

# Why Are You Doing These Things?

Acts 14:5-20

*Halifax: 16 September 2012*

## **Introduction**

Last week we looked at the tenacity of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium.

- There, they “so spoke that both Jews and Gentiles believed”
  - They did not adjust their message to make it less offensive...
    - either by denying justification of Gentiles without circumcision,
    - or by de-emphasising the cross.
- They extended their stay when they were slandered...
  - They knew that they had to work harder because the minds of the Gentiles had been poisoned against them.
  - The Lord helped them (granted signs and wonders).
- The outcome: the whole city was divided.
  - This showed that their work was complete... the message had gotten through.
  - God graciously caused them to see a plot that was hatched to stone them.
  - They fled to Lystra and Derbe—
    - But they still kept on preaching.
    - Nothing could stop them

This week, we pick up with their ministry at Lystra.

- Lystra was only about 30 kms from Iconium.
  - Lystra and Derbe were both located in the province of Lycaonia Galatia. (Galatia had Phrygia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia)
    - The liberals had long denied this, joyfully declaring that Luke was mistaken when he said that Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia...
      - But they were put to silence by one of their own—
        - Ramsay, the British scholar, historian, and archaeologist I have mentioned before, traced Paul’s footsteps.
        - Though himself a skeptic, he came to the conclusion that Luke was the most accurate historian in antiquity...
          - He found evidence showing that the boundaries of Lycaonia had changed many times, but that from 37 AD to 72 AD, Lystra and Derbe had indeed been part of Lycaonia.
          - Luke wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
            - After his extensive research, Ramsay declared that he could not find a single error of historical reliability in the book of Acts.
  - So what was Lycaonia like?

- Lycaonia was a flat, dry, almost treeless plateau—
  - very dusty by the end of summer and inhospitably cold in the winter.
- It was a rustic, backwater place with an uneducated populace.
  - The Roman rulers had a hard time with the Lycaonians...
    - They were regarded as militant, intractable, and non-Roman
    - The place was said to be full of robbers, to have little regard for civil law, and the people lived among the mountain caves and ate food that was unmixed with salt.
- However, the city of Lystra itself had been colonised by Augustus in 26 BC...
  - It had three elements in its population...
    - A Greek element that was educated and generally well to do...
    - A Roman element that was the ruling class...
    - And the common uneducated people who spoke the Lycaonian language.
      - There was, perhaps, a small Jewish population, though we have no evidence of a synagogue there.
        - We only know that Timothy was from Lystra, and that he, at least, had a Jewish mother and grandmother.

Here at Lystra we have recorded for us a powerful miracle...

- One that clearly reveals the power and grace of the Lord to save...
  - That is very encouraging...
- But we are also given an example of the absurd way that people steeped in idolatry respond to such miracles...
  - no different than the way they have responded to God all their lives...
- And in hearing the apostle's rebuke about idolatry,
  - we are admonished (through his searching words) to purge idolatry from our own hearts that we might continue with the Lord in the truth...
- And finally, in seeing the idolaters' response to Paul's rebuke,
  - We are warned against the danger and futility of hardening our hearts.
  - There is no telling where it might lead us.

TRANS> So let's take a little while to examine each of these things that are revealed to us in this passage.

## **I. First, be encouraged by this miracle that clearly reveals the power and grace of the Lord.**

A. Here we have a man who has a condition for which there is no remedy.

- **v. 8: And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.**

1. Luke the physician describes his helpless state...
  - a. He was without strength in his feet.
    - That simply means that he could not use them.
  - b. It was a congenital condition, for Luke says that he had it from his mother's womb.
    - It wasn't just an injury that might get better—he had never even had a chance to learn the skill of walking.
  - c. He had never walked.
    - Even today, no physician could heal a man who had been unable to walk since birth to immediately get up and walk.
    - He certainly could not cure himself.
  
2. This illustrates the desperate condition of the people of Lystra and of all of us without Christ.
  - a. We have no strength to walk with God.
    - Romans 5:6 says that Christ helped us when we were “without strength”
      - We are spiritually paralysed.
      - We can as easily jump over the moon as walk with God apart from grace.
  - b. We have this condition from our birth.
    - Psalm 51 says, “In sin my mother conceived me.”
      - We are sinners by nature ever since the fall.
    - Not that we can blame God for it, for He made us upright at creation.
      - It is our own folly in Adam that we turned away from our God who would have continued to give us strength to walk with Him.
  - c. Until we are born again, we have never walked with the Lord.
    - We may have done many things that conform to the letter of the law—
      - we may have done honest labour and given to the poor...
      - we may have kept vows even to our own hurt...
    - But we have not walked with God in the doing of these things...
      - because we are His enemies until we are reconciled to Him through Christ.
      - We have never taken one step with Him...
        - We cannot do it—there is no strength in us from our birth.

