

A Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken

Part 4

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[00:00:00] Now will you turn please to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, and we'll read from verse 1.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

[00:01:07] When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Now chapter 8, and verse 12.

[00:02:09] But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Now chapter 14, and we'll read from verse 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, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, [00:03:01] and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Now lastly, chapter 20, we'll read from verse 22.

And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me

there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. [00:04:05] Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

The Acts of the Apostles is really the book that we could term our history book.

It's here that we see our beginnings. It's here that we see the great principles that govern the early Christians. It's here that we see the mind of God revealed for this new day, the Christian era. And we find many references to the kingdom in this book.

[00:05:06] There are another two, at least, that we haven't read, references to the kingdom of God. It's obvious, then, that if the Holy Spirit guides the servants of God to speak and preach about the kingdom of God, it must have a very important place in this new era, the Christian dispensation.

I thought we might consider, briefly, these opening verses in this wonderful book, where we see clearly the great truths of Christianity presented, guidance for us in our day, guidance for the Christians in all times. And without these things, we wouldn't be here today in testimony for the Lord Jesus. It's a wonderful scene, really, to visualize, and if only in spirit we could enter into it, [00:06:03] we would enter into something of the triumph of Christianity. The disciples are gathered together, and the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of them, and he's speaking to them. And for 40 days, he instructed them as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. You say, what's remarkable about that, that the Lord Jesus Christ should be among his disciples? And this is what is remarkable. This man has been into death. For three days, he lay in the tomb, dead, really dead.

No doubt about it at all. He was dead, he died, and he fulfilled all the prophecies concerning himself. And now, here he is, a man, they could touch him, they could speak to him, [00:07:02] they could have a meal with him, but he's alive. He's no longer dead. And this is the very spirit and triumph of Christianity. We have no time for the teaching that says, well, Christ was a good man, and he taught good ethics, and he set a good example. This to us is an empty shell. But the truth of a living Christ is the very essence and triumph of Christianity. And if we miss this, we miss the whole force of this book, that a living Christ inspired his disciples to go out from Jerusalem and spread abroad into the regions beyond with the news that Christ was alive, and the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven, indwelling those who believed in him. And so we find him with his disciples for 40 days, instructing them as to the truth of the kingdom. [00:08:03] What marvelous instruction that must have been. We've been together four nights, and we've been touching a few things concerning the kingdom, just a very, very few, and a very imperfect teacher at that. How wonderful to be in the presence of a perfect teacher, the teacher, the Lord himself, and hear him in his exposition of the kingdom, bearing upon them in all their ways, in all the features of their lives. What a wonderful unfolding it must have been, 40 days in the presence of the risen Christ, and hear him expound these wonderful things.

I'm sure they never forgot their experience. We find these men who, just a few days before, were burdened, and perhaps disillusioned, and perhaps doubting.

[00:09:01] We find them now imbued with purpose of heart, courage, joy, life, and energy, because they've been with the living Christ. They've heard him. They've seen him. They know he's alive

beyond all possible doubt. And then gathered together, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then began that wonderful day that has continued up till the present moment, the Christian era. And on these two great truths is based everything that's workable in Christianity, a man in the presence of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit here among the saints. I wonder, why is it that the Lord spoke to his own for 40 days about the kingdom of God?

There must have been something in what he said that gave them to think that the kingdom was going to be restored to Israel. [00:10:03] They must have thought, well, the kingdom, yes, we read about the kingdom. We read about its blessing, its joy, its power. Is this going to be the time when Israel will get its place of supremacy? Will this be the time when the yoke of Rome will be broken? And they asked the Lord this, and he tells them now, just forget that. Forget that for the moment. This doesn't lie within your province. This is the right of the Father. Times and seasons are in his hands. When it comes his time, he'll bring into being all those wonderful prophecies concerning Israel and the nations. At the present moment, I want you to concentrate your thoughts and your energies on this aspect of the kingdom, loyalty to Christ as Lord and subjection to the Spirit of God.

