



RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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Paul and Gretel Haglin

EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

Letters of Faith

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“...they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that they must enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations.”

Acts 14:22 NLT

Dearly Beloved in Christ Jesus,

The Scriptures tell us that the apostles Paul and Barnabas went among the new “churches” and strengthened the believers and encouraged them to continue in The Faith. They told these new believers in Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Sovereign Lord, and soon-coming King, that they were headed for some very tough times because of their confession of faith. And they certainly demonstrated that as well as declared it.

Paul was stoned by the Jews in Lystra who then, **“...dragged [him] out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”** (Acts 14:19 NASB) **“But as the believers stood around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned again to Lystra...”** (Acts 14:20-21 NLT)

Can you imagine what the disciples gathered around their fallen leader saw as Paul “pulled himself together” (please pardon the pun) and rose from being stoned and left for dead?

Can you imagine what Paul looked like?

Can you think: bruised and broken—or bloody—or black and blue—or pulped? And don’t for a moment think Barnabas got away scot-free during this vicious attack of the anti-Christ spirits marshaled against them: they were against them both as a ministry team!

So Paul and Barnabas moved on to Derbe, (please note the Scripture does not say they hobbled, or limped on!) which was the next city on the Holy Spirit’s itinerary. Two totally beat-up disciples preaching the Lordship of Jesus—preaching Jesus will take you from glory to glory—while they looked like they had both just come straight from hell. They even were openly preaching that the way into the Kingdom of God is through many tribulations—like, look at us, we’ve just been stoned for Him!

Maybe Paul’s “altar call” was: *Anyone want to join us?*

And he was **“...making many disciples...”!**

Paul was resurrected, healed, and empowered! And as surely as when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount in front of Peter, James, and John, Paul must have shined and glowed with the indwelling light and power of the Holy Spirit

which no amount of torn and pulverized human flesh could hide.

Then, almost unbelievably, they went right back into Lystra, the very city where Paul was executed and disposed of outside the gates. (Ref. Acts 14:8-19) The word “lystra” means to ransom. It comes from a root word meaning to loose or to release and is the same word Jesus used in both Matt. 20:28 and Mark 10:45 when He said: **“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom [lystra] for many.”** Paul’s repeated return to Lystra in spite of what had been done to him there released mighty Holy Spirit power. Lystra was also the home-town of Paul’s spiritual son, Timothy, who was such very special fruit of his ministry!

Can you believe that some of the great words that Paul wrote to the church in Galatia were initially a part of his proclamations in Lystra each time he was there? Words such as: **“I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** (Gal. 2:20)

Can you believe that these words would have had an explosive effect on the people in Lystra? They had seen him die for Jesus, and then be raised up by Jesus, and then empowered beyond their imaginations by Jesus.

What kept the spirit of fear from overwhelming Paul and his disciples? What kept them pressing through the **“...many tribulations...”** to preach, **“...Christ crucified...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** (1 Cor. 1:23-24 NASB)

Would you allow us to consider an extra-Biblical revelation? Is it possible that some of the greatest words Paul wrote later in his ministry were first formed and declared here in these earliest confrontations with the Devil?

Could you believe that this is where Paul first experienced the fear of being led away from his devotion to Christ Jesus by the deceitful pressures of the enemy against him—and where he first discovered that his simple and pure devotion to Christ was his bulwark against that fear?

Was it here that Paul first articulated the antidote to the enemy’s craftiness in attempting to mislead the Saints by the spirit of fear? Was one of the cornerstone Scriptures of our own walk with Jesus first articulated here in Lystra: **“...I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”** (2 Cor. 11:3) Was this primary defense against Satan’s deception first formulated in Paul’s heart and then proclaimed to Christ’s Body here in the Lystra mission field?

Surely Paul demonstrated and proclaimed to these early disciples this key to not allowing circumstances to neutralize ministry with fear. So we too must hear his clarion call to not allow the enemy of our souls to lead us into fear over the financial, moral, and religious morass all around us in the world today by usurping our focus on our **“...simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”**

Beloved, we are all facing developments in our lives never even considered before. The enemy is attempting to steal our livelihood (our jobs) and to rob us of our hard-earned and carefully made provisions for the future (our savings). He is threatening our freedom to peaceably pursue the spiritual and moral course of life we have learned is proper for mankind and pleasing to God, and is tightening the grip of oppressive governmental control over ever increasing areas of our lives.

All of these attempts of the enemy **“...to steal and kill and destroy...”** (John

10:10) are what he thinks are his trump cards to get us out of faith and into fear. Surely these are scary times and we are experiencing scary and great shakings, but we must not ever embrace fear!

Fear is the opposite of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God (Ref. Heb. 11:6).

Perhaps few of us will be chosen to experience the Apostle Paul's triumph of being resurrected from his martyrdom in order to continue ministering **"...in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."** (1 Cor. 2:4-5) But it appears that all of us must be prepared to overcome and withstand the shaking of our values, our principles, our assets, and our emotions that we have put any reliance on in the past.

The writer of Hebrews warns and instructs us all, **"...‘yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.’ This expression, ‘Yet once more,’ denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe..."** (Heb. 12:26-28)

Surely, we will all be called upon to not allow anything, or anyone, or any situation, or any experience to lead our minds **"...astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."** *That* is the primary protection we have against the spirit of fear.

We pray that this year ahead of us unfolds myriad opportunities for each of us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus, to maintain the simplicity and purity of our devotion to our Lord, and to strengthen and encourage believers as we all learn what it really means to victoriously enter the Kingdom of God through many trials and tribulations—with ransoming joy.

Hugs,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul & Gretel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.