



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: Overcoming a Misdirected Life

Date: 7/5/2026

Big Idea: Misdirected faith is a misdirected life.

Every day we are told to put our confidence somewhere - politicians, the economy, science, progress, or ourselves. Many of these have real value, but they all share the same weakness: none of them is ultimate. **Hebrews 11:1** tells us faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Every person exercises faith every day. The question is never whether we have faith - the question is where it is placed. **Acts 14:8-20** gives us four expressions of faith and one warning running through all of them: misdirected faith is a misdirected life.

1. You Can Live a Faith That is Healing. (Acts 14:8-10)

A man in Lystra had been crippled from birth - never a single step, never standing under his own strength. As Paul preached, he saw that the man had faith to be made well and commanded him to stand. The man could have stayed seated, reasoning that nothing had ever changed before. Instead he acted on what he believed, and as he did, God supplied what he lacked. He sprang up and walked. Saving faith is not merely intellectual admiration of Jesus. It entrusts itself to him completely and moves - it always drives you toward him rather than keeping him at a distance.

2. You Can Live a Faith That is False. (Acts 14:11-13)

The miracle should have pointed everyone to God. Instead the crowd concluded that gods had come down in human form, shaped by a mythology that warned of consequences for failing to honor divine visitors. Their faith was sincere - but sincerity does not make something true. A person can sincerely believe a bottle contains medicine when it actually contains poison. What matters is not only the strength of faith but the object of faith. Whenever something occupies the place in our hearts that belongs only to God, we have entered the territory of misdirected

faith. The idols change from generation to generation. The impulse is always the same.

3. You Can Live a Faith That is Bold and True. (Acts 14:14-18)

Paul and Barnabas tore their garments and rushed into the crowd - a Jewish expression of horror at blasphemy. Their response stands in sharp contrast to Herod in Acts 12, who accepted worship and paid for it with his life. Paul and Barnabas immediately redirected attention: we are men, of like nature with you. Then Paul called the crowd to turn from vain things to a living God, pointing to rain, harvests, and food as evidence of God's goodness already surrounding them. Every good gift is a witness to the Creator. Bold faith directs attention away from self and toward God, and is willing to speak truth even when truth is unwelcome.

4. You Can Live a Faith That is Destructive. (Acts 14:19-20)

The crowd's shift is astonishing - from wanting to worship Paul to stoning him and leaving him for dead outside the city. That is where misdirected faith ultimately leads. When people devote themselves to something other than God, that devotion can turn dangerous. History is full of people willing to persecute and kill in defense of false beliefs. But Paul rose, walked back into the city, and continued the mission the very next day. His faith was fixed on Jesus - healing, bold, and unmoved. Hebrews 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please God, and he rewards those who seek him. The crippled man trusted Jesus and found healing. The crowd trusted idols and found confusion. Paul trusted Jesus and found courage. The object of faith changes everything.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. The sermon says every person exercises faith every day - the question is only where it is placed. What are some things people around you (or you yourself) tend to trust as ultimate that were never designed to carry that weight?**
- 2. The crippled man acted on what he believed before anything had changed. What does that kind of active faith look like in a practical situation you are currently facing?**
- 3. The crowd in Lystra interpreted a genuine miracle through the lens of a false worldview. How does the worldview we absorb from our culture shape the way we interpret what God is doing around us?**
- 4. Paul and Barnabas tore their garments and redirected attention away from themselves when the crowd tried to worship them. How do you consistently point people toward God rather than yourself when you are in a position of influence or when things go well?**
- 5. The same crowd that wanted to worship Paul stoned him shortly after. What does the destructive potential of misdirected faith - even sincere, passionate faith - warn us about the importance of regularly examining what we are actually trusting?**