

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
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42 AD	Peter Led from Prison by the Angel	Acts 12
44 AD	Herod Agrippa Dies	Acts 12:20
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Iconium	Acts 14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe	Acts 14:8
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:21
48 AD	Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:24
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36

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• Acts 14:5 **Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.** 6 **When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area.** 7 **And there they preached the Good News.** 8 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 9 and listening as Paul preached. **Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed.** 10 **So Paul called to him in a loud voice, “Stand up!”** And the man jumped to his feet and started walking. 11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, “These men are gods in human form!” 12 They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. 13 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. NLT

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• “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 9 and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, **Paul realized he had faith to be healed.**”

• Paul realizing the crippled man had faith to be healed is a very clear example of “a word of knowledge” given by God.

• How else could he have known except for direct revelation?

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• Paul was taking a risk – what if he makes this grand pronouncement “stand up!” and the man can’t or won’t stand?

• He ran the risk of discrediting himself if he somehow misinterpreted what he thought he knew.

• In this case it seems clear that not only the cripple had faith to be healed, but that Paul had faith to believe God had revealed as much to him.

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- There is a bit of a mystery here – the Bible says, “Paul realized he had faith to be healed.”

How did Paul know the crippled man had faith to be healed?

What conclusions might we draw?

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- This text has also produced some wrong conclusions – like **“if you have enough faith you will be healed”**.
- **It seems like the answer to “do you need faith to be healed?” is a clear “sometimes”**.
- While Jesus said to some, “your faith has made you well”, he healed others who had no faith in him and didn’t even know who we was until later.

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The Tales of Two Blind Men

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• Matthew 10:49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here." So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" 50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "My Rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road. NLT

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• John 9:1 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. 2 "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" 3 "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.6 Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. 7 He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went and washed and came back seeing! NLT

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When it comes to divine healing in this life there is no making sense of it except to say that God heals the ones he chooses to heal, and when he heals it is in his own time and in his own ways.

He heals for his purposes, not ours. We should always ask, and he will always answer according to his will.

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Big Thought

If we are wise, we will thank God for whatever he gives believing that his will is always the best of all possible paths we can travel.

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- Next look at what follows this miracle – Paul and Barnabas are assumed to be the Greek gods, Apollo and Zeus.
- Now that sounds like a strange leap – to assume they are not only gods, but specifically Apollo and Zeus, to whom they should show worship.
- They were intent on offering sacrifices to them and Paul and Barnabas are offended and restrain them.

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- The reason why the crowds thought Paul and Barnabas were Apollos and Zeus was because there was a legend in Lystra that said these same two gods once visited the town and were mistreated by the people except for one couple who treated them well. Apollos and Zeus ended up building a mansion for the couple who recognized them and then proceeded to kill the rest of the people who were in the town who did not recognize and worship them. ☺
- So now we know why they were willing to give them “god” status and make offerings to them. (self-preservation!)

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- Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, ¹⁵ “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. ¹⁶ **In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them. ¹⁹ **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. ²⁰ 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. NLT

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- **“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.”**
- Paul begins with a statement about the freedom God extends to all mankind, but also assures them he has always had influence over the minds of men.
- He “permitted” mankind to go any way they chose to, but he never left them choose uninfluenced by Himself.

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- With the notable exception of Israel, his influence on mankind has generally been indirect – **nature and conscience.**
- **(Nature)** Romans 1:18 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. NLT

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- These verses are some of the most helpful ones when it comes to understanding how God deals with and judges mankind.
- **(Conscience)** Romans 2:12 When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. ¹³For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. ¹⁴Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. ¹⁵They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. NLT

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- Look at the nature of the evidence God gives – rain, food, and joyful hearts.
- Rain and food, we get, all living things need food and water to survive, but joyful hearts? What is that about?
- The goodness of God extends to everyone, even the lost are supplied with tastes of the eternal things that provide episodes of joy. (familial love, sunshine on our faces, laughter with friends, and the list goes on).

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- **"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. ²⁰But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town."**
- These verses tell us all we need to know about Paul's commitment to the work God called him to.
- Knocked unconscious by rocks and dragged out of town, he gets up and walks right back in. (he really believed what he would eventually write; "absent from the body, present with Lord".)

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- Acts 14:21 **After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples**, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, **22 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. 23 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.** 24 Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. 25 They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. 26 Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. **The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed.** 27 Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. 28 And they stayed there with the believers for a long time. NLT

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- **“After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples”.**
- The Greek word that is translated as “disciples” here has as one of its meanings **“to enroll as a scholar”.**
- This suggests to me that being a disciple is not an event, but a process wherein a believer is in a continuous state of learning and growing.

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- It seems like the modern church has reduced becoming a disciple to an event – becoming a disciple is part of sanctification and therefore has no end.
- Early on in my Christian life I heard something that has stuck with me now over 40 years – **a disciple is one who learns to follow so that he can follow to learn.**
- I cannot recall a season in my Christian life where I was not in a learning mode – including and especially today!

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"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

The Apostle Paul

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• "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."

• Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

• The words "violence" and "violent" here should be seen as one forcing their way – in Jesus' day the kingdom was breaking out in a very forceful way as prophesied by the prophet, Micah.

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• Micah 2:12 "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. 13 The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the LORD at their head."

• The sheep, who were penned up all night, begin pushing and shoving to get through a single, narrow gate opened by the shepherd.

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- Jesus was no doubt teaching an OT concept from the prophet Micah involving sheep – a pen for the night – a narrow gate – and a shepherd showing them the way to green pastures.
- **Part of the discipleship process is having willing disciples who sort of can't wait to learn and make progress.**(the violent take it by force)
- Paul and Barnabas encourage the believers to keep in the fight and remind them that in this war there is certain success at the end, but only after many bumps and bruises.

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- **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.**
- The church was growing fast and like any entity it is served well by order and structure.
- “elders” are appointed – so what is an elder and what is their purpose?

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- Acts 15:1 While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: “Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. **Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.** (Elders settle disputes in the body.) NLT
- James 5:14 Are any of you sick? You should **call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.** NLT

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- Hebrews 13:17 Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. **Their work is to watch over your souls,** and they are accountable to God. NLT
- Acts 6:2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, **“We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.** 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.” NLT

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- Sort of sounds like “elders” are like our pastors of today, do they not?
- The main difference today is that we have “professionalized” the role to those who believe they are “called to the ministry” as we express it.
- In the early days of the church there were no professional pastors with degrees, offices, and buildings - men from among the congregation were appointed in every church.

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- **The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed.**
- Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
- Like we do today, we send, we support, and then welcome our missionaries home for fellowship, and to hear of all that God has done through them.

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Questions

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