[00:11:02] And by this means, you'll demonstrate what the kingdom of God is at the present moment. Very wonderful thing. And from this moment onwards, all that happens in the acts of the apostles and by extension into the epistles as we see the fruit of it, is because men and women believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, is alive. And knowing this and believing this, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And then things began to work for the pleasure and for the glory of God. Is it any different today? We say no, it's not any different today. If there is going to be any expression of the kingdom of God in your life, in my life, or in any company of Christians, it's based upon this and this alone, that Christ is alive, a living person, [00:12:01] able to influence our lives and the Holy Spirit, the power to enable us to live those lives for the pleasure of God. It's exactly the same today as it was in that early day. Oh, dear brethren, how much we need to be reminded of these things. When spiritual conditions get low, when there isn't much fruit in service, when there isn't much fruit in service, perhaps not much joy or warmth, there's always the idea, or rather the request, what can we do to improve things?

What can we do to make things more attractive? And all sorts of ideas are brought forward to make Christianity more attractive. And the truth is, if our lives as Christians are not based on these two central truths, we can do what we like to improve things, they'll never be improved. [00:13:05] We've got to really hold in living faith upon the value of a man at the right hand of God, a man out of death, who is able to influence our lives at all times, and to take hold of the fact that the Holy Spirit is the only power for Christian life and testimony. And once we give these things up, we have nothing else. We can think of any amount of ideas, brilliant ideas perhaps on the face of it, but they'll all come to nothing if we don't give prime place to these two wonderful truths. And so the Lord is instructing his own as to the essentials of the Christian faith that they would require in their life and testimony. And I think it's very encouraging when he says, [00:14:06] but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. I find this extremely encouraging that those dear men who had been with the Lord in his lifetime, who had seen him, who had heard him, and then they saw him nailed on a cross, they all forsook him and fled, and now they were talking to the risen, glorious Savior. And as they talked with him, they saw him ascending back into glory from whence he came. [00:15:05] But with these wonderful words ringing in their ears, go to Jerusalem, wait there, you're going to receive power, the Holy Ghost is going to come upon you, and

you'll be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, unto the uttermost bounds of the earth. And this is where we are tonight. Thank God that this wonderful message has reached to the uttermost bounds of the earth. I think I'm right in saying that there are very, very few places that haven't heard the sound of the gospel. Thank God it has been encompassed, this earth has been encompassed with this glad news, beginning in the place where Christ was crucified and rejected, his servants in the power of the Holy Spirit went forth preaching the gospel, and souls were saved and received the same blessing [00:16:04] that the persons had at the beginning of the Christian era. The gospel is not dated at any moment.

The gospel is always relevant, always up to date. It meets a man in his need, meets a woman in her need, it meets us all in our need, whatever that need might be, sets us free from the power of sin, gives us a power to live here for God, and gives us a wonderful destiny. There is nothing like the gospel. Nothing like the news concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit. And millions of men and women have had their lives changed by knowing Christ as Savior and by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. And wherever the gospel is reached, the truth of the kingdom has been seen in operation. Men and women owning Christ as Lord, doing the will of God, [00:17:02] doing what is pleasurable to God, and righteousness and peace and joy, the result of receiving Christ as Savior and following him as Lord. Yes, doesn't matter which country the gospel goes into, the same results are seen because it's the same Lord that is bowed to, it's the same Spirit that is received, and the same results are achieved in persons who are blessed this way. And so I think it's extremely encouraging to see this handful, just a handful of men, and they were poor men in themselves. They had been such poor instruments, such poor servants, such cowards in the face of their master's need. And now they were going to go forth, encouraged, emboldened by the reception of the Holy Spirit. And they certainly turned the world upside down. And their message has continued to do this. [00:18:03] And thank God at the present day, this message is still relevant. I'm sure every one of us, those of us who in some measure have experienced the joy and value of conversion, we've experienced the joy of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, not as an historical person, but as a living person to whom we can turn at all times. And this is the value of a living Christ, a glorious man at the right hand of God and available for us now. So we turn from chapter 1 and we come over to chapter 8.

It's very interesting to read about this man called Philip. He was a very able servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wasn't one of the 12 that was along with the, [00:19:05] that was there at the beginning to whom the Lord spoke. He was an evangelist described as such. And he went to Samaria and he preached Christ unto them.

Then there was a man there called Simon, a sorcerer.

And he became interested in this great work that was going on. Obviously, some kind of power was being demonstrated there. And Simon wanted to know something about this. And we find the story from verse 13 onwards, how Simon thought that by money, this power might be acquired to give people the gift of the Holy Spirit. And of course, Philip dealt with this matter.

