



28 | ACTS 17:1-15

TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

God's word is sufficient to turn the world upside down.

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It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ²to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, ³to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. ⁴For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.—Psalm 92:1-14

Songs

Who You Say I Am

Show Us Christ

There is a Fountain Filled with Blood

He Will Hold Me Fast

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, “Test me in this” Proverbs: “**Give of your firstfruits.**” We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

Introduction

The General Secretary of the **Bible Society in Zimbabwe**, tried to give a New Testament to a very belligerent man. The man insisted he would **roll the pages and use them to make cigarettes**. Mr. Kambarami, the General Secretary said, “I understand that, but at least promise to **read the page of the New Testament before you smoke it.**” The man agreed, and the two went their separate ways.

Fifteen years later, the two men met at a convention in Zimbabwe. The Scripture-smoking pagan had given his life to Christ and was now **a full-time evangelist**. He told the audience, “I smoked Matthew, and I smoked Mark, and I smoked Luke. But when I got to **John 3:16**, I couldn’t smoke anymore. My life was changed from that moment.” Aren’t you glad God’s word is more than just words on paper? It’s the living, breathing, life-transforming, powerful word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 | For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The expansion of God’s kingdom comes through the **power of the word of God**. Sometimes as Christians, we dream of our church growing and expanding, not just in our **character** and in our hearts and lives, but also **numerically in evangelism** and influence in our culture. I’ve seen some really crazy ideas that churches have adopted that make them look more like a circus than a house of worship. Indeed, so many pastors are **entertaining the goats instead of feeding the sheep**. We are called to feed the sheep with God’s word.

We have been learning that God will build his church (Mt 16:18; Psa 127:1). Paul was in a jail cell when the foundation of the church of Philippi was put in place. What you could not stop Paul from doing was **expositing the word of God** and demonstrating who Jesus was. It is the word of God by the Spirit of God that draws and transfers people from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s Son.

In Paul’s day, people of many cultures would **examine** these things, and the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of people to **expand and advance Christ’s kingdom** one soul at a time. As simple as that may sound, that’s what turns the world upside down. It’s what radically ripped the fabric out of paganism in Paul’s day, and it what has expanded God’s kingdom every day since.

Key thought: God’s word is sufficient to transform the world! Let us be done with the pragmatism of manufacturing false converts but instead boldly preach God’s word, drawing hell bound sinners to be heaven transformed saints.

How do we change the world with the word of God? First, it begins with preaching.

1. THE PREACHING OF THE WORD IN THESSALONICA (17:1-9)

We start Acts 17 with **Paul leaving Philippi** after an apology from the government officials for beating and imprisoning Paul and Silas who were both Roman citizens. They see the church of Philippi established in Lydia's living room. It continues to grow year after year so that by the third and fourth centuries there were many churches in Philippi. Paul later writes of how impoverished the churches of Macedonia were. Lydia's help only went so far, but **even though they were the poorest of all the churches, they were the most generous**. How does a little tiny church grow with such amazing influence over a pagan culture? They were faithful to exposit the word and preach the gospel.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE GOSPEL

Paul moved on from Philippi and went to a beautiful and influential port city with a large population of Jews. Remember though a number of Jews are coming to know Christ, **many other Jews are opposing the gospel ministry of Paul**. Thessalonica is going to cause Paul a lot of trouble, but he's not afraid. He knows God's word is powerful to save.

Acts 17:1 | Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

This was at least a three-day journey of about 100 miles from Philippi. When they arrived, they found a thriving city of about 20,000.¹ **Thessalonica** was the **capital city** of Macedonia. It is to this day a **beautiful port city set on the Aegean Sea** with a direct view of the famous **Mount Olympus**. They were a **self-governing city** which retained their Greek culture. There was also a **significant Jewish population** that thrived in that city until the time of World War II, when they were sadly shipped to Germany and put to death. But when Paul arrived at Thessalonica, the Jewish population was strong.

Despite the treatment Paul and his companions receive, we know that the gospel takes a firm hold in the city, based on Paul's writings in 1 Thessalonians. This epistle also reveals that the **majority of believers in Thessalonica were Gentiles**. Paul commends how they **"turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"** (1 Thess 1:9). Luke does record that some Jews and many God-fearers believed as well (17:4).² We find out that **they start their church planting effort in the synagogue** in Thessalonica during three Sabbath days.

Acts 17:2-3 | 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

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 222.

² James M. Hamilton Jr. and Brian J. Vickers, *John-Acts*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. IX, *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 498.

