

## 41—Acts 17.10-15 (5-9)—People of the Book

- I. Introduction
  - a. We tend to focus on the obvious responses people have to the gospel. In these two scenes, we see with two very clear responses: receiving the word and rejecting the word. Those are very easy to see. In fact, I wish it were that obvious to us this morning. I wish those who rejected the word would just say so and those who receive the word would give some evidence of it.
  - b. Indifference is deadly. Apathy is deadly. More deadly than these obvious mobs who go to great lengths to reject and stop the word from spreading. People who are indifferent go unnoticed. I imagine there are some in the stories we will be looking at today but you don't hear anything about them. They silently slip through the cracks.
  - c. But if they are dangerous, what do we do about that? Well, it's hard to do anything because it's like not having enough evidence to prosecute a case. You just continue to let them walk. People of our day are very good at it.
  - d. But one clear symptom: are they people of the book? Are they eager to hear it? Do they examine the Scriptures? Do they believe them and do them?
- II. Main Point
  - a. The transforming power of the gospel to save anyone who believes
- III. Outline
  - a. Many join the Kingdom and many join a mob
  - b. Immediately out and Immediately Proclaiming the gospel—comparing the responses
  - c. Implication from the Parable of the Sower
- IV. Exposition
  - a. We ended with the amazing work of God's grace as many were persuaded or as we saw securely trusting in Christ as their refuge for eternal salvation. As we continue to see, there are different responses to the gospel. Those who were persuaded join Paul and Silas in the Kingdom of God while others become jealous and form a mob against God's Kingdom. Let's take note of these responses so that we may discover how we are responding to the Word of God.
    - i. Every time the word is sown, there are different responses. The parable of Sower describes four responses and we will glean from some implications from it at the end.
      1. But did you know you need more than ears to actually hear God's word? By nature, were full of pride. Therefore, Paul says prideful people think the gospel is craziness. (1 Cor. 2:14)<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
      2. Therefore, the Holy Spirit must act before anyone can submit to God's demands to repent and believe.
    - ii. The work of God in each of these cities has been obvious. In Thessalonica you have some of the Jews and a great number of the devout Greeks and many leading women of the town who are persuaded. They are secure. They are trusting Jesus. They are humbled. They are reasonable. They are in the refuge and safety of Jesus.
      1. But some of the Jews were jealous. That's their response to Paul reasoning with them from the Scriptures. They were not persuaded. They are not secure. They are not trusting in Jesus. They are prideful and unreasonable. Their refuge which isn't one at all is in this mob of people they wouldn't normally even recognize exist.
        - a. The exact same word of jealousy is used to describe Joseph's brothers when they sold him as a slave to Egypt back in Acts 7.
          - i. I was thinking about that the other morning. Maybe they have a different understanding of dreams than I do but how do they hold

Joseph responsible for a dream? Maybe they are certain it will come about but where did it come from? Obviously, we know how and why this happened but jealousy toward a teenage boy's dream seems unreasonable.

- b. This is a natural, emotional response.
    - i. I get this. I've tried to train myself to recognize any emotional responses that cloud sound judgment. It's normally the first impulse and that should tell you in many cases to give it some thought.
  - c. This type of response is aggressive. It's normally an overreaction.
    - i. The Jews of Thessalonica hunt down some of the rabble in the marketplace.
      1. They are the layabouts and bums of the city who have nothing better to do than join a mob to set the city in a riot.
      2. It's one thing for a few people to be driven by unhinged emotions but it's quite another to unleash a crowd that's been whipped into a frenzy.
2. They attack Jason's house to search for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the crowd.
    - a. This part of the story may seem confusing but let's see if we can untangle it.
    - b. Jason has recently been persuaded to trust in Christ. I say that because in verse 6 he is named among the brothers.
      - i. He seems to have responded just like Lydia and the jailer from Philippi by receiving Paul and Silas who have turned the world upside down into his home.
      - ii. By association, they are marked men with Paul and Silas.
  3. These jealous men have formed a mob. Attacked a man's house. And in expected fashion twist the words of Paul and Silas with a false charge against them.
    - a. The motto in their day was Caesar is lord. And he was in part.
    - b. They have it right that Jesus is Lord. Indeed, he is the King of the universe not just the Roman Empire.
      - i. And you can hear the demands of the gospel in their charge. To come to Christ, one must submit to him not only as Savior but as your King.
        1. And as your King, he doesn't call his people to a revolution. He calls them to proclaim the gospel. He calls his people to submit to the governing authorities. Be good citizens. But Jesus is your ultimate authority.
        2. I mean, to be persuaded that Jesus is King and not Caesar leaves a person secure and safe forever. If Caesar is your lord, where does that leave a person?
        3. Who is your King? Who is your ultimate authority? Who calls the shots in your life?
  4. Jason and the brothers get a chance to find out who their King is.
    - a. They are required by the city authorities to pay what we might call something like posting bond.
    - b. In this case, it seems this security payment was for their release and the removal of Paul and Silas from the city.
      - i. They probably got at least some of the money back when the troublemakers were packed and leaving the city limits.





- b. Well Paul is a marked man. He seems to be the focus of the attacks.
    - i. The new believers immediately send Paul off to the sea.
      - 1. As we will see next week, Paul makes the 300-mile voyage to Athens from a port there on the sea.
    - ii. Thankfully, Silas and Timothy have avoided the need to leave immediately. They remain in Berea.
      - 1. But after Paul makes it to the coast, he gives the brothers from Berea a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.
        - a. They eventually reconnect with Paul in Athens. We think Silas gets sent back to Philippi. We know from 1 Thess. 3 that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica. Both Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul in Corinth according to Acts 18:5.
        - b. This is such a good place to hear more of the details of what Paul was thinking concerning the churches and in particular the church in Thessalonica and how Paul was already using Timothy in some very important roles.
        - c. (1 Thess. 3:1-5) Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, <sup>2</sup> and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, <sup>3</sup> that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. <sup>4</sup> For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. <sup>5</sup> For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.
- c. Well let's end with some implications of this text from the Parable of the Sower
  - i. (Matt. 13:18-23) <sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."
    - 1. Those who didn't understand seem to be those who formed the mob. They reject it. If they had been persuaded, they would have been securely resting in the promises of the gospel but the enemy comes and snatches it away because they were not persuaded.
    - 2. Paul sends Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how their faith is when the persecution comes. Like the rocky soil, they need a root to endure and Timothy has gone there to make sure the root is firm.

3. If you read through the letters to the Thessalonians, you will find those who had received it with joy but only endured for a while. They even try to convince others but Paul encourages them to continue trusting the Lord.
4. Obviously, there will be some who hear the word but the cares of the world and lure of riches choke the word and no fruit comes.
5. It was amazing to see that Timothy finds many still trusting the Lord in Thessalonica. The word fell on some good soil and yielded much fruit.

V. Response

- a. Listen to the sermon with an open bible.
- b. Talk it over with others over lunch.
- c. Be eager to hear the Word
- d. Do a lot of examining yourself
- e. Test the teaching with the Scriptures in humility
- f. May the Bible have the final say

Are you persuaded that Jesus is the Christ? That he suffered on the cross and was raised from the dead? Have you repented and believed and been baptized? Are you trusting Jesus as your all-sufficient Savior and the ultimate love of your life? Is he your King? Does he rule your life? Is he the treasure that you found and gave up everything to have him?

**Benediction:**

(Eph. 6:23-24) <sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.