

Acts 17_pt1

by Bill Gallatin

The sermon highlights the importance of living a life of love and obedience to God, as demonstrated by the life and ministry of Paul.

Duration: 1:04:24

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Genesis 22:18, Exodus 12:13, Psalm 22:16, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 52:13 - 55:9, Hosea 6:2

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of maintaining love and excitement for God throughout our lives. He mentions that Jesus prophesied that people's hearts would grow cold and angry as Christians in the end times. The speaker then highlights the example of the Apostle Paul, who immediately responded to God's call to go to Macedonia, even though he was beaten and thrown in jail. Despite his difficult circumstances, Paul remained obedient and even sang praises to God at midnight. The speaker emphasizes that God can use any situation for His purposes and to spread the gospel, and encourages listeners to share the love of Christ with others in a loving and gracious manner.

Transcript

Let's turn to Acts chapter 17. One of the things that I find so remarkable about Paul, first his great apprehension of grace, and he tells us that grace causes us to stand. It's the power of God to enable us to go on no matter what.

Now when we begin to glorify God, Satan seeks to come against us to discourage us, to cause us to look back. And it's interesting Jesus, I said, I think he, let's see in Luke 9, 62, he said, no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is worthy or fit for the kingdom of God. Now the amazing thing about Paul, and so often we see in our own lives until God brings us to that understanding, and he changes us within with his grace, his unmerited favor, and his love.

So often when we feel or experience or face difficulties, we get hardened. I look back at my life and as I was a younger Christian, there were times like the apostles as they struggled against the wind going across the lake, trying to be obedient to the Lord. You remember the Bible says their hearts were hardened.

And I can recall times when I'd get nasty, and the poor people around me would be at the brunt of my nastiness or my reaction because of the struggles that I was going through. As you get older in the Lord,

you begin to realize that God designs everything that happens in our lives, and it's his grace that keeps our hearts soft that we continue to go forward. And we don't become hardened, we don't get nasty.

And it's difficult to be around a nasty Christian or a mean-spirited Christian that just can't tolerate the slightest little thing that maybe upsets their agenda. It's just difficult. Well, if anybody had a right to be maybe nasty and even take out his anger at the lost rather than share the love and the grace of God, it would be the apostle Paul.

Now stop and think of his life. Now we've all had our magnificent, glorious initial experiences with Christ, our Damascus Road experiences. And we can recall that glorious day that we were born again, particularly if there was some great supernatural phenomenon with it, like Paul's road experience.

But it's interesting, from that moment on he faced nothing but difficulty and jail. And yet he's the man that had the greatest handle and understanding of the grace of God, the love of God. He's the man, as Jesus said, continue ye in my love.

So many of us, because it's our human nature, we begin in the love of God. And Jesus prophesied that at the end of the age, one of the signs of the end was that people's hearts would begin to wax cold and get angry and nasty again as Christians. The initial love and excitement of that experience with Jesus Christ would wax cold.

Now the apostle Paul was so different. The amazing thing is, remember, he's had the vision to come to Europe, to Macedonia. So he responds immediately.

And as soon as he goes into Europe, Philippi, the very first place he stops, he's beaten and thrown in jail. He heeds the call of God. He's obedient to the vision, immediately responds to it, and he's beaten and thrown in jail.

And at midnight he's singing praises to God, not ready to quit the ministry, not angry at the jailer, not getting nasty with the person next to him. You see what the grace of God can do in the heart of the human being. It wasn't some special anointing more than anybody else.

He had the indwelling Holy Spirit. But he began to apprehend the grace and the love of God that surpasses all knowledge. It's the power of God unto salvation.

It's the power, it's the strength that causes us to stand, Paul says in Romans. So you see, that's what defeats Satan. He knows that he gets out of jail and he's now being led to Thessalonica, where we will see tonight.

And what happens in Thessalonica? The Jews get all stirred up, create a riot. They go to the magistrates, they run them out of town. It's another riot.

He's in the perfect will of God everywhere he goes. And his own countrymen. He travels some 100 miles, and before it's all over, 200 miles by foot from village to village on this main Roman road from the west to the east.

