

A Tragic Yet Triumphant Ending

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 May 2016

Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] Question 5 Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5:30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7:59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And when they did not agree with one another.

[10:29] Thank you.

What was this past Thursday.

And if them, you little bit of this ocean.

start stopping and they start getting out of your car. It's like freeway. Can you imagine that on I-17 in Phoenix? That'd be psycho. May 11th in Israel is Memorial Day for soldiers and victims of terrorism. And then the next day, May 12th, is Israel's Independence Day. Interesting how with the history of the nation of Israel, with just these things, you see tragedy, and yet triumph.

[12:40] Tragedy in the sense, six million Jews were killed, but then three, four, five, six, seven years later, 1948, they become a nation.

Triumph. And then the war, 67 war, 73. What a picture. How would cause yet a nation?

What a picture. Tragedy and triumph. That's what we have in our passage today as well.

Interestingly enough, with the Jewish people again.

Tragedy and triumph. It's tragic that most Jews reject the truth of the gospel. Most Jews do.

Is anyone here Jewish? No one in here is Jewish. Peggy, are you Jewish? You're not Jewish. No one's...

[13:47] Amazing. No one in here is Jewish. Which just proves the point of what we're seeing, how as a whole, Jews, Israelis, are hardened to the gospel.

That's tragic. The hope promised to them by God, through Moses and the prophets, they don't see it.

And yet God still always has a remnant. There's a few Jews that respond. Which is actually a picture of what we do, how we give people the gospel as well.

When we give people the gospel, lots of people that we interact with and talk to them about the gospel, they reject it, don't they? But God's still faithful and some people respond.

So as a title to our message, Acts, just do it. Be who you are. Let God use you to fill His mission. The title we have is A Tragic Yet Triumphant Ending.

[14 : 52] Here in Acts 17, excuse me, Acts 28, 17 through 31, though Acts ends with a note of sadness, because of a lack of Jewish response to the gospel, the hope of Israel, it also ends in triumph because the gospel advanced to one of the greatest cities in history, to Rome.

A tragic yet triumphant ending. Israel's hope is God's kingdom, rule fulfilled, and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ repent and believe in Him.

Ah, this is for them! And yet they reject it. And yet this salvation is extended to all who hear and respond to the Lord Jesus Christ. For anyone!

The gospel is for anyone and everyone. Paul witnessed to these Jews in Rome. Some responded, but as we see, most, many of them will just reject the gospel in fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 6.

But the message continues to go out. Not just Jews, but Gentiles. It's all people. Rejection by the Jews was nothing new for Paul.

[16 : 12] It's found throughout the book of Acts. All people are called to respond to the gospel, Jew or Gentile. To the Jew first, because Jesus fulfills and culminates the hope of Israel, as we're told in the Old Testament.

Jesus is God's Messiah. The promises are fulfilled in Him. To the Jew first, but then to everyone, because He saves anyone and everyone. Everyone needs compassion, as we sing.

Everyone needs forgiveness. We all need that. It's just sad, because the Jewish pattern has been stubborn refusal to listen to the Lord God.

Nothing new under the sun. And yet, is that not a picture of anybody? Is that not a picture of what happens to anyone when you give someone the gospel just hardened to the truth?

Hardened to the gospel? It's a picture of what we deal with with all people today.

[17 : 24] All need a heart change to believe. A Jew or Gentile? We all need to have our hearts changed.

God, in His sovereign power, He brought the gospel to the capital of one of the greatest cities of human history, Rome. Which is not really the end, it's actually the beginning journey of it making its way to the ends of the earth.

But not only is God sovereign in bringing the gospel to Rome, God is sovereign in bringing people to salvation. It's our only hope. God's sovereign to the end of the earth.

And which is why the kind of two themes that we're going to see here in this passage is rejection but also bold witness and God's sovereignty.

So in the midst of tragic rejection, the gospel word of the kingdom and the Lord Jesus Christ will triumph. It will triumph. God is still active today changing hearts to embrace His Son in repentant faith.

