

Turning the World upside down

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[0:00] Acts 17 tells us here of the account of Paul as he is in Thessalonica.

In the context there the Jews in verse 5 they were moved with envy and there were some rough types there who gathered a company and set all the city on an uproar and assaulted the house of Jason and sought to bring them out to the people.

And when they found them not they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.

These that have turned the world upside down they've come here, these stirrers, these troublemakers they've come, they've turned the world upside down and they're here as well. I want to talk along the theme of the world and our influence on the world.

And I guess you could look too at the world's influence upon us. I'll quote you from a secular source. A secular source that says this, Just look at us, everything is backwards.

[1:15] Doctors destroy health. Lawyers destroy justice. Universities destroy knowledge. Governments destroy freedom.

The major media destroys information. And religion destroys spirituality. You could see truth in that statement I think. In the world that we live in the context of the world and the ways of the world and the influence of the world.

And even the world can see, even this source here can see there's something wrong with planet earth. There's something wrong with the human race, with the world that we're living in, with this planet that we're residing in.

And the thought really goes to the very core of the heart of man. Right down to the very core of every heart. And when the world was made, in Genesis 1 verse 10, God saw that it was good. It was good. It was the best. And yet, just, I don't know if it was hours later, maybe minutes later, Adam went and wrecked it all.

[2:25] But our first parents turned the world topsy-turvy. Upside down, when they chose to be like God. They wanted to be like God. They wanted to choose sin and disobedience and rebellion against God's way.

And our world since that time has been damaged by sin. It's damaged. It's been wrecked. And that is society's biggest problem. I know before I got to church tonight, there was a troubled man talking to me.

And I just couldn't get away from him. He just wanted to talk about his troubles and all the concerns and difficulties within his life. And without meaning to be glib, and I prefaced it with that, I said, your answer is Christ.

It's Christ that you need. It's Christ that you need. You know, all of these other things that are going on are side issues, really. And that's not to say if Christ comes in, life's going to be hunky-dory. But when Christ comes in, at least you've got someone who stands by you. He stands with you through life's trials and troubles. He'll be with you. He'll hold you fast. And he'll help you to have that strength that is beyond your own.

[3:40] And this man, he needs Christ. It's his biggest problem. It's not all the peripheral things about family troubles and finance troubles and all the woes of society about him.

It's Christ that he needs. And that's the government's biggest problem too. That's the biggest problem about our environment. It's Christ is the one. It's Christ that people need.

It's Christ who's the answer to man's every problem, really. Because sin is the ultimate problem. Sin entered the world and ever since, sin has wrecked everything that was good and right and true.

And mankind now views upside down as the right side up. That's why we need to be those, as mentioned here in Acts 17, we need to be the people who are turning the world really the right way

up.

You know, because the world is upside down. Now the wrong is the norm. The model, the ideal, our world is upside down. This world is the wrong way up and we need to turn the world upside down.

[4:43] And as God's people, we are called to be walking upright in an upside down world. So we are called to be salt in this world that is needing that preservative power of the salt because it's corrupting and dying and needing that restraining influence that we are called to be.

We are called to be the light in this dark in this dark in this dark in this dark in this dark in this dark in this dark world. To shine as light while we have his light within us. And God's message itself, this Bible, this word from God, this message from God is the answer that we need, that our world needs around us.

And yet to our world it sounds upside down. It sounds, it sounds too amazing. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, when our Lord called out in Matthew 5 and surrounds there, to give to those who take, to love those who persecute us, to pray for those who spitefully use us, to bless those who curse us.

It sounds upside down because it goes against the grain, doesn't it? It goes against the flesh, against how our natural man would think and act. God's ways are upside down to the world. It sounds so contradictory, so contrasting to how the world would have us think and act and live. And turning the world upside down is really what we are called to be, to do. Because it's really turning things to the right side up.

[6:16] That's what happens when God breathes upon a people, upon a community, upon an individual, upon a place. In days of old, in revival times, where God touched whole communities.

I was hearing of late, of how there's been some great transformations in some communities where pubs have closed down. Because there's not been the patronage, because the people are in the prayer meeting instead of at the pub.

