



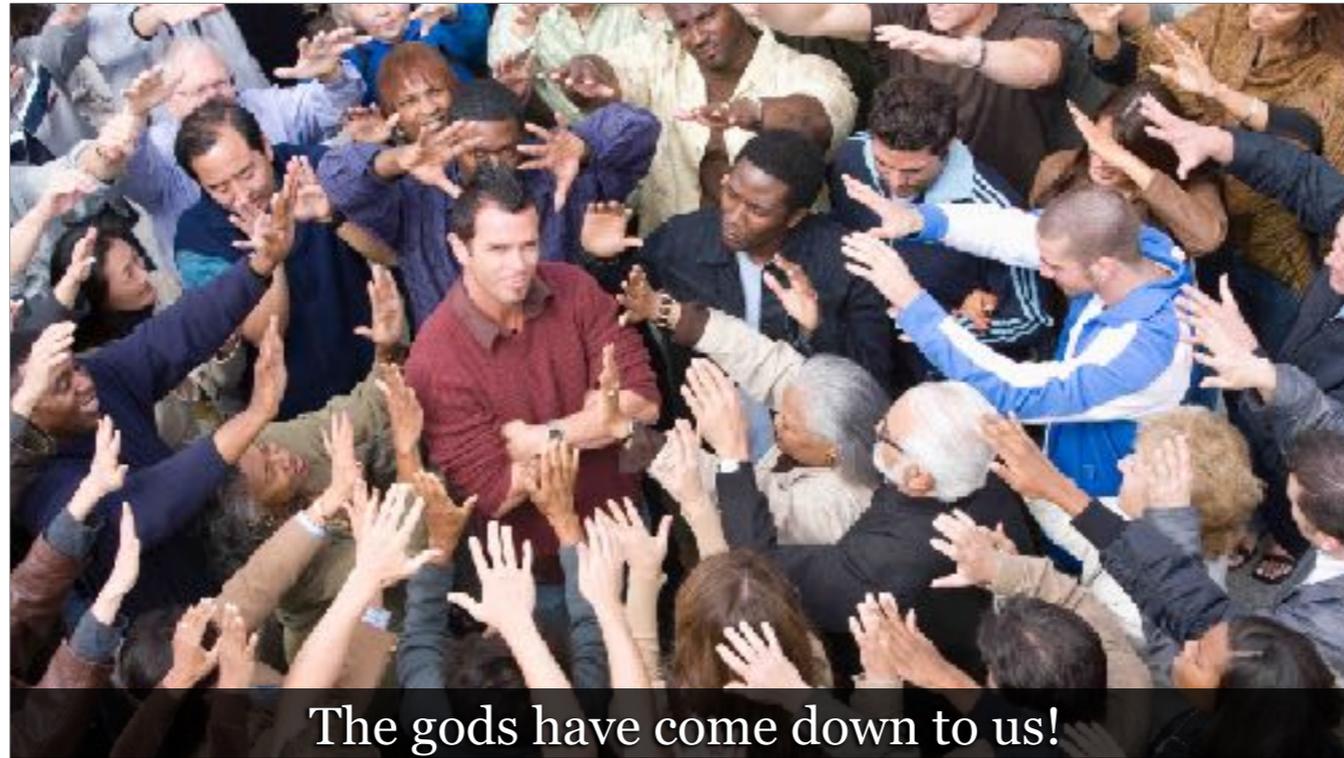
- Paul and Barnabas travel deeper into the heart of Asia Minor arriving at Lystra
- They had been chased out of Iconium by the people, so they were kind of on the run.
- 7: and there they continued to preach the gospel



- Ovid, Roman poet
- Zeus, the chief of the gods, and Hermes, the messenger of the gods,
 - had visited an area in the province of Phrygia
 - but had been denied lodging by the local people.



- An elderly man and his wife welcomed the gods to their humble dwelling.
 - The gods amply rewarded the couple's hospitality by turning their house into a temple and, at the couple's request, appointing them priests in this temple.
- The gods punished the rest of the people by destroying their homes.



The gods have come down to us!

- The healing of the lame man lead to the crowds to realize that something special had happened.



The gods have come down to us!

- 1 Corinthians 2:2-5 (ESV)
 - 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
 - 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,
 - 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom,
 - but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
 - 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.



- The people equated the healing with the power of gods
 - 8) They were aware he was crippled from birth and had never walked
 - 10) He sprang up and began walking
 - This was beyond the power of man



The gods have come down to us!

- Unsurprisingly, they attributed this miracles to the gods they knew
 - gods have come down in the likeness of men (common part of their stories)
 - Barnabas = Zeus (“father of gods”)
 - Paul = Hermes (chief speaker)



The gods have come down to us!

- They have to stop the people from thinking they are gods and from worshiping them.
 - 14: tore their garments
 - 14: rushed into the crowds
 - 15: Why are you doing these things?



The gods have come down to us!