[18 : 33] God is still working. I'll steal my thunder from what I'll say later on in my message. The one who's the greatest hero in the book of Acts is God.

He's the hero. He's the one who's moving. He's the one who's acting. He's the one who's bringing everything about. It's God. And you know what? He's still the hero today.

It's a good thing. It's a good thing He's the one who's working and yet the amazing part which we'll see in a moment is that the hammers that He uses, the instruments He uses is us.

Wretched sinners. He uses us as the means to give someone the gospel. Isn't it amazing? What did John the Baptist say? God can raise up stones to be children of Abraham.

The stones can cry out said Jesus if we don't speak. God can use chairs to speak the gospel but He decides to use us. Amazing.

[19 : 44] So, we've got three different questions. Question number one, what is tragic? What's tragic is people who reject the gospel? Hearts are hardened to the truth.

It's just a reality that we have to face. The reality is, the tragedy is, people will reject the gospel.

Whether you talk to them at school, at work, your neighborhood, relatives, friends, anywhere and everywhere, unfortunately, people reject the gospel because their hearts are hardened to the truth.

Notice verse 24. Some are being persuaded by a thing spoken. We'll look at that in just a moment.

Excuse me. But others would not believe. The normal response Paul would receive from Jews, few believed but most, many of them, disbelieved.

They rejected God's message to them. This is nothing new for Paul. He saw this in Pisidian Antioch. He saw this in Corinth. He saw this in Ephesus. Acts chapter 13, chapter 18, chapter 19, blah, blah,

blah.

He continues to see this. 25. These leaders did not agree with one another. He called together these prominent Jewish leaders in the community there in Rome.

[21:06] They weren't agreeing with one another. A division came about which, by the way, fulfills the prediction by Simeon in Luke chapter 2, verse 34. He'll bring about the rise and fall of many within Israel.

He'll bring a division because few will believe in the gospel who are of Jewish origin. Most will reject them, which even today, the nation of Israel is an absolute rejection of Jesus as being the Messiah. praise God that the few that did respond was to show that God will keep his promise to always have a remnant of Jews repent and believe in his son.

I've got to give you some glimmer of hope as we're looking. This is awful. This is horrible. We'll look at the great stuff in just a second so I'll give you just a little tidbit of that in the midst of this horrible part.

So notice what happens. the leaders are departing and Paul gives them this final word. By the way, he says, he warned them about their rejection. He says, rightly did Isaiah, excuse me, the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet speak to your fathers.

[22:23] He quotes from Isaiah attributing the father's response to them. In other words, Paul used this passage to warn his audience that they're following the pattern of their fathers of rejecting the truth.

They rejected the truth in Isaiah's day. They rejected the truth when Jesus was around and now they're rejecting the truth that Paul was speaking. Isaiah, excuse me, Paul is like Isaiah and the hearers that he's speaking to hear just like national Israel.

Like parents, like children. As the people of Isaiah's day rejected the message and the people have rejected Jesus, so here with Paul too. Notice, he says, go to this people and say, you will keep on hearing but will not understand.

You'll keep on seeing but will not perceive. Why? Why? Verse 27, the first part, for the heart of this people has become dull.

Israel has a problem. Israel's problem if they had a dull heart. Their eyes, their ears, their hearts were closed to the message of salvation.

[23:48] Dull hearts result in plugged ears and blind eyes to the truth. because notice how it says, keep on hearing but will not understand, keep on seeing but will not perceive.

Why? For, the heart of this people has become dull. Isaiah's message was simple in Isaiah chapter 6. It was clear but the people were unwilling to receive his message and act upon it.

The same way with Jesus and the same way with Paul. And with their ears they scarcely hear and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and I should heal them.

If God would open their eyes and open their ears and soften their hearts they would return and God would heal them. So what does this mean? I should put that on the screen.

It takes an act of God. It takes an act of God for a person to respond.

