

Two Responses to the Gospel

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Date: 25 March 2018

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[0 : 0 0] look or read the same book or the same poem they can look at the same piece of art and these both two people can come away with two completely different opinions on it one person might think that the book was a wonderful masterpiece they might have loved the the plot and they loved the rhythm and and the the beauty of the poetry they love the colors and the lines of a piece of artwork the other person might think the book was an utter waste of paper the poem was nothing but a few silly rhyming words which meant nothing at all and they themselves could probably paint a better picture than that so-called artist so much of life can be subjective it can depend on how we see the world on how we're brought up on what kind of way we interpret things how even how we're educated even what our friends are like we are so easily influenced and our views and opinions can change even by ourselves so quickly and so easily as we see from this chapter here in chapter 17 of act there are some things that require us to take a solid stance to some things require us to make a solid decision there are some issues and some questions that require us to address them address them seriously require an answer an answer that has real meaning and an answer that has real eternal consequences in the previous chapter chapter 16 paul and silas were of course taken from the jail cell they were imprisoned they were released miraculously they shared the gospel with the jailer and his family they discovered then of course that paul is a roman citizen so they are allowed to to go their way of sorts so here they are they're now free and they are traveling 90 around 90 miles west from there and now we arrive in chapter 17 they've arrived in thessalonica we can look at these verses in roughly uh three ways three very loose headings uh first we're looking at the simple gospel then looking at the both positive and then the negative answer response to that simple gospel here we are in the philadelphia what are we told in these verses about this great impressive city are we told of its great wealth are we told of its renown as an essential trading city all scripture tells us about this incredible city full of different cultures and languages full of wealth all we find here in these verses about it is that there was quite simply a synagogue of the jews there paul and silas weren't there to take in the sights and the sounds of this new city they weren't there to explore this cultural melting pot this wonderful place of market stalls and trading they were there for one simple purpose and that was of course to spread and to share the gospel so we made the way to the synagogue to the place where paul knew he would find people who needed to hear the gospel where he would find people who were waiting still waiting desperately waiting for their messiah to come and here paul was going with to them with the good news that he had come he is taking with them the news that the messiah had come the christ had come and that this christ this messiah the promised one was jesus

as we delve into these verses let's first ask ourselves and study and see what we can learn in terms of sharing the gospel what we can learn for sharing about sharing the gospel from one of its greatest communicators first like we said paul went to a place where he knew the jews would be he didn't stand in the middle of a marketplace and wait for them to come to him he found the synagogue he searched out and he went there as we see him doing later again in the chapter and again throughout all his journeys he shares the gospel in a land of many other gospels we see even this chapter we find out there are many other voices many other opinions many other philosophies all claiming to know or to at least have some knowledge of what was real and what was the truth and paul here is saying that he has the truth even in the midst of these other many voices all proclaiming that their savior that their god is the only god paul was here amidst these people saying my god and this savior that's christ jesus that he alone is the only one worthy of worship we see that in verse 18 and 19 the epicureans and the stoic philosophers they conversed with him look with me at verse 18 some of the epicureans and stoic philosophers also conversed with him and some said what does this babbler wish to say ever said he seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities because he's preaching jesus and resurrections and they took him they brought him and they said may we know what this new teaching is you're presenting brothers and sisters in many ways nothing has changed for us today nothing has really changed in our towns in our streets even perhaps in our homes we are sometimes and we are often one voice among many in this so-called post-truth society we live in everyone's truth is right because it's right to them we can believe we want to believe because well that must be the truth for each one of us individually it makes no sense but that is the reality of the world we're in today but nothing's changed nothing's really changed even then even paul here in this town paul in athens he was there and they were hearing him and they were offering their own truth saying we believe what we believe is right you believe what you believe is right let's hear it we may often feel quite lost as we look to share the gospel of jesus the gospel of what we know is through the gospel that has changed our lives that we've seen change our people's lives and very often we might feel quite lost as we try and share that to others who simply do not care or who maintain that they alone are correct so on the example of paul if the people won't come to us quite simply we have to go to them i don't know anyone here really a few faces i don't know much about this church this gathering here but what's true in athens what's true in thessalonica is still true anywhere and everywhere in scotland today in fact it's not the trend to attend church anymore it's not the trend to be involved in church life it's not the social thing to do so we must go and join and be where people are

