
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study

by Warren Doud

Lesson 219: **Acts 14:8-18**

ACTS, Lesson 219, Acts 14:8-18

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Acts 14:8-18**Acts 14:8**

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

there sat a certain man at Lystra

This lame man was sitting in a public place, as the lame man in Acts 3 had been sitting at the entrance to the Temple in order to ask alms. There was no Temple here, and probably no synagogue, as we might infer from the fact that most of the people were totally ignorant of any concept of Jehovah God. He might have been sitting at the main gate of the city.

impotent in his feet

"Impotent" is **ajlunato**~ "powerless; incapable; (sometimes) impossible"

being a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

He was born lame, as was the man who was cured by Peter (Acts 3:2).

This account is a very close parallel with what Luke wrote about the first lame man.. Both were lame at birth. In both cases the apostle "fastened his eyes on him"; and in both the man "leaped up and began to walk."

Acts 14:9

The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

The same heard Paul speak

He heard the gospel message, and he believed the gospel

who, steadfastly beholding him

That is, it was Paul who beheld the man, not vice versa (as Peter had looked on the man he healed).

perceiving that he had faith to be healed

The man had heard a simple presentation of the gospel, and he may have heard about the other miracles that Paul and Barnabas had done in Iconium. He accepted the doctrine that he heard, believing that Jesus could, if he would, make him whole. Something about his looks, his attention to the teaching, or something he said, gave Paul the assurance that he had faith.

"To be healed" is the aorist passive infinitive of **swzw** "to make sound; *to save*". Here, the meaning is clearly related to saving the body, rather than the soul; but the use of this Greek work is striking.

Other examples of faith in Christ leading to healing: Matt 9:21, 22, 28, 29; Luke 7:50; 17:19; 18:42.

Acts 14:10

Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he leaped and walked.

Paul may have spoken with a loud voice so that people nearby could have heard clearly. Several manuscripts expand Paul's statement, to suggest that he said "I say unto you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, stand upright on your feet," which would make it even more like the words that Peter had spoken.

John 11:43, Jesus cried with a loud voice "Lazarus come forth!" Why the loud voice? Barnes note: "This was distinctly asserting his power. He uttered a distinct, audible voice, that there might be no suspicion of charm or incantation. The ancient magicians and jugglers performed their wonders by whispering and muttering."¹

he leaped up and walked

Here there is a difference from the earlier healing by Peter, in that this man leaped up and walked of his own accord, whereas Peter grasped the lame man with his right hand and lifted him to his feet.

¹ Barnes on John 11:43

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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.

The local population, steeped in religious lore, looks upon Paul and Barnabas as two gods who have come down to Lystra in human form.

The people of this region spoke Greek, but it was not their first language. They spoke a regional language which Paul and Barnabas probably did not know. The two apostles would have been very perplexed about what was going on, until someone, at least, could explain it to them. When, in verse 13, the priest began to get ready to offer a sacrifice to the two men, as gods, Paul knew that the whole incident had been completely misunderstood.

Acts 14:12

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.

I don't know why the KJV uses the Roman names for these gods here, Jupiter and Mercury. In the Greek, the names used are **Zeus** or **Dios** (Zeus) and **Ernh-** (Hermes). Both the NAS and NIV have the Greek equivalents.

There is an interesting piece of mythology regarding the religious beliefs of people in this region of the country in Roman times. Their legend said that both Zeus, the chief of the gods, and Hermes, the messenger of the gods, had visited an area in the province of Phrygia but had been denied lodging by the local people. Finally, an elderly man and his wife welcomed the gods to their humble dwelling. The gods amply rewarded the couple's hospitality by turning their house into a temple and, at the couple's request, appointing them priests in this temple. The gods punished the rest of the people by destroying their homes. The legend has been recorded by the Roman poet Ovid, who lived from 43 BC to AD 17 and who called the gods by their Latin names: Jupiter (Zeus)

and Mercury (Hermes). (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.626ff).

Acts 14:13

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.

The inhabitants of Lystra worshiped Zeus (Jupiter), whom they regarded as their guardian deity. Outside the city they had erected a temple in his honor. In addition, they worshiped Hermes (Mercury) as the patron deity of speakers and travelers and as the god of fortune and fertility. Hermes, whose task was to relay messages from the gods to men, was the son of Zeus and Maia. His name is reflected in the word *hermeneutics*, which derives from the Greek term which means "interpreter".

