

Acts 14:1-7: When Was the Last Time You Heard God's Voice?

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I. Introduction

Wouldn't it be awesome to be able to hear God's voice? Whenever you faced a tough decision or situation, you could just ask Him and He'd give you the answer. Is this possible? But what if we hear something and it's not actually God, what if it's our own voice, or worse, what if it's Satan's? How do we discern which voice it is?

II. Acts 14:1-7: Is it Possible to Hear God's Voice, Especially When You Need it the Most?

14:1-7, though a great many Jews and Gentiles believed in the Lord Jesus Christ at Antioch of Pisidia and throughout the surrounding region, Paul and Barnabas were persecuted and thrown out of this area when some Jews who opposed the Gospel of the Lord stirred up the prominent women and leaders of the city. So they shook the dust off their feet and went on to Iconium. Iconium is modern-day Konya in Turkey. It was 90 miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch. It was the most eastern city of the province of Galatia. It became part of the Roman Empire in 25 BC, then part of the province of Galatia. It became the principal city of Lycaonia. Though it had a distinct national population, it was absorbed into the wider Hellenistic culture.

As was Paul's custom, he goes to the Jews first. So he and Barnabas enter a synagogue filled with Jews and Gentile god-fearers and proselytes. Paul preaches the same Gospel message he did in Antioch. And he got the same response: a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed in Jesus when they heard of the new life He was offering them, the forgiveness of all their sins, the salvation that would set them free to live a new life in Christ without having to worry about justifying themselves from everything that was wrong with them. But as in Antioch, the same thing happened: the Jews who refused to believe in Jesus "stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren"—this indicates that Paul and Barnabas quickly set up a church in Iconium.....what would you do in the face of this opposition?

Though they were up against persecution once again, Paul and Barnabas did not back down. Instead, they grew bolder "in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands," (Galatians 3:5 may be a reference to these miracles). At the heart of Jesus' message is grace; He's offering and giving these people what they do not deserve. It sounds as if Jesus is the one speaking to these people, the one performing signs and wonders....that's because it is (Acts 1:1). Can you see why Paul and Barnabas were so bold? Why did Paul and Barnabas stay and press on, who told them to do this, who's there with them?

Though a tremendous revival was going on among the people of Iconium, the city was divided, some sided with those who wanted to persecute Paul and Barnabas, others with these two apostles. Things soon get dangerous as a plot to kill Paul and Barnabas emerges: all who refused to believe in Jesus make plans to put them to public shame and stone them to death. But Paul and Barnabas discover their plot and flee to Lycaonia, which is part of Galatia but in a different district.

Does an attempt on their life finally get them to stop spreading this news about Jesus? NO! Instead, they keep preaching the message of salvation in the cities of Lycaonia. Why? What drove them? Did they hear a calling from the Lord to press on?.....whose voice drives you?

Are Christians supposed to be able to hear God's voice? Yes! It may sound weird that we could actually hear God's voice, but we can. How's this possible? What Jesus offers and gives us the moment we believe in Him is a never-ending, 24/7 relationship where He's part of us and we're part of Him. He's always there ready to speak to us and give us the answers we've been looking for, the direction we need, the salvation we've been desperate for (John 17:3, 20-26; Acts 14:3; Galatians 4:6; Hebrews 4:15-16).

What does Satan's voice sound like? Satan is the most cunning creature there is (Genesis 3:1-11). Everything that comes out of his mouth is a lie (John 8:44) and it's designed to separate you from God and His truth (Genesis 3). Satan is always talking to you (1 Peter 5:8). What he says is always negative and it takes no faith to believe, in fact, you will always agree with his lies because he uses the "facts" of your life to prove it to you: Adam in the Garden hears God's voice and Satan's and Satan's voice is much easier to believe (Genesis 3). But realize this: it's super easy to defeat Satan, all you have to do is listen to God's voice, to His truth, and Satan will run away like a coward (James 4:7).

What does God's voice sound like? Ultimately Acts is about Jesus acting, Him preaching, Him healing and saving people (1:1; 14:3). So what does Jesus sound like in Acts in the mouth of the apostles and others: God speaks through His people because His Spirit dwells in them and His voice is filled with power and wisdom. And when you walk by Jesus' Spirit, He will prompt you to do things that you never thought you could, to face odds that you never thought were possible, and to face heartache, fear, and difficult circumstances that you would have previously run away from (Acts 1:8, 16; 2:4; 4:8; 6:5, 10; 13:2, 14:3).

But how do I know if it's God speaking and not my own voice or worse, Satan's?! One very real and legitimate concern is, "How do I know that the voice I hear in my head is God's? What if it's just me, or what if it's Satan's voice I hear?" This is a great question, one that God answers for us: God wants us to question whether or not it's God talking to us because Satan also speaks to us. But God tells us exactly how to tell the difference: If the voice in your head contradicts anything God has already said in His Word, then it's not God. If the voice in your head sounds like the opinion and philosophy that you hear in the world, then it's not God. And when you obey (to obey and follow God is to know Him, 1 John 2:3) and follow God's voice, His Spirit, which is in you, will protect you from Satan's voice/lies. This is how you will know the difference between "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:1-6).



III. Conclusion

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

¹ Wright, T. (2008). *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (pp. 22-23). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.