

## 50. Paul Was Stoned to Death in Lystra

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why people oppose the message of forgiveness of sins through Christ. We saw that those who strongly oppose are depending on their own efforts to try and be accepted by God. As a result, they oppose those who teach that we must come to God through Christ. The Jews in Iconium planned to injure and stone Paul and Barnabas. They became aware of those plans and fled to Lystra. In our topic today, we will see that Jews come from Iconium to Lystra and convinced the people there to stone Paul.

After Paul and Barnabas arrived in Lystra, they met a man that had been crippled his entire life. Acts 14:8-10 says, “And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. *This* man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked.” In these verses, we see that Paul and Barnabas saw an opportunity to show kindness to a man in need. How would you feel if you had never been able to walk from the time that you were born? This man heard Paul as he was speaking.

Paul fixed his eyes on this man. The word translated “seeing” means *to know by seeing, to notice or to know* and is usually translated by the word “know”. Paul knew as he carefully observed this man that he had faith to be healed. As a result, Paul said to the man with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” Immediately, the man leaped and walked. This is a very similar situation to the man that Peter healed in Acts 3. Acts 3:6-8 says, “Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.” This man also leaped and walked.

Paul had been talking to a group of people. He had spoken to this man with a loud voice. As a result, everyone that was close at all saw this man as he leaped and walked. This caused those people to respond. Acts 14:11-13 says, “Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.” The people who saw what had happened became very excited. They began to shout in their Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” The people of that city had a story or tradition that two gods named Zeus and Hermes had once visited their city. Their story said that the temple in their city had once been a small house. It was turned into a temple by those two gods, because the couple living in that house had shown kindness to them.

The people were shouting in Lycaonian that these gods had come back for another visit looking like men as they had done the first time. They decided that Barnabas must be Zeus. They thought that Paul must be Hermes because he was the main speaker. Their story or tradition said that the

people had ignored these gods the first time they came as men so the people of Lystra did not want to repeat the same mistake. The people brought oxen to their temple to offer as a sacrifice and garlands (something like a necklace) to put on Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:14-17 says, “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’” Usually, when the Jews tore their clothes it was to show great sorrow. At times, it was also done to show anger when the Jews said someone was guilty of blasphemy against God. Here, it was to show great sorrow.

As we can see from the actions, the people of Lystra were idol worshipers and had no knowledge of the Old Testament. As a result, Paul and Barnabas began by speaking about the Creator. They made it very clear that they were humans and not gods. They had the same feelings as the people of Lystra. Paul told the people of Lystra that they should turn from the useless idols that could not help them and turn to the living God who could help them. Paul later wrote that was what the Thessalonians had done. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Repentance is turning from whatever a person is following to the living God.

Paul told the people of Lystra that the living God is the One who made the heaven, the earth, the sea and everything in them. Here, we see that Paul helped these people to understand that the living God is the Creator of all things. Paul said that in the past God had allowed people to walk in their own ways. Joshua 24:15 says, “‘And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’” God allowed people to choose whether or not to follow Him.

However, Paul said that God never forgot the people that He had created on the earth. God gave the people a witness to remind the people that He created them. Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” The things God did were done to help the people of the world, but they also left people without any excuse. God is the One who sent the rain from the heavens to water the plants and provide food for the people. He is the One that caused the crops to be fruitful and the trees to give their fruit. Paul said that God is the One who provided everything that we have to eat. God is the One who made it possible for people to have joy and gladness.

Acts 14:18-20 says, “And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the

multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” Even with all they said, it was difficult for Paul and Barnabas to keep the people of Lystra from offering sacrifices to them. However, that would soon change.

We go on to see how quick people are to change. Paul and Barnabas had a hard time preventing the multitudes from offering sacrifices to them. However, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium heard that Paul and Barnabas had traveled to Lystra. Then, a group of Jews from these cities also came to Lystra. There, Jews were able to turn the people of Lystra against Paul and Barnabas. In fact, they even persuaded the people of Lystra to stone Paul. Here, we are reminded of the greatness of the anger of the Jews who rejected Christ. They were willing to do anything possible to stop the preaching of Paul.

The Jews and the people of Lystra stoned Paul. Then, they dragged him out of the city, because they supposed he was dead. The word translated “supposing” means *to think or to suppose* and usually refers to things that are not actually true but the people think are true. This word is used in Acts 17:29 where we read, “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.” Here, we see that the people of Athens thought or supposed that God is like gold, silver or stone. Paul made it clear to the people of Athens that God is not like an idol made of gold, silver or stone.

We read that the disciples gathered around Paul after he had been dragged out of the city. This teaches us another important lesson. Most of the people in Lystra first thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods, but quickly changed their minds as they listened to the Jews from Antioch and Iconium. However, there were some people who had listened when Paul explained the meaning of repentance. They then had the opportunity to learn about the death and resurrection of Christ and had placed their faith in Christ as the One through whom they could come to God. Here, we see that they were now following Christ even though most of the people of the city had rejected Christ.

As these new disciples gathered around Paul, we read that Paul got up from the place where he had been dragged. He then went with the disciples back into the city. Paul and Barnabas, along with the new disciples, realized that Paul could not stay in Lystra and so the next day he and Barnabas left that city and went to the city of Derbe. Here, we see that God still had work for Paul to do and so the Jews had not accomplished their goal even though they had stoned Paul. We can use this passage to help our physical and spiritual children realize that God will give them life until they have completed the purpose that the Lord has for them on this earth. The Lord had a purpose for each Christian to complete and will give us life to complete that purpose. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the purpose that God has for them.