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.”

Paul would take the Scriptures of the Old Testament, since that’s mainly what they had at the time, and he would preach Jesus. Remember Jesus did this in Luke 24. How did Paul preach? **Paul’s public ministry was three-pronged in Thessalonica.**

Teaching Hearts

Acts 17:2 | And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

First, he “**reasoned** with them from the Scriptures.” The word translated “reasoned” is the root for our English word **dialogue**. Paul talked through the Scriptures regarding Jesus. There was exchange, questions and answers. He dialogued with them “from the Scriptures.” They would together take up the vellum and parchment copies of the popular Greek Septuagint, and Paul would select a passage and read through it, opening the floor for a give and take.

Opening Eyes

Acts 17:3a | And Paul went in... explaining...

Further, there was “explaining.” This word literally means “opening.” This is **a very strong word**, Luke used it to describe the opening of the womb in Luke 2:23 and in the 24th chapter for the **opening of spiritual eyes** on the road to Emmaus.³

Luke 24:31-32 | And their eyes were **opened**, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he **opened** to us the Scriptures?”

Paul was very simple and plain when it came to dialoging about the Scriptures. He read it, talked about it, and answered questions from the Scriptures, letting the Holy Spirit open the eyes of the blind. No flourishes or scams were needed.

Proving the Gospel

Acts 17:3 | And Paul went in... 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.”

The third prong of his method is stated as proving, or literally **“giving evidence”** from the Scriptures that Christ needed to die and rise again. It means he gave Scriptural evidence from throughout the Old Testament. Paul would prove his case, leading his hearers to a particular verdict. The message was that the Messiah had to suffer. No doubt Paul took them to many Scriptures, including Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.⁴

³ Hughes, *Acts*, 222.

⁴ Hughes, *ibid*, 223.

Isaiah 53:5 | But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

He proved Christ's resurrection to them as well. **He gave them Scriptural evidence.** I can hear Paul in **Hosea 6:2** telling them, "**After two days he will revive Christ, the true Israel, and on the third day he will raise him up.**" To be able to do this, Paul had to be **committed to the word of God**. Remember, Paul didn't just study his Bible all day. He often had to work at tentmaking and whatever else just to make ends meet. But he studied the word of God. If you want to see the gospel expanding, you need to be a studier of God's word. You've got to spend time in the word diligently, day and night (Psa 1:2).

FAITH IN THE GOSPEL

Luke reports that Paul's scriptural arguments with the Spirit's influence were enough to win over many of his hearers. There was a healthy response to the faithful teaching of God's word.

Acts 17:4 | 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.

The devout Greeks were the men and women who had not been circumcised but they were faithful to the synagogue. They are born again. It's inferred here that the persuasion that occurs is brought about by the Spirit of God applying the word of God. Faith is engendered by the word of God.

Romans 10:17 | Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

James 1:18 | Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth.

There is no other way to bring a person **to faith in Christ but by the powerful word of God**. You must tell them the truth from God's word about themselves, that they are sinners—about God, that he is holy and demands justice—and about God's mercy, that he sent his only Son to die for our sins and rise again for our justification. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). God can open the eyes of an individual like Lydia, or he can open the eyes of a great number as here in Thessalonica.

As a result of the faithful preaching of the gospel, a few Jews believed, along with **an impressive number of God-seeking Greeks**, including a number of prominent women. **A spiritual foundation was beginning to form in Thessalonica.**⁵ But these results did not bring joy to everybody. The unbelieving Jews envied Paul's success and were grieved to see the Gentiles and the influential women leaving the synagogue. Paul hoped that the salvation of the Gentiles would "provoke" the Jews into studying the Scriptures and discovering their promised Messiah (Rom 11:13–14), but in this case, it only **provoked them into persecuting the infant church.**⁶

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 224.

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 470.

FACTIONS BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL

What we see now are the lengths that Satan is willing to go to in order to discourage and hold back the gospel. **The religious people go and recruit a mob of** what one translator renders **“bums”** or as the ESV says, “rabble.” Whatever you call this mob, it looks like it’s getting interesting in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:5 | 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.

This was **“rent-a-mob”** justice.⁷ Since Thessalonica was a free city, it **had a popular tribunal** (17:6), a **panel of judges** before whom charges could be laid. The Jews attempted to bring Paul and Silas before this panel of city authorities.⁸ They did this by causing a riot so that their charges of “disturbing the peace” would stick to Paul and Silas. It’s likely that **Jason gave Paul and Silas work and housing** while they were in Thessalonica and was eventually converted by the missionaries. In any event, the crowd did not find the missionaries at Jason’s. Possibly they had learned of the riot and had fled elsewhere.⁹ The house of Jason was attacked. Mob justice is always unpredictable, emotionally charged and filled with all manner of prejudices expressed in violent outbursts.

