

# Acts 14:19-28

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, good morning, church. All right, we are super excited to get to worship with you guys one more time before we head back to our country in Southeast Asia.

! The past couple months has been an extreme delight and joy for our family. We've gotten to have meals with many of you guys to talk.

And sadly, there's been some that we haven't even had a chance. And we're like, oh, we wish we could sit down and talk with them. But in the Lord's due time, we would love to do that. I'm excited to get to bring the word to you all today from Acts chapter 14.

So if you have your copy of God's word, please open to Acts chapter 14. And we'll begin today in verses 19 through 28. As you're turning there, I want you to know that my hope for today's sermon is that you will be reminded of the joyful privilege and blessing it is to have the local church.

And I want to remind you that I know you guys already know it. But we, as Nathan has said over and over again, if you've spent any time around Providence Baptist Church, he will say, we are people slow to remember and quick to forget.

[ 1 : 28 ] And why does he say this a lot? Well, because we are people slow to remember and quick to forget.

So we need a lot of reminders. And so my prayer for today is that you will clearly see in the scripture that our God is building his church through his church for his glory.

I pray that you will not only see it, but you will be reminded of the joyful privilege and delight that it is that you have been given by God to be a part of a church.

That if you're a member here, that you get to call Providence Baptist Church. And if you are not from here, I do hope that you have a church that you get to be a faithful member at and call your family.

To be a part of a local church who knows the gospel, loves the gospel, loves one another, and desires to see his glory known in all the earth.

[ 2 : 31 ] So may we never forget the precious privilege that we have been given. But before we begin looking at today's passage, I want to lay a little bit of a foundation, a little bit of a context, since we're jumping into the middle of the book of Acts, into some events that have already been unfolding.

And I don't have enough time to do a lot of detail, so I'm giving you a very big overview of what goes on here. Really, we're looking at Paul's first missionary journey, and this starts back in Acts 13.1, where Paul and Barnabas were worshiping the Lord and fasting with the church at Antioch in Syria. And the Holy Spirit said to the church, Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So here is the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey, and they are set apart and sent out through the local church.

And from there, they set out on this U-shaped journey. They then go to Cyprus, and then to places in Lycia and Galatia. And what do they do each time they arrive to these new places?

[ 3 : 51 ] Well, they preach the gospel and make disciples. And why do they preach? Well, because they preach because the power to raise dead hearts to life is not in them, but is in the word, the gospel proclaimed.

It wasn't in just doing acts of mercy or of kindness, which we should do, but it was through the preached word. Acts of mercy might be a vehicle to help carry the gospel to some of these regions, but without the gospel proclamation, there will be no life.

There will be no true power. So what was Paul's missionary strategy that we see throughout Acts 13 and 14, and honestly, the whole book of Acts?

Well, we see that he goes and he preaches the gospel. And he goes to the next place and he preaches the gospel. And I would like to say that this isn't just Paul's missionary strategy, but this should be ours.

We know Mark chapter 16, verse 15 says, to go out into all the world and preach the good news. And what is the core of the gospel they were preaching?

[ 5 : 12 ] And before we get into our text, I want to make this clear, church. And I know you know this. You've heard the gospel proclaimed over and over again. But we are slow to remember and quick to forget.

So I do want to remind you that the gospel is that you have sinned against a holy God and deserve to be cast into hell for all of eternity. That there is no amount of good works that you could do to save yourself from the wrath of God.

However, God sent his perfect son, Jesus Christ, who came and lived a perfect life and died as a substitute on your behalf, taking your sin upon himself and giving you his righteousness.

And then on the third day, he rises from the dead. And if you believe in him and repent of your sin, you can have eternal life.

That is the core of the gospel message that we believe. And this is good news. But I'm afraid as a church who's very comfortable with this, that we can be in danger of adding to this gospel.

[ 6 : 25 ] Instead of it just being Jesus and the gospel plus nothing else, we're in danger of adding external actions to try and affirm our acceptance or our maturity in God.

Maybe it's Jesus plus a quiet time every morning. Jesus plus a healthy lifestyle. Jesus plus dressing a certain way.

Or Jesus plus homeschooling. Plus good parenting. Jesus plus a stable job. A big family. Jesus plus fostering. Jesus plus getting married.

Jesus plus being a part of a healthy church. Jesus plus doing family worship. Now listen to me carefully. These are things that are good to do.

But if you think that your maturity or acceptance by God is merely based on doing these things, then you are in danger of adding to the gospel.