Simon rather, I'm sorry, let me see.

Yes, verse 20, Peter said unto him, [00:20:02] Thy money perish with thee.

Peter, the apostle, he dealt with this matter. But we're not concerned with that story. The danger of being sidetracked in relation to Christianity.

You see, some people might think, well, it's a good thing to be a Christian. It brings you into a sphere where certain influences are at work. And it might give me some place of prominence or something that will be gratifying to me. This is what Simon thought. He thought, well, this is fine. I've been a sorcerer. I've been using magical powers to sway people and impress them with my power.

Here's something that I don't understand, but I would like to have it. And I would like to be able to give others this power. But this kind of thing was exposed. No, dear friends, we come to Christ with our need, our guilt, our sin.

[00:21:02] And when we come to him in that way, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, a power that sets us free from that guilt and sin and need and gives us the power to lead a Christian life. And I believe this is involved when it says in verse 12, But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

I want to speak of three things here. The belief that those persons express the name of Jesus Christ and baptism.

If a king in any kingdom gives a proclamation to his subjects that certain things have to be done, then there's nothing optional about it. If the king gives a decree, then it's right that the subjects should obey. [00:22:07] Now, I believe that the gospel that was preached by Philip, call it the gospel of the kingdom if you like. Uh, it says he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God. Then persons who heard that were obligated to believe and to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the royal proclamation. And that proclamation was a very interesting one. That there was a power now resident in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that was far greater than any other power that was in the world. Powers exercised by Satan, the enemy of our souls.

And when people believe in this wonderful gospel, this good news, the glad tidings, when persons believed in this, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, [00:23:04] then the wonderful power was expressed towards them.

They were set free from the power of sin and they were baptized. They gave an outward evidence of their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we want to speak of these things briefly. First of all, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find that all that is done in those early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles was done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we want to explain this. You remember at the dedication of the temple in Solomon's day? Solomon referred to God and he says, this house that I have built, it's not large enough to contain the God of gods, the God who's dwelling places in the heavens. He says, God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands.

[00:24:06] No building is large enough to contain this wonderful God. But he says, look down from my dwelling place in heaven to this place where thy name is and hear and grant thy servant's petition and so on. Now what Solomon's saying is, look, God is in heaven, but this temple that's upon earth is where his name is. And where his name is, all that's true of God has to be recognized and followed. Where his name is, there is majesty, glory, power, authority.

And this is exactly what we have to think of when we think of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw in chapter one that after the Lord was finished speaking to the disciples, [00:25:01] he was seen ascending up into glory, glorious man ascending into heaven. And then the disciples began to preach in his name. All that was true of him in glory was expressed in his name. We want to quote one incident to prove this. At James, Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray time of prayer. As they went up, he is a poor beggar. He's sitting there. He's helpless. He's lame. And he wants something to help himself with. He wants some alms, some money, something to ease his position materially, not physically. And then the disciples look at him and Peter says, silver and gold have we none. But such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

[00:26:02] And the man rose up. And he walked. And it wasn't very long before he was leaping and praising God. Because the power connected with the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth was operated towards him. And his physical disability was healed instantaneously. Power in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so today that power is still connected with the name of Christ. There is no problem. There is no difficulty. But it can be met through believing in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's power in that name. There's attraction in that name. There's glory and greatness in that name. It's the greatest name of all, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. There is coming a day, the Bible says, when every knee shall bow. [00:27:02] And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Every knee will bow and confess that wonderful name. They'll have to confess that that precious name is the name that's far above every name. Not only in this world, but in that which is to come. And I believe this is what Philip presented. The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The name in which things were done. In which power was expressed. In which blessing was received. And that name was equivalent to the herald shouting forth the king's proclamation. And persons believed in that name and received the blessing. Oh, what a wonderful thing it was to see those men and women bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus [00:28:01] Christ, owning him as Lord, and then entering into baptism to give a public expression to their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't believe for one moment that baptism washes away our sins. There is no evidence of this in the Bible. Baptism was a right that men and women went into to show that they were taking sides with the Lord Jesus Christ who had been rejected by this world. When they were baptized, when they were immersed in the waters of baptism, they said publicly to all around, our interest is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to live for him. We want him to be supreme in our lives. [00:29:02] If you can think of any town at that time where the disciples went to preach, you would find that in most of them there was a synagogue. And in the synagogue, there was the preaching of the faith concerning the law, the law of Moses, the Old Testament principles.

