

WORSHIP SERVICE -

10.19.2025

PART 37 - TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

I. INTRODUCTION

- The gospel has always been accused of being revolutionary, of turning the world upside down.
- As Paul and his team travel to Thessalonica, that's what the crowd shouted, "*These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also!*"
- That's an extraordinary charge!
- What did Paul preach that was so revolutionary, so dangerous, so subversive, that it threatened the very order of the Roman Empire?
- It was simply that he opened the Scriptures and proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ—the True King.
- That message shook empires then, and it still unsettles hearts today.
- Because when Jesus is proclaimed as King, everything else has to take its rightful place beneath him.
- Our text today shows us how that world-changing message was both taught and received, first in Thessalonica, then in Berea.
- We'll see how faithful preaching and humble hearing of God's Word remains the power that still turns the world upside down.

Acts 17:1-15

17 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **2** And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3** explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." **4** And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. **5** But 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, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. **6** And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, **7** and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." **8** And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. **9** And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. **11** Now these Jews were

more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. **12** Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. **13** But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. **14** Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. **15** Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

II. THE WORD TAUGHT AND RECEIVED IN THESSALONICA

PAUL'S PRACTICE

- After traveling about a hundred miles southwest from Philippi, Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica. and they go to the synagogue as was their custom.
- For three Sabbaths, Paul reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures.
- Paul didn't begin with human reasoning, philosophy, or rhetoric.
- His custom was to go to the source of truth, the authoritative Word of God.
- He has an unwavering commitment to the Scriptures.
- He points them to the Word and what the Word says about the Christ.
- The gospel must be taught from the Word of God.

- We also must have an unwavering commitment to God's Word.
- Do you believe God's word is authoritative?
- If so, bring God's Word to bear on any gospel conversation.

PAUL'S PROOF

- Notice the tools he employs:
- Reasoning: That is he engages in dialogue, he engages in intellectual and scriptural argumentation.
- Explaining and Proving: He opened up the Scriptures and presented evidence.
- Luke 24, On the Emmaus Road, Jesus opens the disciples' eyes to both see their Lord and understand the Scriptures.
- Paul has an unwavering commitment to the consistent exposition of Scripture.
- Paul reasoned, explained and proved from the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again. Every argument drawn from the Word, pointing to Christ as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.
- That's the essence of faithful preaching—reasoning from the text to reveal Jesus.

- That's what every preacher and Bible teacher should do.
- The Word is authoritative and the primary instrument of conversion and sanctification.
- Preaching must be grounded in Scripture.
- We need to read our Bible through a Christ-centered lens.
- All of Scripture points us to the person and work of Jesus.
- We should never substitute the cross and the resurrection with moralism or self-help tips.
- It's not enough to know Bible stories, we have to know the storyline of Scripture.
- The entire flow of redemptive history culminates in Jesus Christ.

PAUL'S PERSUASION

- The conclusion to all of Paul's preaching was his declaration: *"This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."*
- Paul anchored the New Covenant message entirely in the predictions of the Old Testament.
- All of Israel's promises are wrapped up in him—Jesus is the Messiah.
- Luke records the immediate response and the immediate division that the preaching of the gospel created.
- Some were persuaded and believed.
- The message took hold among some Jews, some God-fearing Greeks, and prominent women.
- It was Paul's persuasiveness, after reasoning from the Scriptures, and proclaiming Jesus is the Christ, but it was the Spirit who accompanied the Word, opened hearts, and people were "persuaded" to believe.

FURIOUS OPPOSITION

- As we've already seen in other places, not everyone received the gospel.
- Some Jews oppose it.
- They stir up the city, finding all of the troublemakers to form a mob and seize Paul and Silas.
- Not finding Paul they target Jason, who was hosting the team at his house, and they also seize some of the brothers and drag them before the city authorities.
- The accusation is two-fold and politically charged.
- First charge is social upheaval.
- V6a "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."
- Second charge is political treason.
- V6b "they are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."
- They effectively charged Paul and the believers with injuring the majesty of Rome, a capital crime.
- Now, these accusations are simultaneously true and false.
- The gospel upends everything. The gospel call is for all to believe Jesus as the one Lord.
- To submit to Christ is to declare allegiance to the King of kings!
- The gospel message is subversive because it comes into conflict with the customs of the world that are contrary to God's word and order.
- Wherever the gospel is received, the social order is changed.
- Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, people everywhere are called to bend the knee to King Jesus.
- Don't miss this! The gospel is revolutionary.
- The kingdom of God clashes with the rival kingdoms of this world.
- The message that Jesus is the Messiah is interpreted by Greeks and Romans as a claim of kingship, which is contrary to what Caesar has commanded, he alone is king.
- But the gospel is not attempting to supplant earthly rulers.
- The gospel call is subversive in that it will undermine Caesar in some ways, especially where he commands what God forbids.
- But in another, the gospel call supports Caesar, as followers of Christ are commanded to submit to their earthly rulers, pray for them, and live as law-abiding citizens.
- When you receive the gospel and understand it, you see it creates a dual-citizenship that will sometimes bring us into conflict with the authorities of this present, fallen world.
- Paul's host, Jason, faced personal danger and financial cost.

