

Series: Acts

Lesson #71

Title: Effectual Working of God's Word

Scripture: Acts 17: 3-9

Date: May 28, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

Do you rejoice in the word of God? There is a sure way to know. If you have truly been made one in Christ Jesus then you will associate yourselves with those who believe the gospel of Christ. Sinners are made one in Christ through the word of God.

Acts 17: 1: Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: **2:** And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, **3:** Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. **4:** And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

I. Paul Preached That Christ Must-Needs Have Suffered and Risen Again (V3)

A. It was a must-needs that Christ suffer and rise again because God foreordained it and Christ agreed in covenant grace to do so.

1 Peter 1: 18: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; **19:** But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: **20:** Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...

B. We might give many reasons why God foreordained Christ to suffer, but chiefly the purpose in foreordaining Christ to suffer was to gather all things together in Christ that those gathered might praise the glory of God.

Ephesians 1: 8: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **9 :** Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **10:** That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: **11:** In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: **12:** That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Note these key phrases: **Ephesians 1: 9:**...according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **10:** That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ;...**12:** That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ; (*back up at verse 6*): To the praise of the glory of his grace,

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Brethren, when God entrusted all our salvation into the hands of Christ, by doing so, God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. That is what verse 4 says: **According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.**

Ephesians 1: 4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

God the Father trusted Christ to make his children holy and without blame before him. Being holy and without blame before God in love is what God made us when he put us in Christ. It is also what Christ accomplished in his person and by his death as substitute of his people. This truly is the love of God in Christ Jesus from which nothing shall separate us.

Ephesians 1: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,

When God trusted the work of redemption to Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ becoming the Surety of God's elect, it was the pre-determining of our destiny to be adopted unto God.

Ephesians 1: 5:...according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein--

In blessing us with all spiritual blessing in Christ, in choosing us in Christ before the world began, in predestinating us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself... **WHEREIN GOD hath made us accepted...in the beloved.**

Ephesians 1: 7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Christ came in time and accomplished the redemption of those given to him through laying down his life. Believers have redemption. Believers have the forgiveness of sins. All this is according to the riches of God's grace. Through the gospel God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence and made this mystery known unto us.

Paul was sent by Christ to bear witness of Christ. He used the old testament scriptures. Paul showed throughout the word of God that every word declared Christ must-needs have suffered and risen again and that this Jesus is the Christ.

- Christ is the Seed of Woman (Gen 3: 15.)
- Christ is Abel's Lamb (Gen 4: 3-5.)
- Christ is Noah's Ark (Gen 6: 8, 17-22.)
- Christ spoke to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3: 1-6.)
- Christ is the Passover Lamb (Ex 12: 1-13.)
- Christ is the Manna in the wilderness (Ex 16: 14, 15; Jn 6: 32-35.)
- Christ is the Smitten Rock (Ex 17: 6; I Cor 10: 4.)
- Christ is the Serpent Lifted Up (Nu 21: 4-9; Jn 3: 14, 15.)

- Christ is the High Priest who represents us to God (Heb 9: 7-12; Lev 16: 2-19; 34.)
- Christ is the Laver in whom those who have been made priests wash and are holy to approach God (Ex 30: 18-21; Heb 10: 19-22.)
- Christ is the Altar upon whom all our sacrifices are presented to God (Ex 20: 24-26; Heb 13: 10.)
- Christ is the Ark wherein the Law of God is not broken (Ex 25: 16, 17, 21, 22)
- Christ is the Mercy Seat, the one place, where God will meet with his people
- Christ is the pure Shekel of the Sanctuary from which the floor of the tabernacle was made--upon which no work could take away or add to--declaring that our Redemption is by Christ alone (Ex 30: 11-16; 38: 25-27; I Pet 1: 18-21.)
- Christ is our Judge and our King and our Kinsman Redeemer (Ju 11: 27; I Sam 8: 4-7; Jn 19: 14, 15; Ru 4: 9-10, 13, 14; Is 54: 4, 5.)
- Christ is the good news of the Chronicles, our Ezra and Nehemiah by whose person and Spirit the temple of God is built, the one gloried in the book of Esther who has been secretly working all things since the world was made by him and for him. Christ is the Job who suffered and gives patience to his people to suffer for his name sake.
- Christ is the Sweet Psalmist of Israel (Ps 1: 1-3.)
- Christ is the Wisdom of Proverbs set up before ever the earth was made (Pro 8: 22-31.)
- Christ is the glory of God shining before the black backdrop of humanity in Ecclesiastes
- Christ is the Song of the Wise Man--Solomon
- Concerning the prophets we read **Acts 3:18: But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.**