B. But see how the call of God raises up the lame to walk!

- **Acts 14:9-10: 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.**

1. This illustrates the fact that faith comes by hearing...
    - a. Remember that miracles in the Bible are also signs...
      - They represent to us the invisible work of God saving souls,
        - or in this case,
          - healing us so that can walk with God when we were formerly unable to do so and had been from birth.
    - b. The lame man heard Paul speaking, and Paul saw that he had faith to be healed...
      - The Word *healed* here is actually the word *saved*.
        - He had faith to be *saved* from his condition in two ways...
          - both from his physical condition and his spiritual condition...
          - The word can cover both, and here seems to do double duty.
        - For Paul was preaching the gospel as verse 7 says,
          - And this man began to indicate that he believed...
          - We do not know just how Paul knew this, but it was likely by prophetic insight.
    - c. The best thing you can do for those who are spiritually lame is to expose them to the word.
      - Give them a Bible to read, give them sermons to listen to, bring them to church.
        - God uses His word to impart faith to us.
        - In the Word we have our sinful condition exposed,
          - but we also have God's precious promises of salvation revealed.
          - And we very simply just come to believe those promises and when we do, we have faith to be healed!
            - Do not be disbelieving!
            - Do not block the word!
            - Receive it with eagerness—listen as this man did so that you may be healed.
2. See how the Word not only produces faith, but also empowers people to do what they could not otherwise have done...
  - It has creative power when it is addressed to us just as it did when God commanded the light to shine in the darkness...
    - And when He spoke and the heaven and the earth and all that is in them were formed.
    - That is the amazing creative power of God's Word.
  - a. Here the Word commands this man to get up and he does!
    - He does what he could never have done by his own power.

- God's messenger said, "**Stand up straight on your feet!**" with a loud voice **and he leaped and walked.**
- This is most obviously divine power.
  - Even if a man could have given him the hardware that was needed for walking,
    - he would have to learn to balance and to use all of those muscles that had never been used...
    - And they would all be atrophied...
  - But the Lord is not limited by such things at all...
    - There is no half-way healing here...
      - This fellow immediately gets up and leaps around.
- b. In the same way, sinners are commanded in God's Word to rise up and follow Jesus—to walk with God!
  - Jesus says, "Take up your cross and follow me,"
    - And we can no more do it than this lame man could stand up...
    - But when He gives us His command with the power of the Spirit, we get up and we start following!
      - Our lives are radically transformed.
  - And even though we have never walked at all before,
    - the Word comes with power and we get up and we walk!
- c. What joy comes to us when we believe and experience the grace of God in our lives like that!
  - But my dear friends, understand, you may not use the power of God as an impersonal force under your control...
    - You cannot tell Him to do this or that for you unless He has promised to do it.
      - You can ask for things that are lawful, but you cannot demand them.
    - But if He has promised something, you can be absolutely sure that He will do that if you come to Him with faith.
      - If you come, looking to Him to pardon your sins, or looking to Him to give you the Holy Spirit,
        - you can be certain of those things because of His promise.
        - Whenever a sinner is saved, it is a miraculous work of God.

TRANS> But of course when God does miracles like causing this lame man to walk, there are many people who see it.

- This man was not a stranger in Lystra—everyone knew of his condition.

- And it is always the case that whenever a miracle like this is done, everyone has to interpret what they have seen.
- Somehow or another, they have to explain it...

## **II. And here in our text we see how foolish idolatrous people can be interpreting or explaining divine miracles.**

A. The people of Lystra immediately conclude that Paul and Barnabas are gods and try to worship them!

- **Acts 14:11-13: 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.**

- This conclusion grows out of the idolatry that they and their fathers had been devoted to for generations.

1. It should have been perfectly obvious to them that this was the work of the God who created heaven and earth.

a. This had the divine stamp painted all over it!

