

Responding to the Gospel

27 September, 2009

*By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture Reference – Acts 17:10 -18:11

Unit Theme: The Expanding Church

Central Truth: Christians are to confidently proclaim the Gospel, regardless of how people respond.

Key Verse: Acts 17:11

Introduction:

¹Paul's party continues to Thessalonica, where again an enthusiastic response from Gentiles arouses the fierce jealousy of the Jews. These create so much disturbance that the apostle is urged to leave the city (17:1-9). But in nearby Berea the Jewish population is enthusiastic and responsive to the Gospel. Then hostile Jews from Thessalonica arrive and again stir up a riot (vv. 10-15). Paul is the focus of the hostility, so while the others stay on in Berea the apostle travels to Athens. There Paul cannot keep silent and soon finds himself preaching a unique sermon on that city's Mars Hill. This carefully crafted evangelistic sermon does not quote an Old Testament unfamiliar to pagan Greeks, but uses a philosopher's approach to lead hearers to the central truth of Paul's message: the resurrection of Jesus (vv. 16-31). The idea of resurrection, totally foreign to his audience, brings ridicule. But, as always, some believe (vv. 32-33). Paul's next mission is to Corinth, a vital commercial center on a narrow isthmus of land, with ports on two seas. There too the Jews turn against him, although many of the more prominent Jews become Christians (18:1-11).

As you study the life and ministry of Paul, you may note that he does not ever seem to become discouraged. Regardless of the response or lack of response to the preaching of the Gospel, he presses on. Knowing that there are others who need to hear, though they may reject, they still need to hear the Gospel. Furthermore he seems to know that there will always be someone who will hear the Gospel and believe. Read **Romans 10:13-15...** Paul understood that without exception, the Gospel must be preached and if it's not, souls would perish. This should awaken a sense of urgency within us to also preach the gospel. God has not changed His mind, He still wants all to repent, but if we don't go and preach, they will not hear and if they don't hear, they will never believe. We must make up our mind that though all stand against us, though we may be mocked and ridiculed, we must unequivocally preach the word as often and in as many places as possible. As for me, I would like to spend my body, preaching the gospel – I have a long way to go.

I. Honest Inquiry– Acts 17:10-15

One thing is for certain, whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached it will be opposed. What is surprising however is who it may be opposed by. It is understandable why the Jews would oppose it, because they viewed it as a threat to their traditions and law. What is not understandable is when it is opposed by like believing Christians as it is so often today. We are living in very exciting times, I believe the Gospel is being preached as at no other time in history,

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likewise it is also being opposed as at no other time in history. Many may disagree with my latter observation, however when viewed from a spiritual perspective i.e. the spiritual wickedness in high places are ever increasing, it is more understandable. Furthermore, when combined with the opposition one often faces from within the “church” it becomes markedly clear. Finally my comment should not be viewed apart from Jesus’ comment on the wide and narrow way in **Matthew 7:13, 14....**

➤ **Think about it:**

Have you diligently searched the scriptures to verify the validity of your doctrine?

Have you ever encountered one who readily received the word you shared?

“It isn’t easy to prove that there is a God. In fact, nowhere in the Bible does God attempt to prove His existence. But have you ever considered how much more difficult it is to disprove God’s existence?” – C. Neil Strait

II. Intellectual Curiosity – Acts 17:16-34

vv 16-21 –Paul was moved with grief at the idolatry he witnessed in Athens. He was so in-tune with the Spirit that he sensed when the Spirit was grieved and was determined to do something about it. It’s apparent that the Jews and Gentiles had embraced all kinds of different beliefs and as a result were open to just about anything. Comparatively, many today have done the same. There is little interest in a belief that is exclusive (Jesus is the only way – John 14:6). Instead of embracing the truth, which would set them free (John 8:32, 36), people today would rather believe a lie and remain in their captivity. **vv 22-34** –Paul was able to capitalize on their religious lifestyles in order to gain opportunity to witness. In other words he met them where they were, with language they could understand and by doing so was able to present the Gospel truth to them. There is no doubt that throughout history people have sought for ways to fill the void in their lives. This is an absolute truth that is still evident in our day and as the Lord tarries will continue to be the norm for all humanity. All have a God shaped void in their life that can only be filled with Christ. The devil has many counterfeits that bring temporal satisfaction, but until one excepts Christ as the filler of their void they will continue to be unsatisfied. Through Christ and Christ alone we can be satisfied; He alone fulfills all of our intellectual curiosity.

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Think about it:

Have you ever been grieved by the sin in the world? Why or why not?

“Good philosophy must exist...because bad philosophy needs to be answered” – C. S. Lewis

III. Informed Belief – Acts 18:1-11

We must never fail to take the Gospel out and if by chance it is rejected, we should not grow discouraged (Galatians 6:9). When one door closes we need not stop, but look for another opportunity. There is no end for the need of the Gospel in our world. However, many so called “called” preachers are sitting in their churches expecting God to send the people in. God does not work this way. His command to us was to go, and we need to make sure that we do. It is not only God’s desire that we preach His word, but it’s His command. When we are obedient to His command He takes great pleasure in providing labors where we have need of them. He will send us people who will encourage and help us as we work for Him. Just incase that is not enough though, He often speaks to us Himself. Paul had a difficult run if he was like me I’m sure he would have thought about giving up. However, the Lord would speak a timely word of encouragement directly into his life.

➤ Think about it:

Have you ever felt like your labor has been in vain? **1 Corinthians 15:58**

Has God ever spoken to you as He did Paul in Corinth?

“God is on the lookout for a man whose heart is perfect toward Him. Will you be quiet enough to hear Him, brave enough to proclaim Him, and honest enough to obey Him?” – Vance Havner

Conclusion:

**“To speak for the Lord in the midst of total corruption requires a special kind of courage and boldness. This is our imperative today as we view a world of total rebellion, yet in the midst of*

