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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2114 ~ Miracles in Lystra.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

After Paul and Barnabas escaped from an angry crowd in the city of Iconium, they travelled south to the nearby town of Lystra. The people in Lystra were very religious. They worshipped in a temple that was built to honour Jupiter, the king of the gods in Roman mythology. Jupiter was hailed the god of the sky and thunder and known as Zeus in Greek mythology.

About 400 BC, the Greek and Roman gods were given more of an embellished story that joined their backgrounds, achievements and crimes. Nevertheless, different countries gave their favourite gods different names. They also made statues of their god which looked very similar to a human being.

Because the people of Lystra had no background knowledge of the one true God, Paul started to talk to them from their religious position to teach them the truth about God Almighty. The Greek and Roman myths were just made-up stories that people believed gave an explanation as to how the world came about. Yet Paul talked about the one true God and how the history of the world started at creation and why sin entered into the human race.

What Paul had to say was totally foreign to the people of Lystra and many people remained very entrenched in their thinking. They found it hard to accept that they'd been taught false things and wanted to resist believing in a new way. When this situation happens, people often want to combine both the old and the new ways of thinking somehow so their old ways could still be considered right as well.

But this isn't possible for the Creator of the universe. In Exodus, Chapter 20, God said to the Israelites after bringing them out of Egyptian slavery: "Worship no god but me. Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals." The Lord Jesus in Luke, Chapter 14, also made discipleship to Him conditional on the person first giving up everything else.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

When Paul started preaching in Lystra, he noticed a certain man in the crowd who was lame from birth. Paul saw that the man had faith to be healed and so commanded him to stand. The man started to walk and leap around. When the crowd saw how this crippled man had been healed, they began to call Paul and Barnabas gods. But because the people of Lystra spoke this in their own language, Paul and Barnabas couldn't understand what they were saying at first.

In thinking Paul and Barnabas were gods, the people tried to offer sacrifices to them. What a mistake these people made! When Christ, the one true God, came to earth, men didn't offer sacrifices to Him. Instead, they turned Jesus – God's Son – into a sacrifice by killing Him! Now these people of Lystra were trying to offer ordinary men the sacrifices that should have been only offered to God.

Finally Paul and Barnabas realised what the people were about to do. In horror, the apostles tore their clothes. They refused to accept any honour or praise for themselves. Rather, they sought to give all the honour to Christ. They hadn't forgotten what had happened to Herod when he accepted the people's praise as a god. He was struck down by God's angel and died.

“We are not gods!” Paul cried. “We are ordinary men who have been sent by the living God to bring you the good news of salvation. We’ve come to tell you to turn from worthless gods like Zeus and Hermes. There is only one true God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.”

In his preaching, Paul emphasised certain things when his listeners were Gentiles, while other things when his listeners were Jews. The reason for this was that the Jews already knew the one true God. But the Gentiles didn’t – they worshipped many gods. The true God was a living God, not a dead idol.

Paul told the Gentiles of Lystra that up until that time, God had shown great patience toward the Gentiles. Even though God had not revealed Himself fully to them like He had the Jews, He had not left Himself without any evidence. The Gentiles could have learnt about God simply by looking at the natural creation around them. God was the One who sent them rain and gave them crops; not the Greek gods they’d previously followed and sacrificed to.

Paul insisted that things had changed – God was revealing Himself through Jesus to all men. The time had now come that the Gentiles too must repent and put their trust in God, because God would no longer overlook their guilt of sin anymore. But even after saying these things, Paul and Barnabas still had difficulty in preventing the crowd from offering sacrifices to them.

After this event, Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium came to oppose Paul. So great was their anger against him that they had walked 100 miles from Antioch to oppose his teaching personally! And they won the crowd at Lystra over and persuaded them to stone Paul. How easily people can be persuaded from one extreme to another! First, the people wanted to treat Paul and Barnabas like gods and then a short time later, they’re so angry with them that they set out to throw stones and kill Paul.

