

## **Bold Prayers: Living God** by Pastor Kurt Hoover

**Acts 14:8-18** <sup>8</sup> Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, <sup>10</sup> said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. <sup>11</sup> And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" <sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. <sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and 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. <sup>16</sup> In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> 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." <sup>18</sup> Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

**John 20:11-18** <sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup> Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

***"The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"***  
**- Acts 14:11**

**How close they were! These are the words spoken in the native tongue (Laconian) by the people of Lystra when they observed what God could do through the Apostle Paul.**

**Have you ever had an experience where you thought, God did this, God did that... The words, the actions, the outcome of the experience were just too significant to have been by chance. The outcome too significant for you to give your abilities any of the credit. You just happened to be the person God used in that moment.**

**When was the last time you had an experience where God has made himself known?**

**Acts 14 paints a vivid picture. There have been many paintings done throughout the centuries depicting the priests of Zeus attempting to sacrifice a bull in garlands, a very Greco-Roman thing to do... and they intend to make the Sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, as if they were gods. They literally thought Barnabas was Zeus come to visit them, and Paul was Hermes his mouthpiece.**

**But even before that the detail in describing how God used Paul to heal a paralyzed man. It puts us right in the mind of Paul. He sees the need, sees a hint of hope or faith in the man's eyes. And I would imagine without even thinking it through when he sees this man's hope – Paul says in a loud voice, 'Stand up!' Now here is the real question ... Did Paul do this or did God? Did Paul leverage some power? No that is not the picture painted here. Was there a power inside of Paul that brought this event to happen? A power that only required Paul's presence. Yes!**

**A Living God! Paul is not offering these people a power to leverage... if they just have enough faith they might do the same thing. That they might be God in the likeness of man! This is not what Paul nor any of the early churches had to offer. In fact it was the opposite. Good news that there is a living God who works through human beings.**

**It is subtle but important. We will never be God. But God can be and has been the whole time in us. And all the good we have to offer our families, the community, our team and the stranger... All the good we have to offer is the living God doing what He does. Using our voices and our actions to care for His creation. It has nothing to do with us, but the one who is present in us.**

**When was the last time you had an experience where God has made himself known?**

**Here is the Pr. Hoover theory on God's presence. Just how living our God is. Well, really God is no matter what convoluted beliefs you may have in him.**

**When I visit someone in the Hospital. Never for a moment do I have any notion that I am doing anything for that person. When they thank me for the visit, and the words of hope from scripture, the promise of communion... I have a similar response.**

**'God cares about you, He is the one who brought you those words, that hope and the promise.' This visit is about how much God cares about you. My visit, you families visit, the words of the nurses and doctors and the person who picks up your lunch tray... those are all God showing his love and care**

**for you in your time of need. God cares about you. He is a living God!**

**Think about it this way. Who would you be with out the countless expressions of love given through parents, siblings, dear friends, coaches and mentors... often at just the right time. When you needed it. That didn't happen because you have really caring people in your life. That happened because God will use anyone in anyway to show His love for you.**

**Just take a moment and think about how many times God has shown his love for you! That is a living God! You are a product of God's love.**

**It is not our job to become like God; it is God who choses to show up like people.**

**We are not, nor do we have to be, God in human likeness. But miracle of all miracles. Human beings bear not just the likeness, but the actual presence of God! It is not our job to become like Paul; you already are everything Paul was. An empty shell through which God produces His love.**

**God taking on the likeness of man has only happened through one body in history. Jesus our Lord. And that body is not limited to a 30-year period 2000 years ago. Moses talks with 'the Lord,' at the Tabernacle, Daniel was lifted up by 'the Lord,' in the wilderness, even Paul being blinded on the Damascus Road happened after Jesus Ascended into heaven.**

**Which is all just a testament to how truly living God is. His Holy Spirit takes over our actions and voices throughout our lives. Always tugging on our heart and the back of our minds. A living God!**

**We would not have harvest or rain without our Creator creating. There is a very real power that carefully maintains the proper mixture of oxygen and other gases that we need to breath and maintains within the narrowest of margins a magnetic field that allows the energy we need from the sun without the radiation that would kill us all. A living God!**

**And for a select few, God can show up in the likeness (and reality) of human flesh. Every time we read 'The Lord' in the Bible most theologians will tell you - that is a reference to the actual incarnation of Jesus. Jesus is not limited to one period of history. He can and He has shown up at any time often when we have needed him most. A living God!**

**And what is more the Bible clearly states that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (John 1). Through our history billions of people have heard the Word of God (the Lord) not just in dreams, or an audible voice out of nowhere... but the same good news shared in millions of churches through time and this earth.**

**A living God!**

**I give you these same words from God this morning from Paul:**

***...we bring you good news, that you [have turned] from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (Acts 14:15)***



\* Sts. Paul and Barnabas in Lystra, Adriaen van Stalbeem, ca. 1610 – 1620