



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 14:1–28

“Faith Healing at Lystra”

TRANSCRIPT

For the Scripture reading this morning, we are turning to Acts chapter 14 and reading the entire chapter. For those of you who have not been following along with us in the exposition of the book of the Acts, the Apostle is on his first missionary journey. He has just finished his preaching in Antioch in Pisidia, and now, being forced out of Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle goes a bit to the South and to the East. And we read in chapter 14 of Acts:

And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, They were aware 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 steadfastly 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, 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 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: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 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. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.”

Occasionally, the views have been expressed to the effect that the Apostle was stoned to death and experienced a form of restoration, but in the light of the fact that the Apostle in the 11th chapter of 2 Corinthians describing his past sufferings says that he was stoned once. It’s obvious that this is the one time to which he’s referring, and there he calls it a “stoning” and says nothing about having been stoned to death. So, it’s probably to be understood in that way. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. The Apostle, obviously, illustrated that truth with his own experiences.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (That’s very interesting, that the Apostles ordained the elders here, expressing in that fact their apostolic authority in the ordination of elders.) And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: And thence sailed to Antioch, (this, of course, is Antioch in Syria) from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work, which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he (of course, he refers to God) how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.

May the Lord bless this reading of His inspired Word. Let’s look to the Lord now in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of gathering around the Scriptures and we thank Thee for the message that they contain. We thank Thee for the way that they minister to us, ministering to our spiritual needs and to the needs of our daily lives as well. We give Thee thanks today for a Savior who has been raised from the dead, and who lives at the right hand of the throne of Majesty on High, and we thank Thee that He ever lives to make intercession for us, and we praise Thee that we have the assurance of a living Savior, who lives to secure the benefits for those the Father has given Him. We praise Thee and thank Thee for all that the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ means to us. We thank Thee, Lord, for Thou hast been marvelously gracious and loving toward us.

And we thank Thee for the great privilege of proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, through a risen Savior today in this country and throughout the countries of this globe, and especially in this auditorium. We thank Thee, Lord, for the way in which Thou hast gathered those who are here to this meeting to hear Thy Word; and we pray that we, each, may be responsive to the things that we have read in Holy Scripture and to the things that may be said that are in harmony with Thy purpose

and will. We give Thee thanks for this assembly, its elders and its deacons, its members and its friends, and for the visitors today. We ask Thy blessing upon its testimony and upon its outreach.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the way Thou hast blessed in the past and we pray that Thou wilt keep us cleaving to Thee in such a way that we may experience Thy blessing in the future, as well. We give Thee thanks, too, Lord, for every believer and we would, particularly, offer prayers of intercession for some who are unable to be here with us, due to illness and other causes. We commit them to thee; we pray that Thou wilt sustain them and that Thou wilt encourage them. And some, who have experienced recently, we bring them to Thee. We give Thee thanks for this country in which we live and for the freedoms that we enjoy. Thou hast truly blessed the United States of America. And, Lord, we are grateful for that and we pray for this country, that there may be a turning of heart toward our triune God and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Accept our thanks, in His Name. Amen.

[Message] Paul and Barnabas were like the early evangelists, who evangelized the frontier in America and were characterized by itinerate preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The difference lies in the fact that while the Americans evangelized the frontier of the United States, Paul and those that were with him were evangelizing the frontiers of Asia Minor. This chapter is very illuminating in that it illustrates their methods, their message and the response that they often received. The situations change, but the dissemination of the truth remains unchanged. And as one looks at this chapter, it becomes evident that the things that are stated concerning the purpose of preaching, are things that are characteristic of the proper expansion of the message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be done primarily by preaching.

For example, the Apostle writing to the Corinthians says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” And, Paul continues, “For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” And then, in a few moments later,

the Apostle says, “But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

Preaching is the divinely intended way that the Word of God is to be disseminated. Of course, one may preach behind a pulpit, as I am preaching now; or, one may preach man-to-man, or as we say one-on-one. But preaching is the divine intention of the Lord God for the dissemination of His message.

