

**Acts 14:8-18 NIV**

**“The temptations of preaching”**

“In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed <sup>10</sup> and called out, ‘Stand up on your feet!’ At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. <sup>11</sup> When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in human form!’ <sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

“<sup>13</sup> The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. <sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: <sup>15</sup> ‘Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. <sup>16</sup> In the past, he let all nations go their own way. <sup>17</sup> Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons;

he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.’ <sup>18</sup> Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.”

**On a mission trip to southcentral Turkey, by God’s power, Paul and Barnabas enabled a paralyzed man to jump up and walk.**

The fellow had never ambled before.

**Because of the miracle, townspeople wanted to honor Barnabas and Paul as Greek gods.**



**Considered by Greeks as father of all gods and humans, Zeus was the chief Greek god.**

Chief Zeus ruled from Mt. Olympus.

Hermes, a messenger god, was Zeus’s son.

**Because he was likely older and bigger than Paul, the Lystrans thought Barnabas to be Zeus.**

**Paul talked more so they deemed him the messenger Hermes.**

The town folks and the priest of Zeus began to offer sacrifices to these miracle-working “gods.”

**The Lystrans thought their esteemed gods healed a paralytic right in their city.**

These actions horrified Paul and Barnabas.

**They knew they were mere human servants of the one God, who created heaven, earth, the oceans, and everything they contain.**

Barnabas and Paul rushed into the crowd, shouting:

**“Friends, why are you doing this?  
We too are only human, like you.”**

**We should honor and encourage one another.**

**Yet when we receive accolades and awards, we humans easily puff with pride.**

I can't speak for other preachers, I can only confess the difficulty of keeping my ego out of what I say and do.

**“I can live for two months on a good compliment,” said Mark Twain.**

It's tough when a preacher has to go that long.

There's an old story about a politician speaking from the back of a train on a whistle stop tour. In one town, the politician droned on and on. Suddenly, the train pulled out of town while he was still talking. The crowd broke into applause cheering and shouting. The politician sat down and said to his aide:

**“I don't know if they were applauding me or the engineer.”**

**In the city of Lystra, folks cheered the speakers, not the Creator and Engineer.**



**The Apostles pointed people to God.**

God designed and created the stars, this planet, and every living and inanimate thing in existence.

**The Apostles wanted those folks to honor God.**

**They knew they were mere mortal servants of our eternal Creator.**

God meant for this and all churches of Jesus to tell and demonstrate God's wisdom and power; not to glorify churches or their leaders.

**As Paul later wrote:**

*“<sup>9</sup> I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.*

*“God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

*And “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 3:9-11 New Living Translation & Ephesians 3:20, 21 NIV

**Churches and members struggle to put God first and to fully honor Him.**

**Even the best of us possess some bad inclinations.**

A little boy scraped a chair across the kitchen floor and climbed on it to reach the cookie jar on the top shelf. His mother heard the noise and called out, "What are you doing in there?" With his hand in the cookie jar, the child replied,

**"I'm fighting temptation."**



**Sometimes temptation comes unexpectedly.**

**More often we succumb to the same old temptations that dog us for years.**

**For now, I'll pass on those that trouble me.**

**Remember the creation story in Genesis?**

**God's created son Adam lived in a paradise.**

**He had plenty to eat and drink.**

**The living was pretty easy; work wasn't hard.**

**He had a wife just made for him.**

**But when Satan tempted them, both fell.**

**Adam's bad choice affected all of us.**

**You know the results:**

**"Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."<sup>2</sup>**

**In other words, Adam's sin infected all of us.**

**The Bible never says that we inherit Adam's sin. The idea of original sin came from a man named Origen in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century.**

**The Bible says repeatedly that the child doesn't inherit the sins of the father; E.g. Ezekiel 18:20 Adam did "dig" a filthy cesspool into which we're all born.**

**Our generation should understand this principal better than any previous generation.**

**Think of the Covid19 virus.**

**A few humans likely brought it into existence and are responsible for its creation.**

**Covid's existence lead to lots of evil behavior, e.g. pride, power grabs, greed, fear, selfishness.**

**None of us is guilty of Covid19 or of Adams's sin.**

**Adam, a created son of God succumbed to temptation bringing sin and death into the world.**

**God doesn't hold us responsible for Adam's sin.**

**He judges us on pride, power, lust, greed, fear, selfishness, and envy to which we often succumb.**

**"The wages of (our) sin is death."**

**Mark 1 tells us about another Son of God.**

**Jesus, the Son of God wasn't created.**

**He's totally unique—the only one of his kind-- "Only begotten" means that.**

<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:12 NIV

**He came from God and was God, but he took on human flesh.**

**Compare Jesus’ temptation with Adam’s.**

**Adam enjoyed a cushy life with God.**

He didn’t scoop snow or worry about slipping on ice.

