We Must Enter the Kingdom of God

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**Foundational Scripture:** Acts 14:21-22

**Intro**:

* The book of Acts is well known for its stories and chronicles related to the start and growth of the church Jesus Christ died for. By the time we arrive in Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas have been staying busy on their first missionary journey travelling through various cities and towns making and encouraging disciples. But it was on this journey that something would go horribly wrong. The Jews grew tired of Paul and the gospel and they sought his life. At the start of Acts 14 they plotted to severely mistreat them while they were in Iconium but to no avail. Having no mind to concede, these Jews travelled to Lystra where they proceeded to stone Paul almost succeeding in their plan to kill him.
* A badly bruised and ailing Paul got up and kept on preaching and encouraging as best as he could. Luke records for us these events in Acts 14:21-22 and there is something striking to note in these verses. Noting what was said in the latter part of verse 22, we are left to wonder what possessed Paul and Barnabas to continue to put their lives on the line. These men mustered up the strength and the courage and concluded that in spite of all they had been through and what they would likely face ahead, ***“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”***

1. **Salvation ought to be achieved at any and all costs**
   1. Paul and Barnabas understood something we all need to appreciate and remind ourselves of constantly: There is nothing that’s more valuable than a soul being saved! When one begins to truly understand the nature and need for salvation, nothing, not even the fear of death, will come between that search until it is achieved. Jesus told three parables in Luke 15 highlighting the importance of salvation.
   2. These parables show: (1) No comfort zone is so good that it dictates I should put my soul on the line. (2) There is no inconvenience too great that I should turn away from an opportunity to be saved or save someone. (3) If one is truly concerned about their need for salvation, there is no cost too high they won’t be willing to pay.
   3. There is great faith and perseverance seen in people who understand the need to enter the Kingdom. The Kingdom was established with a price and that is seen in the Cross of Christ. Jesus was willing to leave Heaven to pay a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could never pay. The least I can do is to take advantage of that act of love (Mic. 6:8).
   4. God never promised His people that things in this world would be easy, but He did promise it would be worth it! No one wants to die, and certainly no one wants to abandon their families and loved ones if they could have a say in the matter. However, the greater danger lies in spending eternity in Hell (Matt. 10:28).
2. **There is NO alternative to the Kingdom of God**
   1. The word alternative suggests the idea of a substitute, replacement or second option. When it comes to salvation, living forever and having the right kind of relationship with God, there is no substitute, replacement or second option. Christ died once for all having established one covenant which saves (Heb. 9:12, 14).
   2. This is exactly why Paul and Barnabas used the word *“must”* in terms of entering the Kingdom and being saved at any and all costs. The reality is that there is no other way for me to walk with God hand in hand unless it’s through Christ in His Kingdom. (Acts 4:12).
   3. We may look across the aisle and gamble with the notion that the world and what it offers is a better option to the Kingdom. But who in their right mind would want to suffer in anguish and pain forever in hell?
   4. Paul and Barnabas’ point is that there is no room for failure and falling short of the Kingdom. If we do everything in our power to acquire salvation, it is guaranteed that we will find it (Prov. 8:17; Matt. 7:7-8). If we are apathetic, disinterested and stubborn the only option is suffering and we have to ask ourselves if we are willing to live with that.

**Conclusion:** God has gifted us with the quality of free-will. When we think about the nature of free-will, it’s truly overwhelming because we have the ability to call the shots and make changes that have the potential to affect our lives for weeks, months and years. We make choices every day and we treasure the power to make those choices. But there is no decision that will ever be as important as choosing whether we want to enter the Kingdom of God or whether we remain on the outside. That decision will affect our eternal destiny. What are we going to do with our free-will?