In the perfect will of God, he gets to Thessalonica. He has to go out of town at night, and he goes to a little village off by the wayside. And it's interesting, he starts to share the gospel with a little place called Berea.

And the Jews in Thessalonica, some, you know, 100 miles away, they get wind of it and they stir up skinheads from the streets and go down looking for him. And another riot and he has to leave Berea. I mean, that's his life.

But you see, he put his hand to the plow. His love for Christ and his understanding of Christ's love for him, as he teaches in Corinthians, the love of Christ constrains me, overwhelms me, and there's no difficulty that Satan can send that could cause me even to look back. I put my hand to the plow.

I love Jesus Christ more than my own life, more than my closest human friend. And that enabled him to keep from getting hardened and angry and nasty. He drew out of that deep well of grace, and so when he preached the gospel, there wasn't nastiness or threatening or anger or resentment in it.

It was love. It was a concern for all races of people. It's that marvelous grace.

That's what God can work in any heart if anybody's willing and is willing to find out about it. Again, the scriptures tell us that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And when you begin to apprehend that and drink of that well, you can't get enough of it.

You just want more and more. And it's wonderful to know that Satan can't cause you to get nasty anymore. Start taking it out on your wife or your husband or the children or your friends.

The grace of God constrains. It's so powerful. Well now, he's responded, you remember, they have left Philippi.

The jailer's whole house had been saved. A church has been established. And it's interesting, he'd go from village to village.

He's going from place to place, some from Philippi to where he goes now. When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. So now, there are Jewish males there, more than ten, and so there's a legitimate according to the Jewish law and custom, there's a synagogue there.

And as his custom was, you know, to the Jew first, he said, I wish, I could wish myself a curse from Christ for the benefit of my countrymen that they might come to know the Messiah, who he is, Jesus Christ. And so, even though he was the apostle to the Gentiles and he knew that, and he knew that Peter was the apostle to the Jews, Paul's desire was to the Jew first, to reach his countrymen. He ached inside that they might know.

The very ones who had followed him around and badger him and beat him and lie about him and try to disrupt his Bible studies. You see, the grace of God kept him from beginning, mean-spirited and angry. He still had a desire to share the love of God with them, because of what the love of God did for him.

You see. So he's gone from one village to another, and I like the way he plants churches, not five miles from each other, eight miles from each other. He goes about 30 miles here, then he goes another 33 miles, another 37 miles.

And before it's over, he, by foot, has gone up, and if you look at your map, you see the northern portion of the Aegean Sea that separates the coast of Turkey and Greece. And that upper portion is what was known then, and even today, is Macedonia. The lower portion, or the border of Yugoslavia, met Greece.

And so he's planted a church. He's got a group of believers. He's met that very influential, wealthy woman from Thyatira.

Her house has gotten saved. He moves on now, taking the gospel to another town. But God's using the persecution and the attacks from the enemy, allowing Satan to do these things, to direct Paul.

I think if we begin to learn the sovereignty of God, and the providence of God, and know that things aren't by chance, that even if we do, in our decision-making, and I've done this so often, make mistakes. It's so easy to make a mistake and miss the direction, but God still has a way of working it to the good. He works everything to the good, to those that love Him, and are the called according to His purposes.

So that no matter what Satan tries to do, God uses it for the gospel's sake, and for the spreading of the gospel. And for the learning experience for you and I. And to change our hearts, and conform us into the image of Jesus Christ. I marvel at Paul, a man who before he was born again, before he was converted, was a deeply devout religious Jew.

But he was bitter and nasty and angry. He could resent just as easy as he could show kindness in an instant. He could go from a religious Jekyll to a Hyde.

And how, as God worked in this man's life, how he was changed into the image of Jesus Christ. A man just like you and I, as James tells us concerning Elijah, he was a man subject to like passions as you and I. A normal human being that the grace of God worked in, through these things, and made him like Christ. And so the longer he walked with Christ, the more difficulty experiences, the more Satan attacks, the more he became like Christ.

He continued in the love of God, and grew in the grace and the knowledge and the love of Jesus Christ. No more nastiness. No more resentment in the man.

No matter how difficult his situation, he was always pleasant to be around. He didn't have to hide when Paul was going through a trial. God do that in us.

