



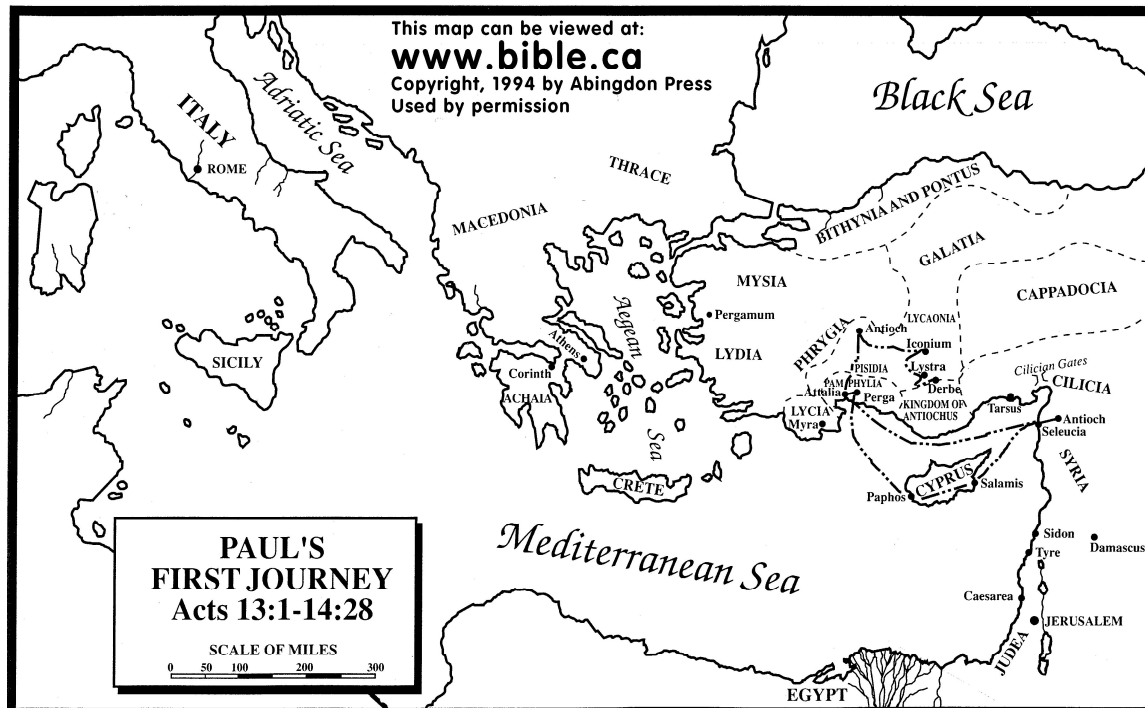
# ACTS

## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

### ~SUPERNATURAL~

### The Homecoming

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch of Syria



*Acts 14:21-28:* <sup>21</sup> After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

What great text this is that wraps up Paul and Barnabas' first missionary adventure. Yes this was more than a journey for the two-it was an adventure in that although they were prepared and equipped supernaturally by God to perform the signs and wonders that won hearts for God, it was not without some pain and suffering.

As Paul and Barnabas "made their mark" in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (of Pisidia) finishing in Derbe, they back-tracked their way home to Antioch of Syria. As they did so they exhorted (encouraged) the disciples to continue in the faith telling them that their faith-journey will not be easy but one of tribulation<sup>1</sup>. Paul and Barnabas were not just early church planters intent on converting non-believers; they were interested in making disciples and they had a passion for it. Just as we see today, it was also in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century new believer that being saved is a first step in the sanctification process. Salvation is our surrender to the Lord that we cannot do life on our own and that we need His help. Discipleship is learning to follow Jesus and emulate Him under the guidance and wisdom of those ordained to teach us and help guide our steps.

How would you describe discipleship in your life?

Do you believe that some people entrusted to disciple you are supernaturally gifted and equipped to do so? What are some examples?

Discipleship is made possible when the student submits to the teaching and wisdom of someone that has gone before them. Such was the case with Paul and Barnabas. The two endured tribulation and it strengthened their souls. They also experienced first hand the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that allowed them to be a vessel for God to do miraculous things. These experiences were necessary in order that their testimony would exhort disciples as they made their way back home. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church commending them to the Lord because they believed. Tradition was (and is still very much) to lay hands on the appointed elders. This practice of laying of hands is an act of ordaining and releasing the elders to God.

What is the role of an elder in the church?

The bible spells out at least five duties of an elder:

1. The elders help to settle disputes in the church. [Acts 15: 1-2](#).
2. They pray for the sick. [James 5:14](#).
3. They are to watch out for the church in humility. [1 Peter 5: 1-4](#).
4. They are to watch out for the spiritual life of the flock. [Hebrews 13:17](#).
5. They are to spend their time in prayer and teaching the word. [Acts 6: 2-4](#).

After Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and reported everything God had done through them. Neither of the men took credit for the conversions that took place but rather gave the credit to God so that He would be glorified. After all it was God's supernatural ability that allowed the two to do so.

What is your testimony? What in your life is/was so extraordinary that it can only be attributed to an act of God?

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<sup>1</sup> Tribulation: distress or suffering resulting from oppression or persecution

**Bringing It Home**

Paul and Barnabas stayed home at Antioch with the believers for a long time. You could say that while their work in their first missionary journey was complete, Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia would need check-ups. These were church plants and were left to function autonomously but I think we can rest assured they were not left to fend for themselves. These new churches were under new leadership and what you might consider rather green by today's standards for those appointed to lead them. This is why Paul would revisit. This is why he and Barnabas "doubled-back" on their way home; to encourage the churches. Paul and Barnabas did not neglect the home church either. Upon returning home they stayed for a long time, no doubt encouraging leaders there as well, shepherding and being in fellowship. They must have had quite a few stories to tell. Stories of hearts won and of those still lost. The story of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey could be reported as a success and according to plan. God did not make the way easy for them though He certainly had the power to. Like anything in life, that which matters the most and those things we value the most do not generally come easy. We have to work to reach the mountain top. We need encouragement from friends and family to reach the summit. The journey to the top will take its toll for sure. Paul and Barnabas had plenty to complain about. Let's face it. If you are called to do work for God and you are faced with tribulation-even having stones thrown at you perhaps it might make you wonder why you should press on. Jesus was obedient...even obedient to death on the cross. Surely we can endure lesser suffering? Paul and Barnabas "got it." The question is-do you and I get it? What is it worth to bring the gospel to someone? How much are you willing to sacrifice? How much will you surrender?

*[Philippians 3:12-14](#) <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

**Pastor Rob:** "As we submit, surrender and sync, entrusting ourselves to the Grace of God we will experience supernatural levels of success in our lives and ministries."

***Luke 14:33** <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.* Jesus' instruction here is not to say we should give away all of our possessions. After all, what good are we to the poor if we too are poor? No-what He is instructing is for us to surrender our possessions to Him and to acknowledge that all we have belongs to Him. If we cannot be good stewards of the gifts in our life, to freely give, then the very nature of what Christ did for us cannot be grasped. This is why many pastors freely share sermon material and why Christian musicians freely share song lyrics. Those that "get it" understand that what God freely gives by grace should be paid forward with the same spirit of generosity.

**The Journey continues this October with Acts, Season 5**

[Click here](#) for information about Antioch of Syria



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