One notices another thing about the Apostle; the emphases of the message sometimes changes or change, but the essence remains unchanged. It’s true that occasionally the Apostle will yield to the exigencies of the situation and lay some stress on divine truth that is proper for the particular situation. Here, preaching in Lystra, in a back-wood rural area—those terms don’t necessarily go together but it did with reference to Lystra—it was a back-wood area and it was a rural area; and there he preached in a—by emphasizing some of the great general truths that come to us by virtue of the common grace of God. He spoke about the God who gives us rain from heaven, fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. He talks about the benevolent love of God. But that complacent love of God by which He loves some and passes by others is something that the Apostle reserves for more biblically literate people, it would seem.

But, in essence, the message is still the same. He preaches the Word. Listen to verse 3. He talks about the Holy Spirit giving testimony to the word of His grace. And then, in verse 7, “And there they preached the gospel.”

And in verse 21, we read, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city...”

And then, again, in verse 28, “And there they abode long time” with the gospels after having said in verse 25, “When they had preached the Word in Perga.”

So, preaching the Word of God, preaching the word of His grace, these are things that stay the same, wherever the Word of God continues to go forth. He may changes his tones, as one well-known preacher said, but he never really changes his matter. It is the old, old story of our Lord and His love as expressed in His atoning work.

I love that comment of Mr. Spurgeon, which I have sometimes referred to here before, in which someone—who was really one of his enemies—spoke about his preaching in this way. “Here is a man who has not moved an inch forward in his ministry, and at the close of the 19th century is preaching and teaching the theology of the 1st century and is proclaiming the doctrine of Nazareth and Jerusalem current, eighteen hundred years ago.”

Ordinarily, particularly in our academic circles in which I’ve spent a lot of time, if you are not speaking about the latest thought and the latest theories, then you are really out of date. But, when it comes to the preaching of the gospel, what we are to do is to go back to the preaching of the apostles and let that be the standard by which our ministry is gauged.

The responses varied. Usually, there were violent responses. In the 4th verse of the 14th chapter, we read: “The multitude of the city was divided and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.”

In verse 19, we read that, “There came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.”

But, when he came back to Antioch in Syria, he was able to abide there a long time with his disciples.

So, one can notice that the gospel always has a response, if it’s preached in the power of the Holy Spirit; and that response is often a violent response. Now, we are indebted to our Lord Jesus Christ for that, because He Himself has said, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, no. But rather, division.” So, the Lord Jesus Himself said that the message that He brought was a message that divides people.

Why does it divide people? Well, it divides people for the simple reason that it tells us exactly what we are in the sight of God, and calls upon us, through the grace of God to repent and to turn to the Lord God in heaven. In effect, it tells us that we are without hope, without God and without Christ, and that there is only one way to have acceptance with the Lord God of heaven, and that is

through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an offense to human pride to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is why men do not like the gospel. They turn against it because they do not like to recognize their need, their condition, their peril, their soon and certain condemnation if they refuse the message of the gospel.

No wonder, if one does not believe the message of the Apostle, it is an offense to us to hear a message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and not those other trusts in which we normally have, “And you shall be saved.” And, that there is no other way than the way through Jesus Christ. That is supposed to be the doctrine of the bigot, but it is really the doctrine of the Lord God.

At Lystra where Paul preached after leaving Antioch in Pisidia, there occurred a remarkable incident, the healing of the lame man that illustrates the work of the gospel. And he still heals the lame. He heals the lame who are lame in spirit; and He heals them with the free forgiveness that comes from the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Paul was expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, the response that he received as a violent response. And, as a result of that, he determined to go east and south a bit, about eighty-five miles to Iconium. It was an ancient city; in fact, the Iconiumites, or whatever they would be called, were ones who claimed to live in a city that was older than Damascus, one of the oldest of all of the cities on the face of the earth. In fact, they in years past had a ruler whose name was Nanakis, and when people use the expression, “Since the time of Nanakis,” that was a proverbial expression “from the beginning of time,” like we would say, “Tom Landry has been coach of the Dallas Cowboys since the time of Nanakis.” (Nanakis is the Greek spelling—not sure if that is the correct reference.)

And, the intent of the people of Iconium was, of course, to praise themselves as being an old city. It was the home of Thekla, who in an ancient tradition, was one, a lady who became attached to the Apostle Paul’s ministry, and ultimately became a proclaimer of the gospel that Paul preached. And in this traditional work of the Acts of Paul and Thekla, there was a famous description of the Apostle. I’d like for you to pay careful attention to it, and notice who might be of the same description.

