

**Acts 17: 1-9; “Turning the World Upside Down”, Sermon #62 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 1st, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

At this hour I want to bring out to you, the power of the Gospel of Christ, from this statement in verse 6 – “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too”. Paul and Silas and those with them were described in this amazing way. And so, I believe that it will be good for us if we can think together about this statement for a few minutes; that is, that we will think about its implications for ourselves, and our witness to people around us. Do people who we come into contact with, see us in this same way as the people in Thessalonica saw Paul and Silas? Do they see us as people who are turning their world upside down, because of the gospel message we share? I think that they will, if we are consistent Christians. By the words that we speak, and realizing that Christ is in our life, we will be turning their world upside down.

So let’s think about this truth in greater depth. The gospel of Christ will bring the following reactions from people when we make it known to them. 1st of all – The gospel of Christ and Him crucified, Christ and Him raised from the dead, will persuade some. (verses 1-4) 2nd – The gospel of Christ will cause others to be envious, and they will violently oppose it. (verses 5 and 6) And 3rd – The gospel of Christ will, by some, be mistaken for a threat to national allegiance, and allegiance to the king. (verses 7-9) I hope that during this time you will come to see the great power that there is in the gospel when you live it out in your life.

1st - The gospel of Christ and Him crucified, Christ and Him raised from the dead, will persuade some. (verses 1-4)

In verse 4 it says – “And some of them were persuaded”. So, when this little band of missionaries came to Thessalonica, they did what they had done a number of times before; they went into a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his custom was, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures for three sabbaths. It is always a good thing if the Lord gives you the opportunity, to reason with solidly religious people. The way that Paul reasoned with them was to explain and to demonstrate to them that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. This is the essence of the gospel. What portions of the scripture would Paul have used to show this? Well, they are the same portions of scripture that we ought to draw from as well.

People need to hear from us that Christ was the only Savior who was sent from God. They need to hear that He became Incarnate, and that He came to redeem a people unto God. He came to suffer and to buy people back from their sins by His sufferings. When you and I share the gospel with people we need to share these truths. As we share we will reason with them. We will explain to them that all men are sinners and that it was absolutely necessary for Christ to suffer to rise from the dead, if they are to be saved and have eternal life.

What portions did Paul turn to in the Scriptures? Well, if we were to turn back to Acts chapter 13, verses 16-41, we would see that Paul, as was his custom was, it says in verse 2, reasoned with them by using the history of Israel as it is recorded in Moses and the Prophets. He pointed out that it was God who had chosen Israel to be His people. He delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. He put up with their ways in the wilderness for 40 years after He brought them out. He destroyed 7 nations in the land of Canaan, and distributed their land by allotment. He gave them judges for about four hundred years. It is good that people should know and understand that salvation is of the Lord; that it is always God’s choice.

It was God’s choice to make Israel an elect nation; to choose them, not because they were a great nation, they were actually very small. And it was God who set His love upon them, not they loved God first, but that He loved them and brought them out of pagan idolatry to being His very own people. Let me ask if you tell others that salvation is of the Lord? It is He who chooses us, not we that choose Him. It is He who takes us out of the trashcan of sin and He

places us on the rock of Christ's life and His finished work. It is He who helps us to understand the greatness of His grace and His power to change and transform our lives. He turns our world upside and He actually makes it right. Paul related to them history of Saul and David and then showed them, that based on the promises given to David, that God had raised up for Israel a Savior – the Lord Jesus. He told them of the ministry of the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist; how he pointed Him out to people during the time when His earthly ministry was beginning. He spoke of His greatness and glory, and that He was indeed was the promised Messiah of the Jews.

He then brought them to conviction of sin by relating how those in Jerusalem did not know the Lord Jesus, nor the voices of the Prophets which were read to them every Sabbath which spoke of Him. They did not realize that these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. And they condemned Him, even though they had not found any real cause for putting Him to death, they still had Pilate do it. Paul related how Jesus was laid in a tomb, but God raised Him from the dead. And how He was seen by many witnesses during that time. Let me ask, do you know that it is possible to hear the reading of the scripture Sunday after Sunday and still not come to know the Lord? What is the problem? It is that you think that you do not have to respond; that you do not have to have personal dealings with God, and repent of your sins and believe in Christ for yourself.