Because that's what he wants to do. That's what he's willing to do. That's what he can do and will do through the work and the beauty and the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we don't look back. David Livingston, they ask him, where do you plan to go? He says, I don't know, but wherever I go, I'm going forward. I've put my hand to the plow.

I'm not going to look back. Lot's wife looked back. And what did it do? It paralyzed her.

It stopped her from going forward. Just to look back. And so he comes to Thessalonica, and Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scripture.

So he was there, it could be either two weeks or three weeks, depending on when he started. If he came the first day on a Saturday, he could have stayed until the next Saturday, and then the Saturday after, that would be two weeks. If he came on a Sunday and spent the week with them, and then went in that following Saturday, he could have been there three weeks.

Two weeks or three weeks, but he was there for three Sabbaths in the synagogue, reasoning with them out of the Scriptures, as his manner was. His desire to convert the Jew. And he began to open and allege that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach

unto you is Christ.

The Messiah is Jesus, Yeshua of Nazareth. The anointed one who all your Old Testament prophets spoke of is Jesus. Now, here's the wonderful thing.

They had no New Testament. So Paul proved to them and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, out of nothing but the Old Testament that you and I have to convert. You can use nothing but the Old Testament to convert someone to Christ, if you know the Old Testament.

There was no New Testament written yet. Everything was verbal and oral, and they're going about sharing. So he used, in the Scriptures, it was all Old Testament.

Now stop and think of the wealth of the Old Testament Scriptures. You recall, and it could be he took them down the same path that Jesus himself took the two men on the road to Emmaus, when it says, when he began, at the beginning with Moses, Jesus gave them this Bible study and brought them through the Old Testament from Moses all the way up to the present time, and then revealed himself to them, you remember. And it says, did not our hearts burn within us when he was sharing these Scriptures? And Jesus shared nothing but Old Testament Scriptures.

Now stop and think of the wealth and the pictures and the figures of the Old Testament that prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Well, first of all, you start, you know, right in Genesis, and maybe Paul very possibly went right immediately to Abraham, where the very first mention of love in the Bible is where it speaks of Abraham loving his only son, and offering up his only son, and then having his son given back to him in a figure, the resurrection. So immediately he could have gone there to begin to prepare them with the Old Testament Scriptures, because they'd heard about this Jesus who died and rose again, who was claiming to be the only begotten son of God the Father.

You've got the whole second Psalm that speaks about the Lord's son. He said, this day have I begotten thee. He's going to have him reign and rule on the earth, and the begotten in that second Psalm speaks of resurrection.

Why do the heathen rage? And it says that God's going to raise him up, and he will rule and reign on this earth. He said, this day have I begotten thee. He's raised him from the dead, and he's coming back to reign again.

You've got the beautiful figure of Joseph, the son, the favored son, rejected by his brethren, cast into a pit for dead, lifted out of that pit. As far as his brethren, the Jews are concerned, this son that they hated, the father loved, but the brethren hated, rejected, dead, gone, and he becomes mighty with the Gentiles in Egypt. The Jews are suffering.

They need to go to the world. They go down to Egypt to survive in the famine, and here Joseph disguises himself and meets their needs, and they don't even realize it's the rejected son that's keeping them and meeting their needs. And it says, and a second time he revealed himself to them, the one they thought was dead, just as Jesus Christ, you see, is going to do again for the nation Israel, the one, the favored son of the father who's been rejected, who they think is only but a dead prophet, false prophet on the cross, crucified.

You look at Moses, the same thing. Moses, a common criminal, wanted to lead his people out, rejected, runs for his life, disappears for many years, lives with the Gentiles, takes a Gentile bride just as Jesus

Christ has taken a Gentile bride to church, and then comes back a second time with his Gentile bride and delivers his people, Moses. The 22nd Psalm, the two-thirds of the beginning of the psalm describe crucifixion, our Lord on the cross, and then from verse 26 on is the resurrection.

In the very last verse of the 22nd Psalm, the psalmist says it is finished, the very thing that Jesus cried out on the cross. Psalm 16, verse 9, thou will not leave my soul in Sheol, or the grave, the resurrection. Psalm 17, verse 5, when I awake I will see thee, I will awake with thy likeness, speaking of resurrection.