[ 7 : 27 ] Which adding anything to the gospel actually takes away from the gospel. And then in your evangelism, as you're sharing with others, you are in danger of unintentionally saying through your actions, to be a Christian means believing in Jesus and homeschooling and eating this way and being reformed.

We must be careful that we are clear on what the gospel is and that we aren't adding to it. So should you read your Bible every day?

I think this is a good practice and a really good habit. But listen, if you walk through the rest of the entire day feeling guilty or feeling that you're not pleasing to the Lord because you didn't get up early and read your Bible because maybe you had sick kids all last night.

And if you feel like you're not walking pleasing to the Lord because of that, you might be trying to earn some kind of merit through your quiet times.

You're accepted by God in the gospel. And should you do these things? Yes, the gospel compels you to want to know the Lord more, to want to delight and spend time with him.

[ 8 : 49 ] But your righteousness, your merit before the Lord is not based on what you do. It's based on what he has done. And that is really good for us to keep reminding ourselves. I love the lyrics of the song that say, All sufficient merit, shining like the sun, A fortune I inherit, by no work I have done.

My righteousness I forfeit at my Savior's cross, Where all sufficient merit did what I could not. And you know what? God doesn't just save us and leave us alone.

But he cares for us so much that he places us in a family that we get to call the church. And it is through that church that he goes and he gathers more people to praise him for his goodness and grace.

A family which will help us to remember the gospel. For how do we grow in our discipleship? Well, we preach the gospel to one another. We preach the gospel to our own hearts.

We listen to good, faithful preaching while we gather with the church. And this is why I get so concerned when I hear people say, And I have heard this quite a few times.

[ 10 : 06 ] I don't go to that church because of the preaching. I go because of the community. The programs. And that leaves me going, What?

Really? That's like saying I go to a hospital because I like hanging out with the nurses and doctors. They're very friendly. Though they might have a terrible reputation of not helping sick patients get better, They got really nice nurses.

Now don't get me wrong. A good hospital will be hospitable. But I want to be in a place where I am going to hear of the balm for my soul.

I want to be in the place where the word of God is going to be preached. And where I can grow. I want to be in a place where sick patients can get better.

So brothers and sisters, we need to be in a community where we will hear the gospel preached regularly and faithfully. A place where we will find true help.

[ 11 : 19 ] So I'm laying a little bit of foundation because you see that Paul is going to place and he's preaching the gospel, Preaching the gospel. And he goes to the next place and he preaches, makes disciples. But I also want you to see that's not all he does on this journey.

And this is what we'll get into in Acts chapter 14. He also plants churches, appoints elders, strengthen and teaches the believers.

And this is what we will see throughout Acts 14, 19 through 28. So if you have your copy of God's Word, let's read it. Acts 14, starting in verse 19, says, 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. 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.

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 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.

[ 12 : 40 ] And when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Italia. And from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.

I've divided our passage today into two parts to make it easier to follow along. Part one is the suffering from verses 19 through 20.

And part two is the mission, verses 21 through 28. And the main point of our text today will be that God is building his church through his church for his glory.

[ 13 : 43 ] So part one, the suffering. I'm going to reread verse 19, which says, 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.

Paul and Barnabas had just come from preaching in Antioch and Iconium, and after many had heard the gospel and believed, much conflict began to stir.

Well, actually, the conflict wasn't even just stirring. It was actually boiling over at this point. Antioch and Iconium were about 100 miles away from Lystra, where Paul and Barnabas were.

However, this kind of journey could take a group of people, anywhere from like two to five full days of traveling, to get there. So in relative comparison, it would be like they jumped in a bus in Atlanta, and drove all the way to California to put an end to Paul, the preacher.

I hope you see that they were pretty mad. There was a lot of conflict stirring there. So when they get there, they persuade the crowds to stone Paul and drag him out of the city.

[ 14 : 55 ] And mob stoning like this was brutal. Getting pounded by large, heavy stones, bones breaking, blood dripping, skull cracking. And after they are sure he is dead, they drag his limp body out of the city.

And this was a deep pain and suffering, and I'm sure Paul looked as dead as dead could be. But what happens next? Verse 20 says, But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and into the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

The disciples had actually probably come to bury him, but in a miraculous way, Paul gets up and the next day heads on to Derbe.

Paul's condition was probably worse than somebody, if somebody had driven their car off the side of a mountain and lived. His condition was probably worse, but in some miraculous way he gets up and he walks the distance of potentially 50 miles to go to the next city.

And what does he do? Well, he continues to preach. God gives him the strength to go on, but his scars still remain. And what was Paul's perspective over Christian suffering?