And how there's a transformation that can occur. And that is where God turns the world upside down, isn't it? Where there's a revival, where there's a real revival, not a pretend revival.

Where there's a reformation that starts in a reforming of character, as well as a reforming of the church. Where there's a revolution, a turning of something upside down. That's what God wants to do through you and me.

There's a slogan here about soul winning, which is really God's working through you. Using you as his instrument, his vessel, his messenger. And that slogan is this.

[7:30] Evangelism is turning this world upside down for Jesus Christ, one life at a time. One life at a time.

So, we might not see a community wide encounter with God. We can, we may. But, yet, each one of you has an opportunity to minister one by one.

One soul at a time. One soul at a time that you can have an influence on, as a communicator of the gospel, of the message of Christ. To each one that they can be turned around.

Their lives can be turned around. They can have that experience of being made a new creation. Of becoming a new creature in Christ. As he transforms them from the inside out.

And turns them upside down. And as the church, as God's family here in this place, in this community. We want to choose that which is God-honouring. That which is biblical.

[8:33] That which marks us as different from the world. That there's something about us. There's something about our lives that breaks the mould.

That we are really biblicists. That the Bible is our guide to life. You know, I've heard it said there was a preacher who was a man.

A preacher who was being interrogated to be the new pastor of a church. And they asked him, are you an Arminian or a Calvinist? He said, I'm a biblicist.

I'm a biblicist. That's what we need to be, isn't it? You know, it's a Bible doctrine. It's Bible doctrine we need. It's sound doctrine. And to have a church that is a church with momentum.

A church that is on the cutting edge. And this is the cutting edge. The Word of God, that's what we need. It's not some razzmatazz. It's the cutting edge that is the Word of God.

[9:31] The sword. The sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit. The Word of God. That's what we need. The cutting edge of conviction. Of sound doctrine. Someone said this.

To be the bride of Christ. To be the church. To be the church. We must be divorced from everything that's in the world. That should be the separation.

That should distinguish us. That should make us distinct. As the body of Christ. As the bride of Christ. As a pure spotless bride. For a husband. That we as that picture of the church should be pure.

And spotless. And cleansed. For him to receive. And to be united with. And friends today. We need to be non-conformists.

Non-conformists. Many of the men of God of old. They weren't part of the establishment. They were non-conformists. In other words. They didn't conform to the. The mainstream.

[10:31] And sometimes. And not necessarily so. But the mainstream of Christianity. The popular. Flow of Christianity. Sometimes can be lacking. In that Bible. Foundation. We see that. I believe we do see that. In our day today.

Where the mainstream. Has got off track. It's got away from. The people. The people. The people. The people. The people. The people. The people.

The people. The people. The people. It's got away from that narrow way. And it's. It's too broad. It's. There's something missing. There's something lacking. It's like a.

Really. The gospel is missing. The gospel is missing. I've been hearing some. Messages of late. Talking about. That the church is missing. So much. In terms of. The popular gospel.

Terminology. That is being used. I've talked about it briefly. This morning too. About. How. It's sometimes. Missing the point. About.

[11:26] What salvation is. It's. It's not about. God blessing you. And. God. God doesn't intend that. Church is some kind of. Bless me club. And that. It's all about blessing you.

That's about honoring him. It's. He is the one who deserves the honor. His. Work of Calvary. Is deserving of our honor. Of our praise. Worthy is the lamb. That should be our attitude. Not. That salvation is some. Fire insurance policy from hell. Salvation is. All about what he has done. Worthy is the lamb. And. He is worthy. Of purchasing us.

Because he. Is deserving. Of everything that he has done. To claim us. To pay for us. And. Our simple faith is all. That we can offer. In response. To his.

Almighty grace. And. We need to be. Unconventional. At times. Unorthodox. That we can. Not. Bow to the. Popular opinion.

[12:23] Or the. What is popular. Christianity. Where it's getting. A stray from. The word of God. We need to. Be willing to be. A voice crying. In the wilderness. And not.

Always following. That which is. The popular. Model. And. Go against the grace. It's a natural inclination. For all of us. To feel. That we want to be liked. And we want to be part.