But then along with the synagogue, you would find temples that the pagans worshipped in to all the various gods that they had. And they had a multiplicity of gods, the synagogue, the pagan temple.

And then the servants of the Lord, they went along and they preached the gospel and persons believed in Christ and they got baptized.

And when they got baptized, they said, if they were Jews who were converted, we are not going to have anything more to do with the synagogue. We are cut off from that. And if they were pagans,

they said, we have nothing more to do with the pagan idols. [00:30:05] We're finished with that. And when they got baptized, they said, we're going to live for Christ. No more synagogues, no more pagan temples. Our lives will be devoted to Christ. And when persons get baptized today, that's what they say. No longer our old way of life.

We live for Christ. We own him as Lord.

We give him our allegiance. We are baptized to his name. This is what it says in the Acts of the Apostles. They were baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That meant simply that whatever they went, whatever they did, whatever they said was consistent with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person enrolls as a soldier or in any other of the services, then they have to act [00:31:05] consistently with the position that they have taken. Otherwise, there will be trouble. And so it is for the Christian. If he accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as a savior and he gets baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is to live in consistency with that act that he has done. And so I think it's wonderful to see Philip the Evangelist preaching Christ, preaching Jesus, preaching the kingdom, men and women coming into the kingdom through faith in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we'll turn over to chapter 14.

Chapter 14, the verses that I had in mind were verses 21 and 22, and when they had preached [00:32:03] the gospel to that city and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch, 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. Paul, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, had experienced something of this tribulation just before these verses that we read together. We read of an incident connected with the devoted servant and they stoned him and left him for dead. You say, well, if we are under the kingship and lordship of Christ, surely there should be power to deal with opposition. [00:33:01] But then we must remember the words of the master, the rejected king. We must remember what he said. They hated me. They will hate you also. In the world, ye shall have tribulation. In me, peace.

And we think of the Old Testament scriptures and we think of David, the king, the anointed king, and yet in rejection, hunted like a partridge in the mountains, Saul seeking his life, men hating him, hardly any food to eat, hardly any time to sleep, hunted up and down, men desiring to kill him. A picture of the rejection of the anointed king today.

But look at those who were with him, all those who gathered to him in the cave of Adullah. They were looked after, protected by David. They shared in the rejection of the king. They shared in his tribulation. [00:34:01] They shared in his trials. They shared in his sorrows. And in that day that was to come, they experienced the joy of his supremacy and his undisputed kingship, and they enjoyed the benefits when he was in the place of authority. And so the Christian today, he's just like David's followers. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could all say from our hearts, like those persons who came to David when he was in the cave of Adullah. You remember, David saw a party approaching to the cave, and he wondered, are these my enemies? Are they coming to take me? Are they coming to kill me? And he goes forth to meet them, and he asks them who they were, and what a wonderful answer he got from them. Thine are we, David, and on thy side thou son of Jesse. Oh, how his heart must have filled up with joy as he thought on these persons seeking [00:35:02] him out in the cave of Adullah and expressing their allegiance to him. Thine are we, David, and on thy side thou son of Jesse. Oh, if only our testimony as Christians could be like this, clear cut, definite, outright, on

thy side, the Lord Jesus Christ, the rejected Jesus of Nazareth.

Thine are we, and on thy side, Jesus of Nazareth.

Oh, I'm sure that this is what the Lord wants, full, wholehearted committal to him and to his interests, even though publicly he is still a rejected man. And so Paul experienced this sorrow of tribulation, but then he wasn't surprised, because you remember when he received his commission from the Lord Jesus to be a servant of the Lord, [00:36:01] he was told very plainly that the Lord would show him how great things he must suffer for Christ's name, and Paul knew what it was to suffer. When we turn to the second epistle to the Corinthians, we find him writing a great list of sufferings and difficulties that he passed through, but he says he did it for the Lord's sake. And in all these things, the Lord sustained him and maintained him, and this is our pathway today. You remember in perhaps the darkest period of the war, the Second World War, Mr. Churchill spoke to the nation, and he promised them blood and toil, sweat and tears.