Daniel 9, 26, when he lays it out and he prophesies the coming of the Messiah, but it said he will be cut off, but not for himself, rejected, crucified. Hosea speaks of him being rejected, and after two days he says, I will return to my place whence I came, and he will hide his face for two days, or two thousand years, and then he will return, and he said he will revive us again. Hosea, chapter 5. Zechariah chapter 12 speaks of, they will look upon me whom they have pierced.

And then over in chapter 13, verse 6, it says, we will look upon you and say, what are these wounds in my hands? And say, these are the wounds which I received in the house of my friend. So, text after text after text, and then the one that's so dynamic and so emphatic that the Jews to this day will not read it in their synagogues, you know, on their holy days at all since Christ came. Isaiah 52, 16 through Isaiah 53, that they refuse to read in their own synagogues.

The rejection and the accurate description of Messiah. Scripture after scripture after scripture. You can just see Paul reasoning with them.

They've heard of this Jesus, and knowing the scriptures well enough that the Holy Spirit can honor and open their hearts. Opening and alleging. Notice, opening, giving understanding.

Not angry, not bitter because of all of his trials and difficulties since he got born again and met Jesus. A difficult road, a difficult yoke, and this heavy cross I've got to bear. Why did I ever even give my life to Christ? I've had nothing but trouble since I've been born again.

See, the grace of God changed the man. He'd never look back. Never look back.

He said, this person that I speak of is Jesus, the Messiah. Some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks, or Greeks who had converted to Judaism, and a great multitude, and of the chief women, not a few. Just as he shared the grace and the love of God with such a spirit, it's just like the Holy Spirit began to open our hearts.

Instead of attacking them, it says he reasoned with them, and opened the scriptures in such a way that they weren't defensive. He didn't go out and start slashing and, you know, attacking them because they were believing false things and they were blind idiots, or that their religion was damned and they'll be damned. You know, it's interesting, Jesus said, remember, in John, that if I just be lifted up, if you'll just share me in such a way, he said, all men will be drawn unto me.

And naturally he was speaking of the cross. The true meaning of there is Isaiah's text, that he'll be exalted and highly lifted up on the cross. He said, if you do that, if you present the cross in my love, I can draw men to me.

Not attacking or damning people. And now, notice immediately. But the Jews, now, remember, Jews, that was a feather in their cap, to proselyte a Gentile, have a Gentile convert to Judaism.

So here's Paul coming along, and now the Gentiles, who were these devout Jews that had been converted to Judaism from Greek pagan thought, are now realizing, through their Jewish faith, that the Messiah that they were believing in, going into Orthodox Judaism, the Messiah was none other than Jesus, and now these devout Jews who are Orthodox are saying, we're losing our converts. They're following Jesus and they're leaving our religion. We're losing control here.

And notice what that usually does. How it stirs up envy and resentment. The Jews which believed not, in other words, they believed in Messiah, but that Jesus, not the Jesus of Messiah, the Jews that were blinded and hardened, you see, they took the 22nd Psalm and they saw Jesus as being put to death as a false prophet, as a blasphemer.

They didn't see that it was fulfillment of Psalm 22. But the Greeks were saying, those whose hearts were open, were saying, wow, this has got to be Jesus. And so the Jews which believed not, they were maintaining their faith in that Orthodox Judaism, they were moved with envy.

And they took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. In other words, they went out and got some street gangs, these kids that just, you know, they're hanging around in the corners, maybe in a neighborhood or in a shopping center with their, you know, court bottles of beer and their ghetto blasters on their front, and you drive through and it's almost like they dare you to hit them as they, they don't even get out of the street, you know, and you can feel the vibes. They're just looking for trouble.

Just on a street corner, that kind of a crowd. And isn't it interesting, the devout Jews went looking for them to create problems. They knew they could stir these kids up, certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, just some street gangs.

They gathered a company, and they set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the real world. So Paul had befriended a Greek named Jason, they were probably staying at his house, teaching the Bible, and they'd become friends, and so they, they knew that that's where Paul was, and so they went after that house. They sent these kids just to, you know, create a ruckus in the neighborhood and stir up the city and even the police.