Of a crowd. But. If the crowd's going. In the wrong direction. Then we don't follow the crowd. Amen. We don't want to follow the crowd. That's for sure. And if normal means. Following the course of this world.

We don't want to be normal anymore. We don't want to be normal. We don't want to be. Uh. Accepted. And. And. And. Unite normal. Unpeculiar.

Amen. That's a good point. Absolutely. Don. Don. It's more peculiar than most. Amen. But. We praise God. We need to be a peculiar people. Absolutely.

[13:18] That's. Spot on. We need to be a supernatural people. A radical people. A godly people. And. That might mean. People might say. Oh. That's.

Getting a bit too radical. And they said that. People like. Of Elijah. Of old. He was called a troublemaker. He that troubleth Israel. In 1 Kings 18.17. He was called a troublemaker. And I know.

Some of these street features. They're called troublemakers. They're causing a bit of trouble. A bit of commotion. A bit of strife. A bit of stirring up. And that can. It goes against the flesh for even them. I'm sure. It doesn't come easy.

I'm sure. It doesn't come. Naturally. And. For us to have the unpleasant experience. Of. Of that kind of. Standing out from the crowd. But. Yet. We're called to be.

Standing out from the crowd. And. To be. To be. Radical. Like. Elijah was. Like many of the men and women of God were. Through the pages of this book. The Lord Jesus himself was called. A friend of sinners.

[14:13] That was radical. He was different. And the Bible describes the Christians of those days. As regarded. As being strange. In 1 Peter 2. Dearly beloved. I've received you as strangers and pilgrims abstain. From fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13. 1 Corinthians 4.13. And 1 Corinthians 4.13.

And 1 Corinthians 4.13. Paul described. The believers of his day. Being defamed. So in other words. People. Bagging them. Deriding them. Calling them. Names. Being defamed.

We are intrigued. We are made as the filth of the world. And are the off scouring. Of all things unto this day. He says they're treated like dirt. They're treated like scum.

Like the off scouring. Like filth. Like scum. Of the world. of the world and like that too there's many men and women of God I'm sure who face that kind of persecution even in Australia where different ones I'm sure teachers in public schools at times where they won't teach evolution they stand against that they stand against the tide and I'm sure they face derision and persecution in their workplaces for that and it's commonplace in every place in the world today I'm sure that the Christian testimony is scorned and mocked and that which is gross and opposed to it is exalted and praised and celebrated friends we need to be non-conformist with this world and God wants his people to fear God not man to fear God we should fear God more than fearing a man and a man's displeasure or a man's getting upset with us and God wants his people to be passionate for the truth to be on fire to be unstoppable outrageous to be filled with intensity faith-filled people faithful people living lives that are evidenced by sacred devotion discipleship and a changed life a changed behavior we see that in Romans 12 that familiar passage therefore I beseech you reverend by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God not conformed to this world as some described it as being pressed into the mold of world and shaped and pressured into the world's way of thinking and living but be transformed by the renewing your mind that you might have the blinkers removed that you might have the scales fall off like with Paul that you might see the truth that your mind might be enlightened with the light of the gospel that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God that God's power can come and transform us and renew our minds now friends today it's true it's a reality a sad reality I believe a sad case in many circles of churches today that some churches believe in being contemporized contemporized following all the ways of the world it's almost like there's scarcely a line drawn where it's too far and scarcely a place that they say look we draw the line on at that and no further because you see even mosh pits mosh pits in churches carnality blaring hard rock head banging crowd surfing even stage diving suggestive dancing we're talking about church not talking about the disco down the road or the local rock concert we're talking about church I know as a parent at one time when we were in the pentecostal movement at one time our children went to a youth event and our son came home and he had a sore head from head banging at the Christian meeting that he had been at friends this is happening and it's sad it's sad it's very sad uh very very sad but this is what is going on and I'm glad I'm not in that scene anymore the stage is dominated by the drum kits and the loud

