

Opposition and Misunderstanding

Message 02 of the series, "Sent"

I. We are sent people.

"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." John 20:21 (NLT)

"...the Holy Spirit said, 'Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.' So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way."

Acts 13:2-3 (NLT)

II. Sent people will face opposition.

"Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: 'Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it.' So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. 'Men of Israel,' he said, 'and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me... We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God—something the law of Moses could never do.' As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week. Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God. The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord. But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said." Acts 13:14-16, 38-39, 42-45 (NLT)

Note: Opposition may come from people who are unwilling to change.

"For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them." Matthew 13:15 (NLT) (See also Isaiah 6:9-10)

Note: The Gospel will cause division.

"Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume." 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (NLT)

Life Application: Opposition can lead us in new/better directions.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. For the Lord gave us this command when he said, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. So the Lord's message spread throughout that region. Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:46-52 (NLT)

III. Sent people will be misunderstood.

"While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. So Paul called to him in a loud voice, 'Stand up!' And the man jumped to his feet and started walking. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, 'These men are gods in human form!' They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles. But when Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, 'Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and

everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.’ But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them. Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. Acts 14:8-29 (NLT)

Life Application: The goal of our ministry is to bring glory to God NOT ourselves.

“He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.” John 3:30 (NLT)

Note: Popular opinion can change quickly.

“Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. But Jesus didn’t trust them, because he knew human nature. No one needed to tell him what mankind is really like.” John 2:23-25 (NLT)

IV. When the going gets tough, sent people keep going.

“But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” Acts 14:20-23 (NLT)

Note: Hardship and suffering are part of the lives of all Christians sent on mission.

“You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. Yes, and everyone who wants to live a good life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:11-12 (NLT)

“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to turn everything over to the care of the Lord.

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Can you recall the first time you went to the store for your parents by yourself after getting your driver’s license? Do you remember what emotions you had?
2. Read John 20:21. “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” How do you explain to someone every follower of Christ is sent to share the Gospel?
3. Read Acts 13:44-52. Have you ever felt like Paul and Barnabas in this story when you were slandered and ridiculed for ministering to unbelievers? How tough was it to stay focused on the Gospel message instead of how you were feeling?
4. Read Acts 14:21-23. What makes it difficult to revisit places or people when ministry opportunities did not turn out well? What were some of the reasons Paul went back to those places?
5. Read Galatians 6:9. How would you encourage someone to keep sharing the Gospel in a difficult circumstance?
6. Why do you think sharing the Gospel brings hardship and suffering?
7. What are some areas in your life that you are struggling with sharing your faith in Jesus? How can we encourage and pray for you in this?

Quotations To Consider:

"To learn strong faith is to endure great trials. I have learned my faith by standing firm amid severe testings."
George Mueller

"You may readily judge whether you are a child of God or a hypocrite by seeing in what direction your soul turns in seasons of severe trial. The hypocrite flies to the world and finds a sort of comfort there. But the child of God runs to his Father and expects consolation only from the Lord's hand." Charles Spurgeon

"There are two ways of getting out of a trial. One is simply to try to get rid of the trial, and be thankful when it is over. The other is to recognize the trial as a challenge from God to claim a larger blessing than we have ever had, and to hail it with delight as an opportunity of obtaining a larger measure of divine grace." A. B. Simpson

"Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine inheritance, now and always: Thou and Thou only, first in my heart, High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art." Mary E. Byrne

"Always look a mob in the face." John Wesley