[24:58] It takes an act of God for the person to embrace Jesus. It takes an act of God for a person to repent and believe in the gospel. it takes an act of God.

He says in verse 28 since you reject it let it be known to you that in this salvation goes to Gentiles they will hear and respond. Maybe Paul was baiting his own people when he says this.

Maybe prodding them not to disobey God's commands said one writer. Trying to provoke jealousy and the Jews talks about that in Romans chapter 10 verse 3 verse 19 to 21 chapter 11 of Romans Paul talks about this provoking jealousy amongst his people.

Notice he warned these Jews about their hard heartedness which would result in God's judgment upon them. Which is exactly what Isaiah said. Isaiah said the same thing to your fathers and you rejected it and God judged you.

Why are you going to reject it again? Aren't you listening? Respond! Are you here today and do you need to respond to the gospel?

[26:18] The fact that God is a holy God and he created you and you should worship him at all times and yet you have rebelled against him you've broken his law he should condemn you and yet Jesus came took on flesh his life was perfect in every way complete righteousness he lived he died as a substitute for sinners resurrected from the dead the call is now for you to respond to repent

and put your trust in Jesus alone that's the gospel you should respond to the gospel don't let your heart become hardened to the truth respond to Christ repent and believe God's message calls in short what is this where did this come from oh it came somewhere okay anyways God's message calls for humility and repentance a radical reoriented of one's thinking and behavior towards God this was

God's message to the people in Isaiah time with Jesus with Paul and even today to you to us but it takes a work of God in the heart what happened with Lydia in Acts chapter 16 God opened her heart to the things Paul was speaking and she responded our problem is that we have woeful disobedience lest we should see the truth with our eyes hear the truth with our ears and understand from the heart and return God heals us by saving us God must act as I said to you earlier this means that God is sovereign not only of the message going out into all the world God is sovereign in that but he's also sovereign in opening hearts opening eyes opening ears in order for people to respond to his message the tragedy is people are hardened to the truth they reject the truth everyone has dull hearts deaf ears and blind eyes unless the spirit of

God does a work whereby he quickens the soul to understand the gospel word do you see why we need God's enabling power to clearly simply and accurately give the gospel word this is why we're given the spirit to enable us because when you have this when you hear about this tragedy that people's hearts are hardened you can just become so depressed and we need God's spirit to enable us to speak this word which we'll get to in just a second we'll talk about that but here's a prayer for us today how this applies to us specifically pray that we will continue to be soft to his truth his word we're not hardened to God's word but be ready to hear and joyfully receive the word to be transformed by his great grace are you ready for that do you pray for that here's something to pray for for yourself and for the church this is what you can pray for when you're driving here on a Sunday morning when you're driving here on a Wednesday night when you're coming and you come through the doors or come here or there some of you can pray God soften me to your word soften your people to your word let us be ready to hear let us be ready to be transformed by your great grace what is tragic people's hearts are hardened to the truth ah here's the good news what is triumphant God still changes hearts and people still respond to Jesus ah praise God for that praise the Lord for that notice verse 24 that first part and some were being persuaded by the things spoken and then verse 28 let us be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles they will listen in other words they will respond the message that's triumphant is that God still changes hearts people still respond to Jesus Christ hope all hope is not lost in other words it's not hopeless we might feel like it feel rejected feel alone no as Elijah was there depressed and saying nobody's following you the Lord says I still got 7000 not bowing down to Baal Israel in northern Israel 7000 are not listening but they're listening to me God still has people he's saving God's salvation has always been for all people but now it happens it goes out to them in other words it now comes to you see before the Old Testament the message was always for all people but in the