[18:58] speakers the belching smoke machines it's all about entertaining about being upbeat feeding people's emotions drumming up an excitement and you even get to give God a round of applause that's church now there's a lot of talk about the presence of God but it's all lacking in substance really there's an absence of God friends now this is not true of every church uh thankfully there's still some who are restraining who are holding back but it is true in many circles today and it's a sad sad reflection on how the message has been watered down and diluted such that

there's no gospel evident there's no gospel evident there friends people take offense when i say these things um i don't mean to pick on anyone i'm not doing that i'm just saying how it is this is how it is it's the reality it's the truth and friends it's difficult for me to say these things got to draw the line somewhere you know how much clothing do they remove when they're singing on the stage or how much when does that rock beat influence people to to to listen to that that that is the same style of music when they get home or in their car on the radio if you develop a love for that it's going to take you further and further and further that's the danger brothers and sisters honestly that is the danger that that it would be better to be restraining that than to succumb to that and then it becomes a slippery slope that's the danger that's all i'm urging and plea for that and if people are offended then then i can't help that but it is it is a fact that the truth is being watered down it's being watered down and it needs to be proclaimed we are sinful rebels against the holy god this is what we need to hear we are sinful rebels and i was talking in brief this morning too uh along this line against the holy creator god we're utterly undeserving of his mercy we're utterly undeserving of his grace of his gospel we are worthy of his wrath we are deserving of his wrath we're deserving of his punishment and we're objects of his righteous anger against our sin there's nothing that we can credit to our own account in our favor everything that we can credit to our account is grossness and and unworthiness it says of us that even our righteousnesses are us filthy rags even the very best things that i can do are just utterly unworthy of his name of his grace and god would be just in punishing and wiping us out in his righteous anger and judgment we're under the sentence of death but thankfully he stepped in didn't he he stepped in in our place he stepped in to stand to take the punishment for us for you for me he died as our substitute our atonement he turned aside god's wrath and now we can receive his forgiveness we can be saved on the day of judgment and it's not about us having some kind of a accepting of some or some parenting of words that we don't understand or don't fully conceive it's not about us doing god a favor by inviting jesus into our heart it's about god that we should bow in in humble adoration

that it is god almighty who is absolutely deserving of our all of our heart of our will of our whole substance of who we are it's about us trembling and bowing before him and acknowledging who he is and what he has done and of his absolute worthiness worthy is the lamb worthy is the lamb it's that kind of an encounter with the almighty that we need and of our recognizing our absolute sinfulness and as i touched on this morning that there's not one here that deserves it not one there is none righteous no not one there is none that seeketh after god there is none who who understand there is none not one not one who is righteous not one who is good enough for heaven and yet he is the one that he takes our very place i saw a little video clip about um it was a kind of a drama of a bunch of people coming up before a a couple of people in white clothes that are kind of pretending to be doing some kind of scientific test and uh have this meter behind them with a um good and bad uh kind of a big meter behind them with a big uh arrow on it and uh these people came up to the these uh folk and they were being asked whether they were good enough for for heaven and you know they were parenting all the things they might have done or not done or you know they didn't commit too many particularly bad sins and and yet they all ended up in the bad section and they had the file there with all these pages of all their sins and and some of them had only a little bit of things and lots of good things but but they still didn't measure up it wasn't good enough it all came up with not good enough not good enough for heaven and then this man came up and he had a big file and it was full of all the sins there's lots of sins there in his file lots of reasons why he was not good enough and he got up to the the folk and as they started talking to him the lord jesus came and stepped in in front of the examiners and he was the one who stood on the scales to be kind of measured as to who who was good and who was not and i said what are