- When Moses first went to Egypt and the Lord began to send the plagues upon them...
  - The magicians in Egypt at first tried to deny the LORD,
    - but eventually they had to confess that what Moses was doing was the finger of God.
    - But you remember that Pharaoh kept trying to deny it.
  - God said that He did all of those plagues in order to show both Israel and Egypt that He was the LORD...
    - but it was only while under judgement that Pharaoh would admit it.
    - As soon as the plague he was under was removed, he denied the Lord all over again.
      - Perhaps that is the reason Hell is eternal...
        - Because fallen men are such that unless they remain under judgement, they will again deny the LORD.
  - But whatever the case, the people of Lystra had seen the finger of God in healing this man,
    - And they should have become disciples of Paul and Barnabas instead of worshippers of them...

b. The hand of the true God was not obvious to them because for generations they had been fabricating lies about God.

- They were trained—habituated—in lies.

- They had concocted these because they were not comfortable with the only true God who made heaven and earth.
    - It was much more comfortable to believe in a god that was not quite as holy as He is...
      - You know, one that is not quite so offended with sin...
      - And one who does not have quite as high standards of morality...softer commandments and stuff...
        - The Greek and Roman gods sinned as we do.
      - And one that could not see into our very hearts and thoughts—or at least who did not care about such things...
        - Allah is like that—he doesn't try to look at your heart—just at what you do.
        - Christopher Hitchens often complained about the very idea of a God who was always watching haunting him!
    - And it was also much more comfortable to believe in a god that was not quite as powerful as the true God is...
      - One who had to deal with some rivals who could threaten Him...and force Him to do things He did not want to do...
      - One that was dependent on us for things and that you could negotiate with a bit.
        - They just wanted to tone God down a bit and so they did.
        - Although they knew Him, they did not like to retain the knowledge of Him... so they didn't...
          - They made a few modifications.
2. Let me show you how their interpretation of this miracle was rooted in their idolatrous understanding.
- a. First of all, they concluded that the gods had become men.
- **v. 11: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"**
  - That came from all the stories they had heard about this happening.
    - Some of these stories may have been encounters with demons which they worshipped as gods.
    - Some of them may have been idolatrous corruptions of stories in which angels had come as men...
      - The very idea of gods becoming men may have even come from the ancient promise of God that the seed of the woman would rise up to crush the serpent's head.
    - All men had this promise in their roots,
      - and over the generations, many of the pagan religions had virgin born gods who came to visit them.
      - But the truth was always distorted and altered.

- b. Secondly, their idolatrous background caused them to conclude that Barnabas was Zeus, the chief among the gods, and that Paul was Hermes, the messenger or speaker for all the gods.
- This was because in their idolatrous conception of things,
    - they understood that the chief god would not speak but would have the lesser god do the speaking for him.
  - But they had more that would have caused them to jump to the conclusion that they were Zeus and Hermes...
  - They had an ancient legend about the day when Zeus and Hermes (or Jupiter and Mercury to use the Roman names) had come to visit in this very region...
    - The story was narrated by the Latin poet Ovid in his work called *Metamorphoses*.
    - Ovid tells how these two gods came in the appearance of men and sought hospitality from a thousand homes, but found none...
      - until at last they came to the tiny cottage where a peasant couple lived—Philemon and Baucis.
      - They entertained them out of their poverty, giving them out of their meager supply of wine and grain which kept replenishing itself.
    - Finally, they went to kill their only goose, but were prevented by the gods who then said,
      - “We are gods and this wicked neighbourhood shall be punished as it deserves, but to you shall be given exemption from punishment.”
      - They then led them out of their house to see a flood destroy their neighbours and to see their house turned into a temple with a gilded roof.
        - Philemon and Baucis were then made priest and priestess and granted their wish that they would die at the same time so that neither of them would have to be bereaved.
    - This story was surely known to the people at Lystra,
      - and that is why they were so zealous to show honours to Paul and Barnabas.
      - They did not want Zeus and Hermes to be angry with them again for giving them a poor reception...
        - And besides that, they were quite pleased to think that their city might be the place where these gods had been entertained!
          - it would have surely made them famous and led to the building of a great temple there!
- c. And this brings us to the third way that their background influenced them...
- In the manner of worship that they bring...



