

Lesson Text

Acts 14:8-11, 19-23 (NIV)

⁸ In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!”

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¹⁹ Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Today’s Lesson Aims

- **Learning Fact:** To describe the experiences of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and nearby cities.
- **Biblical Principle:** To compare the experiences of Paul and Barnabas with those of Christians experiencing opposition in the present.
- **Daily Application:** To choose attitudes and behaviors that express faithful persistence in challenging circumstances.

Power Hour Lesson
Summary for
December 17, 2017

“Faith to Persevere”

Lesson Text:
Acts 14:8-11, 19-23

Background Scripture:
Acts 14 &
Colossians 2:6-7

Devotional Reading:
2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Introduction

Misheard Lyrics

Sometimes singers and songwriters make their lyrics deliberately vague, leaving interpretation to the listener. Quite often, however, lyrics to famous pop songs are misheard. Those who sing along to a favorite song may be singing words that were never intended! For example, in the song “Purple Haze” Jimi Hendrix did not sing “scuse me while I kiss this guy,” but rather “scuse me while I kiss the sky.” Creedence Clearwater Revival did not give directions to a “bathroom on the right,” but warned of a “bad moon on the rise.” The Rolling Stones vowed that they would “never be your beast of burden,” not counseling cooks to “never leave your pizza burnin’”!

We all want to be heard. We do not like to be misunderstood. It’s bad enough when it happens unintentionally, but problems multiply when it happens with malicious intent. Paul’s experience with regard to the latter has something to teach us.

Lesson Background

Time: A.D. 47-49

Place: Galatia

This lesson text continues the story of Paul’s first missionary journey of about A.D. 47-49. After traveling across the island of Cyprus, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed northward to Asia Minor (modern Turkey). From its south coast they traveled inland first to Perga, where John Mark called it quits (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37, 38). It was then on to Antioch of Pisidia, a straight-line distance of about 75 miles; walking distance was much farther due to terrain. There Paul preached in the synagogue; his message led many to faith but provoked bitter opposition from others (13:13-52). This pattern was to repeat itself throughout Paul’s missionary travels. Wherever the gospel went in Acts, it met with opposition as well as faith.

Miracle and Misidentification: Acts 14:8-11

From Antioch of Pisidia, the missionaries traveled eastward to smaller towns. The first was Iconium, where again preaching led to division and controversy (Acts 14:1-7). The team of Paul and Barnabas then moved on to Lystra, in the Roman province of Galatia, the setting of the lesson text. Lystra was a modest-sized town on a secondary highway and thus somewhat isolated from contact with the wider world. A local language was used commonly there even after the Greek language had spread through the region centuries before the New Testament. Archaeologists have recovered inscriptions from the area showing the persistence of belief in traditional pagan gods and goddesses.

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What Do You Think?

- What did you learn about God from an occasion when you exercised your Christian faith publicly?
- In today's world, what can we do to correct misperceptions of what being a Christian implies?
- When was a time God called you to minister in a hostile environment? How did things turn out?
- What specific situations call for prayer and fasting today? Why?

Conclusion

Power Seen in Suffering

Stories and experiences of opposition to the Christian faith can be very discouraging to us. Sometimes we look to the past and think that there was a time when the Christian faith was warmly and widely received. That selective memory contrasts with our view of the present, when it seems that hostility to Christian faith is common in all quarters.

We do well in such instances to remember that suffering is the means by which we experience God's kingdom. None of the biblical exemplars of our faith escaped suffering, and Jesus himself suffered supremely at the hands of His enemies.

Hostility to the faith should not surprise us. But neither should those experiences of persecution blind us to the other things that God is doing. As He did with Paul and Barnabas, God is bringing people to saving faith through the faithful witness of His suffering people.

Today, even as we see persecution coming from every direction, we also see faith in Christ taking root in the lives of people whom we thought far from God's truth. The power of Christ that healed the lame man continues to transform lives around us in amazing ways. In fact, we realize that the power of Christ is often most clearly demonstrated among His people when they suffer.

Are we ready to accept and act on both of these realities? Can we demonstrate firm faith in Christ when our faith is tested by suffering and persecution? Are we ready to acknowledge and celebrate the work of God that is happening all around us? Will we revere Christ in our hearts and serve in His name with our hands, despite the hardships and with expectation of His victory? Do we desire to see the victory of God enough that we are willing to see it in our own suffering?

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Prayer

- Almighty God and heavenly Father, as Paul and Barnabas committed the new believers to Your care, so we likewise commit ourselves. Teach us faithfulness in every situation, a faithfulness that praises You in hardship as in triumph. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thought to Remember

- Speak up; speak out; speak clearly!

Anticipating the Next Lesson

- Next week's lesson is **"Faithful Seekers of the King"** and describes God's guidance of the wise men on their mission and their historical encounter with Herod. Study Matthew 2.

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