Well Paul preached to them the glad tidings, the good news of Christ. He preached that the God had fulfilled the promise made to their nation, that God would raise Jesus up from the dead! And Paul quoted Psalm 2, verse 7 where the Father said – “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And He quoted Isaiah 55: 3 – “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” And the former part of that verse says – “Incline your ear, and come to Me.” “Hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you – the sure mercies of David”; that is, the blessings of salvation which God promised so much to the Jews, in the Psalms, that would come to God through their Messiah. These promises are just as much for us as for them.

For Jesus was sent just as much for us, as for them. Paul quoted Psalm 16, verse 10, that God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. Jesus saw no corruption. He was raised from the dead. He said that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. Let me ask whether you understand that salvation is based upon God's promise, and your believing that God will fulfill every promise that He makes? Paul's conclusion was, from the evidence of what was plainly given there in prophetic form, that this Jesus whom he was preaching to them, was the Christ; the One sent from God to save His people. And it says in verse 4 of our text that some of them were persuaded to believe in Christ for salvation for themselves.

This leads me to say, that if you will tell people what the prophetic scriptures say concerning Jesus being the Christ of God, that some people will be persuaded; some will believe and be saved. When you show people that prophecy was not made up by men, but that it was given by God to certain chosen men who knew Him, to write these things down; and that since it is written down, God always is and He always will be, faithful to His word to fulfill it. Whether it is prophecy concerning nations, or whether it is prophecy concerning Christ and His coming, or Christ and what He would do by His life, His death, and His resurrection, and what He will do for them, it is a tremendous way to witness to people concerning the truth.

The reason for you to tell people about Jesus, is because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes. The gospel is what turns a person's world upside down, when they hear it. When you hear that God is a Judge and that He will judge the world through the Man whom He has appointed, that is Christ, you are shaken. But then when you hear that God has furnished proof of this by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, you need to say – Is it true that Jesus will judge me? But if God is striving with you, you will say – Could this same Jesus save me? Did He have to die on the cross for me? Yes, it is so. He said – “I did not come into

the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Me.” (John 3: 17) And so you ask yourself – Was Jesus raised from the dead for my justification; so that God could declare me righteous, His having taken my place in perfect obedience, and my place through His suffering for my sins? Yes, it was completely necessary.

And so, when you do place your faith in Jesus, the work of His redemption begins to be applied to you. Your world is turned upside down, because now it is right side up. You who were expecting judgment have found mercy. You who expecting to be condemned found a Mediator. You who were so estranged from God, alienated from Him by wicked works, you are now accepted in the Beloved. You are a New Creature in Christ. The old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.

God has reconciled you to Himself through His Son. He made Christ who knew no sin to become sin on your behalf, that you might become the righteousness of God in Him. The person who shared the gospel with you has turned your world upside down and now, through Christ, it is right side up. You want to join a church with other like-minded believers. You want to continue hearing the word preached to you, so that you might grow in relation to salvation. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is, to preach and to share the gospel!

2nd - The gospel of Christ will cause others to be envious, and they will violently oppose it.

Verse 5 says – “But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.” “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” Envy is really an awful sin which can lead unbelieving people to do awful things to Christians who are only wanting to do them good; only wanting them to believe in Christ and be saved. In this case, the Jews who were not persuaded, were envious of Paul and Silas that they had this great number of devout Greeks and quite a few of the leading women of the city joining with them.

Their whole world had been turned upside down. They had expected all of these people who had believed Paul’s message of salvation to continue coming to the synagogue. They thought to themselves – These people who have believed Paul’s message would have made faithful members of the synagogue if he hadn’t come and convinced them that they could not keep the law sufficiently well to be accepted by God. These ultra-religious men who professed to know God, by their deeds, they denied Him. They expected all Jewish people to follow them and their teaching of being righteous by the works of the law; by their following their views of the moral and ceremonial law being the means of salvation. Paul had come and had told them different.

They didn’t like it at all. They hated him enough to want to kill him. And so it says that they took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason where they thought that Paul was staying. Sometimes envy will lead very religious, unsaved people, to violence. This has happened all down through Church History, and it still happens today in places where people want to maintain the doctrines of a ritual religion, one that professes godliness but denies the power of godliness. The men who are leaders in such churches and synagogues are not so much interested in knowing God, according to the scriptures, as they are in having people held under their control.