Not much different than today. We look at the things that are happening in the United States today. You know, we, it's been what, about 30 years since we said it was the constitutional law that says you can't pray in schools, and now they're deciding whether, you know, trying to figure out, maybe they're going to arm the teachers so they can be protected.

The metal detectors aren't working. They're going to arm the public school teachers in the United States, even though they have police in the halls. I've got a few statistics.

Just to show you, this is from the Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C. Some of the late, this is what's going on right now in the United States with teenagers. Every 24 hours. So by this time tomorrow night, this is what will take place in the United States.

437 teenagers will be arrested for drunken driving. 1,206 unwed teenagers will have abortions by this time tomorrow night. We're talking teenagers, not the people in their 20s and 30s that are into lust and pornography.

We're talking about teenagers. 1,206 unwed teenagers will have abortions by this time tomorrow night. 1,365 unwed teenagers will give birth by this time tomorrow night.

1,512 teenagers will quit school by this time tomorrow night. 3,288 teenagers will have run away from home by this time tomorrow night. 135,000 teenagers will carry guns into schools by this time tomorrow night.

That's the future of America, by taking God out of everything and thinking that secular humanism and education is the answer. And you have, you see, you make your own morals. You allow secular humanists running the educational system to form the morals of a country.

Well, these were the kind of kids that were always out hanging around. Parents probably, you know, didn't know where they were, what they were doing, who they were associating with. And so it was very easy to stir them up.

Just restless, no goals in life, no future, no absolutes, no moral standards. And you have to know the Greek culture in Paul's day, you see, the society was split between the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans were, you live for nothing but pleasure.

And so there was no creator to answer to. So you're just on the animal plane, living for sensual pleasure to the highest extreme without pain. And it led to nothing but degrading lust.

That's all the society lived for, was some new sensual pleasure to have without pain. That's Epicureanism. That was Greek thought.

And so they got them stirred up and they assaulted a house. No respect for the law or for authority. And they attacked this house where there was some Christians living.

Stirring them up. The Jews stirred them up. Behind that we know is Satan stirring them up.

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren under the rulers of the city crying, these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. So Paul wasn't there. As the riot started and all the trouble, the authorities came and they blamed it on the Christians and dragged them into court and the Jews, you know, they accomplished their agenda.

They disrupted the preaching of the gospel temporarily. Now, here's the amazing thing. Now, you remember Paul in Romans, as he's writing to the Roman Christians, declared that as God would work in the Gentiles, because they're being rejected, God would use that to stir the Jews to jealousy to get them to react.

The very purpose of God is being accomplished again in His sovereignty and His providence. Amazing how God is so sovereign in this universe, He controls all events and works it to the good eventually. And He fulfills prophecy.

He achieves His agenda. You wonder, when we look at our own personal life, is God achieving His agenda in your life, in my life? Is He able to work everything to the good in your life? Are you called according to His purpose? Do you love God? Is He being able to achieve that in your life? Turn to Romans chapter 11. Let's look at it.

Verse 7, Paul is saying, What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for. Now, Israel is seeking for redemption, seeking the coming of the Messiah, the anointed one. But they've rejected Him, Jesus.

And so they're blinded. But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Paul was one of the elect.

He was one of the... that man born out of due time. That's why he had this burning desire, knowing that as a Jew you could know who Messiah was. But they hardened their hearts and rejected Him, the Jewish people.

And so it says, The rest were blinded, and are blinded to this day. According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear unto this day. And David said, Let their table be made a snare.

Let all their ritual and their worship services be a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense on them. Let them just be trapped in their own religious system, because they've hardened their heart against Jesus Christ. Let it become a snare to them.

Their devotion, how devout they are, but devout in their error. Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always. Let it be difficult for them, for a purpose.

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? In other words, is God going to allow them to fall so far down that they'll not exist as a people and be finally destroyed as a race? God forbid. But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. That's the very thing that was taking place wherever Paul was going.

God's purposes were being accomplished. God again controlling all things at once. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness when their eyes are finally opened at the end of the age, when the blindness is taken away.

