

Acts 17:1-15

“Reasoning From The Word”

Ch 17 slaps us pretty much straight into the center of Paul’s 2nd missionary journey. Jesus had told His disciples that they were to be *witnesses to Him*, which is to say take the message *about Him*, the gospel, the message of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the world, or to the end of the earth. Well, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria have been covered, now they’re working on that final aspect of the command, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Jesus said, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*” John 3:16-17 Which is to say that God loves mankind so much, that though we were lost in sin and headed for destruction that He sent His only begotten Son into this world, being in all ways tempted as we are, yet with out sin, and though He was with out sin, He willingly became sin *for us* that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*. Or to understand that another way, God loves you so much that He allowed His own innocent Son to bear the penalty of all your sin ridden/guilt infested ways so that you might be forgiven of your sin in Him. and Having done everything He could possibly do to span the gap between a sinful people and a Holy and righteous God, even to the giving of His very life, Jesus desires and has determined that every tribe, tongue, people and nation will hear of that good news before it’s all said and done. Because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, now that doesn’t mean that all *will* come to repentance, but that’s His heart for all of mankind, that they might be saved, that’s why He came.

So though He came *through* the Jew, and presented Himself 1st *to* the Jew, His love is in no way *limited* to the Jew. “For God so loved *the world*.” He loves all of mankind equally, therefore desires that all of mankind be saved. You say, “Well, it seems to me to be a pretty big task, how is *all the world* going to hear?” Don’t worry God hasn’t left it up to you, as much as God wants to *use* us and has determined that in this “dispensation of grace” that the way He reaches out to mankind will be *through* us. Before it’s all said and done, He’ll take matters into His own hands. The day will come when He will see to it personally by the mouth of His angel to put forth the gospel to all the world. We read in Rev 14:6-7 where John writes, “*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people -- saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’*” What was he preaching to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people? “The everlasting gospel.”

As you know there are 3 words for “heaven” there is the 1st heaven, which is the sky you see, there is the 2nd heaven, which we’d call outer space, then there in the 3rd Heaven, which is where God dwells, in Heaven. The word “heaven” in Rev 14:6 is “mid-sky” the 1st heaven, there will come a time when this angel will literally fly throughout the earth, preaching the gospel, insuring that everyone has heard the good news of the everlasting gospel, because God so loves *the world*.

Now does that in anyway diminish your responsibility to share the good news of what Jesus has done? No, not everyone’s going to live to hear the gospel in that way, meanwhile God has chosen you to propel the message. Jesus said, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* Matt 28:18-20

So Jesus has commanded us to get the gospel out to a hurt, dying, desperate world that’s lost and in the dark. Does that mean we’re all called to be missionaries? Yes. Does it mean we’re all called to travel abroad, or even short term mission trips? No, as long as there are lost people with in the general vicinity in which you live, there’s a mission there, work to be done, and a message to be shared. The lost of Joplin, MO need the gospel, and need salvation as much as do the lost in Agbor Africa, or any place else. and If everyone goes, than what’s to become of the lost in our own backyard? Now, if God calls you to go, than go, if not you’re no less spiritual if you stay. God had called Paul to go, that’s where we find him, going from the area of Asia Minor, into Europe, he stopped in Philippi, was beaten brutally, thrown in jail, suffered, but was successful, people were saved, a church was planted. Ch 17 begins with them in transit having left Philippi, making their way to Thessalonica. The ch breaks up into 3 basic divisions as noted by 3 different reactions to the Word, ch 17 shows us different people, #1 Resisting the Word, #2 Receiving the Word, and #3 Ridiculing the Word

Vs1

In contrast to Philippi where there was not, now Amphipolis was a little over 30 miles from Philippi, Apollonia was a little over 30 miles from Amphipolis, and Thessalonica was just over 30 miles from Apollonia, so they were about 100 miles down the road from Philippi. and This is just a typical example of the pattern we’ve spoken of with regard to Paul’s strategic agenda in his approach to missions. Because though Amphipolis and Apollonia weren’t super small sort of nothing towns, Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia with a population of about 200,000 people. It was a major metropolitan city as was Philippi, and so rather than stopping at every city he came across he’d head (generally speaking) to major crossroads and through ways planting churches strategically in high traffic areas knowing that from those places the gospel would reach out into all of it’s surrounding suburbs and sub-communities. That’s exactly what happened in Thessalonica, even though his stay here will be very short, and the word will be resisted by the majority of the Jews (so it seems), the church in Thessalonica became a very strong flourishing and fruitful church.

