

Acts

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Preacher: Tyler, John Sperling (1912-1989)

[0 : 00] seeking the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost, let us again direct the friends seeking to continue our meditation in chapter 14, the Acts, and verse 22.

Chapter 14, the Acts of the Apostles, verse 22, concerning 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.

Just a brief word of introduction is desirable this evening concerning the geographic position of our own apostle when the Lord gave him two amazing blessings and favors.

By divine guidance, he comes to Lystra, and the Lord blessed his gospel there so that he was soon surrounded with a little band of gracious souls that had been called by his ministry, and they were tender plants indeed.

Now, these precious souls, and it is tantamount to saying that we could draw an analogy between these souls and some of the sweet babes and the sweet infants in your arms, very young, very tender, very beautiful, very precious, and it could well be said, the fruit of love.

[3 : 17] And, uh, that was the position at Lystra. These souls were newly born of the Spirit.

They were just little tiny babes, as it were, to be, uh, fed and nourished and brought up and established.

And if you contemplate how exceedingly precious your own dear children are to you and your grandchildren, your own flesh and blood and bone, and that preciousness is unfathomed, you can never really speak to the fool.

It is rooted in the Creator. His method of building families.

Now, the point is, think of the extreme preciousness to this holy apostle of those sweet babes in grace, Gentiles they were, that had been born again as he so spake, as I mentioned this afternoon.

[5 : 08] Namely, with the power and the demonstration of the Spirit. And I suppose this was something like 15 years after Pentecost.

and the divine operation of the Spirit in regeneration in the new birth had taken effect in this little band.

Now, what a princely blessing this was. how wonderful and, although so young in grace, how courageous they were.

But something that must have completely overwhelmed them took place. and let me try to spell it out in this way to you.

The strong man that had kept his goods had known this, the coming of a stronger than he.

[6 : 37] Christ had come and cast out the vile usurper, the devil, from their hearts.

And the powers of darkness were in a rage. rage. And that rage resulted in something that the apostle Paul refers to and something that he bore the marks of to his dying moments.

And something that had also a very special connection in his early life when he had witnessed and consented to a similar thing.

Namely, I can hardly visualize this in these days, although the same thing happens mentally, if not physically, he was stoned.

The boulders came crashing down upon his frame until it seemed as if all life had gone from his body.

[8 : 19] Amen. Let me reiterate those words quoted this afternoon.

Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, and I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

It was as though the very powers of darkness were shaken. Brands had been plucked out of the fire, my friends.

I expect some of you feel to be in that category, a brand sloughed out of the fire, nearly gone.

and how wonderful to feel that there is hope for others even this night that God will do the same.

[9 : 46] Well, they drew him out of the city, supposing that he had been dead. dead. And this little band formed a circle round him.

Oh, the pathos, the spiritual pathos of that scene. The little band forming a circle round his battered body.

I should not stay, I think, here at this juncture that I would suggest to your minds that although your body may not be battered in that sense, literally, Satan may vent his fight upon you so that you may know that you are bruised by him.

Now, look at the amazing blessing, the wonder, the miracle that the Lord performed. How be it, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city.

Really, this was of the nature of the resurrection power of Christ, known in his person.

[11 : 39] What a miracle. miracle. The Lord is still able to perform miracles. Now, the wonder is this, that presently, when they had preached the gospel to that city, that is Derbe, did they go home?

Did they go back to Jerusalem? No. No. He returned.

He returned to the very place where he had been stoned. Now, that's grace, isn't it?

And, when he came there, this was his work, to confirm the souls of the disciples, to exhort them to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.

What I would like, just at this stage, to suggest to your mind, is this. He was more concerned for the spiritual welfare of his own children in the faith, than his own mortal life.

[13 : 38] death. The other is this. We could say at once, that his return to Lystra was a double confirmation.

salvation. He not only concerned them, but they concerned him.

That is to say, they concerned him because he saw the fruits of his labors in those precious souls that were so loyal and loving to him.

So they concerned him. And his work was to confirm them. Now that will bring me to the words, the subject matter, in this verse 22.

And so may the Lord give the help that is so needed to work out with you this spiritual triad that is according to the character and mind and will of God and is to his glory and is for the benefit and blessing of his dear saints.

[15 : 19] And as I said this afternoon, I felt the liberty to say this. I believe this verse is the perfect summary of the pastoral labors of dear Mr.