[16:17] There actually are many places we could turn to, but I want to mention just one that is relevant for our passage for today. Listen as I read Colossians chapter 1, verses 24 through 26.

It says, Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

So Paul sees his sufferings as filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. And if you read that, I bet a lot of you guys are saying, what does Paul mean here?

How can there be anything lacking in Christ's afflictions? Maybe you will think of Hebrews 10, 14, which says, For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Christ's atonement was perfectly sufficient. So what is lacking? Well, nothing is lacking in merit, but it is lacking in extension.

[17:43] And I love how John Piper explains it. He says, Christ's suffering must be carried to the world. And God has ordained that this happens through the suffering of his servants.

He also says, The sufferings of Christ are completed in redemption, but they are still being completed in mission. As his ambassadors go out and preach the good news, there will be suffering.

And in that suffering and sacrifice, there will be a physical display of Christ's suffering that proclaims to a dying world, that proclaims to a church that is suffering, that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.

And look at what Paul says in Acts chapter 14, verses 22 in our text today. It says, so we're going to skip down just a little bit, but it says, that he was 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.

And remember, Paul is saying this to a church right after he was stoned. His body, broken and beaten, was physically displaying the suffering of Christ, strengthening the church, building up the church, filling up what was lacking in the affliction of Christ for the sake of the church.

[19:25] And now some of you may say, but Caleb, am I really suffering? My life is so easy compared to what we read in the Bible, what we read about what's happening overseas in different areas.

And this may be true. However, I have to ask you, are you being faithful in these so-called smaller sacrifices and trials for your king?

For if you are not faithful in these smaller trials and difficulties that you face in a time of relative ease, how will you expect to be faithful in the time of great trial?

And I can't flesh this out for all of you in your specific context, but maybe it is refusing a high-paying job or promotion because it would require you to work when the people of God are gathering.

Or maybe your job requires you to buffer some numbers, to be dishonest, but you remain true.

[20:33] Maybe it's the daily sacrifice of waking up every single Sunday, getting your kids ready, and going to church, training your kids, when you know, honestly, you're probably only going to hear a few words from the sermon, but you do it anyways every single week because you know it's good for your soul, it's good for your kids, it's good for the church.

Maybe it's opening your mouth at work to share the gospel with a co-worker or in your neighborhood with a neighbor or some friends who you know as soon as you open your mouth to tell them the gospel, oh, they're going to label you as a religious bigot.

But you want them, you want them to believe, so you do it anyways. Maybe it's saying no to wasting your time on social media or watching TV so that you can be a more faithful friend, mom, dad, brother, sister, neighbor, church member, and disciple to those who are around you.

I don't know what your current situation is like and what that sacrifice might be, but may we all on these quote-unquote smaller trials be faithful to our king.

These trials of various kind and may they produce in us a steadfastness and may they build up the church for his glory. And after being built up, we may stand firm in the days of great trial.

[ 22 : 13 ] Praise God that the suffering of this present time are truly not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us. That is part one of our sermon today. Part two is the mission.

And this will be verses 21 through 28 and I'm going to break this up into four brief sub-points or aims in order to show what was the apostles' mission and what was their strategy to spread the gospel to all nations.

And by implication, what should our strategy be? The four aims of the mission are reaching the lost, teaching the disciples, planting local churches, and then we see Paul returning to encourage.

And in all of these, and if you didn't quite write those down quite yet, I will repeat them as I get there. But in all of these, there is an underlying assumption of preaching and proclaiming the word of God.

For how do we reach the lost? Well, it's by preaching the gospel. How do we teach the disciples? Well, it's through preaching the word, encouraging each other in the word. We plant churches that stand upon the word of God and we return and encourage others by telling all that the gospel has done.

[ 23 : 32 ] So the foundation of those is a preaching and proclaiming of the word. So aim number one, reaching the lost. Let's read the first part of verse 21, which says, when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples.

So what did they do? They first reached the lost in that city through preaching the gospel and then making many disciples, thus taking part, the first part of the Great Commission, which says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

So what was Paul's aim? To go and preach and make disciples. So what should our aim be? To go and preach and make disciples. But Paul doesn't just end there.

Paul's ambition was to preach Christ, not where he had been named, as he says in Romans 15, 20. So Paul wanted to go to the unreached to preach the gospel there.

But he just, he doesn't just leave these disciples alone. He doesn't just reach them, but he goes back and teaches them as they gather together as the local church.