We read in 1 Thess as Paul was commending them in the good example that they'd become where he said, "*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*" 1 Thess 1:8-10 But this was the strategy that Paul followed, planting churches in high volume, very populous places, and from there the Word of God would permeate the surrounding regions. So he comes the Thessalonica finds that there was a synagogue, and as was his custom whenever there was a synagogue he'd go there 1st to seek to reason with those seasoned in the scriptures.

The Jew having been entrusted with the scriptures, having the promise of the Messiah to come through them, had the priority in hearing the good news. But not only that, they were supercharged Christians just waiting in the wings. Meaning that they already had such inundation and saturation in the scriptures that when they were finally able to see Jesus for who He is, they already had an incredible working knowledge of the scripture just waiting to be utilized and so they made for very effective, readily equipped believers to begin evangelizing the city. So Paul, by way of priority, his heart for his countrymen, and by simple logic would go to the synagogues 1st. These were people who already had a vested interest in the things of God, were wanting to be right with God, so naturally these are the people who you want to talk to 1st. So

Vs2-4

Which is a diminutive way of saying, that there was a mediocre response from the Jews at best, but there was a radically explosive impact being made with the Gentiles, and not just ambiguous people in the city, but some major figures in the city were coming to Christ. Devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women.

Now there are a few things we want to take note of here in that we're given here just a bit of insight as to Paul's approach to witnessing or sharing the gospel. Notice 1st of all back in vs 2 that #1 He reasoned with them. Which is to say that he discussed, or dialogued with them over the matter. The gospel if simply thought through is a very *reasonable* proposition. You're in sin, there's nothing you can do to *atone* for your sin. Jesus who was without sin, paid the price *for* your sin, and in Him you can be saved from the penalty *of* your sin. Or apart from Him you can suffer eternal destruction apart from the presence of God. Reason it through... "*Come now, and let us reason together,*" Says the LORD, "*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*" Isa 1:18 God wants to talk it over with you, reason with you, show you the truth about yourself, and your position, and His love *for* you, the compassion He wants to have *upon* you, how he wants to spare you the penalty of your own ways. Some people think that to come to Christ is to take leave of your sense when the fact of the matter is that coming to Christ brings a person to their senses.

God has made us an incredibly gracious and reasonable offer in Christ; as a matter of fact it's *so* reasonable that people have to think of reasons why *not* to come to Christ. But the reality is, is that you'd have to be blind to not take advantage of the salvation that God offers to you in the person of His Son. and That's exactly the case, people don't come to Christ because they're blind, blind to their own sin, blinded by the god of this age, Paul said, "...*if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*" 2 Cor 4:3-4 But if anyone would just honestly assess their situation and put some honest forethought into it, how could they *not* come to Christ. In the book of Duet we read where God said, "*Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would consider their latter end!*" Deut 32:29 If people would only think about the path that they're on *presently* so as to see where the life of sin is leading them *ultimately*. If they would just use wisdom, if they would reason it through, Paul sought to reason with them #1.

But he didn't just reason on the basis of what seemed right in each man's eyes, "You have your beliefs, I have mine." No, he reasoned with them #2 From the Scriptures. The Word of God is the standard from which we reason, it's the platform from which we deliver the various points and premises that we hold as essential to life and godliness. and When someone refuses to reason with you on the basis of what the scripture says, there's really very little to nothing more that I have to say to them. Because the biblical perspective is the one that I ascribe to and know to be true, everything else great swelling words of emptiness at best. Or another way to understand that, just a lot of hot air, but the scripture will sustain you, will dig into you, will confront you, convict you, challenge you, and change your life because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So what Paul had to say, had to share, the way in which he would reason with them was *from the scripture*.

What was it he pointed out? The gospel, the message is always the same. #1 He reasoned with them #2 He used the Scriptures (which is why we need to study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed *rightly* dividing the word of truth, you want to make sure that your reasoning is in line contextually with the scripture), but the bedrock of his reasoning lie in #3 Explaining and demonstrating the necessity of the death and resurrection of the Christ.

