“Down, But Not Out”

II Timothy 3:1-12

May 4, 2017

Please find with me Acts 14.

II Corinthians 4:8 says this. II Corinthians 4:8 *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

*(10) Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (11) For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”*

Do you know anyone who’s been really knocked down, but has gotten back up and is standing strong in the LORD? Maybe it’s been you.

I read about a New York City lawyer who made a trip to South Texas to do some dove hunting? On this particular day, he’d shot a dove and when the dove fell, it landed in a nearby pasture. So, the lawyer climbs the fence in hopes of getting his bird.

But as he was making his way through the pasture, the rancher who owned the property came driving up on his tractor. He hollered to the lawyer/hunter, “What are you doing on my land?” The lawyer said, “I shot a dove, and I’m going to go get it.” The rancher said, “This is my property. It’s private property. So you can just get off of it right now.”

The lawyer/hunter responded, “I’ll have you know that I’m a lawyer from New York City, and if you don’t let me get my dove, I’ll sue you for everything you’ve got.” The rancher thinks for a few minutes and then says, “Down here in Texas, we settle disputes with what we call “the Texas three-kick rule.” The lawyer said, “What’s that?”

The rancher says, “Well, I kick you three times, then you kick me three times, then I kick you three times, and so on until one of us gives up.” The lawyer looked at this very old rancher and he thought, “I’m a whole lot stronger and a whole lot younger than this old man. I can take him quite easily.” So he says, “Okay, we’ll use “the Texas three-kick rule.”

The rancher climbs off the tractor and walks toward the lawyer. But before the lawyer could prepare, the old rancher planted the tip of his cowboy boot in the middle of the lawyer’s shin. While he was holding his shin, the rancher kicked the lawyer in his mid-section knocking the breath out of him. When he fell to his knees, the rancher kicked him on the side of the head.

The lawyer saw stars and laid there in pain for a few minutes, but then he finally got to his feet and said, “Now it’s my turn you old codger. I’ll show you how we kick in New York.” As the lawyer moved toward him, the rancher smiled and said, “Naw, I give up. Go get your dove.” [Found on [www.gabc.org](http://www.gabc.org) “Down, But Not Out” by Dr. David O. Dykes].

In an Illinois Senate race held way back in 1858, a man named Abraham Lincoln has just won the popular vote in his state. But somehow, a Mr. Stephen A. Douglas won and became Illinois’ newest Senator. Afterwards Lincoln was asked how he felt. He responded *“I feel like the boy who stubbed his toe: I am too big to cry and too badly hurt to laugh.”* [Found on [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com) “Knocked Down, Not Out” by Pastor Russ Adams, Western Reserve United Methodist Church].

The reason I like this quote from Lincoln is because it’s a reminder that sometimes events in life take a big toll on you. And it it’s a huge matter as to what happens to you when you’ve been knocked down.

Today’s sermon title is “Down But Not Out.” Shall we pray?

In our studies in the Book of Acts we are now at this fourteenth chapter. And, as you are about to see, often and even when we do just exactly what God has commanded us to do, we still might get knocked down. Yes, God does allow us to experience downfalls and setbacks.

Would you begin with me at verse one. Acts 14:1 *“And it came to pass in Iconium [modern day Konya, Turkey] that they went both together [Paul and Barnabas] into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. (2) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected [created a spirit of bitterness] against the brethren.*

*(3) Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. (4) But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. (5) And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,*

*(6) They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe [cities in Turkey], cities of Lycaonia [region in Turkey], and unto the region that lieth round about: (7) and there they preached the gospel.”*

Now, having been persecuted in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas to south to the town of Lystra.

Now move on down to verse nineteen. Acts 14:19 *“And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. (20)* *Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

*(21) And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, (22)**Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

*(23) And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”*

Not only is Paul assaulted in Iconium, but he goes down to Lystra and this time the same people who had attempted to stone him in Iconium follow him to Lystra where he is then stoned and left for dead. And, knocked down, but not out, the very next day he and Barnabas go on to Derbe to reach out with the Gospel. They then return to Lystra and Iconium, the very places where they had been persecuted, to teach and encourage the new disciples made earlier that week.

