

When To Act

"And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine.'" (Acts 2:12-13, ESV)

Notice that the Acts of the Apostles is not called the Vacation of the Apostles. The title Acts is based on a Greek word which signifies action, the action of heroes. These men and women gathered in the upper room were waiting for God to act. Then, it would be their turn to act. The Holy Spirit that came upon the brethren was what fueled the apostles and disciples to act. That same Spirit still abides with the church today. (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) Because God lit the match back then, the fuse hasn't stopped burning today. Truly, Acts is a blade that cuts through the toughest tree of complacency!

God's people waited for him. We often wonder when we should act in our own personal lives. Should I buy this house? Should I rent this car? Should I marry this person? It would be so simple if God would tell us yes or no, wouldn't it? If we could simply ask God and he would tell us, flat out, all we would have to do is do what he says or not. Does it really work that way today?

We know that God has promised us lives relatively free from the anxieties of the world if we live according to his will. (cf. Mat. 6:27) God indeed wants to spare us from worldly troubles. (1 Cor. 7:28) But, God gives us work, effort with our hands to keep us busy and provide our physical needs. (1 Thes. 4:11) He does not simply rain down manna for us as he did for physical Israel in history. Likewise, he does expect us to consult him for the decisions we make, but are we waiting for a sign from God as the disciples in the upper room?

No. We must make conscious choices. We have free will, we must act. We must first pray, but we must not expect God to make our choices for us: he has given the principles we are to act on, we are to consider them and act on them. Without making choices, how would we learn from our mistakes or be rewarded for our faith? How would faith produce steadfastness if never acted upon? (Jam. 1:3) If faith without works is dead (Jam. 2:17) and faith without works cannot save anyone (Jam. 2:14), let us choose to act. Once God has lit the match, the fuse hasn't stopped burning. We are indeed to contemplate, to pray for wisdom (Jam. 1:5), to prepare ourselves in soberness and holiness, but let us also act with the right opportunities, not being passive, but making choices and deciding to learn from them. This is the manner in which God guides and teaches us. "Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him?" (Job 36:22)