

Katamares: Acts: 14:8-23.

14:8 *A Man Crippled from Birth*

14:9 *Faith to Be Made Well*

His Soul Needed No Healing.

Chrysostom: Look, he paid attention, it says, to Paul's words. Do you see the elevation of his mind? In no way did his lameness hinder his eagerness to listen. "Paul, looking intently at him and seeing," it says, "that he had faith to be made well." He was already predisposed in his purpose and resolution. And yet in the case of the others it was the opposite. Their bodies were healed before their souls. Not so with this man. It seems to me that Paul saw into his soul. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 30.6

14:11 *The Apostles Considered Gods*

14:12 *Barnabas Called Zeus*

No One Has Ever Seen God.

Ammonius: In the writers of ancient stories you can find that Jove, even though he was a man, made himself a god and said that he was a god, just as many Roman and Macedonian kings styled themselves gods. There one ought to believe in what was said long ago about this, namely, that some were misled and called certain persons gods. ⁸ Consequently these too were misled in regard to Barnabas and Paul... Barnabas's followers, in order to close their mouths and to instruct them gently, kept saying, "No one has ever seen God." ⁹ We are what we look like, not gods but human. In Jesus alone it happened that he was God and man at the same time for the principle of union. But in this case, these were only men who performed miracles through the Holy Spirit. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 14.12.¹⁰

14:14 *Tearing Their Garments*

The Apostles Free of the Lust of Glory.

Chrysostom: Look! On all occasions they are free of the lust of glory, not only not coveting but even repudiating it when offered, as Peter too said, "Why do you gaze upon us, as though by our own power

or holiness we had made him to walk?”¹¹ These men say the same. And Joseph also said of his dreams, “Is not their interpretation of God?”¹² And Daniel likewise, “And to me also, not through the wisdom that is in me was it revealed.”¹³ And Paul always says this, as when he says, “And for these things who is sufficient?”¹⁴ And again, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think [ought] as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.”¹⁵ Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 30.¹⁶

The Devil Did Not Prevail.

Chrysostom: Notice the vehemence with which all this is done by the apostles: “They tore their garments and rushed out among the multitude, crying.” All because their very beings were turning away in horror from what had happened. For truly it was grief, a grief inconsolable—they were about to be called gods and so introduce idolatry, the very thing they came to destroy! This was the devil’s contrivance, but they did not keep quiet. For what do they say? “We are men, of like nature with you.” Immediately, from the very outset, they overthrew the evil. They did not simply say “men” but “with you.” And then, so that they should not seem to honor the gods, “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.” Notice how they do not mention the prophets at all.... This is because they had learned that one should strive not so much to say something worthy concerning God as something that is of use to one’s listeners. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.¹⁷

14:15 Turn from Vain Things

Correcting a Wonder Worker.

Basil the Great: We find a reason for some illnesses in the saints, such as in the apostle, for, lest he appear to go beyond the bounds of nature and lest anyone consider him to possess, in his nature, something greater and more excellent than is fitting—which was the case among the Lycaonians, who offered him crowns and bulls—he was struck with illness in order to show his nature was human. The Long Rules 55.4.¹⁸

My Flesh for the Life of the World.²⁰

Origen: To sacrifice son or daughter, beast or booty is something completely foreign to us; to offer one’s very self to God and to be pleasing not by another’s work but by one’s own is something more perfect and more illustrious than all vows. Whoever does the latter is an imitator of Christ,²¹ who gave to us the

earth, the sea and all that is in them, and to serve our needs he gave the sky above and the ground below, the moon and the stars. The rains, the winds and all in the world he gave to us. But after all this, he gave his very self. “So much did God love the world that he gave his only begotten Son,”²² “for the life of the world.”²³ What then shall a human do of any greatness when he sacrifices himself to God after God has already sacrificed himself to him? Homilies on Numbers 24.2.6.²⁴

14:17 *Not Without Witness*

The Freely Offered Benefits of Creation.