But they're actually, they're being stirred to jealousy because of the success of Paul, sharing the Christ, and having people respond to it. And so here they're stirred to envy, and they cause trouble. Yet God still is controlling it and working it to the good.

Now, you see, that is very encouraging for me. I don't have to understand why. I don't need an answer why anymore like I used to have to have an answer.

Lord, why did you let this happen? Why is this happening? I don't like it. I don't understand it. It doesn't seem to go along with what, you know, the scriptures say.

But if you look at the apostle Paul, and you look at the plan of salvation, and the sovereignty of God, that no matter what happens, God is working all things all at once to the good for his glory. And so, you see, I'm not going to look back. I'm keeping my hand to the plow.

I don't need to understand it. I know that God's in control, and I'm trusting in Him. And as Isaiah said, thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee.

What's your mind? What goes through your mind constantly? I see some people, they've got everything going through their minds. This Babylon out there is racing, pouring through their minds, and they're trying to have a little space once in a while to think about Jesus in their life, in their activities. And it's always this battle of this world, you know, racing through their mind.

If your mind is stayed upon Christ, you can do your job, you can take care of your responsibilities, and you can be totally consumed with Jesus Christ. Mine's stayed upon Him, and you'll have peace. Thou will keep him in peace.

It says God will keep him in peace, so the job doesn't have to overwhelm me. The difficulty doesn't have to get to me that I quit. I need an answer.

You better give me understanding, Lord, or I can't trust you anymore. No, those aren't issues anymore. You see, you trust in God.

He's controlling it. He's working into the good. When they had taken Jason into the jail, or before the magistrates, they're probably questioning him.

Where is Paul? Where are these people that are turning the world upside down with their talk about this Jesus? Jason, when he received them, they said, these do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus. So they're lying about him. They're lying about what Paul is saying.

Now, that's an absolute lie. You remember in Luke chapter 20, verse 25, you remember the Pharisees came to Jesus Christ to lie in wait to entrap him. And they say, which is lawful? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or to give to God? What is lawful? And Jesus was aware of their craftiness and their deceit, because they knew that Jesus was getting a following.

But Jesus was designing a kingdom that he plainly said, my kingdom is not of this world. No threat to Caesar. Jesus didn't come to change the world.

He came to bring people out of the world, as we shared last Sunday. Remember, John heard a voice from heaven, another voice from heaven saying, come out of Babylon, O my people, that ye not become partakers of her sins or receive of her plagues. Jesus didn't come to Christianize the world.

He came to call to himself a bride, a heavenly bride, that wants to leave this world. He's going to destroy this world and all the governments of man. Remember, Daniel saw the beginning head of gold right down to the end of Gentile sovereign rule on this earth.

God's going to bring it all to an end, not save it, not Christianize it. And so Jesus caught them in their very words. He said, you know, he saw through it.

He said, and this is what I find interesting. He didn't say, render unto God what is God's, and then Caesar unto Caesar's. He mentioned Caesar first.

You're down in, you're temporary, you're aliens, you're strangers, you're just biding your time in this world. Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. He caught them.

He said, you render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's. You do both. You don't start some movement to overthrow the government.

You render unto Caesar's what is Caesar's. And then Paul later on devotes practically a whole chapter of Romans 13 about being subject to the higher powers and glorifying God, even if they're unjust. You obey the laws of the land.

And then Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 2, he picks up on it, and he too says that we're to give honor to the king, the honor that is due and respect, and obey the laws of the land. And this is what's good in the eyes of God, even if it's unjust. Remember, Jesus said the meek are going to inherit the earth, not the revolutionists.

But it's the meekness that causes the revolution. It's the walking in humility and lowliness and obeying the laws no matter how unjust, not trying to start a movement to overthrow a government. Jesus taught against that.

He said, render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. He wasn't trying to overthrow the Roman government, and neither was the apostle Paul by sharing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. See, the problem was Augustus Caesar started it.

He was the August one. He began to claim deity. He was God in human form on the earth, ruling the world, and he demanded worship.

So to be a good Roman citizen, you worship Caesar. And so that was the issue. People were beginning to worship Jesus Christ, and they quit worshiping Caesar.

They weren't trying to overthrow the government. They just weren't worshiping a man as God anymore. They'd met the true God, Jesus Christ.