A **similar incident comes from the Great Awakening**, in the preaching of John and Charles Wesley in early summer 1743. John Wesley was making his way from Walsall to Wednesbury, and his biographer gives the following account. It begins with a graphic description of **Wesley’s physical suffering**:

Some tried to seize him by the collar and pull him down. A big, lusty fellow just behind him struck at him several times with an oaken club. If one of these blows had taken effect, as Wesley says, “it would have saved all further trouble. But every time the blow was turned aside, I know not how, for I could not move to the right hand or left.” Another, rushing through the crowd, lifted his arm to strike, but on a sudden let it drop and only stroked Wesley’s head, saying, “What soft hair he has!” One man struck him on the breast, and another on the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out; but he felt no more pain, he affirms, from either than if they had touched him with a straw; not, certainly, because he was over excited or alarmed, for he assures us that from the beginning to the end he was enabled to maintain as much presence of mind as if he had been sitting in his study, but his thoughts were entirely absorbed in watching the movements of the rioters.¹⁰ — from the book, “John Wesley, Evangelist”

What Wesley experienced is an example of what the early apostles encountered when they preached the gospel. There is **no guarantee that such scenes will not be**

⁷ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 482.

⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 294.

⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 361.

¹⁰ Rev. Richard Green, *John Wesley—Evangelist* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1905; Nampa, ID: Northwest Nazarene University, 1999), http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/methodist/ch12.htm

witnessed in our own time as, indeed, they are in some parts of the world today. There is a cost to being faithful to Jesus Christ.¹¹

FRUITFULNESS IN THE GOSPEL

What was the accusation that was leveled against Paul and his missionary team? They were guilty of **“turning the world upside down.”**

Acts 17:6 | 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.”

Paul and Silas were accused of changing the culture and way of life for the ancient world. They couldn’t find Paul and Silas, so they arrested Jason and dragged him before the city magistrates in Thessalonica. They charged the Christian missionaries with preaching political rebellion. They knew their charge to be a lie, and yet it is expressed in terms that were full of significance. They said, “Those who are upsetting the civilized world have arrived here.”¹² The gospel was not just turning Thessalonica upside down, but the entire world, and so it is even today. That’s the fruitfulness of the gospel. Man tries to do what he can to stop it: creating mobs, instigating persecution, making up lies about God’s people—but **no one and nothing can stop the advance of the gospel.** It is and will turn the world upside down.

FALSEHOOD AGAINST THE GOSPEL

The Jewish leaders **followed the script of those who crucified Jesus.** They got the mob stirred up and then leveled the charges they thought would really get the magistrates irritated: **treason.** They are setting up another kingdom!

Acts 17:7 | “And Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

The charges were simple enough: disrupting the peace and treason. They had acted contrary to the decree of the Roman emperor by saying that there was another King, named Jesus. The charge of treason, of course, was far more serious and, if substantiated, **carried with it the penalty of death.**

Paul had urged people to turn away from idols, including the plethora of Roman gods (1 Thess 1:9). **Paul’s preaching about the second coming** (a major feature of his first and second letters to Thessalonica) may well have been construed as suggesting a coming overthrow of the Roman emperor. It would not be difficult for pagans to hear sedition in Christians’ talk about Jesus, especially when **they heard Christians refer to him as “Lord.”**¹³

¹¹ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 482-483.

¹² William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 150.

¹³ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 483.

FLEEING BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL

Acts 17:8-9 | 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.

Jason and the others had been **forced to post bond** for the good behavior of the apostles, and there really was nothing for it but to leave Thessalonica as quickly as possible, lest they be the cause of harm coming to others.

The city is thrown into such confusion that **Paul and Silas are forced to leave and go on to Berea** (17:10–15). Their departure is so premature, so far as Paul is concerned, that he worries a great deal about the Thessalonian converts until Timothy goes to investigate and returns with a favorable report (1 Thess 2:17–3:10).

1 Thessalonians 2:17 | Since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face.

Paul had to flee, but he described it as being “torn away” from the believers there who were so precious to him. In response to this Paul writes the two Thessalonian letters from Corinth.¹⁴ Even though persecution came, the believers there in Thessalonica were **examples to all the believers in Europe.**

1 Thessalonians 1:7-9 | You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

Note very clearly how a church is established. It is founded upon the expository preaching of God’s word. This is how we evangelize and disciple people, through the word of God, going through every part of Scripture verse by verse, chapter by chapter, precept by precept.

