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PAUL AND BARNABAS--WORSHIPPED AT LYSTRA
(First Missionary Journey Continued)

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 56
ACTS 14:6-16

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ACTS 14:6-16 "They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passion with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."

Paul and Barnabas have now left Iconium and have fled to Lystra and Derbe. God has a diversity of ways in leading us as illustrated here. At Iconium God protected Paul and Barnabas from danger, but at Lystra and Derbe God did not protect them. The point is this--God was with them in both places but in one place they were spared, in another place they were not.

ACTS 14:6 "They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:" The word translated "fled" in verse 6 means that it was the right time to run away. Fled came from the word "kata pheugo" and it means that it was the right time for them to run. Paul is going to suffer stoning at Lystra but this didn't mean that God was not looking after him. Sometimes God uses stones to accomplish his work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:11 "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Indeed this verse indicates that God took care of Paul in both instances. Sometimes we are delivered from suffering. Sometimes we are delivered in suffering.

Lystra is in a very remote inland desert area on the edge of the Taurus Mountain range. An area very similar to much of Arizona. It was never really conquered by the Romans, had a very dry climate, and didn't have anything that the Romans wanted or needed. It was a very dry area, and at times, water was sold for a higher price than wine. Into this area Paul and Barnabas walked. This is called the Black Mountain area, and the Romans had never established any of their courts at Lystra or Derbe.

ACTS 14:7 "And there they preached the gospel." The word preached is "euaggelo" and is a present, middle participle and means to communicate good news. This probably was a conversational type of preaching. He just kept on talking and preaching and asking questions and using every means to get them to listen. We are to tell and communicate the gospel message and then leave the results to the Lord.

ACTS 14:8-10 "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

Here is the illustration of a miracle. They didn't have a synagogue at Lystra so the approach had to be different. Paul and Barnabas had to have some method for drawing a crowd. The only way they could get the attention of both Jews and Gentiles in this town was to do something unusual. Please remember that a miracle of healing was never for the purpose of alleviating suffering. The miracle was to call attention to the power of Jesus Christ. The alleviation of suffering was incidental. The main purpose was to so present Christ to those people that they would come to know him and believe in him. Physical healing was never the major purpose Christ had in mind. Indeed Christ is interested in healing, but Christ came to heal the soul not just the body. Please remember--the greatest thing that can happen to you is not physical healing but spiritual healing. We ought not to be overly impressed by miracles of physical healing. But you know how gullible people are. If someone appeared on the horizon today and performed a healing miracle most people would think it is wonderful. And if he performed several healing miracles many would jump on his bandwagon and go all out for this kind of thing. You see, so many of us are not impressed by Bible doctrine but by some physical miracle. We need to get over this kind of thinking. So often our minds are geared to false values. Some will piously say, "Of that we might return to Pentecostal power" and they mean by that emotionalism, healing, speaking in tongues and all kinds of physical and emotional demonstrations. Let me repeat--please remember that this miracle was for one reason and that was to present the credit card of Christ so the people in Derbe and Lystra would come to know Christ as Saviour. In this connection it does us good to remember that Pentecostal power was the result of God's doings and not the result of the efforts of those people in that Upper Room. Man didn't work up Pentecost, but God sent Pentecost down. Power resides in God and in the Word of God. We need to keep this in mind as we observe this miracle at Lystra. It all came from God and not from Paul and Barnabas. We are the wires that carry the electricity and we are the pipes that carry the water--but let us always remember that God is the electrical power and God is the water of salvation. At best, we are conductors of power but we have nothing to add to the perfection of God and his perfect grace. The reason you don't see miracles today like this is for this reason: you hold in your hand the greatest miracle of all the ages other than Christ himself, and that miracle is none other than the perfect Word of God. Before the Canon of Scripture was completed God took up the slack by giving them gifts, and apostles and miracles of healings, and speaking in tongues, and etc. But when that which is perfect is come, which is the Word of God, then that which is in part is done away. So you hold in your hand the most amazing miracle, the Word of God. God only in very rare cases employs miracles today. The Devil, always a step behind God, is trying to perform miracles and use the gift of tongues, but it is always a Satanic counterfeit. Even at best, if you still want to glorify miracles, please remember that miracles only brought temporary relief. Let me repeat, the improvement of environment is not the solution of man's problems. This man at Lystra was impotent in his feet and had been so since birth. We read "There sat" and the construction of the word means that he had been in this permanent position all his life. It does us good to remember that we can walk and use our limbs as a gift from God. Illness can tie up the hinges in your limbs and you can be in a terrible jam. Please notice, that the healing of his limbs was incidental. The giving of the gospel to this cripple man and to the thousands of that town was of major significance. The physical miracle is going to draw the crowd, not so they could admire the miracle, but so they could hear the Word of Salvation. This cripple man is going to be the focal point for Paul's preaching. This man, though cripple, was on positive signals and was willing to believe. He was saved, and that was paramount. He was healed, and that was incidental. This cripple man was intently interested in Paul's message and he just kept listening.