**The tree of life was accessible to Adam.**

**Eternity was closer and more convenient than a refrigerator filled with Lite beer.**

The fruit from the tree of life didn’t cost Adam and Eve a dime or shekel, but they never tasted it.

**When Norma and I first moved to LA, we went to the beach on Christmas Day.**

**“This is heavenly!” we thought.**

**But some days we went hungry.**

**In Eden, Adam and Eve never got hungry or thirsty.**

**They worried about no deadlines.**

**Pride and envy tempted both Adam and Eve.**

**“You will be as God knowing good and evil.”**

**“Just think, you can be a god.”**

**They failed the test.**

**Contrast Jesus with Adam.**

**Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness alone.**

**Someone has said that the real test of who you are is, “Where do your thoughts go when you are alone?”**

**Aloneness tests us mightily, doesn’t it?**

**Jesus faced 40 days of loneliness.**

**He didn’t eat during the entire time.**

**Then, according to Matthew’s Gospel (4:3), “The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”**

**Some ask, “If Jesus were God’s Son, what temptation could he have had? It should have been easy for him.”**

**Jesus is God, but when he came into the world, he was born of a woman as all are.**

**He suffered all the strong feelings, passions, urges and desires any man possesses.**

When insulted and injured, he faced the same proneness to pride and anger we all have.

**“He was tempted in every way as we are,” Hebrews 2:14.**

**He overcame an even greater temptation.**

**The more power that you have, the greater the temptation to use it.**

**Guys, would your temptations increase, if you knew what was going in the mind of the beautiful woman you work with—if you knew that she’d be receptive to your move on her?**

**What if you could change ordinary rocks into diamonds? Would you be tempted, ladies?**

**Jesus could convert a few loaves of bread into several thousand; Satan tempted him to do it.**



**If Jesus failed his selfish tests, we'd have no chance to overcome death, we'd die in our sins.**

**He didn't say to Satan, “Let me think about it.”**

**Jesus wasted no time giving his reply,**

**“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”**

**How do we ready ourselves to resist?**

**1. Don't be fooled by the packaging.**

You've likely seen artists' conceptions of Satan; beady eyes, pitchfork, and long tail.

We don't know the form in which Satan appeared.

If he appeared in a fully physical form to Jesus, I think he was dressed fashionably and handsomely.

**Can we be sure that Satan showed in male form?**

Maybe he looked like a Jewish Jennifer Lawrence.

**Paul said: “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light,” 2 Corinthians 11:4.**

**Temptations rarely come in ugly packages.**

**We often later say, “It looked so right.”**

**“It all appeared to be so good.”**

Check the veneer. Don't let the packaging fool you.

**2. Learn Scripture and read all the Scriptures.**

**Read the first part of Matthew 4 today.**

**Notice how the devil quoted Scripture to Jesus.**

**He quoted out of context or left out vital parts.**



**Jesus knew every word of Scripture.**

I pray that you will start your day with the God's Word; let Him guide you through the day.

**First, we need to check temptation's packaging.**

**Second, learn Scripture—God's Word.**

**3. Keep in mind that one of our weakest times is immediately after a success.**

**Sometimes it occurs right after God has given us a wonderful blessing—when we have the feeling that we're God's chosen person.**

**That's why Solomon warned, “Pride goes before destruction,” (Proverbs 16:18 NASB).**

**When we succeed at anything, it's not the time to gloat, parade and show-off.**

**It's the time to get on our knees and thank God.**

**Are you serious about resisting temptation?**

**Improving your life? Gaining control?**

**If you humbly continue to put God in Christ first and honor Him, God will one day say of you, “You are my beloved child. I'm pleased with you. Enter the joys of heaven!”**

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