you doing here he says i'm standing in this person's place and so it was jesus who was measured and jesus was good obviously obviously absolute good he was absolutely good enough and and so the man was able to go with jesus the lord jesus to heaven i was just picturing that thing that the lord jesus he steps in front of the judgment seat he steps in front of us as that one he is our advocate with the father he is the one who steps in front of the the judge and takes the very punishment for our sins here's the one who is good enough and likewise too for us it's having that acknowledgement that he is the one who's all good and he's the one who can save us only he can do that and so think about friends can you cling to christ to find his forgiveness to chase his holiness to pursue his working of his spirit within you we need that awakening we need an awakening we need a turning over an overturning a reviving a revolution our worldliness is talked about as being the lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes the pride of life it's been described as anything that leads away from god rather than closer to god and you could see we see it emblazoned on the front covers of popular magazines oftentimes many of those people who grace the front covers of our magazines the popular magazines and newspapers they're living self-indulgent lives hell-bent on pleasure partying pleasing themselves to hell and it's the world and the ways of the world and yet these are the ones that the world praises and follows and loves someone said worldliness is what any particular culture does which makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange the tv the media it says that sin is normal and i know in the workplaces we live and work in that's the message we've been barraged with all the time and i was talking with a school principal recently and she was talking with me about something we would agree with that she was saying how they're encouraging healthy eating within schools and so they're transforming all the canteens so that there's healthy food snacks there they're taking away some of the junk food that's a great thing it's a great idea and she said now we can't go and knock on all the parents doors and and and convert all the parents to this way of uh living of this kind of healthy food practice but we're going to influence the children and then the children uh will learn and the chip and we can change the children we can change the children and so that eventually this healthy food kind of practice will be endemic in society and i believe you could say that too about our world that we live in change the children change the children change the children in the schools help them to see that what the bible says is is not normal is normal it's accepted and we should celebrate it change the children when we change the children they'll grow up they'll be our policemen they'll be our judges they'll be our governors friends change the children and you'll change the world and that's what the world is doing worldliness it's invading through the schools and so sin our worldliness is what any particular culture does which makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange and so those that are righteous we know that in the news and in the the way that the message that our world would project about christianity is christians are weird they're weirdos strange they're wackos you know find any news report about any particular christian or christian-like kind of group and label them a cult find the slightest little thing that i've done wrong and magnify that and magnify that and magnify that and put that all across the media and on the headlines so that christians are seem to be warped and weird and friends this is what is going on it's the world it's unbiblical philosophies and sinful lifestyles it's the ungodly movements that are abounding and it's the sinful bent of the world and its influence and it's like that in the bible in lot's day lot he uh pussyfooted around sold him long enough that it influenced him it affected him and the world is going to impact your life it's going to impact your family we know we that are parents or parents-to-be we know the great responsibility we have of these little ones we're bringing into the world we don't to see them corrupted and the world is wanting to impact you your family your thinking your values your priorities the world we could say so much more i've really got so much more we could talk about but the world is talked about so much in the bible there's many things we could say about the world there's many verses we could talk about for example paul said i am crucified to the world and the world is crucified unto me that should be our relationship with the world we've been delivered from it as many scripture verses i could give we're not of the world as the lord told us in john 17 we're hated by the world yet we're sent into the world we're to be preaching the gospel to the world we're told to live godly in the world to love not the world nor the things that are in the world to have no friendship with the world and the things of the world the question is for everyone here tonight what has the stronger attraction for you is it the lordship of christ or is it the lure of the world i can be guilty of succumbing to the lure of the world and i have been and i i know i'm flesh and friends yet it must be the lordship of christ that should predominate our thinking of our love of our affection let the love of christ let the lordship of christ guide you and