Once he'd developed that platform he spoke to them of the evidence that demonstrated Jesus as being the Christ. He reasoned with them in an expositional way, he *expounded* on the scripture, that is, he *explained* what it meant. The OKJV says, "Opening and alleging" where the NKJV says, "Explaining and demonstrating" it's like there in Luke 24:45 where it says that Jesus, "Opened" the disciples understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

You see the Jews didn't have the hindsight that we do, they couldn't reconcile a "suffering servant" Messiah, and a "Conquering King" Messiah so they figured there must be 2, 1 that will suffer, 1 that will reign. Because how can the Messiah suffer, be put to death, and yet reign forever? 1 word, "Resurrection" dying once, for all, death no longer having dominion over Him having been raised from the dead to die no more, never again.

I'm sure he pointed out the necessity of the sacrifice; the wages of sin is death (Gen 2:17) God told Adam that the consequences of his sin would be death. He no doubt pointed out the fact that apart from the shedding of blood that there could be no remission of sin, Lev 17:11 "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.*" But yet with all of that it's not the blood of bulls and goats that God is interested in, Isa 1:11 "*I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.*" It's impossible that the blood of a bull should cover the sin of mankind; by one man sin came into the world, by One Man the sin of the world can be atoned for. All of those sacrifices were but the foreshadow of which Christ is the substance, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, all of those things spoke of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. *He* is our sin offering, our peace offering, it's *His* blood that makes atonement for our soul. No doubt he took them to Isaiah 53 showing them the foretelling of the fact that He'd be smitten and afflicted by God, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, how we all like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us *all*. That He would be cut off from the land of the living and His grave made with the wicked but with the rich at His death, that He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors by bridging the gap upon the cross. No doubt he took them to Ps 22 which gives a graphic portrayal of crucifixion hundreds of yrs before it was ever devised. and Then began to speak of the resurrection, how that God wouldn't allow His Holy one to see corruption, nor would He leave His soul in Sheol, (Ps 16:10) That Ps 2:7 spoke of the Christ being begotten not from the womb, but from the tomb, it foreshadowed the resurrection. Perhaps he pointed out the entire situation with Ab and his "only son" Isaac whom he loved, being offered up as it were for sacrifice but how that Ab received him to himself alive after that 3 day journey where he was dead to Ab.

Once he'd developed that premise he began to bring the facts of Jesus' life alongside of those prophecies and show them how He'd fulfilled everyone of them, over 300. Or #4 He Preached Jesus. Born in Bethlehem as foretold, called out of Egypt as foretold during the time of Herod's massacring all of the male children 2yrs old and under. How He came into Jerusalem on the exact day as prophesied in Dan ch 9. On a donkey as prophesied in Zech 9, betrayed for 30 pieces of silver as prophesied Zech 11, crucified, and resurrected just as the scripture foretold, in the Ps and the prophets. You guys, let me just encourage you, get familiar with your bibles! Be able to open the scriptures to people, explaining to them, why Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead according to the scripture, how that Jesus (and only Jesus) is the only person in human history who has fulfilled the scripture in its entirety and how that by faith in Him we can be saved from our sin and justified in the sight of God.

If you can't demonstrate the gospel to people from the OT, meaning if you can't explain and demonstrate the scriptural premise for the death and resurrection of the Christ and then begin to show people how that Jesus has met the protocol perfectly; let me challenge to make that a personal goal. That you might be able to present the facts in a manner similar to what you just heard, not because you bought the cd and memorized the speech, but because you've researched it for yourself and are confident in your knowledge and understanding of scripture to the point that you can deliver the message from the scripture of sin/salvation and Jesus as our Savior.

Paul did this, and he got quite a reaction, many of the Gentiles received it, many of the Jews resisted it, notice.

Vs5

Jason seems to be the fella who was housing them. Now you're going to hear lots of accusations, but this is the bottom line, see it there, "Envy." But you have to question the position of a particular group of people when they're prepared to get a bunch of notorious, up to no good rabble-rousers to accomplish their agenda. Watch out for the poison of *envy*, what's the difference between *jealousy* and *envy*, in my mind jealousy deals with my things, envy deals with yours, I'm jealous over my things. Some guy starts flirting with my wife I'm going to have a problem, why? Because I'm very jealous over her, she's mine, not yours. But if you have something that I want, I'm *envious* over that. I envy the fact that you have it, because I want it. Envy was the practical motive that placed Jesus on the cross, the bible tells us that Pilate wanted to let Him go, "*For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.*" Matt 27:18 So envy is nothing to toy with, it's dangerous, can be very deadly, it's poison to you. Prov 14:30 tells us, "*A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.*" The Jews were envious of the impact and influence that Paul was having in the city, they wanted that, "Who is this guy who just came into town and is all the sudden some sort of community super star? We've been chipping away at this for years!" and They envied him, so they sought to attack him, they're resisting the word, reacting in envy, and notice how it's twisted them up on the inside and how it's airing itself on the outside.