He was one of moderate height. Now, you must think of course, of a person about my height. Moderate height and he was scanty of hair. And [laughter] and bow-legged—now, I don’t know that I quite qualify for that, but some may think so—with large eyes, [more laughter] meeting eyebrows, and rather a long nose. [More laughter.] But his power lay in his expression. He was—so the description continues—he was full of grace and pity. Now he looked like a man but now he had the face of an angel. [Roaring laughter.]

So, that will give you some idea of what Paul looked like, according to the Acts of Thekla. Well, Thekla was from Iconium and so when you think about Iconium you can think about Thekla and you can think about me—or Paul—that is.

At any rate, we read here that the Apostle went into the synagogue as was his custom. And Luke says that they, “...so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.”

Now, you’ll notice the emphasis that Luke places upon that little adverb “so.” They “so spake, that a great multitude of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” Now, you might have thought that the apostle spoke with some great eloquence or some power of logic that other men might not have. Or, some confidence that other men might not have, because of his experiences of the presence of the Lord God. But it, I’m sure if you study Paul’s life, it’s clear that this power comes from the Lord God Himself and not from the Apostle.

Listen to the way that he described his preaching to the Corinthians. He says, “And I brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellencies of speech, or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God, for I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And when I was with you, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

You see, if we were to preach in such a way that you would go out of the audience and out of this auditorium and you would say, “Why, the gospel was expressed in such beautiful tones, in such a lovely way, with such penetrating logic, and with such great manifestation of the skills of eloquence and rhetoric...” If that was the source of your faith, it wouldn’t be long before you would have the opportunity of hearing one who would be able to do that better. And then, your faith would rest in the wisdom of men. The Apostle was anxious that the faith that believers had rested in the power of God; and so, he eschewed preaching in brilliant logic and with an outstanding magnificence and eloquence and rhetoric.

In fact, the Apostle says he was with them in “weakness and in fear and in much trembling” and his speech was not in the wisdom of men at all. He was relying upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit to give to the preaching of the Word of God that fundamental authority that brings a man out of darkness into his marvelous light. That conviction that rests in the heart of every single believer, that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus Christ is the Way of salvation. It is something put in the heart of believers—some people say, “That’s subjective!” Oh, no, that’s the most objective thing in the world—true, it’s inward, but it’s objective, because it’s the testimony of God the Holy Spirit in the human heart. The most objective thing that there exists in this world is the testimony of God, Himself.

That’s what Paul is talking about when he speaks to the Corinthians; and that’s what Luke is referring to, when he says in the 3rd verse, “Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”

So, the Apostle told it, as we say today, “Like it is.” He didn’t stand up and say, “You know, I’d like to present you a fresh idea for you to consider. I’d like for you to look into the matter of your personal salvation and perhaps consider among the religions of the world the religion of Christianity.”

No, the Apostle preached what he considered to be divine revelation with the authority that comes to an apostle, and to any preacher of the Word of God, who preaches it boldly and fervently, relying upon the Holy Spirit.

Now, he had difficulty; and we should expect to have difficulty, too. And so, we read in the 2nd verse, “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles,” it was not simply a Jewish objection—it was a human objection to the gospel—Jews and Gentiles. And, their minds were made evil affected against the brethren. And then, surprisingly, Luke does not say, “Therefore they left,” but “Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord.” Paul got the idea that when there was opposition to the Word that that indicated that God was working. And when division took place, that was a sign that people were listening to the message. When nothing happens, then you might wonder if they are listening at all. Sometimes when a man preaches his heart out, and no one responds, you just wish that somehow or other they would at least give some response, even if it’s altogether negative.

Signs and wonders were also given, a fact that Paul alludes to, when he wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. They were sovereign manifestations of the power of God to confirm the message that the apostles were giving.

Now, those things may occur at any time, but they should occur and must occur—to be believed—only if they are in harmony with the Word of God. There is no religious experience that is a valid religious experience that is not wedded to the words of the Bible. And when people come and suggest a religious experience that is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture, you can put it down—no matter how much they say, “I had this experience,”—that it is a false experience. The only experience that is a valid experience is one that is wedded to the words of the Bible. Let us never forget that.