Chrysostom: Notice that [Paul’s] wish was not to increase the accusation against them but rather that they themselves should refer everything to God.... Notice how covertly he phrases the accusation. And yet if he did this, he would not have allowed them [to walk in their own ways]. He would have had to punish them for having enjoyed so many goods without acknowledging him as their provider. But he does not say this clearly. “He gave you rain from heaven.” Thus also David, “From the fruit of their corn and wine and oil were they made to abound”;²⁵ and in many places when he is speaking of creation, he brings forward these benefits. Jeremiah also mentions first the creation, then the providence that is shown by the rains. Taught by those Scriptures, the apostle says, they were satisfied “with food and gladness.” With liberality is the food given, not only for sufficiency or even according to need. “With these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.” Indeed, it was especially with this that they gained admiration. Do you see that their point was to put an end to that madness? Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.²⁶

14:19 *They Stoned Paul*

Paul Did Not Hate.

Chrysostom: Believe me, it is possible to suffer things now worse than what Paul suffered. Those enemies pelted him with stones, but it is now possible to pelt with words that are worse than stone. What then must one do? The same that he did. He did not hate those who cast the stones. After they dragged him out, he entered their city again, to be a benefactor to those who had done him such wrongs. If you too had endured the one who harshly insulted you and done you wrongs, you too would have been stoned. For do not say “I have done him no wrong.” For what wrong had Paul done to be stoned? He was

announcing a kingdom, he was leading them away from error and bringing them to God. Such things are worthy of crowns, worthy of proclamations by heralds, worthy of ten thousand good things, not worthy of stones. And yet having suffered the opposite, he did the opposite to what was expected. For this is the splendid victory. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.27

14:20 Paul Rose and Entered the City

Strength Made Perfect in Weakness.

Chrysostom: “But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city.” ... Here the saying is fulfilled, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 28 This is greater than the raising of the lame man! ... “He entered the city.” Do you see his zeal? Do you see how fervent he is, how set on fire? He entered the city itself again, to show that if he should ever withdraw, it is because he had sown the word and did not wish to inflame their anger. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.29

14:22 Entering the Kingdom of God

Rejoicing in Tribulations.

Chrysostom: This [the apostles] said, this they showed. But it is purposely so done, not only by the apostles but by the disciples also, that they may learn from the very outset both the power of the preaching and that they must themselves also suffer such things, that they may stand nobly, not idly gaping for the miracles but much more ready for the trials. Therefore also the apostle himself said, “Having the same conflict which you saw in me and heard.” 6 ... And they were taught this by Christ when he said, “Rejoice not that the devils obey you.” 7 For the joy indeed and without alloy is this, to suffer anything for Christ’s sake. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 31.8

The Desire for Vainglory.

Basil the Great: We must receive rebuke and castigation as a medicine that destroys disordered passion 9 and restores health. From this it is clear that those who feign goodness out of a disordered desire 10 to please people lose all profit and plot against the true life itself. The Morals 72.5.11

Approval Through Tribulation.

Basil the Great: "And he snatched me from all my tribulations." ¹² The just person's entire life is tribulation, ¹³ "both straight and narrow the way," ¹⁴ and "many are the tribulations of the just ones." ¹⁵ Therefore the apostle elsewhere says that he has been "afflicted in every way," ¹⁶ and here, that "we must enter the kingdom of God through many afflictions." God does rescue the holy from affliction, but he does so not by rendering them untested but by blessing them with endurance. For if "affliction brings about endurance, then endurance brings about an approved character." ¹⁷ Whoever rejects affliction deprives himself of approval. Just as none is crowned who has no rival, so none can be pronounced worthy except through tribulations. Therefore, "he snatched me from all my tribulations," not by allowing me not to be afflicted but by granting with the test a way out, in order to be able to endure. ¹⁸ Homily on Psalm 33.4.¹⁹