[31:59] Old Testament you had to become a Jew go to Israel now when Jesus comes he fulfills all this now the message goes out to you repent and trust in Jesus repent and trust in Jesus in the Old Testament repent and trust in you but you don't have to become a Jew anymore no need no need the message of salvation is for anyone and everyone this was promised long ago in the Old Testament it's always been like that Genesis chapter 12 verse 3 and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed in Christ and even if Israel to whom these promises were directed to first and foremost even if they reject it it will still go out because God is still changing hearts and saving sinners but Paul continues to have hope in his own people and God continues to proclaim the gospel to those rebellious people

Romans chapter 11 verse 25 Paul says I don't want you to be uninformed brethren but this mystery a partial hardness happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and thus all Israel will be saved not every single person is Israeli but the people as a whole naturally will respond to the gospel that will happen one day Paul is not saying that all Jews are excluded he's not giving them the gospel at all only if the gospel word would now be proclaimed to Gentiles not just to Jews which once again it brings Simeon's words to mind in Luke chapter 2 the gospel will go out to all hope for Israel but also a light to the Gentiles John the Baptist spoke about that in Luke chapter 3 the gospel will go out to all people and they will respond it's a good thing God is still in the business of changing hearts so that people will respond to

Jesus Christ he's still in that business he hasn't gotten out of that business and Gentiles can get into the kingdom of Jesus the same way as a Jew would get in repent and trust in Jesus Christ alone that's the part that rubs Jews the wrong way what are you kidding me they're supposed to follow the law they should be circumcised no no repent and trust in Jesus alone that's it so you have what's tragic hearts are still hard to the truth God softened our hearts truth triumphant God is still in the business of softening hearts and changing hearts ah now here's where the catalyst runs in here's the means by what means does God triumph what's tragic hearts are hard what's triumphant God still changes hearts okay but what means does he triumph by what means does God change hearts as we proclaim the good news this is where we come in we go we connect we testify and we try to persuade them to Jesus Christ that's what we see Paul doing verse 17 to 23 30 31 this is what he does once again Paul is a great example for us he always finds a way where he can go and connect with people and try to convince them persuade them and testify of Jesus Christ this is what he does so he arrives in Rome verse 17 three days later he calls together the leading men of the Jews the Jewish population in Rome was about 20 to 50 thousand Rome was about a million people the different part there was an independent group of Jews in Rome they weren't like a collective whole there was no central organization which was to Paul's benefit and they weren't very wealthy either but Paul is trying to be proactive here prevent any opposition that may come his way but also he wants to take advantage of the opportunity to proclaim the gospel he's going to go connect with the

Jewish community what's his pattern starts with the Jew first he brings them together verse 17 there the end brethren though I had nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem to the hands of the Romans they examined me they were willing to release me the Jews objected I was forced to appeal that's why I brought you guys together to speak with you I'm wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of this Israel what's he doing four points I did nothing against our people or customs I'm a good Jew the Romans wanted to free me the Jews opposed to that so I had to appeal to Caesar I'm in chains for believing in the hope of Israel I'm a faithful Jew I wanted to see you and speak with you I'm on trial for Israel's hope notice what he does here Israel's hope is wrapped up in the person and work of Jesus Christ our hope is wrapped up in the person and work of

[37 : 32] Jesus Christ and that's the message that we speak so notice the response from these prominent Jews verse 21 we haven't received letters from Judea concerning you we haven't heard a word about you well come on how is this possible many different reasons his case was delayed he arrived in Rome first before those clowns did maybe the Jews in Jerusalem were relieved he's out of our hair he's out of here we don't see him anymore good we don't have to worry about that guy he's in Rome but notice though what they say 22 but we desire to hear from you what your views are for concerning this sect it is known to us it's spoken against everywhere that the local Jews in Rome they saw it's an internal thing they're curious to hear this other side now they're going to listen but with skepticism we'll listen to you but we're a little bit skeptical verse 23 day comes set the day great numbers show up and what does Paul do the best thing which just drives him he loves doing this explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning

Jesus from both the law of Moses and from the prophets from morning until evening the promise of the kingdom and the Lord Jesus Christ belongs together Jesus is the fulfillment of the kingdom promise Paul witnessed or testified and he's persuaded he went he connected he testified tried to persuade that's what Paul does that's what we do so the tragedy is that people's hearts are hardened to the truth was triumphant though God still is in the business of changing hearts and the means by which he does that is he uses us as the catalyst he uses you just be who you are let God use this goes back to the whole point in the book of Acts let God use us to fulfill his mission he just uses us as we go we connect we proclaim we go we connect with people we proclaim it's just a part of our

DNA as a church as an individual as a Christian God fulfills the scripture in his eternal son and notice in the word Jesus Christ God will remove anything that hinders his saving purpose for humanity any sin death Satan anything that stands in a way he's going to get the word out and he uses us to do it let me say a few words about verse 29 drop to verse 29 think that's in brackets in your Bibles when he's spoken these words the Jews departed having a great dispute among themselves seems like this verse was added later it's not in key manuscripts for all you nerds out

there Papyrus 74 Sinaiticus Alexandrinus Vaticanus the miniscules Byzantine manuscripts most of them are dated later it has this we will not take it as the original but notice once again verse 30 and 31 Paul's still doing the same thing verse 30 two full years in his own rented quarters he stayed there either he was paying for it or the

Christians are helping him pay for it either way he was welcoming all who come to him preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness God's kingdom is his promised rule found through Jesus Christ his son and Paul's just openly doing this going connecting trying to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ that's what he's doing so then what happens to Paul after this we don't know two years and then we don't know but what we do know is this message of forgiveness the message of God's rule in Jesus and of his salvation of sinners has begun to reach the ends of the earth because it made its way to the gentile capital of the world the Rome and God did it through the faithful servants proclaiming his message that's how he does it that's been the means by which he goes about doing it using us individuals proclaiming the gospel

God's new reign over this world began with Jesus his eternal son was enthroned at the right hand as a royal messiah the royal messiah it will continue until Jesus returns to completely fulfill his role and that's where we come in he uses us so as we look at the book of acts as a whole who's the real hero God's the real hero because though hearts are hardened God is the one who's changing hearts God is the one who revealed the gospel word through the Lord Jesus Christ God was the one who fulfilled the promise for the gospel word to reach the ends of the world the focus is on him and God is the one who created the church to be the vehicle through which he would proclaim a message of hope to this lost evil hurting world that he changed his hearts and saved sinners he's the focus he's the hero and yet he uses just a bunch of punks to proclaim his message unbelievable isn't it wonderful to know that God brings hope and healing through the gospel it's amazing that God does this that sinners can be forgiven guilt and shame can be swept away with freedom joy glory there's freedom for those who are gossipers liars there's freedom for those who have looked at porn there's glory for those who feel shame by being sexually abused there's honor for those that have been angry and bitter

[44:17] God frees you the gospel frees you what a great God he's the main hero in the book of Acts and so this statement kind of that first statement kind of gives you a tidbit of what we'll look at next week priming the pump next week as we look at Acts 29 that's we're going to see we're going to kind of unpack that how God will use us now oh and one more word Paul he's one of our human heroes he remained faithful to proclaim the gospel of both Jews and Gentiles here's an example for us to follow it's tragic that people reject the gospel it's tragic that their hearts are hardened but God still changes sinners and he uses us to do it just be who you are and we pray father help us as a church may we be challenged as a people your people to be the means by which you use to proclaim forgiveness freedom joy satisfaction we're made to make you our greatest treasure in your son the

Lord Jesus Christ and we have this message and you use us to change the hearts of sinners you've changed our hearts you've shown us grace so here we are we're at your feet you've been so kind and gracious to us we're at your feet use us let us just be who we're called to be take a few moments if you would and ponder what we've seen in God's word this morning in the book of Acts after a few moments we will do our time of giving and sing our last two songs ponder and praise the Lord maybe ask him to keep softening your heart his word ask him to we as a church would be softened to the word let's sit and let's think them come from

Amy I'll get together and they're