Let us get a correct translation of verse 9. Your King James Version says that Paul "perceiving that he had faith to be healed". This is not a correct translation. Scratch out the words to be healed and substitute the words to be saved. The Greek word is "sozo" and means spiritual salvation. This man had faith to be saved. Paul saw this positive volition in this man. This shows what was really important here, not the healing but the saving. If this man could walk in here tonight and give this testimony, he would not begin to tell you about how his legs were healed, but he would tell you about how his soul was saved. Salvation was primary and healing was incidental. When this poor man heard Paul speak he just kept on listening. So here is a positive volition meeting a gospel message and this always means salvation. He was healed not because he had faith, but because God chose to heal him. But he was saved because he was willing to be saved.

ACTS 14:10 "Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." Paul now speaks out so all in the market place can hear him. Paul is going to use this miracle to get a hearing in Lystra. The miracle is incidental, preaching the gospel is paramount. So Paul gave him a command "Stand erect on your feet". The man leaped up and walked. There was nothing indecisive here. It was a command with the power of God in it. The whole market place was astonished, and he jumped up and walked all over the place. I expect he walked for a couple of days without stopping. It was indeed a notable miracle. As an aside comment possibly I should say that we don't appreciate walking today. If we have to go around the block, we get in the car and ride. And when you mention to some young person about doing something that involves walking, they say, "Do you mean go way over there?"

ACTS 14:11 "And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." So Paul and Barnabas didn't have to put out any hand bills and announce that they had come from Jerusalem by way of Antioch. They didn't have to announce that Barnabas would lead the singing and that he played the piano with one hand and the saxophone with the other. They didn't have to mention that they once had a third party to their evangelistic team, but he got cold feet when they got in bandit land, and he went back home to his mother. No, they didn't have to advertise now for the healed man did this for them. This Scripture says, "He kept on walking". And as he walked all over that town everybody was talking about the notable miracle and the whole town is going to hear the gospel. Please notice how the people of Lystra got a distorted view of what had happened. "When the people saw what Paul had done". Paul hadn't done anything, for God had done it all. So they began to speak in their unusual Greek dialect which was called the speech of the Lyconians. It was a mixture of Greek and Assyrian. It was an aboriginal Greek and Paul didn't understand what they were saying. They understood Paul's Greek but he couldn't understand their language. So these people in Lystra decided that they would offer sacrifices to these "Gods".

ACTS 14:12-13 "And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people." They usually sacrificed pigs, but this was such an unusual occasion they decided to sacrifice oxen.

ACTS 14:14 "Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out," Paul now faced the most serious crisis of his life thus far.

Let us read the list of those perils.

2 COR. 11:24-28 "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of

robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Here Paul was tempted in his approbation lust to be recognized and entertained as a god. But Paul and Barnabas came through with flying colors. The point was this: Paul didn't want them distorting a physical miracle into something that would distort the gospel. They rent their clothes to prove that they were not gods, but were human beings.

ACTS 14:15 "And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:" "Like passions" meant that Paul and Barnabas had the same old sin nature that they had.

"Turn from vanities" meant that they were to turn from false gods to the true God. They were to "turn to the Living God" and this is the God who is the creator of the universe.

ACTS 14:16 "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Please notice that they presented God not only as the creator, but as the God who is always conscious of the free will of man. This is brought out in verse 16.

God never will violate the free will of man. God loves men, allows Christ to die for them, and woos men, but he never will force them.

Look at the composition of a human soul.

1. The soul has self-consciousness--This is awareness or self-consciousness.
2. Mentality-- This is the thinking part of the soul.
3. Volition--This is the decider of the soul.
4. Emotion--This is the appreciator of the soul.
5. Conscience--This is the norm or standard of the soul.
6. Old sin nature--This is the distorter of the soul.

So here is a people who "walk in their own ways".

This Paul best describes in Romans 1 and to close this paper tonight, let us look at a description of those who "walk in their own ways".

ROMANS 1:21-28 "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"