Ephesians 1: 8: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (what is the mystery of his will which he hath purposed in himself?) 10: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

The chief reason Christ must-needs have suffered is because God trusted his Anointed Son to fulfill his will in bringing a people together in him to glorify the name of God. God's glory includes his holiness, his love, his mercy and grace, his wisdom, his power, everything that makes up the glory of God.

C. Last time we touched on this truth: that by Christ entering into this covenant agreement, he was slain then. I pointed out that the world literally was founded on his covenant word, even as the word of his power upholds all things. But even more truly, when God trusted this work to his Son, Christ himself began the work by creating all things for him to enter and accomplish what God entrusted him to accomplish. He is God and God created all things BY Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eph 3: 8: Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9: And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:...11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Colossians 1: 16: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth,...all things were created by him, and for him: 17: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. 19: For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

That gives great meaning to why Jesus Christ said to Joseph and Mary: **Luke 2:49: And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?**

It gives great meaning to why the Lord told John concerning his baptism, **Matthew 3:15: And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.**

It why Christ said: **John 12: 27: Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28: Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again.**

John 17: 1: These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4: I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5: And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

John 19: 28: After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. 29: Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth. 30: When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

THIS IS WHAT PAUL CAME PREACHING.

II. Through His Gospel, God Effectually Unites Sinners with Himself and One Another In Christ Jesus the Lord.

Acts 17: 4: And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

I Thessalonians 2: 13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

A. The effectual working of God through his word is set forth in these words in our text:

V4: Some of them believed--It means through the Spirit of God they were persuaded, given confidence in Christ, so that they cast all their care into his hands.

Get this: This work of Christ is brought home to the heart of his redeemed through the gospel and by his word, God effectually makes those he everlastingly loved to trust Christ even as God trusted him before the world began.

V4: and consorted with Paul and Silas--it means they broke ranks with the others and associated themselves with their new brethren Paul and Silas and all others who joined with them. **1 John 5:1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.**

B. When we see how the others reacted we see what God has separated us from in Christ:

This uniting in Christ forever separates us from the sin of separation--sin separated our first representative Adam from God; sin separated all who are born in Adam from God. The reaction of those who refused the gospel did what they did because they were merely left untouched by the power and wisdom of God. This is what the believer is separated from and kept separated from by the Power and Wisdom of Christ Jesus in whom all things shall be gathered together.

1. Sin makes sinners ignore the word of God. **Acts 17: 5: But the Jews...**it means they were religious men and women. These were not practicing sin randomly in the streets but religiously in the synagogues. If we read ahead we find that these folks knew so much about God that they did not even bother to look into the word of God (v11.) Religious sinners are the worst kind. Most know too much to listen to the gospel of God. But those who were saved--and you and I were religious by nature--yet God united us in Christ, now we delight in God's word, it is the way by which we hear from God.

2. The sin of unbelief separates from God. **Acts 17: 5: But the Jews which believed not.** Unbelief was the mother of transgressions in the garden and it is the transgression that Christ put away for his people by his fidelity to God as the representative of his people. When we were yet in our sins we would never admit our unbelief, now we bow to Christ like the father of that child who said, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

3. Sin separates because of hatred for God. **Acts 17:5:...****moved with envy.** The word is they boiled over with hatred and envy. Those whom God saves were by nature, **Romans 1:30: Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents.** To those who were sinners, one with the world, the Lord said, **John 7:7: The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.** When the unregenerate, religious man hears the gospel his hatred for God boils over because the gospel declares all his very best works of righteousness evil.

But Christ abolished the enmity between us and God and between us and our brethren--**Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;** (the enmity destroyed is the enmity between us and God--whether we be Jew or Gentile--by abolishing in his flesh the enmity--by fulfilling the commandments of God--he has made the believer, Jew and Gentile, one with God in Christ.)

