

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 14: 8-18), the Evangelist Luke gives us a fascinating account of St. Paul's healing of a crippled man, lame from birth, who had never walked. (Acts 14:8) The setting for the miracle is Lystra, a Roman colony of retired army veterans. It was fertile territory for their missionary work. Indeed, we learn from Luke that the cripple "had the faith to be healed" (Acts 14:9) According to a local legend handed down to us by the Roman poet Ovid two Greek gods, Zeus and Hermes, once before made a disguised visit to this region but the natives had refused them hospitality and turned them away. Only a peasant couple, had agreed to take them in. In thanksgiving the gods had turned the modest home of the couple into a beautiful temple and, in anger, had destroyed the dwelling of the rest.

The crowd who witnessed the miracle was exuberant. "The gods have come down to us in human form", they cried. They called Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes". The angry reaction of the two healers is dramatic. They tore their garments. Idolatry offended their Jewish sensibilities. "Men, why are you doing this? We are of the same nature as you, human beings" (Acts 14:15).

Paul and Barnabas made it clear that God, not they, deserved credit for healing the cripple.

We may wish to consider if we take inordinate pride in our achievements and fail to give the Good Lord the credit he so richly deserves. Every so often a gifted athlete is interviewed by reporters following a great performance in the game. He rarely takes credit for his own success but give all the credit to "the man upstairs". One must be impressed with the athlete's faith and humility.

"Only for the glory of God" is a favorite Christian maxim. Surely it was embraced by the two great missionaries, Barnabas and Paul.