**Ups and Downs (Acts 14:1-7)**

 Life’s ups and downs will come inevitably, but we are called to go through them in faith.

 Greetings dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we bring up a more general topic today related to our Christian life-walk. It is interesting that in one short passage, we see both victory and persecution. We see both an “up” and a “down” in the recorded event. Thus, our subject today is exactly about this phenomenon, which is closely connected with our walk with the Lord. Again, life’s ups and downs will come inevitably, but we are called to go through them in faith. Let’s talk, then, about this particular truth of life.

 A life with Christ is not only full of victories, but also its challenges and difficulties. In the beginning of the passage, we can see that the apostles, namely Paul and Barnabas, are successful in Iconium in their ministry. The city itself was a prosperous one, with five major roads connected to it. However, in that same prosperous atmosphere, the apostles found themselves going through both ups and downs. Yes, the Lord was with both of them, and it is true that the church began to grow in number there thru their ministry. However, those Jews that were under the influence of the Evil One, also called “disobedient ones”, agitated the Gentiles there and created quite a chaotic situation. At the same time, within that same difficult situation, we find that the two were persevering and were seeing God’s miracles as a testimony to their effective preaching and right doctrine.

Naturally, since they lived in a fallen world (just like us today), the crowd split into two factions. After all, the Word of God is a double-edged sword, often dividing those who accept from those who reject. One party held the position of the unbelieving Jews, and the others were with the apostles. Spurred on by the disobedient Jews, the opposition resorted to violence, upon which we see that the apostles fled that scene to continue their ministry (elsewhere).

Let us remember that when Jesus had told his disciples to go out to the deep waters of the sea of Galilee and lower their fishing nets, Peter had said, “Lord, we’ve worked all night and haven’t caught a thing.” But within those same waters, they would be catching a huge catch shortly.

Sometimes we think that if we just had a different fishing line or net, or a different location or atmosphere in which to work or minister, that we would experience things totally differently. But let us remember what the Lord Jesus said to his disciples and think about where he said for them to lower their nets. Our victories will most often be found within the same waters, having the same burdens as before, with the same temptations present, with the same occupations, and the same potential for disasters and the same place of our previous losses – or, we may not find victory at all (if we look elsewhere prematurely).

In other words, ***life goes on with its ups and downs, but our victories will be found within them, while they are happening.*** Yes, ups and downs will come, and sometimes back to back – but as those called by the Lord, we already know our individual life assignments, and we will continue our walk with Him no matter what form it takes, or what location the Lord leads us to. Let us not lose hope when our faithful service does not bring about our imagined results. Rather, let us rejoice in the opportunity to be a witness to Christ which He has allowed, and let’s leave the business of the results to God and continue our work wherever He leads us to do so. Whether we are to persevere among the people we are with now, or whether we are to bear witness to, to serve, or to be an example to different people.

Therefore, God has called us to persevere – both in our personal walks with Him, and our collective walk with Him as a church. Life’s ups and downs will come inevitably, but we are called to go through them in faith. May God give us patience within life’s ups and downs, and may we be led by our faith in Him at all times. May the Lord Bless You all. Amen.