- This is what they had done, they were doing what they thought was right to honor the gods who came to be among them
 - The idea that the gods would come to them is very interesting and special.
 - Indicates that they at least conceived that the gods might be among them



The gods have come down to us!

- 16: past generations he allow all the nations to walk in their own ways
 - This was because God had chosen Abraham and was going to bless all nations through Him
 - Israel and the Law of Moses were given to the descendants of Abraham



The gods have come down to us!

- This does not mean he stopped dealing with other nations:
 - Pharaoh Nēco
 - Sennacherib
 - Nebuchadnezzar
- But it was never the same as with Israel being God's chosen people



The gods have come down to us!

- 15: We bring you good news
 - But they already thought there was good news ... worship, sacrifices
 - What was better news than a miracle and that the gods had come down visit them?



- Acts 14:15: we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God
- What does Paul mean by “vain things”?
 - Context: Zeus, Hermes and such gods
 - Why are they vain?
 - Vain: worthless because deceptive or ineffectual (TDNT, p. 571)
 - They are useless and disappointing



- This is exactly why Paul had been sent to the Gentiles
 - Acts 26:17-18 (ESV)
 - 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'



- Needed to open their eyes
- Romans 1:23
 - and exchanged the glory of the immortal God
 - for images
 - resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.



- Jeremiah 10

- Jeremiah 10:2-3 Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are vanity.
- Jeremiah 10:5 Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.



- Jeremiah 10:11 Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”
- Jeremiah 10:14-15 — for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish.



- So, naturally, we need to ask ourselves about our vain things.
 - 5: don't be afraid: can't do evil nor good
 - 12: no power, no wisdom (cannot create)
 - 15: delusion



- What is it we fear? What do we think has the power to help us or save us?
 - What is our delusion?
 - What is it in our lives that cannot accomplish it's purpose and thus leaves us disappointed and longing for more?
 - You may be thinking, as we've been repeatedly conditioned to think (and not incorrectly), about things: money, fame, status, work



- Consider, how we create God in our image by failing to think of him correctly.
 - We take bits and pieces of the things that we read, choosing what we decide what we like best about God
 - So God becomes a god of wrath and destruction: so we fear him.
 - Do we need to turn away from this vain god?
 - Or God becomes a god of love (as we define it)
 - Do we need to turn away from this vain god?



- But, perhaps just as worthy of our consideration, what are the things we think of religiously that we substitute for God?
- The Israelites fell into this trap: (cf. Isaiah 1:13)
 - vain offerings — because of their sinfulness
 - incense, New moon and Sabbath convocation
 - Remember these were all commanded, for their good. They are not wrong of themselves.
 - The people had made them wrong.



- Jesus warned about “empty phrases” in our prayers like the Gentiles (Matthew 6:7)
- Jesus spoke of making our own commandments (Matthew 15:9)



- There are times when we are worshiping Jehovah in name only, but really we worship in vain
 - Praying can become our god
 - Singing can become our god
 - Bible reading can become our god
 - Going to church can become our god
 - Evangelism can become our god
 - Unspoken rules and expectations can become our god
 - We fear them, ascribe power to them.



- And we measure our own faithfulness by our god
 - And often we measure the faithfulness of others by our god
- These things commanded by God are not wrong in themselves. It is we who make them into gods.
 - Have you made something into your god?
 - What have you made into your god, exchanging it for the true God?
- Do you need to turn from these vain things?



Living God

- The Good News of the Living God
- 15 a living God,
 - who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.
 - 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.
 - 17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness,
 - **for he did good**
 - by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons,
 - satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”



- Living (not stone, or wood)
- Creator (power and wisdom)
- Allowed nations to walk in their own ways
 - What once was tolerated, but not approved by God
 - Including the ideas of Zeus, and Mercury, and sacrifices to them
 - What they had attributed to their gods was not from those



- He did Good (witness)
 - With Jewish audiences, the main witnesses Paul used was the OT prophecies and the apostles
 - Although they had not been aware of this God, God had still provided enough information that they could have known



- Romans 1:19-20 (ESV)
 - For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.
 - For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature,
 - have been clearly perceived,
 - ever since the creation of the world,
 - in the things that have been made.
 - So they are without excuse.



Doing Good

- He did good
 - So often our concepts of gods is about wrath, vengeance, capriciousness.
 - gods must be appeased else man will face punishment
 - That men are beneath the gods, mere play things
 - This is a part of the legend... because of a lack of hospitality, they destroyed a city