[ 24 : 46 ] And on this U-shaped journey, Paul was headed back to the church that had sent him out. And if you know a U, the quickest way back to the other point of view is straight across. And Paul could have very easily done that.

But instead of doing that, what he does is he goes back the long way and goes back through the regions that he had already been. And why does he do that? To go back to the regions where people had just traveled to stone him.

Why does he do that? What was for the sake of the churches there? For the sake of encouraging and strengthening the disciples who had believed.

So aim number two, teaching the disciples. Let's read the last part of verse 21 and then verse 22. It says, Then they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

So after reaching them, Paul then goes back and teaches them. He strengthens their souls and encourages them to continue in the faith, telling them that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

[ 26 : 02 ] And we don't actually get a lot of detail of exactly what Paul said here, but I can imagine that it sounded just like what he told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, 10 through 17.

And you will see actually a lot of overlap in this passage. So just listen as I read 2 Timothy 3, 10 through 17. It says, You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured.

Yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. While evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. So how does Paul encourage Timothy in this passage? He teaches him and reminds him of the truth and encourages him to continue in what he has learned and believed.

[ 27 : 45 ] He also reminds him that all scripture is inspired by God and useful for building up the church, for equipping the saints. Paul in Acts 14 encourages the churches in a very similar way.

He encourages them in the truth, by the truth. He preaches and teaches them so that they may grow in the Lord. So how are we saved? Well, it's through hearing and believing the preached word of God.

How do we grow? Well, we grow by hearing and believing the word of God. And this is the part of the Great Commission that says, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

It's not just go and make disciples, but it's also to teach them all that he has commanded. And this is not just the job of pastors, of missionaries, of evangelists.

This is the part, this is also your job as a member of the body of Christ. To preach, to reach the lost around you, proclaim the gospel to them and teach them what the Lord has said.

[ 29 : 02 ] So may we all be faithful to open our mouths to reach the lost and teach the disciples. Aim number three is planting churches.

Verse 23 says, and when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. So along with going back to teach the many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to help appoint elders in every church. Now it doesn't tell us when these churches were formed, but somewhere from reaching them to teaching them, local communities of believers were gathering together regularly and they are referred to as churches here in our text.

Honestly, I wouldn't be surprised if these disciples naturally started gathering together because they knew that they needed one another. They had been called from the community of darkness into the community of light, so why would you not gather with the people of God to be encouraged on your heavenly journey?

It would seem foolish not to, but it's a point that I have to emphasize because sadly, even today, one of the most popular missions methodologies out there says that the church is a hindrance to the Great Commission.

[ 30 : 30 ] That if we would just skip over planting churches, we would be able to reach the nations with the gospels like we would have done it already. Churches are messy.

Why would you slow down and plant a church when you can just focus on making disciples? I hope that you see the folly in this.

This is not how the apostles understood the Great Commission. This is not how we should understand the Great Commission. I mean, imagine if your building contractor for your home had this methodology.

After spending about \$500,000 and giving the contractor the house plans, you get a call back after three weeks and he says, we're done.

You go, you're super excited, you can't wait to see your new home, and then when you get there, you're just shocked. Not because of how good it is, but because of how bad it is.

[ 31 : 34 ] You walk in, the foundation is poor, uneven, the walls are caving in, the roof is incomplete, the electricity wasn't stalled right, and the plumbing is a disaster.

You would be disgusted. And if we are not careful, we can do the same thing with our approach to missions. God has given us the plan, and in the plan we see that he builds his church through his church.

And if we skip over that, we will be accountable to the owner of the building, the owner of the church who has given us his building plans in his word.

So we have seen that Paul himself is sent out from the church at Antioch, and then he returns back to report to the church at Antioch. And honestly, guys, if anybody could have sent themselves without being sent out from a church, it could have been Paul.

But that's not how God designed it. He designed that he would be sent out through a church. And he comes back and he reports to that church.

[ 32 : 45 ] So Paul also returns and he strengthens the disciples in all those churches throughout the regions where they had preached and made many disciples. But why does he do this?

because Paul knew that the local church is the vehicle which the gospel would not only reach the nations, but also keep the nations.

And what is one of God's appointed means for growing and keeping the church? You know what it is? It's elders. pastors. That is pastors or shepherds.

Look at verse 23 again. It says, And when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

This verse tells us that they appointed elders, but why elders? Listen as I read Ephesians 4 verses 11 through 12.

[ 33 : 52 ] It says, And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

So why did he give elders? Well, he gave them to make the church strong, to equip the saints. And notice that it uses the word he gave.

Brothers, if you are a part of a healthy church, the Lord has given you a gift. It says he gave. Elders are a gift to the church.

