

4/17/16

Acts 14:8-21

Respectable Temptations

Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

(Pastor Prays)

If you lead a normal Christian life, you will be faced from time to time with a various assortment of temptations. Not all of the temptations you face will be world-class or career-ending or threatening to your marriage. Even still, the Bible is clear on warning us to guard our hearts as Christian people. As Solomon said, "It's the little foxes that ruin the vineyard." Very often, it's not one big cataclysmic event that renders a life

ineffective. Sometimes its 1,000 respectable temptations that ruin your chances at being effective and keep you in the land of mediocre.

Jerry Bridges wrote the book “Respectable Sins.” I recommend it to you. “Respectable” sins are committed because we fall to respectable and understandable temptations. I’m trying to get at something in the passage here, something with Paul and Barnabas. They are traveling and ministering and in some measure they are suffering. And I would contend that they were tired and could really use a break. But instead, they keep pressing and preaching and sharing and serving. In fact, when we find them in v. 8 they are in a nowhere town, Lystra. There’s not even a synagogue there. It’s just a garrison of soldiers and a mixed population of people trying to eke out a living. And similar to what Paul said in the church of Galatia, “Let us not grow weary of doing good. For in due season, we will reap if we do not give up.”

So part of my hope today is to encourage you to keep giving yourself to Christ. Let’s learn from Barnabas and Paul.

Living For Christ Is Worth Your Life

But watch out...

People Are Broken; You’ll Be Tempted Not to Care

Verse 11 tells us there is a crowd listening to Paul preach, but it tells us that in that crowd is a broken man. Read v. 8 and hear his thrice-named affliction. V. 8, *Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked.* There was a man (no name) sitting who: 1. Could not use his feet, 2. He was crippled from birth, and 3. He had never walked.

This is Luke’s way of telling us he was in really bad shape. There wasn’t anything he could offer the ministry of Paul or Barnabas. No help. No money. No connections. He was just a broken man with useless legs listening to Paul. One in the crowd. Paul had a lot to think about, sermons to preach, cities to visit and a world to change. But here was one man, one broken man, and Paul cared.

Now there is a healing that is only going to happen in v. 8-10 in Acts. A *physical* healing presents us with a *spiritual* truth. This man's transformation is a picture of conversion. Like his legs, he was three times dead – heart, soul and mind. And when the Gospel is preached and we are commanded to obey, if you respond in faith, you are brought out of the crippled deadness of uselessness and into the fullness of life. That's a symbol but it leaves a question. Who do you know who is like this man (or maybe just injured) and, because of your business or awkwardness or just coldness, you've been tempted not to care? Living a cross-centered life, living for Christ, means you can't help but care. People are broken and you'll be tempted not to care.

Praise is Delicious and You Will Be Tempted to Take Credit

Let's pick up the action in v. 9. for content and come forward with what happens: v. 9-13 *He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.*

Local tradition – 50 years prior, Zeus and Hermes had taken human form and come to that region and rewarded those that treated them with hospitality and cursed those that didn't. So when this lame man was healed, the crowds put all the credit at Paul and Barnabas' feet. Barnabas, who hadn't done anything, was called "Zeus" and Paul, because he was speaking, was called "Hermes."

The priest of Zeus wanted to make a sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul to honor them. He wanted to honor Paul and honor Barnabas because they were used to heal the man. But it wasn't Paul and it wasn't Barnabas, it was God. But it's tempting to think *you* did it. *You* gave the money, *you* wrote the note, *you* stepped in when no one else did. And while you don't want all the credit, you would like a little. Be careful, men's praise is a delicious poison. Praise from people, especially if it belongs to God, is like what

Proverbs says about the lips of an adulteress that drip with honey and are smoother than oil but in the end, bitter as wormwood. If God uses you, you will be tempted to take some of the credit and often in creative ways. Maybe a little humble brag. You see that a lot on social media. “I’m humbled and honored to be chosen most attentive husband and father.” Or “I’m so blessed to have this giant house that you could never afford that God gave me because He loves me more.” When you are tempted to take credit or to consider *your* part in doing something good, remember your situation in life and focus on Ephesians 2:1-5 where Paul reminds us: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* God’s grace – the free gift of fellowship. Grace – our good God reaching down to us through the cross of Christ.

Our sin separates us from God. The cross of Christ brings us near. We have nothing to boast in but the cross of Jesus Christ and, this morning, we have the opportunity to worship our Savior by celebrating The Lord’s Supper, an act of worship Christians have done together for almost 2,000 years.

And Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:26-28 *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

I would like to spend a few minutes doing that.

(Pastor invites people to come forward to pray. As they are headed back to their pews, he explains who can partake of The Lord’s Supper and why).