2. THE POWER OF THE WORD IN BEREA (17:10-13)

We see a similar trend in Berea as in Thessalonica with the **difference** being the response of the Jews was not to throw Paul and Silas out. **The Berean Jews took to studying God’s word in earnest.** In this way they were “more noble than those in Thessalonica” (17:11).

TENDERNESS TO GOD’S WORD

Being tender to God’s word makes all the difference.

Acts 17:10-11 | The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.¹¹ Now

¹⁴ William H. Baker, “Acts,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 910.

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.

The Bereans are called “more noble” mainly because of how their **attitude** “eagerness” is connected to their **practice** of daily searching the Scriptures. Their **“eagerness” carries the idea of rushing forward**. They could not wait to receive God’s message! Eagerness makes all the difference in the flavor, quality, and nobility of our Christian lives.¹⁵

The word of God should be expounded, and hopefully it is in any church you are a part of. But it’s not enough for God’s people just to listen to the sermons. That wasn’t enough for the Bereans. They earnestly studied during the week what Paul had taught them. They examined the word to see if it was really there.

Notice it was **their “daily” practice to search the word**. They didn’t just want a superficial reading, but they wanted to actually walk in the word. In order to change, a believer must have both **internal** and **external** influences. We must adopt the thinking of the word in our heart internally, having different thoughts and emotions about hard situations. We must reject the slavery of fear and frustration and adopt the attitude of the Spirit. Externally, the Bereans also came together in the synagogue to talk about what they were learning. They held each other accountable. It ended with them coming to faith in Christ.

TRANSFORMATION BY GOD’S WORD

The word was expounded. The message was earnestly examined and studied daily. God blesses that and grants them faith.

Acts 17:12 | Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

The Jews’ response in the Berean synagogue was more encouraging than that in Thessalonica. They were willing to give Paul a ready hearing and to see for themselves if his message was supported by scripture.¹⁶ God’s word engenders faith! Preach the word, and people will be converted.

1 Peter 1:23 | You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

The bottom line is you are powerless to change people’s hearts. Only God’s word can transform the heart. Like Ezekiel of old, we can only preach to the valley of dry bones. We must prophesy to the wind of deadness, and the wind of God’s Spirit will raise the dry bones from the dead and bring his army of regenerate soldiers to life.

TURMOIL BECAUSE OF GOD’S WORD

Mark this: whenever you move mountains into the sea, you will face satanic agitation. As fruit increases you will face the foes of hell. So it was in Berea.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 226.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 17:10–15.

Acts 17:13 | 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.

Evidently this **time the main attack was on Paul, the primary preacher of the word** (17:13), since Silas and Timothy did not have to leave town with him (17:14).¹⁷ Understand that this turmoil and **persecution sets up Paul for another missionary venture, this time to Athens!** Silas and Timothy are slated to hold down the fort in Berea, helping the believers there to grow and change.

Don't be worried about the consequences of faithfulness. It usually sets you up for more fruitfulness, even though you will have to suffer some. God will use the suffering to prune you and bring forth more fruit.

3. THE PREPARATION FOR THE WORD IN ATHENS (17:14-15)

Once more, Paul had to leave a place of rich ministry and break away from dear people he had come to love.¹⁸ But this is just preparation for the next ministry, now to the center of Greek culture: Athens. Never forget that in all your trials and turmoil, God has a perfect plan to expand his kingdom through you.

Just as Jesus taught the 12 and the 70, we are to preach the gospel and **leave the results up to the Lord**. Each person is responsible to respond. God's word will do the work. The fruit comes from God, so **Paul is not paralyzed over the persecution**. He's not stewing over the shunning he's getting from the Jews. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, and so he ventures to one of the greatest Gentile cities after Rome: the glorious city of Athens. This is where God wants the gospel to expand and advance.

As we see fruit, we will also see foes. But the gospel preaching must always be expanding to more and more people. **The Spirit of God uses difficulties in our lives to direct us to the fruit he is preparing**.

THE TESTIMONY

The new mission field of Athens needed a preacher, and the preacher God chose was the apostle, Paul.

Acts 17:14 | Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea but would later join Paul in Athens. This was certainly not Paul's initial plan. He certainly would like to have stayed in Berea longer, but God sends him to a new mission field: Athens.

