



## KNOWING THE POWER AND PRESENCE OF GOD

### LESSON FIVE

#### MIRACLES

Chapter 8 of the Book of Acts in the Bible tells how a great persecution broke out against the Church at Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul began to destroy the Church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Acts 8:4-8 explains: Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. Evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

According to the Scripture reference in the above paragraph, why did the disciples leave Jerusalem? What did they do? What were some of the miracles God worked through Philip?

Acts 8:26-40 tells of an angel of the Lord telling Philip, to go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. On his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official who had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Acts 8:29-31 NIV The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Philip began with that Scripture and then told him the good news about Jesus. When they came to some water the eunuch asked to be baptized. Philip baptized him and when they came out of the water, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing and the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away. He appeared at Azotus (about 19 miles away) continuing to travel about and preach the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea (60 miles away.)

In the account above, what instructions did the angel of the Lord give to Philip? What was his response? Did he know what was going to happen? How did he approach the eunuch? What was the attitude of the eunuch? What was the need Philip met? What was the mode of departure of Philip? Count the number of ways you could say, “Only God could do that.” Think of at least one instance where you believe that God, through the Holy Spirit, prompted you to go somewhere or call someone and on hindsight you realized God blessed the person’s life with that encounter. Who gets the ‘credit’ for that situation?

Acts 13:49-52 NIV *The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 14:1-7 explains that in Iconium Paul and Barnabas spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. They spoke boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. But some who did not believe poisoned the minds of

others and there was a plot to mistreat and stone the apostles. They found out about it and fled to other cities where they continued to preach the good news.

Who confirmed their message? Why? The teaching about Jesus Christ, healings and miracles are not always met with acceptance. What would be some of the reasons that people would resist? What are the various choices we have to respond to disbelief?

Read Acts 14:8-18 The reaction of Paul reveals his character, priorities, and faithfulness to God. By the Spirit of God, Paul perceived that the crippled man had faith to be healed. God often uses such miracles to confirm that the messages spoken by believers are from Him, but in this case many of the listeners credited other gods for the healing. Instructions prompted by God vary and one must learn to be sensitive to what God intends. This is a learning process and the ability to perceive what is happening and what God intends is a gifting made possible by God through the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught that He always does what the Father tells Him to do. Reading the gospels of His ministry one learns that His responses to situations, His words, actions and prayers always vary. There is not a single answer.

Love for God and for His people motivates us to seek Him and learn from Him and then, even knowing we will not be 'right' all the time, move forward with obedience to what God is prompting us to do as disciples of Jesus.

Acts 14:19-20 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium (to Lystra) and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Acts 14:21-28 They preached in Derbe and won a large number of disciples and then returned to Lystra (place Paul was stoned), Iconium and Antioch to strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith even in times of hardships. They appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:26-28 When they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed, they reported all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Acts 28:1-10 tells of miracles forming acceptance among the people.

With the hand of God upon us and the support of others, where could we take the light and truth of God?