Who’s been knocked down recently? How about you?

Steve Jobs once wrote *“Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick.”*

Literally, a Pastor in the Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, OK had an interesting experience one Sunday. At the close of the service, Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty was inviting people to come forward in an invitation. One man came forward. And, as soon as he met the Pastor, he punched him in the face, cut his eye open and the Pastor had to have his eye stitched at the local hospital. The man went to jail, but Pastor Daugherty did not press charges against him.

People, life, problems, persecution, circumstances, trouble, and trials sometimes knock you down. But you might, like all of us, get knocked down, but these things do not need to knock you out.

Let me show you what I mean.

First, obedience to the LORD does not a guarantee you a trouble-free life. As a matter of fact, sometimes doing the right thing can result in negative consequences.

Look with me at Paul and Barnabas here in verse one. Acts 14:1 *“And it came to pass in Iconium [modern day Konya, Turkey] that they went both together [Paul and Barnabas] into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.”*

Isn’t it a wonderful blessing when things go well? The LORD, remember, had separated Paul and Barnabas to do evangelistic outreach and plant Churches in Turkey. We read that in Acts 13:2 *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”*

No doubt the LORD had called Paul and Barnabas to an outreach ministry advancing the Gospel. The Church at Antioch had sent them forth. And they had been reaching out with the message of salvation on the Islands of Crete and Cyprus. And in one place the entire town came out to hear Paul preach. Acts 13:43 *“Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. (44) And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.”*

So, time after time, God’s blessing was upon Paul and Barnabas. And here in Iconium, Turkey the LORD’s blessing is still upon them. Both Jews and Gentiles became Christians. Acts 14:1 *“And it came to pass in Iconium [modern day Konya, Turkey] that they went both together [Paul and Barnabas] into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.”*

Here’s a sizable group responding to the Gospel. So, yes, they’d been called and were now serving the city of Iconium with the Good News of a free salvation in Christ. And a multitude of both Jews and Greeks were saved at that time.

So, does obedience and faithfulness ever imply a trouble-free Christian life? Not at all.

Folks, there will always be some who cause trouble. There will always be some negatives in your life. In Paul’s case it came in the form of rejection and persecution. And there will always be some who influence others against you.

Can I say to you? That’s often the way it is. Life, people, circumstances, and trouble sometimes descend like a heavy blanket upon you. It’s not abnormal, folks.

And for those of you who think that the Christian experience is a quote “better” way to live, keep reading the Word and watching what God does in your life. There is a promise of a blessed life. So, yes, it is a “better” way to live. But there are no promises of a trouble-free Christian experience.

Here’s what’s really going on. I Peter 4:12 *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

*(14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

*(15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”*

Do you think it’s strange when you experience a fiery trial? Well, when you think according to what you find in your Bible, no, it’s not strange. Difficult times are both allowed by the LORD and are part of His purpose for your perfecting. God is using your troubles to make you more like His Son. He’s not going to make life quote “easy” for you just because you have it too hard right now.

As a matter of fact, He’s promised that if you are criticized or falsely accused, you can count yourself “happy.” I Peter 4:14*“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”*

So, first obedience and faithfulness are no guarantee of a trouble-free Christian life.

Second, a very difficult time, even a time of persecution, may often be used by the LORD to direct you.

Look with me at verse nineteen. Acts 14:19 *“And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. (20) Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.”*

One day he’s stoned; the next Paul goes elsewhere to do exactly what he did before; get the Gospel to the people in another location.

Idris Nalos was an African animist converted to the Christian faith in southern Sudan. An animist believes that plants and rocks and rivers and things around all have a soul. Buddhists and Hindus are often animists. Soon after Idris’ conversion to Christ, he became an evangelist. He would go out preaching in some of the most remote places.