He didn't offer the nation an easy pathway to victory. He said it would be long, it would be arduous, it would be costly. And I don't see anything in the Bible to suggest that the Christian's life is one of singing [00:37:06] all the day and happy all the way. Thank God for the happy moments we experience. Thank God for the joy and support that we experience in the company of the Lord. But there are the stern realities of the Christian life that involve conflict with the authorities of darkness, with Satan, with evil forces in this world. And this means conflict, and conflict means suffering, and often means casualties. Persons are killed because of their faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ. There's a dear man in Russia at the present moment. I think George Vins is his name. His father before him died in Siberia because of his faithfulness to Christ.

This man has been imprisoned many times already because he refuses to bow to the communistic [00:38:03] rulers. And he's been faithful in his testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. At the present moment, he is in prison. There is a very real fear that before long he will die as a result of the privations he has experienced in prison. He's one of the persons who is dying for the sake of his king in conflict with evil powers. And so Paul Barnabas here is exhorting these believers to continue in the faith and through much tribulation we shall enter into the kingdom. I believe that this expression is akin to the one that the Lord speak in his pathway when he says that with much force the kingdom of God is taken. That the tribulation expressed here towards persons is Satan's power against the name [00:39:06] of Christ but those who are faithful to him are real subjects of the kingdom and in the time of reward in the day that is to come will get their full reward and blessing for every feature of faithfulness in this world. Dear brethren, it says they confirmed or he confirmed the souls of the disciples and exhorted them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. He spoke about establishing. This is the word here for confirming. We don't believe that if we go through a certain religious observance we are confirmed. We believe that confirmation is that the person is established in the truths of Christianity and practices them day by day in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[00:40:06] This is confirmation.

This is establishing. This is our roots deep down in the fundamental truths of Christianity and we continue in the faith. I want to speak about one of the things that the Lord Jesus spoke about when he was here. He spoke a parable about a sower who went forth to sow.

He said that some of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and they snatched away the seed. Then he said some of it fell upon hard ground. There wasn't much depth of earth and the seed didn't get very far down. At least the little seed didn't germinate sufficiently so that its roots could get deep down into earth and have a strong firm grip of the soil and then grow. When the sun rose the little seed or the little plant shriveled up. [00:41:04] Then he said there was other seed that fell amongst thorns and because the sun and the moisture couldn't get at the seed it too didn't grow sufficiently. It got choked with all those weeds and it couldn't grow. Last of all he said there was some seed that fell on good ground and it brought forth fruit. Now the reason I mentioned this parable the parable of the sower is to draw your attention to the second and the third of these things. When the Lord says that the seed fell upon the ground and there wasn't much depth of earth he said in his interpretation of the story it's like persons who believe the gospel. And when persecution arises they don't continue because of the power of the enemy they give up and they go back. [00:42:02] Other influences are brought to bear in their lives and they give up. And the third one he says it's riches the cares of this world and the lusts of other things and that's what makes the other class of persons give up. They don't continue they don't reach the full maturity of Christian life and experience and bring forth fruit for God. And this is exactly what Barnabas is teaching here he says continue in the faith don't give up don't allow any influence to come into your life that will hinder you in approaching full maturity and bringing forth fruit for God because this in connection with the Lord's parable is the real object of it to bring forth fruit for God. And if we allow any influence no matter what it might be it would come within the scope [00:43:02] of the lusts of other things.

The Lord doesn't specify them because what affects you might not affect me. If something specific had been mentioned by him we might have said oh that's fine that doesn't worry me. But the lusts of other things covers an extremely wide field of anything that might come into our lives and hinder this continuity of Christian life and blessing. See the Lord wants his kingdom to continue. We saw in our first talk together in the book of Daniel that kingdoms have come and gone. They've been superseded by other kingdoms they've been toppled because of internal dissension or outside attacks kingdoms have come and gone. But this kingdom is to continue and if it's to continue its continuity depends upon you and upon me and upon all Christians. [00:44:04] Christians going forward subject to the king obeying the king taking account of all his word and his instructions for us and he demands implicit obedience from each of us.

He has the right to say what we are to do in our lives and if we want a successful prosperous Christian life well for us if we pay attention to what he says. And so Barnabas is saying continue in the faith don't give up exhorting them encouraging them this word exhortation I think means come over on my side come and join me. And Barnabas was one who was continuing and he wants others to continue he wants you to continue he wants me to continue. The Lord says continue continue go on don't give up and then to continue in the faith [00:45:05] and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Now lastly in chapter 20.