Dawson over all those many years in this place. so that really the dear friends who formed this flock and those who have gathered with us in much life would be able to give a commentary in their own experience, especially the older friends, of this triad of divine blessings received through his ministry.

Confirmation, exhortation, declaration, and the blessed, if I might thus call it, the grand finale, entering into the kingdom of God.

Well, now, first of all, confirmation. Confirmation, I suppose that if you take these precious souls that we are thinking of, you can say this, it would be a true analogy drawn from the realm of nature, they were planted, they needed to be rooted, that really is a very simple exposition of establishment or confirmation.

I remember at school very well and it has often been my hope that we used to sing a hymn containing a verse that flowed something like this in our dear lord's garden planted here below many tiny flower rips in sweet order grow.

[18 : 15] Now think of it, the tender plant lays rooting and that is confirmation in the sense that we have the term here.

It means that that precious soul should be well established and grounded and rooted in all the holy doctrines, all the precious truths concerning our lord jesus christ to take root downward and bear fruit upward.

And this is a vital thing, confirmation. But let us, before we come to that, take just a fairly broad view, that is, I mean, through the scriptures of the lord's pleasure in this matter of confirmation.

It really means to frequently give you an assurance to comfort and satisfy your soul concerning your salvation, your interest in christ and his accomplished work of atonement and his present priestly work of intercession and mediation to have frequent truths and evidences of your personal interest in our dear redeemer, and that's confirmation.

And coupled with that, to have proofs and the ratification concerning your standing, your exercises, your hope, your faith, your love, that it should be concerned.

[20 : 35] Now, I want to just say two things. one is confirmation is the Lord in all his loving compassion recognizing our frailty, our weakness, and our fears.

He knows how weak and frail we are. and he knows the exercise of the soul all through the journey of life which really amounts much of it to a great conflict, your doubts and fears and hopes and fears, as the hymn says, my hopes and fears alternate rise, and comforts mingle with my sighs.

And so in divine compassion he knows our need of confirmation. Now, I want to just give a few demonstrations of this from the book of God.

And the first one you will be conversant with. After the first destruction by the element water of the surface of this planet, the Lord's pairing, Noah and his favored few in the ark, you will well remember the ark resting, the vengeance of God retiring to make room to sweet mercy and clemency, and you will remember the sacrifice and the promise of God to the earth and to the human race concerning seed time and harvest and so on.

What I particularly have in mind is this. He made a covenant. There should never be again a flood to drown the earth.

[23 : 10] No. And so he gave a wonderful confirmation of it.

And this spelled out spiritually is very wonderful. He said when I bring a cloud over the earth I do set my bow in the cloud as a bow in the cloud.

Now that's confirmation. What of his covenant? And fairly frequently in the journey of life we may know what it is to have a cloud.

It may be a dark cloud that gathers thick and thunders loud. it may be a cloud of affliction sore affliction.

It may be a cloud of trial some deep trial some fiery trial or it may be a cloud of bereavement.

[24 : 42] now there are these clouds now he said I do set my bow in the cloud this is it and the bow in the cloud is that amazing confirmation to poor fearful trembling souls that it is not raw not vengeance but mercy for that bow as you well know is the whole spectrum of light and as you see dissected the whole spectrum of light you undoubtedly see all the holy divine perfections of

Jehovah Jesus in sweet harmony in your salvation and you'll see the bow in the cloud and this will confirm it is a distinct precious wonderful time of deliverance to the soul I do set my bow in the cloud I don't want to refer to myself but if I give you just this personal note it will demonstrate the meaning of confirmation three and a half years ago when I was in

Westminster hospital the eminent surgeon and his team reached my bed and he said to me very courteously I suppose you know the seriousness of this operation I said yes I do I think I knew something of the anatomy and so on and he said well it is only fair that we should warn you that when you wake up you may be paralyzed one side of your face and he said this may be the price that you have to pay well he knew of course my profession my work but you can imagine when he passed with his team from my bed how

I felt I thought well this may be the end then never preach another sermon and you can contemplate perhaps how I felt talk about a cloud it was not a matter of my soul salvation at all I felt happy concerning that and my eternal prospect but oh how sad I felt now the Lord confirmed me and he confirmed me in less than five minutes I do set my bow in the cloud if you know what this path is my friend you'll know the blessedness of a bow being set in the cloud