we must share the gospel with them paul went to the synagogue we see him elsewhere preaching here in in athens he went to the crowds and he shared the gospel we must take the gospel we must go out with it wherever there are people who are needing to hear it very often that begins even in our own families those in our area those in our homes those who we love and care for will not hear the gospel unless it's shared with them and that that burden of sharing the gospel doesn't just lie with the minister of the elders it lies with each christian here today we all have this great gospel to share this great burden to share it and this great command of our duty as christians to share the gospel our duty as christians to to share the good news of course we cannot all preach we can't all do anything but we know and we've heard this i'm sure plenty of times from this pulpit each one of us are integral important stones in the church of god each one of us we have a perfect place in that because god has placed us there he's given each one of us gifts and abilities and and ways to use them if we humble ourselves and ask him to make use of us for his purposes he will every one of us here who is a believer a believer right now we have a purpose and a place and a real function in god's body in the church in this area each one of us can serve somehow and serve for the sake of furthering the gospel so paul went to where the people were we also see that it was his custom to do this it wasn't just something he decided to do this one day in thessalonica it wasn't just one off event it was his habit his custom it was something he did continually every place he went he found the crowd he found the jews he went to the marketplace he found the gathering and he shared the gospel you might well be thinking just now well it was easy for paul of course it was he was an apostle he's there having met with christ having met with jesus having conversed with jesus of course paul could do this it was so easy for him in many ways of course paul of course is different or was different to us paul had met the risen christ and he had spoken with him he had been commissioned by him and paul elsewhere of course does and the apostles all the rest of the apostles do of course perform various miracles and various signs and wonders but look in his verses what does paul do how is the gospel shared there's no great miracles no great signs in his verses quite simply he shares that this jesus whom i have proclaimed to you is the christ he quite simply shares the simple gospel he doesn't make use of his 30 odd years of intense training he doesn't package it up in a really clever way of explaining the truth he quite simply says that jesus that the savior you're waiting for the one you're desperately waiting to arrive if he has arrived and he is jesus the one i've been telling you all about in one sense we're even more privileged than paul paul was working with the old testament working with these scriptures we have the whole completed scripture to use for our gospel witnessing our gospel sharing

that requires us to know scripture and to really soak ourselves in it the more we do that the more equipped we feel to share it it's not easy it's not easy but always remembering that it's god and his word that has the impact not on our careful strategies of witnessing not on how well we lead the conversation to Jesus not on how well we word our presentation it's based on god's word which will always have an effect as we'll see in a few short moments this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ how many people today in our homes in our streets in our area they need something they need a saviour and they know it they might rebel against the idea they might say they don't but deep down we all know we are desperately in need of saving and the same gospel that Paul preached to these Jews and for the Philistines and to the Greeks it's the same gospel that we have today that Jesus is the saviour there is no one else but him and let our prayer be that God will use us just as he used Paul and Silas that he would use us to share the gospel to those who we meet day by day all for his glory and all according to his purposes so what's the response to Paul sharing the gospel he shares the gospel he goes to the synagogue he shares the gospel what's the response well first of all there is a positive response in verse 4 we are told that this gospel preaching it wasn't in vain verse 4 something but something were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas as there are many of devout Greeks not a few of the leading women wherever the gospel is shared no matter how unlikely the recipient of a listener may be to believe in our minds wherever the gospel is shared it always has an effect the gospel will either always soften or harden the heart of those who listen to it of those who read it but he will see a great many people a great crowd believe the gospel it was the culture in these days when days after this when Christianity spread even more so it was dismissed by the Romans and by the Greeks as being a cult of the peasants a cult a belief system for the poor souls who have no knowledge who would latch on to any old theology but here we see these new believers they were devout they were well known people they were of the upper classes we could say they were well respected men and women well known well liked well known in the area well known in the synagogue the gospel makes no distinction

I know we know this we know this so well but it's good to remind ourselves the gospel makes no distinction it's for all who will hear and respond and believe poor or rich Jew or Gentile man or woman whoever hears believes and repents the gospel is for them in our prayers in our witnessing do we limit the gospel do we only share it with those who we think might actually one day believe it do we only pray for those who we think are perhaps more savable than others or do we understand and do we pray and do we act like the gospel will easily because it is God's gospel transform all who hear it and all who believe and all who repent when a gospel is shared we're not just throwing our words out to the wind hoping something will stick somewhere the gospel shared of course is a powerful weapon the very living words of our creator of the universe and because we trust and believe in a sovereign

[16:35] God who has sovereign power we have the confidence that despite our eloquence despite our perfect wording and despite our awkwardness or our embarrassment despite our personality traits whatever they may be a God will use his word for his sake and for his own glory despite our failing attempts to share the gospel they will not taint the message itself they won't damage the power of the gospel not that that excuses us from working hard on sharing the gospel we can't just step back and hope it happens we see here Paul contended with them he reasoned with them he argued in a discussion sense of the word with them about the gospel he explained and proved it to them in verse 2 and verse 3 at the same time trusting the gospel itself will have the power and has the saving power again I don't know many people here

I don't know where you stand with God this applies to the Christians just as much as those who are not yet saved it's so easy to sit back week in and week out and just listen to preaching listen to the gospel being shared come here and then just go home again make it part of your week but here we are right now in the presence of a king of the universe reading his words together one of the words in Jeremiah 23-29 terrifying words also it's not my word like fire declares the Lord like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces don't just sit and let this word of God just wash over you until next week the living word of God is being spoken you're reading it in front of you you ever listen to it and act on it as the people here in