I want you to notice particularly verse 24. But none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God and now behold I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more.

[00:46:03] Paul had spoken to persons in Ephesus they had believed his word not only had they believed it but they had acted as good subjects of the kingdom they were marked by the spirit of self-sacrifice.

If we turn over to the story in the book in the Acts of the Apostles we will find that they burnt all their books and the scripture records the value of those books as if to emphasize that God takes account of the sacrifice of his people he's giving some expression of what it meant to him that those people who had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ were prepared to sacrifice these valuable books they were prepared to give up and the [00:47:02] Lord Jesus Christ through Paul his servant had spoken to them about the kingdom of God.

When we read that book the epistle to the Ephesians that Paul wrote to those Ephesian believers we find him referring at the end to the whole armor of God every kingdom requires an army at least in these days they have to defend their borders they have to defend their rights so they require an army and an army has to be equipped with the weapons for warfare and the Ephesians are exhorted by the Apostle Paul to put on the whole armor of God because they are fighting against evil wickedness in high places powers that are determined to rob the believers of their joy and of their privileges and so Paul says to them put on the whole armor [00:48:08] of God and stand now the Apostle is saying to these Ephesian believers I'm going away what a wonderful testimony he rendered I want to read it again none of these things move me what was he referring to that the Holy Spirit had witnessed that if he went to Jerusalem he would become a prisoner and eventually would die but he says none of these things move me neither count I my life dear unto myself oh dear brethren I wonder can we all say this can we all say with assurance in our hearts there is nothing can move me from the pathway of discipleship and witness for Christ I'm so established I have such a glimpse of his greatness [00:49:08] and glory that there's nothing in this world can move me from my desire to be for him Paul could say it and the challenge to us this evening is can we say can we say that we don't count our lives dear unto ourselves it means that my life is at the disposal of Christ and I ought not to allow in my life anything that is contrary to his will I don't count my life dear unto myself and he goes on to say so that I might finish my course he says here in the authorised with joy we believe that the better translation omits those two words with joy because that doesn't really matter the object is to finish his course whether it's in [00:50:05] sorrow or in joy doesn't matter it's a question of living or dying for Christ he said so to the epistle to the philippians whether by life or by death Christ may be magnified in my body so Paul says I'm determined to continue I'm going on in spite of every opposition that's against me I want to be a true subject of the kingdom I want to express my allegiance my faithfulness to my lord and suppose I've got to lay down my life to do it I'm ready to do that and he says the ministry which I have received of the lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God and dear brethren we believe that this honored servant of the lord lived his life in keeping [00:51:02] with the testimony he gave with his lips he lived for Christ and he died for Christ and he finished his course in triumph and so in the Christian's life it's really the end that matters Paul in another section of the word describes a person running in the games and perhaps that person receives the crown and then is discovered that he has infringed the rules of the game and he's rejected Paul says I bring under my body I bring my body into subjection so that I might be crowned and crowned lawfully and win the prize and he says I'm going to go on I'm going to continue suppose it means giving up my life I'm not going to give way and so I believe Paul was really an example of the things that he preached to others and now behold I know that you all [00:52:06] among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more he knew what was in front of him he knew what he had to endure and he was prepared to go that way but what a privilege that this dear man went about preaching the kingdom of God there is one who has supreme claim over our lives the lord of glory he died he died to save us because he loved us and this is his supreme claim over us each one greater claim than any any relationship upon earth greater claim than anything in this world the gospel of the kingdom proclaims that everyone ought to bow and own allegiance to Christ and then owning that allegiance be true to it [00:53:03] until that day comes when publicly all the faithfulness of those who have

followed Christ will be an expression in the day of display and glory what a wonderful thing to be considered a friend of our lord Jesus Christ what a wonderful thing to be a subject of his kingdom and to see his rule his authority his glory in manifestation and to say well in the day when things were difficult I was thankful that I took my stand for him and now I can see the value of such a step because now is the day of glory now is the day of manifestation and the bible says those who suffer with him shall reign with him in the future oh dear brethren one feels the imperfection of the attempt to explain these things concerning the kingdom but if something of the blessing of [00:54:07] belonging to Christ has entered into our souls then these meetings will be well worthwhile may we all be encouraged for his name's sake