



## Sermon Series Notes

### "Resisting Idol Temptation" (Acts 14:1-20)

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v.1 Further harvest; If we do not quit, in time we will reap a harvest.

v.2 Further hardship. There are tough times after the harvest comes. Sometimes it gets worse after the harvest!

vv.4-7 Even in the Christian life, you gotta know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em, when to walk away, and when to run. See Matthew 2:12-15. Jesus on more than one occasion escaped the clutches of an evil crowd, but when the time came, he resolutely set out for Jerusalem & His final Passover meal before the cross.

vv.8-12 The people of Lystra were descendants of a group of people called the Gauls, a Celtic tribe (Indo-European, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, etc.). Their land was referred to as Gaulatia, or Galatia. In the fourth century they invaded the Roman Empire and sacked Rome. Later they crossed into Greece and captured Delphi in about 280 B.C. At the invitation of Nikomedes I, king of Bithynia, they crossed over into Asia Minor to help him in a civil war. They soon established themselves in Asia Minor. They were a warlike people, but were eventually made subjects of the Roman Empire and became a province of Rome.

Caesar said this about the Gauls, "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted." Another writer of that period described them as "frank, impetuous, impressionable, eminently intelligent, fond of show, but extremely inconstant, the fruit of excessive vanity." And they were prone to idolatry.

Here they want to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods! Zeus was chief or king of the Greek gods, and Hermes was the messenger of the gods.

The Lycaonians had an ancient legend that Zeus and Hermes had once come to their country disguised as mortals seeking lodging. Though they had asked a thousand homes, no one would take them in. Finally, at a humble cottage of straw and reeds, a poor elderly

couple, Philemon and Baucis, welcomed them and shared what meager means they had. In appreciation, the gods transformed the cottage into a temple and made the couple priest and priestess. When they died, they were immortalized. All the inhospitable homes were destroyed. So these people were determined not to make the same mistake again!

vv.13-18 Tearing one's clothes was the traditional Hebrew way of responding to sacrilege or blasphemy.

vv.19-20 These Gauls lived up to their fickle reputation. One minute they are ready to offer sacrifices in worship to Paul and Barnabas, and the next they are trying to kill them!

What an opportunity Paul and Barnabas passed up here! They could have had the key to the city, no more suffering, no more hardships. But they resisted the temptation to allow these people to idolize them.

There are two sides to the subject of the text. The first is resisting idolatry, and the second is resisting the temptation to become an idol.

What is idolatry? The simple biblical definition is “the worship of false gods.”

Common OT gods:

- Baal – god of seduction (Num.25:1-3) Hugh Hefner’s god
- Molech – god of pleasure; The letter god (NHL, NFL, NBA, etc.)
- Mammon – the god of greed (Col.3:5); Kevin O’Leary (“Mr. Wonderful”) on Shark Tank worships this god.
  - Eccl.5: 10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.
- Ashteroth – the goddess of love; Soap Opera god (General Hospital, As The World Turns, Days Of Our Lives, etc.).

In the OT the Israelites often worshipped these gods. Why? Because they were prone to idolatry. But so are we. Why? Because God created us to worship. Read from “The Air I Breathe.”

If we do not worship God, we will worship something, or someone.

An idol: Any person or thing that contends with God for my time, energy, affection, and money.

Follow the trail of your time, energy, affections, and money, and there you will find a throne. And whatever or whoever is on that throne is the object of your worship.

Some people try to have their worship cake and eat it too. They worship God, but they also worship other things as well (See II Kings 17:33). That's still idolatry!

Ex.20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

In Acts 14 these people sought to worship Paul & Barnabas. They "idolized" them. They made them "gods." Check out this definition of an idol:

Idol: deity; icon; hero; star

See John 10:31-36; In v.34 Jesus quotes from Psalm 82. The JW's use this verse to try and prove that Jesus is a "god," but not God. But that's not at all what Psalm 82 is referring to.

Psalm 82:6 I said, "You are gods," you are all sons of the Most High.

We are all God's children in the sense that He created all of us.

Psalm 82:7 But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other *ruler*.

These are people who have position, power, earthly glory, etc.

Psalm 82:1 God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the "gods."

Psalm 82:5 The "gods" no nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness...

This Psalm is a rebuke to those who have become "gods" in this world, but will one day die like everyone else.

Four people became "gods" in my life when I was very young. Their names are John, Paul, George, & Ringo.

Video of The Beatles debut on Ed Sullivan show

All four Beatles were "gods" to me, but the one I eventually tried to be like was Ringo. I cut out cardboard letters "RINGO" then wrapped each letter in tin foil, & attached them on my bedroom wall. I went to Roses 5 & dime and bought rings to wear on both hands. I think I bought a Beatles wig. I idolized Ringo Starr. I idolized The Beatles. But I wasn't alone!

In 1986 all four Beatles travelled to northern India and studied under Guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Over time only George continued to practice Hinduism. He wrote a song that openly declares his Hindu beliefs.

Video song “My Sweet Lord”

John Lennon wrote a song in 1971 during the Vietnam War in which he imagines a world at peace. While I have no doubt of John’s sincerity in dreaming of such a world, the song reveals his very unbiblical beliefs.

Video song “Imagine”

I have come to believe that there’s nothing wrong with appreciating, even enjoying, the creativeness of people that God has gifted, and that are able to play things, write things, sing things, paint things, do things, that perhaps we would love to be able to do ourselves. I still enjoy some of the Beatles songs. For my birthday this past May my wife got me all the Beatles movies. In my opinion only two are worth watching, A Hard Day’s Night & Help. But there are lines that I must be careful not to cross in appreciating talent, enjoying music, etc. If it leads me away from purity & holiness, it should not be a part of my life. If it proclaims anything unbiblical or false, I must recognize and reject it. For example, I love the song Imagine in terms of its musical appeal, and even John Lennon’s sincere desire to promote peace in the world. But I reject the belief system it declares. When John Lennon was alive, every time I heard that song I prayed for his soul. Now prayer will do him no good.

Appreciate and enjoy music, art, sports, etc. Honor men and women God has greatly gifted in a multitude of ways. But worship God, and have no other gods in your life but Him.

And if God grants you privilege, position, power, glory in this life, never allow people to make you an idol. How does one keep from doing this? Simply always give praise & glory to the Lord for who you are and what you’ve achieved. When you score the touchdown, give glory to the Lord. When you write the hit song, give glory to the Lord. When you become successful in business, give glory to the Lord. When you have a successful ministry, give glory to the Lord. And never forget who you are, and who He is. He is God, and we are not!

- See Acts 12: 21-23
- Prov.27: 21 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the **PRAISE** he receives.
- John 12: 43 ...they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Never forget what happens to idols in the end.

- Isaiah 2: 17-18 The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear.

## CONCLUSION

- When Captain James Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands, he first dropped anchor at Hanauma Bay. He was greeted there with great ceremony as the islanders thought he was their god Lono. Cook took advantage of the situation – until one evening, as he was with yet another woman of the island, her husband clubbed him in the back of the head. Cook groaned and fell to the ground, knocked out cold. When he came to, this husband said to him, “gods don’t groan, and gods don’t bleed.” And then he killed Captain Cook right on the spot!
- I John 5: 21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.