There is a lot that could be included here about the types of rituals and sacrifices which ancient people performed, but I'm going to leave that off here. I refer you to the numerous historical sources for these things [wdd]. Both Gill and Gloag have some good explanations.

Really, the verse makes it clear what the priest and the people were about to do.

Acts 14:14

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

they rent their clothes

The Jews commonly would tear their clothes at a time of mourning, such as at a funeral or in grieving for the dead. The Mishnah *Horayot* has the rule for this:

"a high priest rends below, and a common person above:" the sense of which, according to their commentators, is "that if anyone dies for whom an high priest is obliged to rend his garments, he must rend below, at the extreme part of his garment, near his feet; and as for what is written, nor rend his clothes (Lev. 21:10); the meaning

is, he shall not rend as other men do, above, over against the breast, near the shoulder, as the rest of the people.”²

In addition the Jews were required to do this whenever they heard blasphemy.

Matthew 26:64,65

Jesus said to him, You have said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now you have heard his blasphemy.

So for Paul and Barnabas, steeped in Jewish habits, would have done this almost automatically. It would have been a very dramatic and arresting gesture when done among all of these people of Lystra.

Acts 14:15

And saying, Sirs, why do you do these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

we also are men of like passions with you

The phrase “of like passions” is from the Greek **ὁμοιοπαθῆναι**, which (from the Analytical Lexicon of the NT) is (1) of the same (human) nature, similar in experience, as opposed to having superhuman nature (Acts 14.15); (2) with the same feelings, experiencing similar sufferings, as opposed to having supernatural power and exemption from suffering (James 5.17)

Paul and Barnabas are anxious to make sure that the people know that they are not gods, but flesh and blood human beings. That is, they include themselves as plain people who need food and clothing, too (verse 17).

² Gill, Matthew 26:65

turn from these vanities unto the living God

“vanities” is **ματαίον**, “empty, foolish, idle” or in references to religion, “unprofitable, futile, useless” Used often (79 times) in the Septuagint for “emptiness” or “vanity”, sometimes in reference to false gods or false religion.

From notes on Eph. 4:17

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.

A believer who is occupied with Christ and living in the Word is constantly "renewing his mind" by a process in which he continually takes in (inhales) the Word of God and exercises the Word (exhales). Let's read ahead...

Eph. 4:22-24, That you put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND, and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The apostle Paul makes a very similar plea to the Christians in Rome in Romans 12.

Romans 12:1,2, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The opposite of a RENEWED mind is an EMPTY mind.

A Christian thinks, speaks, and acts based on the contents of his mind. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." In this context, as a breathing exercise, a person “exhales” from his frame of reference.

Because a negative Christian does not "inhale" the Word of God, he can only "exhale" his own ideas, his own doctrines,

or the ideas and doctrines that he has picked up from whatever sources in the world.

When a soul is empty, there is a resulting "vacuum" that pulls in false doctrines, doctrines of demons, darkness. Satan has a complete system of false theology to be used to ensnare the novice, the unprotected, the gullible. Today these doctrines may be any system of religion, existentialism, communism, or any other non-biblical proposition. Into the "vacuum" will go misery, mental attitude sins, religion, legalism, emphasis on details of life, human viewpoint, and so forth.

The Bible's stern message in Ephesians 4 is meant to be a dramatic and forceful warning to all of us, to beware of carnality and backsliding.

who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.

Compare Paul's comments to the people he met on the Areopagus.

READ Acts 17:16-34

Acts 14:16

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

"In times past" = "in past generations", or NAS: "in generations gone by".

suffered all nations

Clarke says, "...should be rendered 'all the Gentiles', to distinguish them from the Jewish people. The Jews had a revelation, and were not left to walk in their own ways. The Gentiles had no revelation and were allowed to form their own religions and modes of worship.

to walk in their own ways

Barnes: "To conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of

religion. God gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers."

Acts 14:17

Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

He left not himself without witness

It was not unfair of God to have left the Gentiles without the same kind of specific revelation that He provided to the Jews. The natural revelation was enough to reveal to any man the existence and sovereignty of God.

READ Romans 1:18-23

he did good ...

In contrast to the imaginary gods and idols, such as the very Jupiter to which Paul was probably pointing, who didn't provide anything, let alone that which fills hearts with food and gladness.

Psalm 147:8

Who covers the heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth.

Acts 14:18

And with these sayings they barely restrained the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

they barely restrained the people

Even with this speech, and demonstration of tearing their clothes, Paul and Barnabas almost failed in preventing the priest and the people from offering sacrifice to them. Apparently the crowd dispersed.