I turned to my locker and took the Bible from the top and opened it wishing praying for a word from God and I said Lord find the place so I just let it fall open and looked and I looked down and as I looked it was not looking just at printers in it was the Lord's voice and he said this have faith in God that did it that delivered me my soul was melted in praise to the

[30 : 14] Lord and the same night before the operation I had a dream and I saw myself on that top floor of Westminster on the table with the long incision and I saw all the nerves and all the network and not one nerve had been injured and I woke up now what about confirmation say this is the first thing that came from heaven and the Lord ratified it for his presence and love and that is why I'm here today now I quite expect some of you are writing your diary some of you may be writing your autobiography what have you to write down concerning confirmation you say this is one thing now all along the line the Lord does this confirmation but I just want to give a few heads and then dip a little deeper into it if I may now take for instance

Sir Gideon in all those years of oppression and then the Lord came under this hope go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel oh how he begged for confirmation very precious how confirmation comes and the blessed spirit put into his very soul what to request of the Lord a most fitting and significant figure he would put a fleece of wool in the floor and you that night wet on the fleece dry on all the floor and of course a fleece of wool what does it do absorb a quickened soul a soul under grace is like a fleece of wool let a little heavenly moisture descend in the atmosphere and your very heart absorbs it drinks it in and in the morning there it was and he wrung it out a bowl full of water confirmation do you see the force of this how that it is

God's pleasure to concern him but now he still seeks dear dear and so he prays that it may be polarized now that it should be dry on the fleece that dew on all the ground and it was so concern so you see this is a holy principle of the spirit that runs right through the book of God this confirmation but I promised you that I wanted to go just a little deeper into this and so we shall endeavor to take up the vital cardinal doctrine of the person of

Christ himself now let me go right on to this the resurrection of Christ was the confirmation to all his dear saints and servants of his divine person and of the virtue and validity of his sacrifice but if you notice everything in the work of Christ was confirmatory to his dear saints and to his disciples for instance he constrains them to get into a ship and there's a tempest a tremendous storm the winds are contrary and you might well say why why this tempest and their lives appeared to be in jeopardy why why come into such extreme circumstances ah the whole exercise and purpose was confirmation presently you can take either narrative there are several written by the evangelists christ may be on the mountain top he may be in the hindered part of the ship asleep on a pillow but the issue is the same presently he rebukes the winds and commands the sea and there is a great calm and what do they say truly thou art the son of god confirmation in his divine person so we might go through the whole of the life of our blessed lord and the whole of his work every part of his work confirms the other for instance take the ascension of christ and his enthronement his session at the right hand of the father he had said tarry he in the city of jerusalem until he be and due with power from on high and when he ascended from bethany as we have read this evening ten days after his ascension that wondrous day of pentecostal effusion took place now what a confirmation in his eternal power and godhead and deity and person as the holy spirit descended what a confirmation of the perfection of his work of atonement and the acceptance of his sacrifice so the holy

confirmation with the people of god confirming the souls of the disciples i suppose i could spell it out to you also in this way it is something i have tried to speak to my dear people about a few times over the years and that is this if we are under the influence of the spirit we are not left in a moribund or static condition that is to say the spirit leads us on and unfolds and teaches our souls a little more of the precious person of christ of his work and of his character and perfections and so on and this is all confirmation for instance i could name this to you take the doctrine of the trinity and unity have you been led into that glorious doctrine i remember so well before i preached one morning one sunday morning being awakened with that by the spirit god in three persons blessed crinit and i commenced to sing the praises of the trinity co-equal and eternal in person work and glory i could not explain this or comprehend it but oh how i rejoiced in this and ever since one of the exercises of my soul has been to find the trinity where you find the father you will find the son and where you find the son you will find the spirit and this is so wonderfully confirmed in in the full deliverance of the soul when the lord grants you pardon and peace i remember this in my deliverance i said now i've got christ he is mine my beloved is mine and i am his and then this dawned on my soul this amazing truth that christ said i in them and thou in me and i said well i i've got the father and the holy ghost you'll see the wonder the confirmation of that doctrine in your own experience to have the trinity well this then is our work it's to lay the people of god on a little further from step to step line upon line precept upon precept here a little there a little and

