

Traveling up to Jerusalem from Galilee on the Jericho road was difficult. It took significant physical effort, as we generally walked the distance. The trip had an elevation range of over five stadia¹. We made this trip often when following Jesus, and then later in pursuing our own missions. There was much importance attached to journeying to Jerusalem as a pilgrimage to worship in the temple. It would be almost impossible for someone whose ability to walk was impaired.

Jesus regularly healed those who were lame, transforming people from that weakness to jumping and leaping with great joy². John the Baptist sent men to examine Jesus, and proof was given in terms of those that had been healed (the blind, lame, leprosy, deaf, and even the dead)³. I had seen Him heal people multiple times, and along with the crowd of witnesses was amazed and joined in their praise of God. I remember one time when a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years was healed on the Sabbath by Jesus⁴, and when the man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years was healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda⁵. The woman praised God and the man picked up his mat and walked away. The response of those healed was very powerful!

We were part of a group that was given power to heal as well when Jesus sent us out in pairs⁶. Throughout the few years we followed Jesus we had similar experiences healing other people. After our Christ ascended, we continued to be empowered by the Spirit that He sent. For instance, our brother Peter healed a lame beggar as he went to the temple at the time of prayer. The response of the man, whom Peter helped up by the hand, caused him to not just to be able to walk, but to jump around – which he continued as he praised God. Those who witnessed this were filled with awe at what had happened⁷. Similar things happened with Philip⁸ and Paul⁹.

In seeing examples of the energetic (perhaps Spirit-filled) expressions of joy when crippled people were healed reminds me of King David as He leapt and danced before the Lord when the ark of the covenant was finally moved to Jerusalem¹⁰. This was not due to a physical healing, but it could be considered as a spiritual healing as the official presence of God was brought to its intended home¹¹. The prophet Isaiah wrote that the lame would be able to leap like deer when we live in the ultimate Kingdom of God¹².

We should feel this level of joy when we feel near to God¹³, perhaps performing some jumping or leaping in response. Remember that John the Baptist as a baby leapt in Elizabeth's womb when Mary the mother of Christ (carrying Him) came close¹⁴.

We all have human weakness and need strength from God. This is more important from a spiritual sense than a physical one. While it is true that God supports us in many ways, it can in no way be said that he is a crutch. Using a staff or crutch is generally extremely painful, and make those who need them extremely clumsy. God warned that rebelling against God is like a staff that entices us at one time or another to lean upon, then it breaks and pierces our flesh¹⁵. The life of a Christian with God is just the opposite¹⁶.

This idea that God is a rock is a beautiful one that is expressed many times in the scriptures. God is a rock that is not just some little pebble; it is gigantic, immovable, and God can plant us firmly upon it. The Psalmist wrote¹⁷, "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." He meant that God will take us out of the sticky mud (resembling being lame), which also represents sin, and will place us on smooth ground where we can really maneuver without limping or stumbling¹⁸. In fact, we are able to run the race of life gracefully with God's help¹⁹. Upon that rock Christ built His church²⁰ and we are members of that body through His grace. The joy of salvation is a result of our response to that grace²¹.

I tried to remind myself of this anytime I was travelling over the rough countryside – savoring the joy of the "great climb" as I journeyed towards God.

1. The elevation difference between Jericho and Jerusalem is 3300 ft.
2. Matthew 15:30-31.
3. Matthew 11:1-6 and Luke 7:18-23.
4. Luke 13:10-13.

5. John 5:1-9a.
6. Mark 6:7 (the Twelve); Luke 10:1 (the seventy-two).
7. Acts 3:1-10.
8. Acts 8:4-8.
9. Acts 14:8-10.
10. 2 Samuel 6:16.
11. "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" Psalm 122:1.
12. "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert." Isaiah 35:6.
13. "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." Psalm 28:7.
14. Luke 1:41.
15. "Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him." Isaiah 36:6.
16. "But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31.
"Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 'Make level paths for your feet,' so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed." Hebrews 12:12-13.
17. Psalms 40:2.
18. "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground." Psalm 143:10.
19. "For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall." Psalm 18:29.
20. Matthew 16:13-20.
21. David in his recognition of his great sin asked God for forgiveness, and wrote, "Restore me to the joy of your salvation". Psalm 51:12.