- Verse 13 says that the priest of Zeus came out with oxen and garlands intending to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas.
- Some have suggested that the gates the priest approached were the gates of the temple which stood outside the city...
  - but it seems more likely that it was the gates of the city where Paul and Barnabas were preaching...
    - If the gods have come to visit, the priest would not go to the temple, but to the gods themselves.
- It was quite unreasonable for them to so quickly jump to the conclusion that Paul and Barnabas were gods.
  - They obviously had not listened to the preaching but had been dazzled only by the miracle—
    - for the very message of Paul and Barnabas was that they should turn to the living God.
- But once again, we see the imprint of truth in that they come to offer a sacrifice by the shedding of blood...
  - Although perverted by years of idolatry that changed the truth into a lie,
    - there is still seen the imprint of what God had instituted from our most ancient progenitors.
    - Indeed, we all come from Noah, so it is not surprising to see perversions of God's original institutions.
      - Pagan sacrifices, pagan Sabbath keeping, and so forth.

TRANS> So you can see how the idolatrous background of these people drove them to act in a foolish manner toward Paul and Barnabas.

B. This ought to teach us to beware of the deceptions of idolatry.

1. When we turn away from what God has appointed in His worship, it leads us more and more away from Him over the generations...
  - The second commandment warns us about this...
    - It says, with respect to idolatry, that the LORD visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.
  - God hates idolatry because it always grows out of our hatred of Him.
    - We are not, as I mentioned already, comfortable with God, so we begin to alter Him...
      - To put it as the Lord does, we hate Him—there are things we hate about Him, so we begin to make changes...
        - about who He is and about how He is to be worshipped.

2. Consider some of the conclusions that are drawn about God by modern idolaters...
  - a. The Romanists and the Greeks have added the worship of saints to their worship...
    - and the result is that the praise that belongs to God often goes to these saints—
      - for protection or for provision or for some miracle.
      - This is very offensive to the Lord—but it is more comfortable for worshippers who are not resting in Jesus!
    - As I mentioned last week the Pope also puts himself in the place of Christ and has priests who offer sacrifices when the only priest for us now is Jesus.
      - We are glad that the Romanists do not claim to have some sacrifice besides Christ,
        - but the Lord is angry for their idolatry claims to offer His actual body and blood at the mass when the Bible says He was offered once for all—when He died on the cross.
  - b. And there is the idolatry that we find in many churches today in which the truth about God’s wrath and judgement are jettisoned...
    - Even those who claim to believe the word will deny the eternity of Hell—
      - We even do this when we substitute our own songs in place of the Psalms—our songs are always softer on judgement.

TRANS> But there is an even more blatant form of idolatry

- c. There is the idolatry of the naturalists!
  - These idolaters have put naturalism in place of the creator.
    - They grow into such idolatry over the years—over the generations.
      - They begin by denying God’s sovereignty in the affairs of men—embracing an Arminian doctrine...
        - They see their salvation as a shared work between them and God.
      - Then they begin to attribute rain to low pressure systems and personal success to their own cleverness or even to luck.
        - At this stage, God is nothing more than an observer who occasionally intervenes.
      - And finally, they come to the place that they attribute creation to natural causes—evolution and such.
        - They give the praise to nature that rightly belongs to God as the only creator.

- At this stage, they may still acknowledge Him for a time, but they soon reject Him
- And why do they believe such absurdities?
  - Why do they continue to believe them even when their theories are disproven?
    - Because the true God makes them feel very uncomfortable.
  - It is a desperate attempt on their part to deny what ought to be obvious...
    - It is desperately obvious that creation is the work of God, but they cannot bear to give Him the glory so they turn to the idol of naturalism.
      - And oh how they love their idols!
      - They defend them with devotion and zeal.
- Sadly, they also become more and more like what they worship...
  - Nature has no morality...
    - so they follow their natural passions and lusts and become more and more corrupt and immoral.
    - But worst of all, it turns them more and more away from God.

TRANS> And that is why we need to flee from idolatry!

- That is why John wrote a whole epistle which he concluded with the words,
  - “Little children, keep yourselves from idols!”
- We need to receive what God has revealed about Himself and about His worship without altering it to suit our own desires.

