

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 19TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

### UPSIDE DOWN (ACTS 17:1-9) FAMILIAR PATTERN

There's a beauty to the simplicity of Paul's missionary work. He trusted in the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives, so he didn't have to create new and exciting methods for sharing the gospel. Paul would go to the synagogue on the Sabbath, show from the Scriptures that Jesus had to suffer as the Messiah, call Jews to faith and repentance, then go to the Gentiles.

#### THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was another prominent city in Macedonia with a population of 200,000. Many Jews had come there during the Roman persecution of the Jews. Many who heard the gospel received it, including God-fearing Gentiles.

- **Faithfully sharing the gospel always produces some type of response, with the greatest being salvation for the lost.**

#### MAKING THINGS RIGHT

Jealous Jews once again stirred up opposition to Paul and Silas, accusing them of having "turned the world upside down" and proclaiming Jesus as King over Caesar. After hearing the charges, they were released to leave the city.

- **The results of the gospel don't turn things upside down but bring the culture back to what's right: Jesus-focused living.**

### REASONING (ACTS 17:10-21) HUMBLE SEEKERS

Berea was about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. There, Paul found Jewish people who were open to both hearing Paul's message about Jesus and doing their own daily work in the Scriptures to see if what Paul taught lined up.

- **Pastors/podcasts are never substitutes for individual study of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is our primary teacher.**

#### NO END TO OPPOSITION

Many Jews and Gentiles trusted the gospel and followed Jesus. Word got out and the Thessalonian Jews came to oppose Paul again. Paul was sent away as far as Athens, while Tim and Silas stayed back to stabilize the new church.

- **Opposition may keep us from our work but if we're making disciples, they are prepared to do the work themselves.**

#### NEW CITY, SAME PAUL, SAME PRACTICE

While the golden age of Athens had passed, it was still an influential city in the Roman empire with its political, philosophical, cultural, and religious influences seen throughout the city. The polytheism of the city "deeply distressed" him. On Saturdays, Paul was at the synagogue, showing Jesus was the Messiah. The rest of the week, Paul engaged the Gentile Athenians.

#### WORLDVIEWS AT WAR

Paul's worldview, which was true, clashed with the worldview of the Athenians, which was false and included Epicureans and Stoics. Some were dismissive of Paul, and others wanted to hear more. Because Paul was a student of the culture, he was able to speak truth into it.

- **Understanding the culture helps us bring light to its darkness.**

#### THE CULTURE'S EMPTY PURSUITS

Luke says the Athenians loved talking about new stuff. They had a false sense of superiority about their intellectual prowess. They couldn't see that they were "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17).

- **Apart from Jesus, we're like sheep without a shepherd. We're always hungry and thirsty but never satisfied.**

### MARS HILL (ACTS 17:22-34) THE HILL OF ARES

Paul was taken to the Areopagus to speak in what was more like a university forum than a trial. When with the Jews, Paul used the OT to show that Jesus was the Messiah. In this secular setting, Paul spoke to their worldview.

- **Know the culture. What do they believe? What do they feel? What do they fear? What do they desire? What influences them?**

#### THE BIBLE'S STORYLINE

Paul used the Athenians' polytheism as an entry point. He encouraged their pursuit of religion while introducing them to the "Unknown God" they worshiped in ignorance. Starting with God as Creator and Lord over creation, he then moved to mankind's creation by God, mankind's sin and need for a Savior, and that Jesus is our Savior, proven by His resurrection.

#### UNAFRAID AND UNASHAMED

As Paul spoke about the true God, he did so unapologetically. He spoke of God's sovereignty (over all things), God's immutability (He never changes and has no needs), God's sustaining (everything runs because of Him), and God's righteous nature and coming judgment.

- **This is God as He is, the true God to whom we submit, not as we want Him to be.**

#### THE GOSPEL BRINGS STUMBLING OR SALVATION

Jesus' resurrection from the dead causes some to ridicule Paul for his teaching (red light). Some wanted to hear more later (yellow light). Some believed (green light). Paul's **character** didn't cause stumbling; Paul's **content** did.

- **If we regularly share the gospel, we must become friends with rejection. Remember, rejection isn't always forever.**

#### MAKING ALL THINGS NEW

- For many, the gospel is offensive because it flies in the face of pride often expressed in self-determination.
- When the gospel is received through repentance and faith, **hearts are changed**, leading to **changed lives**, leading to **changed homes**, leading to **changed nations**. We get a taste of Heaven on earth.

#### CAN WE ARTICULATE THE GOSPEL?

- **GOD:** Made all things, gives life to all things, rules over and sustains all things, including us.
- **MAN:** Created in God's image, which should lead to worship. We reject Him, choosing our own way, which alienates us from God and leads to judgment.
- **CHRIST:** God the Son satisfied God's wrath on the cross and was resurrected for us.

#### HANG AROUND THE LOST

- We love people up close, not from a distance. We are to be in the world, not of it. "Not of it" doesn't mean **isolation from it**; it means we should be **insulated from it**.
- This isn't a **call to compromise our character** but to have **compassion for those far from God**. We can invite people to come, but we must also go to them.

#### BE CURIOUS

- Get to know people. Asking questions and truly listening makes a huge difference.
- **Hearing their stories is more important than sharing your story.** If we truly show love to people, they will eventually want to know about us. **Be patient.**
- Learn the worldview of the culture, their sins and their saviors, and how **Jesus is better.**