Well, the time came when news got out to Paul and Barnabas that they were likely to be stoned, and so they left Iconium and they went to Lystra. It was a Roman colony, smaller than Antioch, a rural community; home of the pious Jewess Eunice, and home of Lois and home of

Timothy, the son and grandson of the two ladies. There were very few Jews in the city of Lystra, and we read in the 8th verse: “There was a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked.” And, as the Apostle is preaching the Word of God, this individual was there.

I like this description that is given of this individual because it reminds me of the country preacher’s outline, to get over the point that he wanted to get over concerning our Lord’s healing of the blind man. He preached on this John, 9th chapter, and he said, “I have three points: my first point is, the man was blind. The second point is the man was stone blind. And the third point is, the man couldn’t see at all.”

Now, if you’ll look at this 8th verse here, it’s very much like that. Listen to what Luke says. “There sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked.” So, over and over again, he says the same thing. But, you get the point—he is surely a lame man.

So, he’s lame, he’s a cripple, he couldn’t walk at all. But he was listening to the Apostle preach and as the Apostle preached, he noticed that this man was steadfastly looking upon him as Paul steadfastly beheld the lame man, and Paul came to the conviction that this man had faith to be healed.

You might wonder, how in the world is that possible, because the Apostle must have been preaching to quite a large gathering of people. Well, preachers often can tell more about their audience than the audience realizes. You can look out over the audience and you can see some who are thinking about a business proposition that they would love to be able to settle next week for their good. And then you can look out and see some of the female members who are thinking about adding a room to their house or at least cutting out a new dress. And then there are others who are thinking of other things. But, occasionally, you’ll find someone who is very intent upon the message, listening to the preacher. And, not simply listening, but obviously are interacting with the things that are said and, at times, are even—you can sense—they are responding favorably to the Word of God.

And so, Paul looked out over the audience and he saw this lame man, and there came over him the conviction as he looked upon his face and saw him responding, that he had faith to be healed. And so, in the midst of his sermon, he shouted out, in a loud voice, “Stand upright upon thy feet.” And we read, “He leaped and he walked.”

Now, last night I walked into the family room of our home, while the television screen was on, and Martha was looking at *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. And just as I came in the room, our Lord healed a lame man. And, we had a picture—it’s pitiful to me how the movies have never really been able to catch our Lord at all. So, you have a stern, unfriendly looking Jesus, who is looking at a lame man, and finally after tremendous struggle, the lame man is able to rise up and walk on his feet. And how does he walk? Well, he staggers along like this—you almost want to reach out and hold him so he won’t fall—he’s walking pigeon toed—terribly pigeon toed—his ankles are going out and in. This is the way in which of one of the miracles of the Lord Jesus.

But, we read here, “He leaped and he walked.”

And, in fact, in the 4th and 3rd chapters, where the lame man is referred to there, that Peter was the instrumentality for healing, that man leaped up and ran about, praising the Lord God.

Oh, the difference between the healings—the purported healings—and the healings of men and the healings of the Lord God.

Now, what preceded his faith? Well, we read in verse 7, “There they preached the gospel.” So, Paul was there in Lystra, in the rural community, and what did he preach. Did he tailor his message for them? Well, in one sense we could say that. He emphasized the common grace of God; but really, Luke says, he also preached the gospel, the Good News, the good news of the forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he was in Damascus, he preached the gospel, that ancient city with the synagogue? He preached the gospel. When he was in Ephesus, where they were filled with sorcery and other kinds of magic? He preached the gospel. When he was on the island of Cyprus, and he was in the midst of

men who were political leaders, like Sergius Paulus? He preached the gospel. When he was in Athens, amid the philosophers and those interested in human learning? He preached, again, the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God, unto salvation, and that is the only thing by which men may be brought from their sin and condemnation to faith and the forgiveness of sins.

So, this man with a single bound, when Paul spoke to him, began to walk. And walk as if a man had been walking all of his life.

Now, it’s not surprising that the people, the simple people of Lystra, were greatly impressed by this and to understand this a little better, let us remember that in the tradition of Lystra—back in the back ages of their tradition—there was a tradition that the gods Jupiter and Hermes, or Mercury, had visited that city. And they had visited the city in disguise; and they had gone over the city seeking for help and for response on the part of the people. And no one in the city gave them response but two people; one by the name of Philemon—no connection with the biblical Philemon—and his wife Baucis. And the result was that Jupiter and Hermes were so disturbed over the lack of response to them, by the people of Lystra, that they destroyed the town. And, afterwards, a beautiful temple was erected. And Philemon and Baucis became the overseers of it. And when they died, so the tradition said, Jupiter made them into two magnificent trees in the city.