But they lied about it. You see, true Christianity is always going to be lied about. Our responsibility is to live the life that my life isn't a lie, that the Christian life that I'm living is not a lie.

It is the truth, a true example of someone being led by Jesus Christ, and also a good citizen obeying the laws of the land. So they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. Just stirring up trouble.

And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go. So they threatened them, broke up the gathering looking for Paul, and they made him post a bond, and they released them and warned them. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night into Berea, who coming further went into the synagogue of the Jews.

So right away he finds another synagogue. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so. Now they just didn't believe immediately.

When it says they were more noble than the Thessalonians, they listened to what Paul said and they searched the scriptures to see, are these things really so? Yes, it does line up with scripture. That's what made them noble, searching the scriptures, not believing instantly. It doesn't mean that.

It's great to be around somebody, you know, who searches the scriptures. It doesn't walk out and say, well, this is what it is because Pastor Bill said it, or Chuck Missler said it, or Chuck Smith said it, or Billy Graham said it, or Greg Laurie said it. They searched the scriptures.

Did God say it? Did the scriptures say it? And see, that's what gives us a powerful witness, isn't it? That we share scripture. We don't share what Greg says or Bill says or Chuck says and try and convert somebody, or what Billy says. We're not following men, even the men that God uses.

We're following Christ. If you want to convert someone, you really want an effective witness, you share the scriptures. You know the scriptures and you know the scriptures that identify who Jesus Christ is.

That's what makes someone noble. They're more noble. Why? Because they searched the scriptures.

They just didn't buy everything that came down the road. There wouldn't be so many weird Christian things going on if Christians would search the scriptures. It's amazing as I watch some of these charlatans on television making fools out of people, raking in money, exactly as the Apostle Peter said.

He said, in the last days, these false teachers, one of the signs of the end, would draw huge crowds and make merchandise of them. And some of the bigger the crowds, it's amazing. I like to watch, it's amazing, very few of them have Bibles.

And yet you see them in the stands weeping and crying and their hands in the air and running up on stages. And you see these guys doing exactly what Jesus said when he identified wolves, casting out demons, knocking people down, claiming miracles, prophesying in his name. And Jesus said to these people, I will say, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire. Isn't that amazing? And you tell some people that go to these meetings, you tell them those scriptures, you say, don't you attack that guy. Don't you judge that brother.

I said, it's right here. I don't care what you did. I got saved there.

I got healed there. And you got ripped off there, too, probably. And you try to help them.

You try to show them the scriptures. Invariably, why try it if you can handle the network, if you can handle what goes on. And you sit there and you watch and you go, oh, God, why don't these people have discernment? And you look and none of them have Bibles.

They're all hyped on emotionalism. It's almost like their strings are being pulled and they get hyped. You say, well, does God heal people, save people? Absolutely.

He's not going to allow Satan to stop anybody who's got a sincere heart and being sincerely deceived from getting saved or touched by God. But I'll tell you one thing. If these people don't start picking up the Bible and reading the word of God, they'll start following these men forever and they will become their Jesus.

They will never get to know the real Jesus. They'll know more about the evangelist or the prophet or the TV personality they got saved under than they do Jesus Christ. And that's all they'll ever do is quote that person.

They'll never be able to quote Jesus Christ. And you'll never see them change. The only thing in their life is they'll only talk about their last experience.

They never get beyond the experience realm or level. And that's all they can ever testify of. Man, what happened to me? Man, you should have seen what happened to me.

And they never change. You try to help them. If they just read the Bible.

The Bereans were so noble. You should never, ever go out of here and just say, wow, that was a great Bible study. I believe it because Pastor Bill said it.

I would rather you go to either start reading your Bible and testing to see if it's true or find a church where people don't use Bibles. I'm failing. How can you enjoy and grow in the knowledge of Christ if you don't read your Bibles? And isn't it amazing how we claim to be spiritual beings, but our flesh still dominates us? If some of you people ate physical food the way you read your Bible, you'd be dead tonight.

And you know it. And I hope it upsets you. I would hope that it would stir you to show you that, you see, you've shifted and you're a saved person, but you're dominated by your flesh and your emotions because the Word of God isn't important.