Vs6-9

Which basically means that they made Jason post bond and be accountable for the situation saying that if an uproar like this every broke out again that they'd hold him accountable. So this is the incident that caused Paul to move on and not be able to really come back lest the ramifications fall upon Jason and the rest of them. But you've got to love vs 6, what a great accusation to have brought against you. "What's the charge?" "They've turned the world upside down in the name of Jesus Christ!"

Would to God that we could be guilty as charged, even Jasper county, the surrounding communities, of course the fact is the world is already upside down, and when you grab someone who's upside down and turn them upside down from that position in reality you turn them right side up. So it would've been more accurate to say, "These who've turned the world right side up have come here too." But from their upside down perspective what they said was true, but God help us to turn our work place, our school, or our county, our locale upside down, or more accurately right side up for Jesus Christ. What an honorable charge. That you're so effective in ministering the gospel that when people see you coming they just get mad because they just know there's going to be change taking place in people's lives.

Vs10

There used to be a very powerful song that was popular a # of years ago, and in the chorus were the words, "You've got to know when to hold em', know when to fold em', know when to walk away, and know when to run." Paul sort of lived by that motto, he wasn't trying to be a hero, if it was time to go, he went.

But he was addicted to the ministry, everywhere he went he seemed to get himself into trouble, but he just couldn't not share, he'd go into another city, and find himself compelled to share the gospel there as well, you've just gotta love guys like that, they just refuse to stop, woe is me if I don't preach the gospel (kind of a thing) the love of Christ compels them. He made his way to Berea, found a synagogue and repeated the pattern.

Vs 11-15

2nd vs same as the 1st these guys just wouldn't leave him alone, so before the situation got dangerously out of control, or the lives of the believers in Berea were jeopardized, he left. But there's obviously a couple of things here that we want to point out that we do well to emulate and integrate into our own lives, but we'll save that for next time.

But for now just note that the difference wasn't in the message, it was in the men who heard it, the difference wasn't in the proclamation, it was in the people. Paul's platform always remained the same, he'd take of the principles and precepts of the word of God, and use them to point people to Jesus Christ who was crucified for our transgression and raised for our justification, now how that hits you is up to you. You can resist it, reject it, ridicule it, or you can open your heart and receive it, respond *to* it, being as it were reborn *by* it, or refreshed/refocused/revived/or renewed as the need may be *through* it. But the platform remained consistent, learn to reason with people via the principles, and precepts of the word of God, they may not consider the bible the inerrant word of God. You don't have to use *ch* and *vs*, but learn to reason from the Word. Because your opinion is just that, but God's word will impact lives, your opinion might not accomplish much, but His word will always accomplish the purpose for which He sends it.

Someone may not believe a gun in the face can kill them either, but that's not going to change the impact of the bullet. So to (if you will) with the word of God, whether they believe it or not is irrelevant, that won't change the impact of God's word in the human heart. So maintain the biblical perspective, learn to share the gospel and the person of Jesus Christ from the Scriptures.

You may be here and feeling the impact of the word of God and the message of the cross of Jesus Christ in your heart right now. If so let me encourage you to not resist the work of God's word in your life, the wooing of His Spirit, but rather respond to it, open up your heart and receive that work. If God is seeking to reason with you about the latter end of things, the desperation of your situation apart from Him, but how you can be forgiven in Him and made brand new through Him than don't reject it. Take Him up on His offer, by just accepting the finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ on your behalf, just believe upon Him, open your heart to Him, and invite Him in, and so shall you be saved.

Prayer Points: God would You teach us to know, and rightfully divide Your Word. Give us hearts that hunger after Your Word, not so that out of knowledge we become puffed up, but so that out of love we might edify and build up one another and be able to share Your love with a hurt, dying, desperate world that's lost and in the dark. Help us to learn the difference between reasoning with people, and bullying them or beating on them with your Word, we just want to be able to open, explain and demonstrate how that You needed to come Jesus, suffer in our stead, die on the cross and be raised again that we might have life. and We may not personally get into all the world, but help us to turn "our world" those with in our reach, or our influence, upside down for You Jesus.