

Day 47, Acts 14

by David Servant

This sermon explores the importance of faith and works, encouragement, discipleship, and the role of elders in the church, all in the context of Paul's ministry in Galatia.

Scripture: Matthew 8:17

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Church Leadership"

Description

David Servant delves into the healing of the crippled man in Lystra, emphasizing the power of faith, action, and encouragement in experiencing miracles. He highlights the importance of genuine miracles in effective evangelism and the necessity of faith accompanied by works. The sermon also touches on the significance of being an encourager and the role of elders in leading and discipling the church. As Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in every church, the focus shifts to the need for whole-hearted discipleship and obedience to Christ's commandments.

Transcript

This incident of the healing of the crippled man in Lystra raises some interesting questions. According to what we read, Paul was preaching "the gospel" (14:7) in Lystra. Listening to Paul's gospel, a man who had been lame from birth was inspired with faith that healed him completely (14:9). How is that? He must have heard something more than just a message about a God who was offering forgiveness of sins.

Perhaps he heard from Paul that Jesus never turned away anyone who came to Him requesting healing, including crippled people, and that He was alive and still doing the same miracles. Perhaps Paul quoted Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would not only be "pierced through for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities," but that He also "took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases" and that "by His scourging we are healed" (Is. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:17). Surely an evangelist whose ministry is accompanied by genuine miracles will be much more effective than one whose ministry is not. How effective would Paul have been in Iconium without healings and miracles (14:3)?

Something else worth considering about this particular story: Luke wrote that the crippled man had "faith to be made well" (14:9), even while he was still crippled. It wasn't until Paul told him, "Stand upright on your feet," and he obeyed Paul's words, that he was actually healed. What an illustration of the truth that faith without works is dead. The crippled man had to act upon his faith before it was effectual, a principle the Bible teaches over and over again. If you want to walk on the water, you have to get out of the boat. Get going!

And what an illustration of the power of encouragement! Paul told the crippled man to get up, while so many preachers would have told him not even to get his hopes up! Encouragers are the mothers of miracles. I wonder where I would be today without the past encouragement of family and friends. Now is a good time to ask yourself, "Am I an encourager?"

After being stoned and left for dead, Paul was either revived or supernaturally resurrected. Then the "stonee" walked back into the city of his "stoners." Paul was no wimp, and what God had said years earlier was becoming a reality: "He [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine....for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

In the city of Derbe, Paul and Barnabas "made many disciples" (14:21). According to the Bible, a disciple is not just someone who professes to believe in Jesus, but someone who is a whole-hearted follower of Christ, one who is learning to obey all of His commandments (see John 8:31-32; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 14:25-33). This exposes the fundamental error of much of the modern evangelical church, which proclaims a false gospel founded on a false grace that results in false converts. Today we are told that one can be a believer in Christ without being a disciple of Christ, and that one can gain heaven without holiness! This faulty doctrine is often derived, at least in part, from isolated verses extracted from Paul's Galatian letter, which we are about to begin reading, in context, tomorrow.

Returning to the cities where they had recently preached, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (14:23). Churches need leaders, and generally speaking, with age comes wisdom, thus elders were appointed. Older Jewish converts, in particular, would have been the most qualified to serve because of their familiarity with Scripture. But none had spent any time in Bible School or seminary. In the New Testament, the words elders, pastors, overseers, and bishops all describe the same ministry. They disciple little flocks.

Keep in mind that almost everything we read yesterday, and everything we read today, occurred in the ancient region of Galatia, in modern western Turkey. In particular, take note that Paul's primary antagonists in Galatia were unbelieving Jews (13:50; 14:2,4-5,19). Also remember that Paul was stoned and left for dead in the Galatian city of Lystra. This is all important to know as we read Galatians.

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