So, you can see that when Paul and Barnabas came and this miracle took place, these rural folk, thought that Jupiter and Hermes had visited them again and they were not going to be anything but responsive to them this time, for they did not want to lose their lives and their city. And so, they shouted out, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.”

The greatest of all perils is human pride. What would you have done, had you been Paul? These people called Barnabas Jupiter, because he had evidently an appearance—a distinguished appearance—and the kind of person that you might think of might be Jupiter in disguise.

And since Paul was speaking—Hermes was the god of speech—it was natural for them to think of Paul as Hermes. And so, as a result of this, the priest of Jupiter, who was before the city, brought oxen and garlands, and they wanted to so sacrifice unto them with the people.

What would you have done? Well, you could have said, “You know, this is the greatest opportunity that any preacher has ever had. Think of it, they think of us as if we were gods.” Would you not think—suppose you thought I was a god? Well, theoretically, you might say, “If they think I’m a god, they’ll pay attention to what I say. So, I’ll give them the gospel, and they’ll be responsive to the gospel because they think I’m a god.” What an opportunity, someone might say!

But, O, the inexpediency of expediency. You see, when we do something with a lie, and the apostles could have said to themselves—now, mind you, we don’t think we’re gods, but they think we’re gods, so let’s go ahead and preach as if we were gods. We know we’re not gods, so God is not going to blame us for this. But let’s take advantage of the opportunity. They think we’re great.

A lot of our evangelism today is done under the same guise and in the same spirit. And attempt is made to impress people, and the gospel often takes second place. But the inexpediency of expediency is illustrated here.

The apostles, when they found out what they were saying, because they were speaking in a speech, a language that they did not understand, they ran down in the midst of them—they rent their clothes in horror at the thought and then went on to say to them, “We are men of like passion with you and we preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities expressed by this, to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things therein.”

And so, the inexpediency of expediency should characterize all of our activities in the preaching of the Word of God. But there is one other thing that I think is rather important here. You will notice that they say “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” It’s almost as if they have anticipated one of the great truths of Christianity; the incarnation. Now, the incarnation of the Lord God may well be something that lies in the background of human minds. Perhaps, because it was one of the early truths and now the memories of it exist only in the minds of men.

So, the very fact that they said, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men,” suggests one of the three great facts of Christianity: the incarnation. The other facts being, the atonement and the resurrection.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who is incarnate supremely; no other person has ever been incarnated, as our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can never speak of us, though we may be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is the incarnations of the Lord God, He is supremely the Son, because He has The Father as His Father—eternally generated—we are created, as sons, but He is eternally generated as The Father.

Genius are repeated in the history of men; but there is only one Son of God—only one Son of God who has come from heaven to reveal the Lord God—only one Son of God who has offered the atoning sacrifice—only one Son of God who has ascended to the right hand of the Father. In fact, to this present day, there is only one person who has ever been resurrected! It is our Lord Jesus Christ.

We celebrate today the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as the only person who has ever been resurrected.

Now, perhaps you are thinking, well, “Others have been restored to life.” Yes, they have. People like Lazarus and others; but resurrection with a glorified body—for that is what resurrection means—only our Lord has been resurrected.

Well, they said, “The gods are come down to us.” Paul said, “No, we’re just men, just like you are.” And the Apostle, as you might expect, received appropriate response when the Jews came and told them about Paul.

They stoned him. Maybe they were indignant. The people who in one moment are ready to worship them, the next moment are stoning the Apostle. That shows you the depth of feeling of people who are responsive to miracles rather than to the message of the Word of God, as found in Holy Scripture.

So, it’s insanity to engage in idolatry. They drag Paul out. They stoned him. They thought he was dead. And the saints were standing around. Poor Paul. It was terrible. Maybe he shouldn’t have preached that message. Perhaps he was a little too hard on the people here in Lystra. And Paul rolled

his eyes about, on the ground, and said, “You can postpone the funeral plans” and managed to get to his feet and go back into the city.

Well, they found out that it was not too healthy to stay at Lystra, at that particular time, so they went on to Derbe, a small time, the home of Gaius. And there, the Apostle and Barnabas spent their time, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” And he didn’t need to give any illustration about the tribulations, which one must experience before entering into the kingdom of God.

