

SERMON FOCUS: What I receive from the preached word is directly related to my study of the Word.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will eagerly study the scriptures.

BACKGROUND:

Last week, Paul and Silas had spent the night in a Philippian jail that resulted in the salvation and baptism of the jailer and his family. The next day, the magistrates released them, but not without profusely apologizing to them, since they had beaten and jailed Roman citizens without cause. We also noted last week that this would have been the beginning of the church at Philippi. So the mission there, even though it resulted in beatings and being asked to leave town, was a success. Something that I neglected to mention last week was that in Chapter 16, verse 10, was the first of the “we passages” in Acts. This means that Luke was actually present on the journey from Troas to Philippi. The fact that Chapter 17 starts with “they” instead of “we” indicates that likely Paul left Luke in Philippi to help the church startup there. So we begin Chapter 17 with Paul, Silas, and Timothy leaving Philippi continuing on the mission.

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 17:1-15 (CSB)

1After they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. **2**As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3**explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead: “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah.” **4**Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, including a large number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.

5But the Jews became jealous, and they brought together some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. Attacking Jason's house, they searched for them to bring them out to the public assembly. **6**When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too, **7**and Jason has welcomed them. They are all acting contrary to Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king — Jesus." **8**The crowd and city officials who heard these things were upset. **9**After taking a security bond from Jason and the others, they released them.

10As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11**The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. **12**Consequently, many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men. **13**But when the Jews from Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and upsetting the crowds. **14**Then the brothers and sisters immediately sent Paul away to go to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed on there. **15**Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible, they departed.

INTRODUCTION:

Has your understanding of a situation ever changed abruptly after being confronted with new facts? On September 11, 2001, I think that happened to most of us. For about 17 minutes, we thought there had been a terrible accident where a plane had hit the World Trade Center. Then the second plane hit, and we knew we were under attack.

We've been observing Paul as he goes around giving people information that their lives are not what they think. Most don't want to hear it. But it's the most important news ever, and

impacts eternity. Today, we're going to briefly look at the gospel Paul shared, those who rejected it, and those who accepted it.

MESSAGE:

1. THE GOSPEL PAUL SHARED

- a. (17:2-3) As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah."
- b. The gospel that Paul preached is the same gospel that we preach today.
- c. The scriptures had promised a Savior to take away our sins.
- d. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross as payment of our sins, and three days later was raised from the dead.
- e. Remember that Paul himself is a witness to the resurrected Jesus, while on the Road to Damascus.
- f. Paul is using the scriptures that the people in synagogues have already been taught to prove that Jesus is the Messiah whom God had promised.
- g. Some would receive the message of the gospel, and some would reject it. We're going to take a quick look at each today.

2. THOSE WHO REJECT THE GOSPEL

- a. (17:5) But the Jews became jealous, and they brought together wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city.
- b. People who reject the gospel are not content to let its teaching go on. They must oppose it.
- c. These were religious people willing to employ bad men to do their dirty work.

- d. Those who reject the gospel invent charges against those who preach it. “They are acting contrary to Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king—Jesus.”
- e. (17:13) But when the Jews from Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and upsetting the crowds.
- f. The tactics of those who reject the gospel are:
 - i. Deny the truth
 - ii. Deny your right to speak the truth
 - iii. Portray believers and the message as something to be feared.
 - iv. They will use whatever tools are at their disposal to oppose Christ.
- g. These particular people, though, had been taught about the Messiah. These were the ones occupying seats where the message was preached every Sabbath.

3. THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE GOSPEL

- a. (17:4) Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, including a large number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.
- b. Those who receive the gospel are clearly not the majority.
- c. These God-fearing Greeks were proselytes, which means that they accepted the truth of the scriptures. But there were other Greeks there, who were idol-worshippers. According to 1 Thes 1:9, many of them came to Christ. Too bad that most who had grown up with the truth of the scriptures rejected it.
- d. It might be tempting from this narrative to look at proclaiming the gospel in Thessalonica to have

been a failure. We have two letters to the church in Thessalonica to prove that it was a success.

- e. (1 Thes. 1:4-6) For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit, and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit.”
- f. (17:11-12) The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Consequently, many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men.
- g. Do you think that the Bereans only started looking at the scriptures when Paul arrived? Or did they have a solid background in the scriptures that allowed them to verify his truth-claims?
- h. Those who received the gospel:
 - i. Were willing to humble themselves before Christ.
 - ii. Were willing to put away false religion.
 - iii. Were willing to suffer persecution for their faith.

CONCLUSION:

As I said earlier, the gospel is simple. First, it's bad news. We are sinners separated from God. Then, it's the worst news: there is nothing that we can do to fix our sin problem. But the good news is that Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He lived a life without sin, died as the sacrifice for our sins, and was resurrected on the third day, proving the validity of

his payment. The best news of all is that while we can't earn our salvation, we can receive it as a gift. So what is our response to hearing the gospel? Do we reject it, or do we accept it?

FOUR QUESTIONS:

1. What do you hear God saying to you?
2. What keeps you from doing that?
3. If you were to do that, what might be a good first step?
4. Who are you going to tell?