### **III. See how Paul and Barnabas rebuke the idolatry that you might be moved to purge it from your own life and worship God.**

- A. First you see how they react very strongly to what the idolaters at Lystra are trying to do...
1. Paul and Barnabas did not understand what was going on at first.
    - The crowd was speaking in their native Lycaonian language which Paul and Barnabas could not understand.
    - Paul and Barnabas did not understand what they were up to until the priest came to sacrifice the oxen!
      - Then they were apparently told what all the commotion was about!
  2. Verse 14 explains how they clearly display their displeasure at what is being done!
    - **Acts 14:14: But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude.**

- From this we see how much they disdained idolatry!
  - We need to cultivate such a passion ourselves!
  - Too often we are mealy-mouthed about such things.

B. And now look at their rebuke against idolatry!

1. They begin with a *why* question!

- **v. 15: Why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you.**
- Why questions are very useful because they make you stop and think about what you are doing...
  - And if it is sin or idolatry, it doesn't make sense.
    - Ask that to yourself about your sin—why are you doing this?
    - In their case, why should you worship that which is the same nature as you?
      - There is no good reason to change God into an image that is like man!
      - We worship Him not because He is like us, but because He is God!
        - Idolatry always attempts to take away from His divinity and to transfer His praise to lesser things.
        - We ought to hate idolatry because it doesn't make sense.

2. Secondly, they explain to them that the doctrine of God which they preach calls them to turn away from worthless idols and start worshipping the true God.

- **v. 15: We... 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,**
- Idols are worthless because they do not have the power to make the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.
  - They are therefore not really able to help us ultimately, so it is foolish to worship them.
  - Anything less than God the creator is unable to help us because whatever it is and however great it is,
    - it cannot deal with God at the end of the line.
- As Augustine once said,
  - Why should you worship the god that can keep you safe and the god that can make you rich if there is one God over both of them that can decide your ultimate happiness?
    - What good is it to be rich or safe if you are miserable?
    - Be reconciled to the one true God and then all will be well.
      - Do not and all will be lost.

3. Thirdly, Paul and Barnabas warn about the encroaching nature of idolatry.
  - As I have already shown you, it happens little by little, from generation to generation...
    - as God leaves men to walk in their own ways.
    - In verse 16, it says—
      - **v. 16: who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.**
      - That is what God did with the nations other than Israel whom He continually restrained from idolatry...
        - He left them to go their own way and their own way never led them to God.
  - Our own way is not safe!
    - You need to see that!
      - It leads us further and further away from the Lord until we are lost.
      - We ought to be loath to go our own way in the worship of God or in our belief about God!
        - It is a great temptation because, as I have been saying, we are uncomfortable with certain things about God...
          - But we must not go our own way because our own way always leads away from God.
          - Don't go by your own imagination, but go by scripture.
  - And when we, who have known the truth, hate God so much that we start to lie about Him...
    - Why should He not leave us to go in our own way?
      - Did Jesus not warn some of the churches in Revelation that if they continued to resist His will,
        - He would come and remove their lampstand?
        - That is right, He will take the gospel away and leave them to their own way.
          - There are many churches today that don't have the gospel.
            - They talk about God and about Jesus, but they know nothing of the atoning work of Christ.
  - The very gospel itself teaches us to worship God as God because it teaches us what we must do to be reconciled to Him.
    - It does not deny that He is perfectly holy and almighty in power,
      - but it rather shows us how He has made a way for sinners to be reconciled to Him without altering Him in the least.
      - In other words, with the gospel, we have no need to deny the truth about Him...

- But once the gospel is taken away, we are left to go our own way—
- Idolatry is our own way and it leads us further and further from God.

TRANS> But even though God left the nations to go their own way, Paul says that He has not left Himself without witness...

- **v. 17: 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."**
4. This teaches you that the goodness of God ought to lead you away from idolatry!
- After the flood, God promised that He would preserve the earth—
    - that there would be seed time and harvest...
    - And He has done so—there has been seed time and harvest.
    - Even those nations that turned more and more to idols after the fresh start that God gave through Noah continued to eat and drink.
  - God did this because He had purposed to call these wicked idolaters who had hated Him and lied about Him to repentance!
    - He purposed to do this when Jesus came.
    - He continued to preserve them even while they were denying Him, and that their food and gladness through all those years continued to prove that He was there.

TRANS> And so now that Paul has pointed all this out to them so clearly,

- they ought to repent and turn from their idols to Him...
  - And so should all of you.
    - What idols are you clinging on to?
    - In what way are you denying the true God and His holiness?
    - In what way are you refusing to run the race that is set before you?