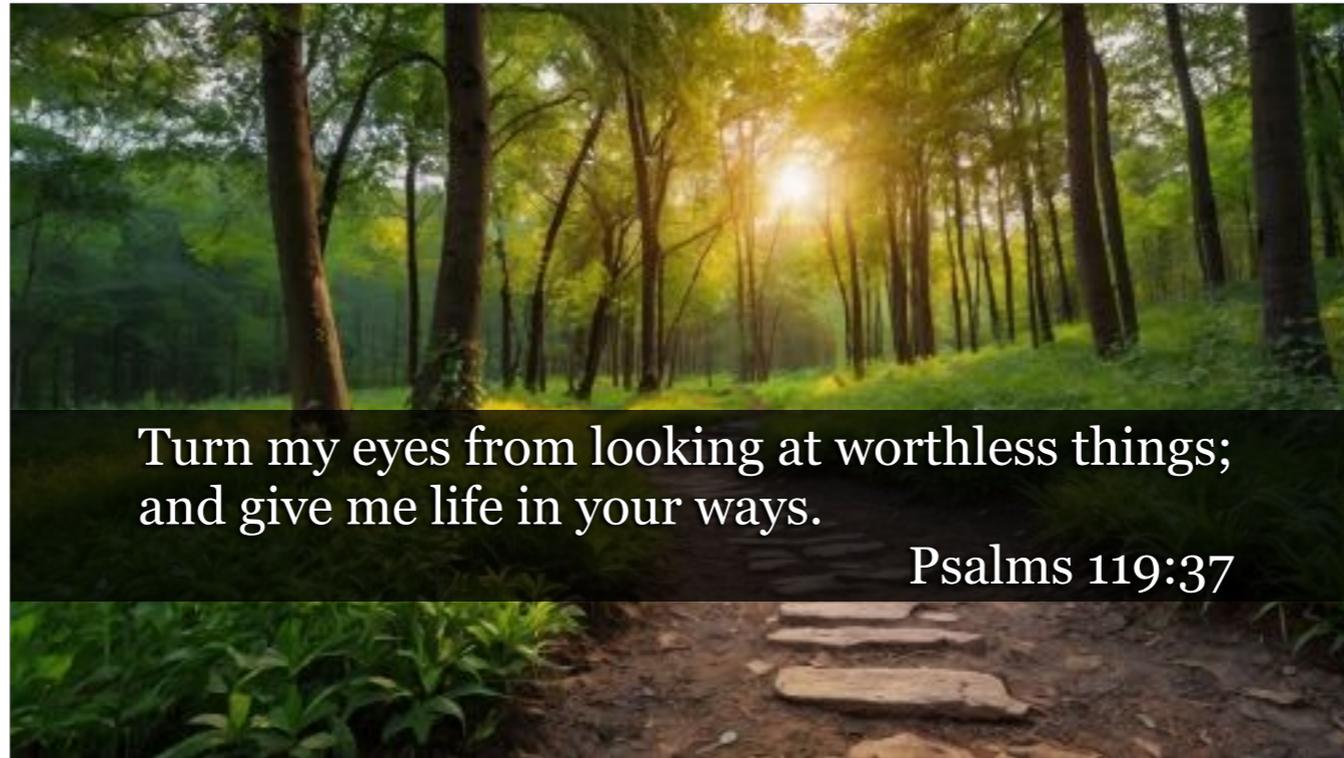
- God has done good to them
 - rains from heaven
 - fruitful seasons
 - satisfying hearts
 - food
 - gladness



- Not only does this demonstrate the reality and power of God
 - But, more importantly, it shows his character and care for mankind
 - Even those who did not honor him
 - He still cared about their existence and their heart



- Paul doesn't get to talk about Jesus
 - But he's set it up really well for the next thoughts about Jesus
 - Maybe similar to what he wrote to the Ephesians 2:1-10



Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
and give me life in your ways.

Psalms 119:37

- Psalms 119:37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

We implore you
on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Call to Action

Photo Credits:

All photos from 123rf.com, istockphoto.com, crestock.com, bigstock.com, dreamstime.com, thinkstock.com, and shutterstock.com are copyright protected. They are used by permission. Please do not reuse without permission.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hans_Vredeman_de_Vries_and_Gillis_Mostaert_-_The_Sacrifice_at_Lystra.jpg

https://www.123rf.com/photo_5475664_young-man-surrounded-by-crowd.html

https://www.123rf.com/photo_270249883_philosopher-statue-in-living-tree-symbolizes-wisdom-nature-fusion.html

https://www.123rf.com/photo_268804735_happy-friends-set-up-hot-dogs-in-the-sunny-yard-surrounded-by-colorful-condiments-generative-ai.html

https://www.123rf.com/photo_264839911_contrast-between-the-fragile-radiant-young-green-foilage-and-the-dark-textured-hands-of-the.html

https://www.123rf.com/photo_253842592_pathway-in-green-forest-with-sun-rays-through-trees-nature-background.html

https://www.123rf.com/photo_128908839_gypsum-copy-of-ancient-statue-augustus-and-antinous-head-on-dark-textured-background-plaster.html

Vain Things

Acts 14:8-18

Synopsis: Paul and Barnabas go to Lystra and heal a man. The people decide that Zeus and Hermes have visited their city and Paul and Barnabas must persuade them to stop from offering sacrifices to them. So Paul speaks to them of turning from the vain things and to the living God.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

“Let all that you do be done with love.”