Incidentally, that’s a very revealing statement that indicates that the kingdom of God still lies in the future.

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting,” and, mind you now, there are only about an hundred and sixty miles from Tarsus, Paul’s home, and another way back to Antioch in Pisidia. So, what would you think these guys would do? Do you think they would go home?

Well, that’s the difference between being wise and being an apostle. So, what they did was they went back from where they had come. And so, they went to Lystra, again, where he had been stoned. They went to Antioch. They came down to the coast, to Perga. They preached the Word of God there and they sailed to Antioch, recommended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

And then, they had the first missionary conference ever held, in the city of Antioch, and they told of the things that God had done with them, “And how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

Now, Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles; and so, the idea that the gospel goes out to all—Jews and Gentiles—all! All without distinction—not all without exception—all without distinction. And, there they abode a long time, teaching the Word of God in the city of Antioch in Syria.

Now, there are some lessons I want to conclude with and I'll take just a few minutes to express them. You cannot read a chapter like this, without being impressed by the fiery sword of the Christian gospel. In fact, you could describe Paul's ministry as the ministry of polarization. Today, that's a very bad word; polarizing people. But the ministry of our Lord was the ministry of polarization. The ministry of the Apostle Paul was the ministry of polarization. The ministry of Martin Luther was the ministry of polarization. The ministry of John Calvin, the ministry of George Whitfield, we could go on and on and on—it was the ministry of polarization.

So, what shall we say to this? Well, we remember the Lord Jesus said he came to bring division. Listen to what Paul says, as he describes his ministry to the Corinthians. He says, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

The Apostle recognized it was a solemn privilege, a solemn responsibility to preach the gospel because it did polarize people. And so, he prayed and he hoped and as the gospel polarized people, there would be many who would come and find in that gospel a savor of life unto life.

We move by the power of the ancient truth, the healing of the lame man is a kind of parable of the mercy that one finds when responsive to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This man's condition was hopeless; so is yours. And so was mine. Our condition is just as hopeless as his. We are sinners from the time of our mother's womb. We are sinners and our lives are characterized by rebellion and rejection of the truth of God, until the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and lives. And just as he was lame and unable to walk, so are we weak and unable to please the Lord God. And just as he was headed to an ultimate life of no walking; so we are as Paul describes us, the perishing. We are on our way to ultimate perishing.

But he heard the gospel and the Scriptures say, lest you think that when Paul looked at that man and perceived that he had faith to be healed, lest you think that that is the product of that man, Luke winds up this chapter by saying that Paul and Barnabas rehearsed all that God had done with

them and how He, God, had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. What Luke saw in the lame man and what Paul saw in the lame man was what God had put in his heart. And so, he heard the gospel and he responded, and he leaped and he walked, and so the man who hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledges his sin before the Lord God and receives the benefits that come from the saving work of the Lord Jesus. He begins to spiritually walk and he leaps as he walks in the joy of the forgiveness of our sins.

O glorious gospel of the blessed God, wherever we take Thee, Thou art suited to the wants of men. The Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, is the true Excalibur and not of King Alfred, but of King Jesus Himself.

May God help us to respond to the Word of God, and moving from faith to be saved to the faith that saves; may God enable us to stand upon our feet spiritually with the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. If I were true to Paul, and looking out over this audience, and looking at you and perceiving that some of you had faith to be healed, I guess I should cry out to you, “Stand upright upon your feet!”

Believe in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall live, for now, and forever. May God in His marvelous grace and power move you to come to Him! What better day to come than the day we celebrate the living Savior at the right hand of the Father. Come to Christ! Believe in Him!

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent account of the ministry of the apostles; Lord we thank Thee for faithful men. But we thank Thee most for the power by which Thou didst animate them and motivate them and enable them to proclaim Thy Word. We thank Thee for the work of the Holy Spirit, who using the word brought that lame man to his physical wellbeing and, no doubt, ultimately, to his spiritual wellbeing as well. We thank Thee for the illustrations of the power of God through the Word and we pray today that someone in this audience, young or old, may turn to Thee and in sincerity, acknowledge, “I am a sinner. Christ saves

“Faith Healing at Lystra” by S. Lewis Johnson
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sinners. Lord, save me?” And now we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt go with us this day, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.