And, within a couple of years, God had used him to plant three Churches in southern Sudan. Soon he became considered dangerous because of what he was doing. He was arrested by the Islamic authorities and Idris was put in prison. In prison, he was tortured in hopes of making him deny his Christian faith. Sometime he was beaten for hours day after day. And then they would not let him sleep.

One day, as he was about to collapse, Idris prayed, *“Lord, prevent me from being like Peter. I am about to give up, help me.”* And God answered him. He gave Idris a vision in which he saw all those to whom he had preached the gospel. They were all telling the Good News to people around them.

*“I saw those who were saved,”* he said. In his vision, he real-ized that even if he were to die, others had already taken up the baton of the Gospel. From that moment on, Idris was no longer afraid for his life. Then, after 3 full weeks of endless torment, his torturers released him without explanation.

Then, in order to avoid another arrest, he traveled north to Khartoum. There in Khartoum Idris founded three new churches inside a fundamentalist Muslim territory. He had learned how to trust God through his time of persecution and wasn’t afraid anymore. God showed him where to go and what to do. [Found on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) “God Uses Problems and Persecution To Direct You.” By Paul Estabrooks].

Like Paul, yes, he suffered. But, as a result, God directed him to another place of ministry.

Rick Warren had one of the most difficult things imaginable happen to him a few years ago. His son Matthew committed suicide. And here’s what Pastor Warren learned. *“Every storm is a school. Every trial is a teacher. Every experience is an education. Every difficulty is for your development.”* [[www.pastorrick.com](http://www.pastorrick.com) ].

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Third, affliction is purposeful.

Paul’s life with its afflictions is right now benefiting you and me. Paul spent a significant portion of his life and ministry behind bars, so-to-speak. We read in the Book of Acts that Paul was imprisoned three times: in Philippi, in Caesarea, and in Rome. God’s purposes are larger than your problems or your comforts.

And yes, he was afflicted. Yes, he experienced very difficult things. Yet, Paul’s affliction benefits you and me every day because we are reading his writings when we read the NT.

David described it this way. Psalm 119:67 *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”*

Lastly what are those ways you can benefit from affliction. Let me show you just a few.

One, afflictions are good because they eliminate pride.

II Corinthians 12:7 *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”*

Paul saw things and had direct revelation from the LORD. Yet, he also had a “thorn in the flesh” to hold his pride in check; *“lest I should be exalted above measure.”*

Two, afflictions are good because they turn you to the LORD. Psalm 25:15 *“Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. (16) Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.”*

When was the last time you experienced a “down” time? When was the last time you “struggled?” And how did you deal with yourself during that period? You did exactly what you needed to do. You prayed. You looked for the LORD to be merciful to you. You knew you need His help.

And what help did He send your way. II Corinthians 1:3 *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

And what will you do when you turn to the LORD and discover a new level of His comfort? Psalm 50:15 *“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”*

The LORD allows the down time. Then He enables you to praise Him in a much greater way than before the down town.

Third, you discover the LORD’s grace in a new way. II Corinthians 12:9 *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

Fourth, you learn more of God’s word.

Psalm 119:71 *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”*

So, folks, do not think it’s a strange thing that you are passing through the deep waters of life. There are benefits in your “downs” because you are “not out.” It’s a good and wise and wonderful Father Who has His eye upon you. Yes, you will be “down,” but no, you will not be “out.”

Today we are going to celebrate the LORD’s Table. Think, as you partake today, of all the Jesus suffered so that you could be forgiven, cleansed, and made right with God. All you are and have comes to you as a direct result of His sufferings on the Cross.

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So, what will it be? Will you allow your “down” times to bring you to “down and out”? Or will you choose today to let the LORD have His way in both the trouble He allows as well as the good things He sends your way as a direct result of that trouble?

Will you pray this pray with me today? *“LORD, it is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”*