They are there to help little seeds, little saplings grow into oaks. And how do they do this? We don't have time to go to all the places, but God's word tells us that elders equip, they shepherd, they care, they keep watch, they teach sound doctrine, they rebuke false doctrine, they pray for the church, set an example for the church, and more.

This is why Paul tells Titus in Titus chapter 1 verse 5 that he left them there in Crete to put what remained in order and what was not in order. What was lacking in the planning of those churches?

[ 35 : 17 ] Well, they didn't have elders. So he leaves them there to help appoint elders. Church, I hope you realize the blessing it is to have elders who stand upon the word of God.

Elders who love God's word, preach God's word, shepherd with God's word, and elders who love and care for you. You may not agree with all of their decisions.

You may not vibe with their personality. You may not even get along very well with them. However, God gave them.

They are a gift. So may we praise and thank God for the good gifts that he has given and realize that shepherds are also sheep.

They also need you members to strengthen and encourage them on their journey to the heavenly kingdom. May we reflect on Hebrews 13, verse 17, which says, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

[ 36 : 29 ] Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. God for that.

Please don't talk and act in such a way that causes them to groan. Be a sheep that is a joy to shepherd. And finally, aim number four, we see they're returning to encourage.

And I'm very briefly going over this section. But verse 24 begins, Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Italia.

And from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

And they remained no little time with the disciples. I think the best way I can summarize these verses is to say that Paul and Barnabas went back through all the places they had been and came to the church in Antioch to report to that church who had sent them out.

[ 37 : 42 ] And why do they report to this church? Because this mission wasn't just Paul's mission. This wasn't his own personal mission, but this was God's mission through the church.

The church sent them out to go and preach the good news to these regions, and they come back and report all that the Lord had done. And in that, the church would be greatly encouraged.

And then he spends no little time with the disciples. disciples. So we have seen in today's text that God will build his church through his church for his glory.

And now I want to end by answering the question, so what? What does this truth mean for my life? Well, for all believers, it means what Hebrews 10 verses 24 through 25 says.

It says, and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

[ 38 : 54 ] Christians, do you want to live not a perfect life, but a faithful one unto the Lord? Don't neglect to gather with the saints.

Be a member of a local gospel preaching church and commit yourself to that church through thick and thin. And I've seen the trend too often.

People stop spending time in the word of God. Then they stop spending time with the people of God. And they stop believing that there is a God. Don't neglect the word of God and to gather with the church.

For the church is God's instrument to make his name known in all the earth. And if you're a teen, a young adult, or a kid here, many of you go to church right now because your mommy and daddy make you.

And guess what? That's a good thing. However, there will come a day where the choice will be yours. And on that day, what will you choose? My prayer is that you will choose to go to a good, healthy church whenever you can.

[ 40 : 16 ] Yes, this means that as you get older and you're in college, maybe you will miss out on a lot of events or games or you'll have less time for your exams, you'll be more tired.

But I promise you it is worth it. Becoming a member of a local church was the best thing I ever did in college. If I could go back, I would do it again.

I would just probably care a little less about my grades so I could have more time with the church.

Let being a member of a gospel preaching church drive the future decisions that you make.

If you get accepted to an excellent university, but there are no gospel centered local churches there, I beg you don't go. Go to the lesser known university where you know there is a great gospel preaching church that will care for your soul.

Remember the words of Mark chapter 8 verses 36 which says, for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? And everyone, I want you to remember that when a wolf attacks a sheep, what does it try to do?

[ 41 : 26 ] Well, it tries to isolate the sheep. It tries to get them away from the flock for when the sheep are together by the shepherd, there is much safety.

There's a level of protection in their togetherness. If you try to walk through life without being connected to a local church, I want you to know that the wolves are waiting.

They would love nothing more than to see you separated from the flock. And a warning, if you are already a part of a local church or considering joining, you know what?

The wolves would be fine if you join, but never truly open yourself up to that church. Never truly let anyone else know your sin, your weaknesses, your failings, even your strengths.

Then be fine, just don't open up. It's a different form of isolation. If you do that, you are still in danger. Get to know others and be known.

[ 42 : 35 ] No one's perfect, so stop pretending. So in summary, as we've seen through the text today, God is building his church through his church for his glory.

And may we all be used by our great God to spread his glory, not only here in this city, not only in our state, not only in this country, but to the ends of the earth for the sake of his glory as he redeems and cherishes his bride.

And may we never forget the privilege and blessing it is to be a part of his church. Let's pray.