- The authorities do not seek to punish Jason or Paul and Silas, indicating their innocence in this matter.
- We must remember that there is a cost to proclaiming the gospel and submitting to King Jesus.
- Personal hardship, danger, financial loss, persecution for the Christian life is not optional, it is guaranteed for all who are truly devoted to King Jesus.
- Even with all of this, a church was established in Thessalonica, an outpost of God's kingdom.
- When you read Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, you get a sense of what Paul experienced there.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 13 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.
- Even in the midst of opposition the gospel bears fruit.

III. THE WORD TAUGHT AND RECEIVED IN BEREAS

NOBLE BEREANS

- Paul and Silas depart under the cover of darkness and arrive in Berea, a town a little off the beaten path.
- And what do they do? They head straight to the synagogue to do what they always do, preach the Word and proclaim Christ.
- But they find something different here. The reception in Berea is more favorable than in Thessalonica.
- V11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica...
- Luke is drawing a contrast between them, these Jews were more noble in contrast to the ones who started a riot in the last place.
- The word 'noble' means 'highborn.' The implication being that they were more tolerant and open.
- In essence, they had a teachable attitude.
- That is displayed in how they received the Word.
- With Eager Hearts - "they received the Word with all eagerness."
- They weren't cynical or hardened. They came ready to hear what Paul had to say. They were willing to learn and be challenged.
- With Diligent Examination - "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."
- Their eager hearts were balanced with deep, disciplined study.
- This is a wonderful model for us rich in application.
- We need to have the same heart posture when it comes to the Word.
- We need to have a teachable spirit and humble hearts.
- Our hearts should delight in reading God's Word, in hearing God's Word preached and taught.
- 1 Peter 2:2-3 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.
- And we need to have the same approach of diligent examination as the Bereans.
- They listened to Paul and then did their homework.
- They listened to his claims about Jesus being the Messiah and they examined those claims to see if these things were so.

- How did they do that? By examining the Scriptures.
- We need to weigh each message against the Word.
- You need to listen with humble and open hearts and then you need to go to God's Word.
- You need to fact check everything that you take in.
- Be enthusiastic but careful. Where in Scripture is this based? Does this line up with Scripture?

BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

- What were the results? Conversions, "many of them believed." Not just Jews, but many Greeks, including more of the influential members of the community.
- A church was born in Berea through the faithful preaching of God's Word and the open-hearted reception of God's Word.
- Not everyone will believe, but when gospel seeds are spread and the seed of the Word is planted, it will bear fruit in some lives.

FURTHER OPPOSITION

- Unfortunately, the repeating scenario plays out again here in Berea—opposition.
- The Jews from Thessalonica traveled to Berea to stir up a mob against Paul.
- It seems like Paul was the main object of persecution, so the brothers send Paul away to the seacoast and take him to Athens.

CONCLUSION

- The same gospel is still turning the world upside down today.
- The gospel is still going forth as God's people faithfully proclaim the good news.
- And it is still dividing listeners.
- Some receive it with joy.
- Others reject and resist it with hostility.
- But one thing is certain, the Word of God never leaves anyone unchanged.
- If you have not yet trusted Christ, I urge you, be like the Bereans. Examine the Scriptures. See that Jesus is the Christ who suffered, died, and rose again to reconcile sinners to God. Turn to him today.
- Believer, let this passage stir your hunger for the Word. Don't settle for second hand truth. Test everything by Scripture. Live boldly for Christ, even if it costs you comfort, reputation, or peace.
- May the world look at us and say again, "*These are the ones who are turning the world upside down!*"

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?