

# Continue

Sunday, January 15, 2023  
10:30 AM

Just before the end of the year, the Lord laid a single word on my heart that I felt He wanted me to hold on to in this New Year - CONTINUE. As I considered that thought, the Lord led me to Acts 14 at the close of Paul's first Missionary Journey

## Acts 14:21-28 (NLT)

21 After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, 22 where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. 23 Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. 25 They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia.

26 Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. 27 Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. 28 And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

*Paul's first missionary journey began in Antioch. You may notice that maps of the ancient world often have two cities labelled Antioch. They're both named after Antiochus, father of Seleucid I. The Antioch in Acts 13 was the third largest city in ancient Rome and capital of the province of Syria. Today, it's part of southern Turkey. The other Antioch was part of Pisidia, an ancient region which is also now part of Turkey. Your Bible likely refers to it as Pisidian Antioch or Antioch of Pisidia.*

*In Antioch (the big city in Syria), the Holy Spirit singled out Paul and Barnabas from the believers worshipping there, and sent them on their first missionary journey.*

## Cyprus

*Paul's first journey took him by boat to the Roman province of Cyprus. Today, Cyprus is a country known as the Republic of Cyprus. It's a mediterranean island south of Syria. Paul and Barnabas arrived in the port city of Salamis, where [John Mark](#) (who was possibly Barnabas' cousin), helped them share the gospel in Jewish synagogues.*

*From Salamis, the group moved across the island to Paphos, where they were met by a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas the sorcerer). This sorcerer worked for the governor—Sergius Paulus—who sent for Paul and his companions because he wanted to hear the word of God. Elymas opposed them and tried to turn Sergius from the faith, and so Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, called him a “child of the devil” and struck him blind. Sergius saw what happened, and believed.*

*Ironically, Elymas meant to steer Sergius away from Christ, but he became the very vehicle God used to draw Sergius toward him.*

### **Pamphylia**

*From Paphos, Paul and company set sail for the Roman province of Pamphylia, located in modern day Turkey. They arrived in the city of Perga, where John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem (which, interestingly, was in the opposite direction from where they just came). We don’t know why John Mark decided to leave, but this would later create a rift between Paul and Barnabas.*

*Together, Paul and Barnabas travelled to Pisidian Antioch, where local synagogue leaders invited them to speak. Initially, the Jewish people were receptive to the gospel, but a week later, the entire city gathered to hear Paul and Barnabas, and the Jewish leaders became jealous. They resisted the message of the gospel, and so Paul and Barnabas made an important pivot: **they began preaching to the Gentiles.***

*Many of the Gentiles believed the gospel, and [Luke](#) (the traditional author of Acts) tells us that:*

*“The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.” —[Acts 13:49–50](#)*

### **Phrygia**

*Driven out of Pamphylia, Paul and Barnabas travelled to Iconium, an eastern city in the region of Phrygia. Iconium still exists today as the Turkish city of Konya.*

*Once again, Paul and Barnabas spoke in the synagogue, where Jews and Greeks alike accepted the gospel. But the Jews who didn’t accept it stirred up trouble, even as Paul and Barnabas began performing signs and wonders ([Acts 14:3](#)). As support for Paul and Barnabas grew, so did the opposition they faced, and eventually, they became aware of a plot to abuse and stone them. So they left.*

## **Lycaonia**

*Fleeing the threat in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas left Phrygia altogether and travelled to Lystra, a city in the province of Lycaonia. Here, Paul healed a man who was lame. The locals who witnessed this miracle thought Paul and Barnabas were gods in human form, calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes. The priest from the temple of Zeus brought bulls and wreaths to offer sacrifices to them.*

*Paul and Barnabas attempted to redirect their praise to God, but struggled to keep the crowds from offering sacrifices to them.*

*Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and continued what they'd started. They riled up the crowds and convinced them to stone Paul. Believing he was dead, they dragged him outside the city. When the disciples gathered around him, Paul got up and went back inside the city.*

*Then Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe, another city in Lycaonia. There, they "won a large number of disciples" ([Acts 14:21](#)).*

## **The return to Antioch**

*After a time in Derbes, Paul and Barnabas went back the way they came, working their way through Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, and Perga. In each city, they encouraged the believers there and strengthened their faith, as they would continue doing on their future missionary journeys. They did, however, stop in a new Pamphylian city on the way: Attalia. Acts only mentions it in passing, but presumably, they established a community of believers there as well.*

*From there, they skipped a return voyage to the island of Cyprus and went straight back to Antioch (the big one), where they told the church what happened on their journey.*

What caught my attention most was the words of verse 22 ***"They encouraged them to continue in the faith"***

This morning I want us to consider what it means to continue in the faith and take a look at several scriptures that encourage us to do just that.

Believe me when I tell you that it was their deepest desire that the seeds of the gospel that they planted continue to grow. They didn't just want to start Missionary works they wanted those works, those churches, those believers to CONTINUE. Satan would love it if he can get you to let go of your faith. Indeed it seems many today start the journey with Christ but don't continue. It is heartbreaking

Jesus told a parable representing this very fact - The parable to the sower and the seed. Later he explained it in more detail to his disciples

Matthew 13:18-23

18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Jesus wants us to CONTINUE...

Continue to BELIEVE

Hebrews 10:22-25

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

John 8:31

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

2 Timothy 3:14

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,

## Continue to GROW

2 Peter 3:18

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:3

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

## Continue to PRAY

## Continue to TRUST

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Psalms 62:8

8 Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

## Continue to GIVE

2 Thessalonians 3:13

13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

Galatians 6:9

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

## Continue to PERSEVERE

Hebrews 10:32-38

32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.”

38 And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.”

James 1:12

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

## Continue to PREACH THE GOSPEL

2 Timothy 4:2

2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Ephesians 6:18-20 (NLT)

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God’s mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. 20 I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God’s ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

## Continue to LOVE

Romans 13:8

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

## Continue to FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH

Luke 9:62

62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

2 Timothy 4:10

10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

1 Timothy 6:12

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

## Continue in the HOPE OF ETERNITY

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

### Titus 1:1-3

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

### Hebrews 12:1-3

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.