began sanctify, you make you holy glorify you then it isn't necessary implication isn't it?

That we must trust in Jesus by following his design for how he does that to put it bluntly and hopefully provocatively in a good way. Presbyterianism theologically rich ministry through the means of grace, especially preaching, with a session and Presbytery organized expression of the visual. Visible church, rejecting autonomy or discipleship?

That is not led. Presbyterianism is an implication of saving faith in Christ. It's just trusting Christ for the rest of his work.

And then let's pray our Father in heaven. How we thank you for your word and the marvels of it. Thank you for those very detailed passages that we have been in recently. Thank you for this broader and more general one help us Lord to trust in you and look to you how to finish the work that you have started to strengthen us so that we can stand grant to us to humble ourselves under your mighty hand, and to cast our cares upon you before.

We ask these things in your own name. Lord Jesus. Amen.