lead you and anything that comes between a man and god is worldliness that hinders godliness and christlikeness that keeps a man from living a god honoring life being worldly minded is the opposite of being spiritually minded and that world's thinking can saturate us if we don't watch out and be mindful of it and be careful of that resist that there's an incremental thing too whereas there's an incremental change that happens we've seen that i know uh we that are older uh ian and don i'm sure um we could uh james we could think of how the world has changed and it's continuing to change and yet like if we were to travel back some 20 years to to see what was accepted and projected and accepted in the world of that time and what was not accepted and allowed at that time that it's a different world now and yet it's incremental in other words it's little bit by little bit by little bit inch by inch it's a cinch you know that's what the world does it it corrupts and it keeps corrupting and like for us as believers sometimes we don't see those incremental changes those little bits of changes that happen we must be ever on our guard for that that cumulative effect that incremental effect that subtle slowly desensitizing that is going on through entertainment and what we might have once not tolerated we can be influenced to accept and finally to embrace that is what is going on that is what is happening there's a conditioning there's a an incremental change and modern culture is normalizing deviant behavior it's normalizing it it's redefining what is right and what is wrong this is what is happening and the media's influence is very powerful beware of that be careful of that many get swayed and end up just going along with the world's portrayal of immorality in movies tv and music and the culture shift is right especially in the lyrics of songs young people are listening to and i was talking with someone lately who's arguing the point about rock music i'll get on that bandwagon again and and they were saying oh we don't listen to the words it's just the music you like the music but i mean the words are the whole it's the whole point that is what they're communicating it's the words and not even if you disregard the the genre of the music it's the words it's what is being said and you see even more so now in the mtv generation as you got the video to go along with it especially in the hip-hop genre is so vulgar and debasing that no one of any age should choose to hear it however there are numerous young people even in the church world who listen to it and of tv david frost said this and i've got a tv i'm not saying necessarily don't have one but david frost is saying this about television television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your house it's true you wouldn't have them in your house you wouldn't want them to be the babysitter for your child if you went out going shopping you wouldn't want them to be there communicating to your children the values that they espouse and the lifestyle they endorse the word of god teaches believers christians if you're truly a born-again christian then we're not to be conformed to this world to be a non-conformist to faithfully follow the will of our father and to walk in his truth to be in glaring contrast to the world we should be contrasted to the world there should be something about you but yes you're weird yes you're peculiar yes you're not the same as the world there's something different about you there's someone who's made a difference within you that's made a difference from the inside out through you by you to others around you that there's something different harry einstein an old-time preacher used to say this world is a system controlled by satan in which people are trying to make themselves happy without god the world system is trying to make people happy without god they're missing the whole point life and joy and reason for life is found in christ he is the reason he is the answer and so i'm wrapping up now to think about the world the things of the world the world is controlled by satan he's called the god of this world this world the lord jesus says the world's going to hate christians so expect it what is the christian's relationship and attitude to the world he's been chosen out of the world he has escaped its corruption he is crucified to it by the cross he is hated by it he is not to love it he's not to be a friend of it he's to keep himself unspotted from it so not soiled by it he's not to get tangled up in it he should be one who his faith should overcome the world the victory that overcometh the world even our faith and friends conforming to the world is destructive it's destructive to the church when we conform to the world when we adopt the world's philosophies and thinking it's dangerous stuff it's dangerous ground the world is devastating to our relationship with the father because friendship with the world is hatred towards god it's enmity it's hatred it's hateful to god and it's damaging for our christian influence too if you want to be assault if you want to be a light in the world around you then shouldn't you be different shouldn't there be something that marks you that sets you apart that identifies you as christ's as his as his people and so as god's people think about your relationship to the world secondly your responsibility to the world we've got a relationship to the world should be as a separation there should be a line drawn somewhere and

let god's word draw a relationship to the world that is separate and a responsibility to the world that is wanting to impact the world for christ this is what they had in act 17 they turned the world upside down our message is a world-changing message it's a life-changing message it's the truth and that needs to be communicated strongly and fully have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them christians must have no part in that which is wrong and yet oppose it so friends to close i exhort you tonight be a world changer let's not follow the pied pipers of this world we know the story the children's story of the pied piper playing his little tune and leading a merry band into oblivion that's what the devil would have for you for me for [39:20] the church and many are following him down that path let us pray lord we pray help us help us lord to turn our world upside down lord let us be revolutionized from the inside out to be reformed to be revitalized to have the life of christ in us if there's any here tonight that haven't had that experience of trusting you lord they'll make it now today that accepted time to trust to call out to receive that grace lord we praise you for the grace that you showed to us at the cross in dying in our very place no deserving of our own no credit to ourselves can make that our gift yet lord it's all of your grace lord we praise you that you gave these undeserving ones these rebellious ones that we are your grace and turned us around and given us a whole whole new hope and reason for life help us lord to be world changers with those that we come into contact with around us that we might impact and influence them and be salt be light in this world for your grace and glory we pray in jesus name god bless you everybody and go with god you