#### **IV. Do not harden your hearts the way these men of Lystra did!**

A. You see that they were so attached to their own ideas about God that even after Paul said all these things, they still wanted to go on with their sacrifice.

- **verse 18 says: And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.**
1. They did not like Paul's explanation of what happened as much as their own.
- Even though he was the one who had performed the miracle, and such a miracle that they thought he was a god,
    - they do not want to deal with the true God...

- and the only alternative they can think of is that Paul is Hermes and Barnabas is Zeus.
2. I tell you, idolatry is very hard to purge from the human heart!
- Jeremiah attributed to idolaters these words...
    - “I love foreign gods and I must go after them.”
    - We love them because we are comfortable with them.
      - Try to peel a devoted worshipper of Mary from her...
      - Try to peel a devoted naturalist away from his naturalism.
      - Try to peel yourself away from your own sinful lusts and passions.
        - As John says in his first epistle...
          - from the propensity to self-justify and say you have no sin...
          - from the propensity to love the world, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.
          - from the self-life that does not love your neighbour and give to him.

TRANS> It is very hard to tear idolaters away from their idols...

- Unless you give them another idol as a substitute...

B. Idolaters are an easy prey for deception...

1. If you do not embrace the truth, they you are subject to being blown about by every wind of doctrine...
  - Every time the truth exposes the foolishness of your idol, you are hungry to find another idol as long as you don't repent.
2. Paul and Barnabas would not let the idolaters at Lystra sacrifice to them, but for them the truth was an unacceptable option...
  - So as soon as the angry Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium who wanted to stone Paul and Barnabas show up,
    - the men of Lystra are ready to join ranks with them!
      - **v. 19: 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.**
    - Isn't this insane!
      - Jewish zealots teaming together with idolaters from Lystra!
      - They had one thing in common with each other!
        - The truth had shone a little too brightly for their liking.
    - Isn't this insane!
      - The same men that the men of Lystra were prepared to worship as gods, they now stone as deceivers and criminals...
        - All for one reason—because they hate the true God!

- If they could go on in their deception, and worship Paul and Barnabas—fine—
    - but accept the God they preach?
      - No way!
3. Don't we see this principle at work all the time?
- What are the staunch naturalists doing now that the theory of evolution has fallen on such hard times with genetics and the fossil record?
    - Do they repent and embrace the true God?
    - No, most of them begin to entertain the idea that aliens must have planted life here...
      - They just cannot let go of their idols,
        - so when idols become impossible, they grab hold of an entirely different idol.

TRANS> Wouldn't it be much better to just repent and accept the truth?

C. Know for certain that if you do go on fighting against the truth, you will not prevail!

1. In their zeal to destroy the testimony of the true God,
- they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city that he might be eaten by birds and dogs.
    - They likely did not expect that anyone would dare follow him...
      - But Paul and Barnabas had been at Lystra long enough that there were a few disciples there...
        - One was surely the lame man that had been healed... for he had faith to be saved...
        - Timothy and his mother and grandmother were others and who knows how many more...
          - But whatever the case, these have been gripped by the truth and they cannot deny it.
          - And so they go out to pay their respects to Paul.
    - And verse 20 tells us what happened...
      - **v. 20: when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city.**
      - What a shock this must have been to the disciples!
        - They came around him and he just got up!
        - This has to be a miraculous intervention because the next day Paul heads out to Derbe!
        - He could not possibly have done that without divine healing.
2. But Paul's healing is loaded with symbolic significance!



- The Jewish idolaters and the Lystran idolaters supposed that they could kill the truth so continue comfortably in their idolatry.
    - Now it is true that they might have been permitted to kill Paul—for he was killed at a later time...
    - But the fact that he was not, and that he was the messenger of the truth against their idols,
      - shows us that the idolaters cannot succeed in destroying the truth.
      - It always gets up and comes back at them whenever they try.
        - It just keeps popping up at them.
          - And on the last day, the great day of judgement, it will break forth with such clarity that no one will be able to suppress it.
3. But be wise!
- What can you possibly gain by denying the truth in any way whatsoever?
    - It is always a losing proposition!
    - You can never overcome the truth—it will just keep on screaming at you forever because it is always there—
      - It is always there because God is always there.
      - So little children, keep yourself from idols!
        - You who are clinging to idols, I have a question for you...
          - **Why are you doing these things?**
          - There is no good reason.