[43 : 10] thus they are confirmed their faith is confirmed and i believe you dear people experience this under the ministry that the lord has favoured you with confirmation what is a confirmation of a living hope one confirmation is this if you have a living hope in christ you have fellowship with the lord communion you know what it is for him to speak to you to touch your heart you know what it is for him to visit you you're concerned what is a confirmation in the ministry a confirmation surely is this that god's servants are led to bring forth those messages from heaven that are absolutely apposite to the circumstances and exercises and hopes of the people of god who listen to them i mean after all you take a precious soul that is exercise concerning holy baptism and it is not a mechanical thing it's a very precious and sacred thing and it's a wonderful thing when as old sheep are gathered into eternal glory the lord is pleased to replenish his flock below now i remember burying a dear saint of god on a thursday afternoon and i was exercised concerning my subject in the evening and the lord said this is the word you must preach from i tell you that if thee should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out and i went with it and i believe i was helped to expound it and i said no the lord has taken this dear saint home and who has the mantle fallen on who is it in this sanctuary that mantle has fallen on and i said amen and went back into my vestry and sat down and waited now that was my faith the lord had given me that faith i sat in my chair and waited and i waited absolutely assured that the lord had heard my prayer now how did he confirm it he confirmed it in a far greater measure than ever i realized at the time presently there was a knock on the door i said come in and there

stood a dear man he said i'm the one i said i'm not surprised i'm the one and of course the remarkable part about it was that not only had the mantle fallen on him to be baptized to take that place in that church for a few years but what really was to be revealed was that the lord had appointed him to preach the gospel and this he does to die say concerning and look when you get older and all along the line you know what the lord will concern he'll concern everything that there is to be concerned that is to say everything that is real everything that he is the author of he will confirm every word that he has spoken to you everything that he has wrought in you he'll confirm he never confirms anything that is not his own work but he confirms everything that he has wrought and that he has given and spoken that he confirms and so you look

Peter was so concentrating on this in his last days he said give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if ye do these things ye shall never fall now i believe that the Lord confirms especially the first work his work in your early days in your latter days it seems to me that the people of God are more exercised about their beginning when they are getting to the end and the Lord confirms those first rudiments of his oracles that is to say in the work of the spirit in your soul now this is a precious thing thou shalt remember all the why why because it's why why there's a it's a why it leads somewhere it leads to heaven now whatever is of

God he confirms you're tried you're buffeted you need to be exhorted to continue in the faith in the very doctrine of faith Satan will assail you you need to be exhorted to continue in the exercise of faith that is to say things may appear to be so dark and opposite and so conflicting you'll need to be exhorted to continue in the exercise of faith as i named to you just now have faith in God this is it when everything appears black exhorted to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom just a final word why do you think

God has chosen tribulation for his people in any case tribulation is exclusive what is tribulation you may say well surely it's just a synonymous term with trouble and so on a number of things like that no there's a particular exclusiveness about tribulation I will tell you what it is as I understand it and view it and experience it it is a compound that is to say it is your cup there's the cross there's a thorn in the flesh afflictions floods flames the whole compound but it is this it is all that tribulation or trouble or affliction or sorrow that you may experience in the whole span of your spiritual life below and the lord has extracted the sting or the bane from it which is the curse and he has not left it as a vacuum he has injected his love and that's tribulation you see all the afflictions all the sorrows all the difficulties all that you pass through in your journey and it's much tribulation and in the revelation great tribulation but there's no curse in it there's no sting there's no terror there's love that's tribulation and because there's love in it it all works for good that's a wonderful thing isn't it and furthermore in the drinking of even things that may seem to be very bitter you'll find that the lord has a free his cross that makes the bitter waters of Nara sweet and that's tribulation now you may say why then must we because the word is imperative we must but what is the bearing of this word must must i want just to take you up on this word must what does the word must apply to you may say at first reading it applies to much tribulation that we must pass through this that's true that's perfectly true but the must really is the word that is joined to entering the kingdom and you'll see both sides there is a must through much tribulation but poor soul precious soul

[55 : 18] dear soul dear heart what the lord is saying to you really is that although it is this way much tribulation he is telling you that being a trophy of his victory and the purchase of his agonies that you must enter the kingdom nothing can keep you out of the kingdom what a blessed thing this is now enter the kingdom well now there is another reason why and that is the the