

'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #18

Acts 14:8-28(NASB)

Acts 14:8-20

At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. ⁹ This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk. ¹¹ **When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."** ¹² **And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.** ¹³ **The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.** ¹⁴ **But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out ¹⁵ and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.** ¹⁶ "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸ **Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.** ¹⁹ **But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.** ²⁰ **But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.**

Q: Barnabas and Paul were telling people to leave the worship of false gods, to "turn away from these vain things to a living God." How could those people think Barnabas and Paul were those false gods?

- That's what happens to a message when the hearers insist on inserting it into their own worldview!
 - The gospel has always called people to surrender their lives and serve God, making everything about glorifying Him.

- But how many people today think the Gospel is about God blessing them, saving and serving them, and making everything about them?

Q: Another trend is beginning to emerge in this story: People opposed to the Gospel follow Barnabas and Paul to cause trouble for them. What lesson should we take from this?

- The real Gospel message is explosive and controversial.
 - The Gospel is unstoppable, but it is also uncomfortable!
 - **If you live it and talk about it, you will attract critics and seldom be comfortable!**

Acts 14:21-28

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." ²³ **When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.** ²⁴ They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. ²⁵ When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. ²⁷ When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they spent a long time with the disciples.

Q: What does it mean that they "commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed"?

- Appointing elders wasn't the apostle's way of maintaining control over these congregations.
- When they "commended them to the Lord" they were entrusting them to follow Jesus... and **they believed Jesus would lead them!**
 - Barnabas and Paul believed that Jesus is Lord over the Church as well as the world, and through His Spirit He leads, teaches, equips, warns, and encourages those who follow Him.

- They thought *Jesus* was responsible for His church... not them!

Q: This is the first mention of “elders” outside the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). Interestingly, it was the elders in Jerusalem who were responsible for the church there, not the apostles. What should this tell us about leadership in the early church?

- It was local and autonomous, each church striving to follow Jesus as the head, and they as one part of His body.

Q: How did Barnabas and Paul decide who should be the elders in these churches?

- In [1Tim 3:2-7](#) and [Titus 1:5-9](#), Paul told Timothy and Titus (*two men we will meet later in Acts that Paul disciplined and trained*) to appoint elders, and gave them qualifications to look for.
- However, Barnabas and Paul had only started these churches a few months earlier, leaving questions as to how men could meet the qualifications of [1Tim 3](#) and [Titus 1](#) in such a short time.
 - The churches Paul delegated Titus and Timothy to appoint elders in had been in existence for quite some time, and, no doubt, had men who were mature enough to meet his qualifications.
- It is likely that Barnabas and Paul looked for the men who worked hard, cared for, and taught the disciples in these churches ([1Thess. 5:12](#)).
 - Not everyone agrees, but it could be argued that Paul appointed the most spiritually mature men in each congregation as the overseers/elders rather than those who had reached an ideal level of spiritual maturity.

Q: Why would these churches need elders? Why wouldn't each new Christian just be free to follow Jesus without anyone telling them what to do?

- Probably because the goal of Christianity isn't to get each believer to Heaven, but rather for all believers to work together to bring Heaven to Earth!

Extra Info on Church Leadership

Eph 4:11-16

And He (Jesus) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors (elders) and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Paul told the Ephesians that Jesus gave leaders to the Church, for some specific jobs, to accomplish a specific goal:

- To equip the saints for the work of service and building up the body of Christ
- To bring every Christian to unity of the faith, which will produce A MATURE MAN, which fills out the fullness of Jesus Himself.
 - The goal of leadership is to help all Christians become one singular **Mature Man**, able to work together as Jesus' body on earth to bring about the changes Jesus wants to make here.

I think it is significant that Paul talks about the body of Christ being “fitted and held together by what every joint supplies.”

- “Joints” are where two parts meet.
- I think leaders are given to the Church to help parts of the body learn to work together, whether as individuals or as groups and churches.

What should your relationship with Church Leaders look like?

1. **Matt 20:25-28** The leaders Jesus gives the Church are servants, not bosses!
 - a. The role of the leader is to be a resource for less experienced followers of Christ.
 2. **1Pet. 5:1-4** The role of a leader is to be an example, not a boss!
 3. **1Pet. 5:5** The role of the less spiritually mature (*“you younger men”*) is to be humble and submissive to those who are more spiritually mature.
 4. **Heb. 13:17** The word **“obey”** in this verse literally means, *“have confidence in.”* The word, **“submit”** means to *“yield or give way”*.
 - a. This verse instructs us to have confidence in our leaders and to defer to them; not to just mindlessly do whatever they say!
 5. **Heb. 13:7** tells us that leaders are the ones who tell you the Word of God, and show you how *they* obey it.
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Follow Up Assignment

Q: Are you trying to make the gospel fit your worldview, or have you made your worldview fit the Gospel?

Q: Is the Gospel making you unpopular? Is the Gospel making you uncomfortable? Explain.

- Do your answers reassure you, or do they, instead, trouble you?

Q: Who are the leaders in your church? How were they appointed? Would Paul say your relationship to them is what he taught it should be?

- What does your relationship with leaders in your church say about how you are living the Gospel?