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Do I Go or Do I Stay?

Text: Acts 14:1-7

Sometimes when we think of the ministry to which God has called us, we lapse into idealistic thinking. We envision preaching, teaching, serving and leading in places in which we are well-received by enthusiastic, eager hearers.

We read of the Bereans and how they received the gospel (Acts 17:10-12) and we want that to be normative. However, the reality is that rejection is as much a part of ministry as is acceptance.

Luke 10:1-11

**10**After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. **2**Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. **3**Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. **4**Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. **5**But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ **6**And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. **7**And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. **8**Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. **9**And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ **10**But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, **11**‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ Remember that phrase, *wipe off the dust which clings to you.*

In our text for today, note Acts 13:50-51:

*But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and came to Iconium.*

How do we know when to persist in ministry in a specific locale or circumstance and when to shake the dust from our feet?

Our text does not tell us all the details regarding *how* Paul and Barnabas made their decisions. In Acts 13:51, they went to Iconium after having a significant ministry in Antioch. Luke tells us they stayed a long time in Iconium (14:3). Then, it was necessary to leave there. In fact, they didn’t merely *leave* that city. They *fled* (14:6). Question: How do we know when to go?

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Sometimes the Spirit speaks clearly, audibly, in a way that leaves no room for doubt.

**Illus.**

Acts 11:12- “Then the Spirit told me (Peter) to go with them, doubting nothing.”

2. Check your own delight level. Are you still “all in”? Are you still engaged with the people, the work? Have you lost the joy of serving in that locale, in that ministry?

If **dread** is more common than **delight**, it might be time to go.

3. Listen to your mentors and sages

I hope we have all have given a couple of people permission to observe us and speak candidly to us. They will see things we don’t see. They will hear our comments and complaints in a way that we don’t.

Exodus 18:17-24

**17**So Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you do *is* not good. **18**Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. **19**Listen now to my voice; I will give you [a]counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. **20**And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. **21**Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. **22**And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. **23**If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.”

**24**So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

Through his father-in-law’s counsel, Moses heard the Divine Voice and made a decision about what he was doing and being.

May God send sages, wise women and men, to us, that we might rightly assess where we are and where we are to be next.

Amen