

**Saturday, October 8, 2022 • Read Acts 14:8–20**

Questions from the Scripture text: Where are they in v8? Who is there? What was he doing? How long had his feet been useless? What hadn't he ever done? What did he hear in v9? And what was Paul doing? What did he see that the man had? What does Paul command in v10? With what kind of voice? How does the man respond? Who see what in v11? What do they do with their voices? In what language do they speak? What do they say? What do they call Barnabas (v12)? What do they call Paul? Why that? Who comes in v13? Where was the temple where he was employed? What does he bring? What does he intend to do? And who with him? Who hear this in v14? What do they do? Where do they go? What do they do there? What do they ask in v15? What do they say about themselves? What do they tell them to turn from? What (Whom!) do they tell them to turn to? What kind of God is He? What has He made? What has He previously allowed (v16)? But what had He not left Himself without (v17)? What had He done? What two things had He given? With what two things had He filled men? What could they scarcely do in v18? But who came from what two places in v19? Whom were they able to persuade to do what to Paul? Then what did they do to him? Why—what did they suppose? Who gather around him in v20? What does he do? Where does he go? What does he do the next day? With whom? To where?

**How does God witness to His goodness?** Acts 14:8–20 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God witnesses to His goodness by giving faith, by common grace, and by sanctification.**

**God witnesses to His goodness by giving faith,** v8–13. The passage mentions the multitudes four times (v13, 14, 18, 19), and it's not at all flattering. We see the multitudes trying to sacrifice to (so they thought) Zeus and Hermes (v13–14), and hardly able to be restrained from doing so (v18), but easily being persuaded to murder (v19). But there is one man, in whom the Lord has done a great wonder. To the cripple from his mother's womb (v8), the Lord has given faith (v9)!

While faith isn't visible, the healing of lifelong cripples is (cf. Mt 9:2–8; Mk 2:5–12; Lk 5:20–26). Paul is able to perform the apostolic signs (cf. Ac 2:43; 2Cor 12:11–12) by which God attests His Word (v3, cf. Mk 16:20; Heb 2:3–4). So he does so (v10)! Only, there are not enough believers there to make a difference. The Lord is absolutely free in giving salvation, and He apparently hadn't brought that many of them to faith. These multitudes are so idolatrous that rather than listening to the gospel that Paul and Barnabas were preaching (cf. v7), they conclude that this sign has been done by the demons that they worshiped under the names "Zeus" and "Hermes" in the temple in front of their city (v13, cf. 1Cor 10:19–10).

**God witnesses to His goodness by common grace,** v14–18. As God does not owe salvation to anyone, it was His prerogative to allow the Lycaonians and all other nations to walk in their own ways for past generations (v16). They may have thought the long history of their mythology was evidence of a kernel of truth, but they were greatly mistaken. Their traditions, having come from men, were "useless things" (v15).

Only from a living God could come life. Only from Him could come heaven, earth, the sea, and all the (living!) things that are in them. Even more, to man specifically He not only does good but gives the capacity to perceive goodness. So when He gives man "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" (v17), He fills their hearts not just with food but with "gladness."

Life can only come from life. And morality can only come from a moral being. Even their gladness was God's own testimony to Himself. But what had they done? Attributed this goodness to a pantheon of their imaginations. God's witness in the creation is not unclear. God's witness in our own nature is not unclear. He has shown goodness in both areas, commonly, to all men. This is what we call "common grace."

**God witnesses to His goodness by sanctification,** v19–20. The healed cripple is not the only one mentioned here who is a marvelous testimony to God's goodness. Was not Paul once a murderer like these other Jews in v19? But now he rejects the adulation of men (v14–15) and loves those who hate him and stone him. The stoning actually ends only because they thought that he was dead. But other trophies of God's grace gather around him in v20, and he arises and goes back into the city. He continues laboring for the salvation of his intended murderers. Yes, he departs the next day, but he will be back again in v21 to strengthen and organize the church in their town. Paul is one who is being pressed into the shape of Jesus—willing to die unto the salvation of those who are all too happy to murder him!

What is the greatest way God has witnessed to His goodness in your life? What are some ways that He has done so in His common grace? How has He done so in your sanctification?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for making continual testimony to Your goodness. Forgive us for how often we fail to glorify You for it or give thanks. Grant that we would have faith, so that the gladness of our hearts would be directed back unto You. Keep conforming us to the image of Christ we ask, in His Name, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP23B "The Lord's My Shepherd" or TPH219 "O Worship the King"

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