4. Sin unites sinners against Christ and his messengers--**Acts 17: 5:...****took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and 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.** What happened to Paul and Silas and to the house of Jason glorifies what Christ did even though the whole world of sinners was against him. Paul was showing the greatest act of love when he came preaching the gospel of Christ. So was Christ when he came preaching the kingdom of God and laying down his life for the brethren. But what they did to Paul, they did for the same reason sinners did the same thing when Christ came. **Psalm 35: 11: False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. 12: They rewarded me evil for good *to the spoiling of my soul*. 13: But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was sackcloth*: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14: I behaved myself as though *he had been my friend or brother*: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his mother*. 15: But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea*, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me*, and ceased not: 16: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.**

But our great King made us to look on him whom we had slain and to be poor in spirit, to mourn our sin, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, so it is we are united together in Christ.

5. Sin unites sinners against Christ's brethren. **Acts 17: 6: 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; 7: Whom Jason hath received:.** They hated Jason and his household because they believed Christ and received the brethren. By nature, we hated Christ, we hated Christ's ambassadors, and we hated all

who received Christ. But God's grace in Christ has now given us a spirit of love for Christ and his brethren because God and our brethren have received us in Christ.

6. Sin separates sinners in ignorant, deplorable backwardness. Acts 17: 7:...and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. The Jews hated the king of Rome (Caesar); they hated being under his rule; they were looking for a messiah who would come as a mighty king and save them from the carnal rule of Caesar. They did not hate the messiah for which they looked; the one they had imagined; but when they heard the true Christ, when they saw in the word of God all speaks of Jesus Christ, when they heard that the King of kings was a suffering Savior and that all who come to God must bow, believing on him, they said we would rather serve man, a king of the earth. So even worse than they hated the king of Rome, they hated the King of Israel, the King of the Jews-- Jesus Christ who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Listen to the Lord's parable: **Luke 19: 11: And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12: He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13: And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14: But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.**

But the effectual word of God works in us, making us willing to be the willing bond-servants of Christ our King. God translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son, gathering us together in One, Christ Jesus our King.

7. Sin makes sinners blind to true righteousness. Acts 17: 8: And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. These Jews are an example of the false religion from which Christ has separated the believer. They were attempting to come to God in their obedience to God. They were careful to observe the letter of the law. But here they proved that their religion was really just the same as the people and the rulers of the city who had never even heard the word of God. Religious men and irreligious men are troubled alike when the gospel declares that Christ is King and all men are sinners at his mercy. The only thing the gospel of man does is trouble the people.

Christ Jesus said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers**" then the Lord said, "**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness**" (Mt. 5: 9, 10.) Why would anyone persecute a peacemaker? Because the only way of peace is Christ the Prince of Peace. The gospel is the only Word which effects peace. But because it pleased God that all things shall be gathered together in Christ and not by the power of man, those who are yet in their natural-born condition always persecute the righteous. We were the persecutors but when God made us fall in love with the Prince of peace we began speaking only of him and thus he made us peacemakers--a peacemaker is a witness of Christ. He gathered us together in One--Christ Jesus the Lord.

Conclusion

Those in whom the word of God effectually works are united to Christ, they suffer even at the hands of their own kinsmen after the flesh, but they are willing by the wisdom and power of God. Back to **I Thessalonians 2: 14: For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: 15: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. 17: But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. 18: Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. 19: For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20: For ye are our glory and joy.**

Christ shall finish this work of gathering all things together in him.

Acts 17: 9: And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

The King of heaven and earth turned the heart of the people and they let them go. Why? Mission accomplished yet again. Through his messenger, through his gospel, Christ saved a great multitude out the evil grasp of Satan and his seed. The kingdom of man was weakened as Christ delivered the captives from their blasphemous rule.

The people knew Christ did it; the people hated Christ the more for doing it; but they could do absolutely nothing about it. No sooner than they opened their mouths in protest, Christ shut their mouths. And Christ the Deliverer then delivered Jason and the others from them just as he did those saints in whom he gave life through the gospel.

Do you see that none can stay his hand? Do you see that our God rules? Our God saves. Our God loves particularly. Our Savior perfected a particular number of sinners and he shall call them out from among those who hate him. He shall create in them a heart of love and they shall submit themselves to Christ and follow him. Because Christ is the Rule of life working effectually in the believer we rejoice, "**For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace**" (Ro 6:14.)

I do pray that God would overwhelm you in his wisdom and power, in newness of life, that he might make you willing to believe on him even now. Amen!