They want control over what people should believe and practice, so that they can make merchandise of them; take advantage of them, and use them for what they can get from them. This was true of many of the Pharisees, scribes, and rulers of the people during the days of the earthly ministry of Christ. They delivered Christ up to Pilate out of envy, it says in Matthew 27: 18. They were the ones who asked for Barabbas to be released and for Christ to be crucified. Caiaphas and others thought that “the whole world was going after Jesus”, and therefore

thought it expedient if “one man should die for the people”. These men thought that their world was being turned upside down by these men who were preaching Jesus, and so it was. When Christ comes into the hearts of people who hear the gospel, it will always affect their church affiliation.

If they have gone to a church which believes in salvation by going to church and being baptized and partaking of the Mass or the Lord’s Supper, they will see what the problem of their former church really is. They will see that it was the true gospel that was not being preached, and they will leave that church behind. They have come to see that a ritual religion will save no one. They will seek to join a church where the gospel is preached on a regular basis; where the word of God is held forth in all of its details and all of its particulars. And they will thank God every day that He opened their eyes to the truth of their need of personally trusting in Christ, and personally walking with Christ, so that they will grow up into maturity to Christ and be His servant in righteousness. Their world has been turned upside down for good.

3rd – The gospel of Christ will, by some, be mistaken for a threat to national allegiance, and allegiance to the king.

Verse 6b says – “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” “Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus.” “And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.” “So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.” Now, you will notice the accusation is – the world as we know it, and are content to have to remain, has been turned upside down. Men have come to us preaching this Jesus, who they say that He is a King. We say that we are patriotic; we do not want any king besides Caesar. And we believe that these men are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar because they are trying to turn our attention to this King Jesus. He is a rival to our king.

It says that these words troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. They had made Paul and Silas out to be troublemakers and disturbers of the peace. In this case it was disturbing the peace of sin and those deceptions which Satan loves to hold people in. In effect, they were saying: Things were going fine here until these Christians came here. What these Christians believe is inconsistent with our obedience to our government and our king. A country cannot have people serving two kings, and so we believe that those who preach allegiance to King Jesus must be turned out, persecuted, punished, and made to suffer for the trouble that they are making. This is the oldest and most effect way to instill persecution against Christians, in any culture, society, or nation.

But should we be surprised by this? No, I think not. For this was the same charge that was brought against the Lord Jesus at his trial before Pilate. In John 19, verse 13 Pilate brought Jesus out and said to the Jews – Behold, your King! But they cried out – Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him! And Pilate said – Shall I crucify your King? And the chief priests answered – We have no king but Caesar! And, it was then that Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. I want you to see that there was back then in those days, and there still is today, a real test of loyalty and allegiance which is placed before every Christian. It is whether you will give the government and the earthly king your highest allegiance, or whether your highest allegiance will be to Christ.

I should remind you that Christ died for you, so that you can be faithful to God and to Him; so that you will be able to have your loyalties right. As a Christian you are also called to be a loyal citizen of our country. You will submit to the authorities in government as long as they are not telling you to do something contrary to what God would have you do, in your obedience to Him and His word. But your highest allegiance will always be to King Jesus. This principle was seen in the life of Jason, whose house was attacked by the mob. Not finding Paul and Silas there at Jason’s house, the mob dragged him and some brethren to the rulers of the city, to accuse

them before the authorities. Jason behaved himself well, and even paid the security money, promising the authorities that neither Paul, nor Silas, nor any other Christian there with them, would cause trouble. This was a very commendable thing for him to do.

Let us see, in closing, that it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus, to try to be a good citizen of our country, and give our leaders honor where honor is due; and yet we can be good witnesses to God and to Christ at the same time. This is what turns the world upside down; when people are saved and give their highest allegiance to Christ their King. And yet, you see what we are called to; not to foment political revolution, but the greatest of all changes of government; to see men come to faith in Christ our King, and spiritually enter the Kingdom of God; to see them no longer rebel against God, but to surrender to Christ, to stack their weapons, and no longer take counsel against the Lord and against His anointed, but to Kiss the Son and enlist in His army, to fight the good fight of faith and to find that their ultimate citizenship is in heaven.