

Turning the World Upside Down (The Road 8/27/17)

Acts 17:1-15

Introduction

One thing the gospel never does is nothing. When it is faithfully and truly proclaimed the message of Christ and his kingdom is powerful and always produces results. In our text this morning, Paul's enemies claim that Paul and his associates have "turned the world upside down" with their message. And they are partly right. But in reality it was sin and the fall that turned God's perfect world upside down. It's Christ, through the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is turning his world right side up. And friends, God has called us, you and me, to be apart of his restoration plan. This morning we're going to see the centrality of the Scriptures in God's plan to restore his broken world.

The Message

Paul's custom (Synagogues) 3 Sabbaths

Reasoned with them from the Scriptures

explaining and proving (that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead)

No Bible Thumper (he didn't rail against them, he reasoned with them)

Scriptural – didn't say I'm an Apostle so you have to listen to my prophetic utterances

The facts of the gospel were not only historical events... but those historical events were the fulfilment of prophecy.

Makes you wonder exactly which OT Scriptures Paul turned to over these three weeks

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

Psalms 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ... 16 a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and my feet;

What was the message of the Scriptures?

v. 3 It was necessary for Christ to suffer

And to rise from the dead

Do you remember what Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane?

"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..."

The answer from the Father teaches us that the cross was the only way to redeem fallen humanity.

At the cross, Jesus satisfied the perfect justice of God by standing in the place of his people and suffering what we should have suffered for our sins.

Not only was it necessary for Jesus to suffer in our place on the cross. It was also necessary for him to rise on the dead. For three reasons.

1. The OT prophesied the messiah would rise from the dead.
2. In his public ministry, Jesus foretold the fact that he would be crucified and rise again.
3. His resurrection was the undeniable proof that he was exactly who he claimed to be. And when he rose from the dead it was the indisputable evidence that God accepted Christ's payment for our sins.

The resurrection is a giant receipt, stamped across history, that reads: "Paid In Full."

Tim Keller

Paul's message was that Jesus was the Christ (the messiah) promised in the OT Scriptures.

Now, Look at the response of the Thessalonian Jews

The Outrage

Some of them were persuaded and believed and joined with Paul.

v. 5 But the Jews were jealous

took “wicked men of the rabble” (lewd men of the baser sort) and formed a mob

Why would they be so angry?

1. Even though the gospel is good news to weary souls, the pride of the human heart makes it very difficult to receive the news that something is wrong with us and we need help. The good news of the gospel starts with the bad news of your sin and the fact that your sin separates you from your God. And that’s offensive.

But can I show you something? As much as we all hate to admit it, we’ve all fallen short. And I’ll prove it to you. There’s not a single person here who has ever lived up fully to their own standards for themselves. We can’t even make a New Year’s resolution and keep it perfectly. Even if God judged you by your own standards... even if your eternal destiny depended on meeting your own expectations for yourself you would still fall short. What makes you think you could measure up to God’s standards? The good news of the gospel is that, even though you’re a sinner, Jesus loved you so much that he was willing to pay the ultimate price to save you and bring you back into his family. Be mad at Jesus if you want to, but I bet if a doctor told you that you had a terminal disease but he told you he had a cure for you, you’d wrap your arms around his neck and gladly receive the help you need.

2. But there’s another reason the Thessalonian Jews were so upset. Look at verse 7. They accused Paul and his associates of proclaiming that “there is another king”... King Jesus! Under Caesar, it was fine to believe that anything and everything was a god. Under the pluralistic Roman Government it was not sin to pledge allegiance to multiple gods. But to say that there is one ultimate King. That there is only one true God and that Jesus is the one King, to whom everyone must bow is an outrage.

If you want to know what someone’s idols are, then just look and see what makes them angry. When you mess with the idols of a person’s heart. They’ll get violent. When you tell someone that they must turn away from every rival but Christ, they must give up worshiping all their false gods. They can’t help but be angry.

Now let me say this... If you’re here today and you’re not yet a believer and you feel insulted to hear about your sin and the fact that you must give up all your rights to yourself and bow to King Jesus, it could be a good thing. If you’re outraged it could mean that you’re hearing the message correctly. And frankly, at first, a lot of people are angered by the gospel. But when you take time to carefully think through these facts, your anger can be one of the first steps to seeing that the gospel is true.

And a word to believers... If you’re a believer here today and you’re looking down on other people for not believing the gospel or you scoff at people who are angry or insulted by the gospel... Maybe you’ve forgotten what it’s like to be an unbeliever. If you’re a believer here today and your sins have been forgiven you, then you of all people should show patience and understanding toward those who don’t believe because you know the only reason you believe is God’s grace. Sometimes people who claim to believe the gospel can be the greatest hindrance to those who have not yet come to faith because of our attitudes. Living in light of the gospel will give you great hope, great patience, and great understanding for the lost.