THE TARGET

Paul didn't know exactly where he was going as he fled from Berea, but the Holy Spirit did.

¹⁷ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 364.

¹⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 471.

Acts 17:15a | Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens.

The **Spirit was preparing Paul to preach the gospel at Athens**. How would he do it? Usually he would find a synagogue, but Athens would be completely different. He went to the city first and later to the synagogue. This in some ways is a new frontier.

What is God preparing you for in your present suffering? He doesn't want you to curl up in a ball and pretend the world is fine. **He is pruning and cutting, and you need to find a way to minister to the saints in your suffering.**

THE TEAM

A little after Paul's arrival to Athens, Silas and Timothy join him.

Acts 17:15b | And after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

How grateful we are that **we are not called to be alone in the Christian life**. We **need the body of Christ, our forever family**. There ought not to often be a solo pastor, but a council of elders. There should always be a plurality of leadership since we are not made to lead the church alone. God will provide the companions of ministry that we need. All these leaders are unsurpassed in their commitment to the word of God. What a team! That's how we operate at our church: word centered. You cannot be God-centered unless you are relentlessly word-centered.

Conclusion

A park ranger at Yellowstone National Park was leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger was so intent on telling the hikers about **the flowers and animals** that he considered the messages on **his two-way radio distracting**, so he switched it **off**. As the group neared the tower, the ranger was met by a nearly breathless lookout, who asked why he hadn't responded to the messages on his radio. A **grizzly bear had been seen stalking the group**, and the **authorities were trying to warn** them of the danger.

We cannot lead this generation out of danger and into God's salvation without the **word of God**. You are not going to grow by trying to figure out your problems on your own. **You need the word to change you first before it can change the world.** The moment we switch off the power of the word in our lives and ministries, we turn off any meaningful ability to help people. May the Lord give us the grace to proclaim the word and see his kingdom expand.

Life Group Questions

Turning the World Upside Down

Acts 17:1-15

1. Read through Acts 17:1-15. What stood out to you?
2. The theme of the passage is that God's word is sufficient to change us internally so we can preach the word to those externally. What are your habits of studying the word, so that you change internally?
3. Talk about why the following practices are helpful in studying the word of God. Also consider adopting the following into your life.
 - a. Journalling what you are learning from your reading

- b. Taking notes from the sermon
- c. Writing down prayer requests and answered prayers.
- 4. Paul's method (vs 2-3) was to (1) reason, or dialogue through the text, (2) explain and let the Spirit open the eyes of the people, and (3) prove and show from the Scriptures the good news of how Jesus died for us.
 - a. How does the Spirit of God open your eyes in your reading and prayer time?
 - b. Do you have someone in your life that you share and dialogue with in the word of God? If someone doesn't have a disciple partner, now would be a great time to volunteer at life group!
 - c. Are you able to share the gospel with a lost person? Someone volunteer to share a gospel presentation with the entire life group.
- 5. We learn that many people were persuaded by the word of God to give their lives to Christ (vs 4). Have a few people share how they were persuaded by the Spirit to come to Jesus Christ in salvation.
- 6. Paul and his missionary team had to flee from Thessalonica because of persecution (vs 5-9).
 - a. Since his conversion, this is the sixth time Paul has been forced by persecution to leave an area. How would you respond if that happened to you?
 - b. Explain from Scripture how God can love his people but still allows us to suffer and go through terrible trials. (See Eccl 3:11; Rom 8:28)
- 7. Paul and his team arrived in Berea, and the people were "more noble" because they studied the word daily and examined what Paul said. Change is only possible if we personally seek God in the word and prayer for internal change, and then come together for external accountability and encouragement.
 - a. What are some things that hinder our daily Bible study? What can we do to become more consistent?
 - b. What hinders us from meeting together and coming to church? How can we be more faithful not only at church but during the week to be accountable and encouraging to each other?
- 8. Are you a good Berean, listening carefully to God's word when it is taught? Which would describe you?
 - a. I listen too easily, accepting all that is said without question.
 - b. I listen too critically, never really accepting much that is said.
 - c. I listen with balance, referring to the Bible and relying on prayer to make sure what I've heard is true
- 9. Paul and his team had to leave Berea because of persecution (vs 13-15). Talk about how suffering and difficulty can set you up for new open doors of ministry opportunities.

PRAY: Take some time to pray for you pastors and teachers at Living Hope that they might teach the word faithfully. Pray also for the congregation, that they would listen and evaluate the word that is taught carefully.