Thessalonica did or you continue to ignore it and further condemn yourself because of your own hard heart and your own stubbornness because Paul went to the people because he shared the gospel with them because he reasoned with them because he discussed it with them because he scripturally defended the gospel some of those there believed and received and were transformed by the life-giving gospel but as always there are those who did not listen or who listened and who did not believe when a gospel is shared of course response is not always going to be positive a good crowd a good gathering did believe they believed the message of Paul the message shared with them but they're also those who did not believe and they didn't just voice their opinions and move on what do we see them doing they disagreed but then they formed a mob verse that the Jews were jealous and taking some wicked men of the rabble they formed a mob set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of

Jason formed a mob they found Paul and Silas where they were staying and they attacked poor Jason dragged him out attacked his house he's now guilty by association what caused this anger we found out in verse 15 that it was pure jealousy pure jealousy caused this anger they had seen their control over the people begin to slip as the gospel was shared as the gospel was shared in this place the Jewish authority they were losing their control their power over the people some of the well-known men and women had believed this new gospel they left the synagogue to follow and believe in this new gospel they watched as their power and their control was being taken away from them they formed this mob and they accused

Paul Silas Jason and those in the house also of this wonderful accusation of turning the world upside down they've turned the world upside down they've acted against the decrees of Caesar and they've declared they've said there's never king Jesus you can almost hear the distress and confusion and pain in these voices what have they done they've ruined everything they've turned our city turned the world upside down we've heard about them they've ruined our cities they've come to our synagogues and turned them upside down now we're here turning our city our world upside down they've come and declared that there is another king is this not the cornerstone of every one of us of our sin and rebellion against god we make ourselves and our idols kings and rulers we view ourselves as some incredible beings with all knowledge and all power the incredible words of psalm 2 words we know but words let's listen to them psalm 2 we have this situation being portrayed to us psalm 2 the kings of the earth set themselves rulers take counsel together against the lord has anointed saying let us break their bonds in pieces and cast their cords away from us naturally we want to be free we want to believe that we are in control of all things there is no higher power over us that we are the pinnacle of all things and in many ways we are often like the crowd at the trial of

[23 : 12] Jesus in John 19 verse 15 these words it was the day of preparation for the Passover at the sixth hour and Pilate said to the Jews here is your king at this they shouted away with him and away with him crucify him shall I crucify your king Pilate asked we have no king but Caesar replied the chief priest very often if we're honest of ourselves if we're honest about who and what we are we reflect this crowd we don't want you to be king over us I have no king I am the king I am the god of my life I do what I want when I want to do it the very idea of a higher power over us for god we must one day answer to that thought repulses us and it just doesn't even enter into our minds if it does enter we don't let it stay for very long before we try and distract ourselves with something else and our cry is always away with him get rid of him crucify him

I want nothing to do with him the reality is that he is your king he is my king whether we serve him or not he's either your king and you're his beloved servant or he is your king and you're his enemy you're either beside him in the throne room or you're outside the gates warring against him either way he reigns and he rules and to fight against the creator and sustainer of the whole universe is not a fight you will ever win the one who right now is sustaining millions if not billions of galaxies and stars on planets who right now is giving you the very life we have right now is affording you the breath you're breathing to rebel against that god and to say that he is not your king is a dangerous dangerous place to be this accusation is not far wrong the gospel in many ways will turn your life upside down that much is true but it's not mixing up to your life rather it's rearranging your life back to the way you were created to be we're created as we know the catechism we're created to worship god to serve god we're created to be his people and we are saved when the gospel changes our lives we slowly often very slowly as far as we're concerned begin to see changes in our life our priorities change our desires change our outlook on the world changes our hopes and dreams they often change too changed and turned upside down slowly and slowly becoming more and more like our saviour that process of course of sanctification doesn't end until we enter glory but it's ongoing turning things upside down but in reality turning things the way they're supposed to be for Christians here let this be the world's accusation against us these Christians have turned this place upside down they've changed the way of things they've ruined our town they've ruined our town by saying there is a

God we must answer to by saying there is a king he's called Jesus that that's the world's accusation against us that their message the message they share has changed and turned people's lives upside down things the king is the king no matter what you think about him against Christians look to the example of Paul let's go to the people let's go to those even our own houses those we work with those we are alongside day by day who have no idea of the gospel let's share with them do it boldly like Paul understanding that the power is not in us but in him and him alone let's be ready to defend the gospel be ready to explain the gospel to those who ask us about it and having the sure confidence that God will work through his word we can become so comfortable with respect in our suits and in our nice comfy seats in this lovely building we can become so comfortable doing this once or twice a week we can become so comfortable doing the church thing and going home we forget this is real and there's no other way of saying that of saying that this is real the gospel is real that it demands a real response from you this is real life and death stuff don't waste another week another day another hour of your life without knowing the

Lord and help us as we carry on this day of worship to have our minds set on you as we
carry on now to sing your praises once more help us to sing your praises with hearts and
minds set on you and your worship all the things your precious name seek amen let's
conclude by singing to god's praise from psalm 62 psalter psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62
psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 62
psalm 62 gave us a holy psalm 62 psalm 62 God the

God the mission or psalm 61 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 60 psalm 62 psalm 62 psalm 60
psalm 62