So, the scriptural message often causes outrage. And friends, if our version of the gospel never offends anyone, then we’re not preaching it like Paul or Jesus preached it. Now there’s another kind of response to the gospel.

The Eagerness – There’s eagerness to hear and receive the good news of the gospel.

Look at the Bereans in verse 11... More noble (look at the contrast – “wicked men of the rabble” vs. the more noble Bereans.

Why were the Jews in Berea considered more noble?

Paul came to Berea just like he did in Thessalonica arguing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ who had to die for our sins and rise again on the third day. Unlike the Thessalonians, the Bereans received Paul’s teaching from the Scriptures with eagerness. They had a God-given hunger for the Word of God. They were eager to have it opened to them and to consider the truth claims of the gospel Paul made.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 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.

John 8:47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Every born again child of God has an instinctual hunger for the Word of God. If you don't have a hunger to hear and obey the word of God then the Bible says you don't have the right to consider yourself a believer. Whenever the Scriptures are opened and they are faithfully and accurately explained and applied, then we are held accountable by God to receive it as his word and obey it.

But, I want you to see this... The Bereans didn't just blindly receive Paul's teaching without question. They listened and thought very critically about what Paul says. They "examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." They didn't just take Paul's word for it. They used the Scriptures to confirm the truthfulness of his message.

This is an incredibly important lesson for us. On the one hand, God calls men to be pastors and teachers of the word. He also calls men and women to various other positions of teaching, like Sunday School or Life Group teachers, etc. Hear me closely. No person has the right or the authority to teach in the name of God, except to accurately teach what the Scriptures say.

Therefore, when we hear someone claiming to teach the word we have a double responsibility. If the teaching agrees with the Scripture then we are obligated to receive and obey it. But we also have the responsibility to use the Scriptures for ourselves to test the teaching.

When it comes to Bible teachers, the pastor who baptized me gave me the best advice I've ever heard...

He said, "You should never follow so closely behind a man that you can't see Christ up in front of him." That's good advice.

One major problem I see for many Christians is that their beliefs are largely only second-hand. What I mean by that is their belief of truth is mainly based on what they've learned from their parents or a pastor. Don't get me wrong, godly parents and godly pastors who pass on their faith to following generations are a tremendous blessing. But at some point your faith has to be grounded not on your parents' or pastor's faith but on the word of God for yourself. Your faith needs to be personally experiential.

Hebrews 5:12-13 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

Another problem in our day is that it's really hard to convince modern people to live their lives based on religious texts that are thousands of years old. But the key to that is Jesus himself. Jesus was a pretty smart guy, wouldn't you agree? Listen to what he said in his most famous sermon:

Matthew 7:24-27 – Build your house on the rock...

According to Jesus, a life of wisdom is a life built on the solid foundation of his word.

One last thing to consider about a life built on the truths of Scripture. An awful lot of people have a view that a life built on Scripture is somehow boring or impersonal. There's a notion even among many professing believers that they love Jesus but they hate theology. They want a relationship with him but they don't want to be burdened with reading and studying the Bible. That seems cold and academic. But I beg to differ. Paul's not the only man who opened and explained the Scriptures. Nearly two thousand years ago, this man named Jesus, after he died on a cross, and after he rose from the dead, he met two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. Listen to what he told them:

Luke 24:25-27 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

And here's what these two disciples said later...

Luke 24:32 They 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?"

Isn't this amazing? Here's two men in the physical presence of Jesus, and nobody is saying, hey, forget the Scriptures! Let's just spend time with Jesus. Jesus doesn't look at his disciples and say, "Dudes don't worry about studying your Bibles, just hang out with me."

It was the act of Christ opening the Scriptures to his disciples that set their hearts on fire. And my friends, let me tell you... This Jesus still opens his Bible to his followers. He still sets the hearts of men and women on fire with a passion for his glory through the faithful handling of his written word.

Our God is still in the process of turning this world right side up by men and women like you and me whose eyes have been opened and hearts have been set on fire by the gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Has your heart been set on fire? Can say with the hymn writer:
my heart an altar, and your love the flame.

Back up in v. 4, back in Thessalonica, it says, "some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas..."

Have you been persuaded? Have you been persuaded that Jesus is the Christ? That he is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world? Have you been persuaded of his love for you and that he died for your sins? Well if you have, then it's time for you to follow him. And it's time to join with us in living for him and serving him.

Let's pray.