Stoning was a Jewish form of execution and Paul knew it well. He'd been there watching while the first Christian martyr, Stephen, had been stoned to death. After the people had hurled many rocks at Paul, they dragged him outside the city and left him for dead. But when the disciples and new believers gathered around him, Paul quickly recovered. Had Paul been knocked unconscious by a stone and recovered from it? Or had God miraculously brought him back from death? Whatever the case, as soon as Paul stood up, he went right back into the city! He wasn't afraid of what mere men could do to him.

If God healed the crippled man as Paul spoke to him, it was entirely possible for God to do a miracle for Paul too. It wasn't God's time for Paul to die. No doubt, Paul was bruised and bleeding from the ordeal, but he wasn't frightened into stopping his preaching about Jesus Christ. The next day, Paul and Barnabas went to the nearby city of Derbe and preached there.

Some of us Christians feel frightened by the threat of being physically bashed up or abused. No doubt we would try to dodge such confrontations by speaking wisely and being peacemakers whenever we can. But trouble can still occur. In countries where it is routine to send soldiers or police into churches and arrest the leaders and scare the worshippers away, the church leaders accept this type of persecution because they know the church grows stronger and larger by learning to tell the authorities the truth.

One Chinese Christian man known as Brother Yun was first imprisoned in 1984. He was badly treated and like the Apostle Paul, almost beaten to death on a number of occasions. Each time the authorities interviewed him, they demanded to know the names of the other house church leaders. Yun determined that he wouldn't become a traitor and refused to answer any of their questions. He shut his mouth and decided it would be better to die than to betray his co-workers. He stopped eating and drinking but meditated on the Word of God instead.

After a while, the other prisoners and guards became amazed that Yun was still alive, because they knew that he had nothing to eat or drink for weeks. Under normal circumstances, a person can't go for more than 3 days without water to drink. Yun's body started to shrivel away and the other prisoners took bets on whether or not he will live another night. The Almighty God decided to preserve Yun's life. God kept him alive for 74 days without food or water.

The story of Brother Yun's long fast wasn't a surprise to a group of pastors from a remote area in northeast India. One pastor said that in the 1960s when a powerful revival was taking place, one pastor was known to have fasted for 100 days!

Yun said in his testimony that he found, just as Jonah the prophet did, that when God has a call on our lives He will never change His mind. Even if we run in the opposite direction, His call remains the same. Yun believed God preserved his life during that long fast simply because God wouldn't accept Yun offering his life at that time. God's plan for Brother Yun was far from finished.

Brother Yun said that when Jesus doesn't want a believer's life to end, then it is completely impossible to die. Jesus is in complete control. Historians say that the Apostle John was lowered into a large pot of boiling oil by a Roman emperor but John miraculously survived. God hadn't finished with him at that time either – John still had the book of Revelation to write!

There are many reports of how God has intervened in the lives of believers whose life work for Him wasn't completed. Wicked men in China have tried to shoot believers, only to find their guns wouldn't fire properly. Others have survived hangings and attempts to throw them off cliffs or burn them alive. And so it happened with the Apostle Paul, the Jewish leaders stirring up the crowd would have thought that Paul was dead after his stoning. But God wasn't finished with Paul's work for Him then.

If we could just catch an understanding of how much our God is in control of this world and our lives, we would rest comfortably in this knowledge and never be afraid of the daily news. Threats and intimidation wouldn't distress us because Jesus is in control and already a conqueror! He said in Matthew, Chapter 28: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

Jesus assured the Apostle John in Revelation, Chapter 1: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Jesus is also in control of what can happen in your life, for in Revelation, Chapter 3, He said: "What He opens no one can shut and what He shuts no one can open."

If only we could learn to practise the words of this song:

Simply trusting ev'ry day, Trusting through a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small, Trusting Jesus, that is all.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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