

Casting the Vision of Grace Partnership

Cast your bread upon the waters,
 for you will find it after many days.
² Give a portion to seven, or even to eight,
 for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.
³ If the clouds are full of rain,
 they empty themselves on the earth,
 and if a tree falls to the south or to the north,
 in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.
⁴ He who observes the wind will not sow,
 and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

⁵ As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

⁶ In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good. – Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

“One of the frustrating things of life observed is the fact that time and chance can overturn our finest plans. If that can be a paralyzing thought, it can also be a spur to action: for if there are risks in everything, it is better to fail in launching out than in hugging one’s resources to oneself.”¹

The Faith-Filled Risk Taking of the Early Church

“When we study the journeys of Paul in the book of Acts, we’re not just reading the travel log of a man; we’re observing the redemptive plan of God unfolding as He promised. Through the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, God’s mission to reclaim His creation from the death grip of evil would move to its next stage. The plan of this mission was outlined in the Lord’s promise at His ascension, where He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...”²

1. Take faith-filled risks, even as you can’t know the return.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called

¹ Derek Kidner, Ecclesiastes, pg. 97

² Charles Swindoll

them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. – Acts 13:1-3

2. Certainty is an illusion and God certainly knows the outcome of all things!

“But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to **Iconium**. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”- Acts 13:51-52

3. Take faith-filled and informed risks for the glory of God and the good of others!

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord**, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶they learned of it and **fled to Lystra and Derbe**, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country,⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel. – Acts 14:1-7

“Of course, this biblical principle will not make all our decisions easy ones. It can be hard to discern when the cause of the gospel is best advanced by living to preach another day and when, like Stephen, we might be called to give our finest sermon in the face of certain death. But it seems that Paul and Barnabas may have reasoned something like this: “If we have people who hate us, fine. If folks are getting agitated and stirred up, so be it. All the more reason to stay—this place needs the word of God. But to die by a secret plot here in Iconium doesn’t seem best for the mission God has given us. We have been here awhile; we have other cities to see. Let’s keep preaching the gospel elsewhere, and maybe we can come back later when things have cooled down.” They made their decisions not in aversion to risk, but in an effort to fulfill their duties.”³

“Many people are responding with increasing nationalism, sometimes with almost frightening ethnocentrism. Christians are not immune to these sweeping currents of thought. They, too, can be caught up in flag-waving nationalism that puts the interest of my nation or my class or my tribe or my heritage above the demands of the kingdom of God...we need world Christians – not simply American Christians or British Christians or Kenyan Christians, but world Christians. By “world Christians,” I

³ Kevin DeYoung

am referring to Christians, genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ whose allegiance to Jesus Christ and his kingdom is self-consciously set above all national, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic allegiances.”⁴

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, *supposing that he was dead*.²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, *they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch*,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. – Acts 14:19-22

How Can We All Participate in Grace Partnership?

Praying

“Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” – Acts 13:3

Going

Gathering

So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having *gathered the congregation together*, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, *they rejoiced* because of its encouragement. And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, *encouraged and strengthened the brothers* with many words. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. – Acts 15:30-33

Giving

Thank you!

“Without the willingness to take risks...
Moses would never have gone back to Egypt
Elijah would not have faced the prophets of Baal
Esther would not have appealed to the King for the lives of her people
Daniel would not have prayed three times a day
David would not have stood before Goliath

⁴ DA Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 1993!

Rahab would not have helped the Israelites
Peter would not have stepped out of the boat
Barnabas would not have embraced Saul
Paul would not have gone on his missionary journeys
Danny Jones would not have planted Metro Life Church!"⁵

⁵ I don't recall where I read this; not mine.