You're not a spiritual Christian. You're a Christian, but you're not a spiritual Christian. You have no desire for the Spirit.

Usually people that get into that, that shift into that mode, they want to feel something in a meeting. And so that's where they go to feel better after it's over. Or to experience something new.

Or to receive something. Not to give of themselves as Paul. To give something they received from Christ away to somebody else.

To see someone else's life enhanced and blessed. Because the flesh is dominating their life. And they never give up food like they give up the food for their spirit, the Word of God.

They don't even give it a second thought. It's automatic. It shows you.

Their body appetite governs them. Not Jesus Christ. And nowhere does it say, you see, after we're born again that you quit eating.

You know, that you don't eat and take care of yourself. We're three-part beings, you see. Spirit, soul, and body.

So important. That's why you see every wind of doctrine. All these weird things.

And you say, hey, I haven't seen so much. Oh, they're going over there. They're into this now.

They're into that now. Oh, no. You quit teaching end times, they don't come anymore.

You're not talking about tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and healing. They don't come anymore. They're not into Hosea or Genesis.

The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica. And that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, not once or twice a week or a month. Daily.

Whether those things were so. And see, when you read the Word of God, remember, God has marvelous, wonderful gifts of the Spirit for each person in the body of Christ. To bless that individual and to enhance the body of Christ.

And as you read the Word of God, the gifts of the Spirit that you're given initially as a believer develop and become more powerful. That's another aspect of truth that a lot of people don't realize. Just as when you are born as a human being, you have in your makeup the way God's designed your physical body and the

genetic code, your muscular structure, your brain, your lung capacity, your coordination.

As you feed your human body nutrition by eating a good balanced diet on a regular basis, and then you begin to develop as you grow older physically, these things all develop and enhance. Your strength gets stronger. Your vocabulary increases.

Everything develops and gets better. God has designed the same thing for everybody spiritually. If they'll feed their spirit, the gifts become more powerful.

You grow spiritually and develop even more as you search the Scriptures daily. Therefore, many of them believed. Also of honorable women, which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

But then the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the Word of God was preached to Paul at Berea. They came thither also and stirred up the people. A hundred miles away.

Now he's down there and let's go get him. And so Satan stirs and here is Romans 11. They're stirred up to envy again.

Here's the hand of God controlling everything. And now what's going to happen? You see, by this trouble, God is going to keep Paul from staying there longer. Paul's saying, you know, oh maybe I ought to stay an extra six months.

And teach him everything. Now remember, if you look at 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, why don't they go to a city like Clifton Springs? Why not Clifton Springs and Shortsville? Those are easy names of villages. Thessalonica.

He wrote these two great letters on the second coming, the rapture of the church, the second coming, the Antichrist, the end of the age, the day of the Lord. Just think how he filled these people up with the eschatology of the second advent. Dynamic two letters to the Thessalonians.

Whoo, thank you Lord, I got it out. But then you see, when you have a Bible study and you're excited and you see people responding, you don't want to stop. So God says, I've got to get him to the city.

It's actually the university city of the world, Athens, where all the intellects of the world gathered. And the religious center, the intellectual, the cultural university religious center of the world. It wasn't Rome, it was Athens.

And God wanted Paul at Athens at a specific time. So he used the Jews from Thessalonica to come rushing down to Britain. No, he's not going to get something started there.

And he drove Paul, he had to leave again, get on ship, and God's using it by stirring up the jealousy to fulfill scripture, to keep the Jews angry, they're hearing about this Jesus, and Paul is moved to Athens right where God wants him. The intellectual capital of the world, where all the great minds, Socrates, Plato, all the great minds of mankind. It was the university center, the great universities, the greatest of the world at that time, in Athens.

And they were pantheistic. And the two great divides of mankind, you had the Stoics and the Epicureans. And here Paul is bringing the gospel to this pagan, cultural, degraded, intellectual place, the great universities that love to do nothing but gather around and discuss religion and politics and culture and philosophy and art.

In fact, they were so pagan, there were so many different religions in Greece, in Athens, that you couldn't find a god before you could find a human being, a statue somewhere, a temple on the street. Silver, gold, marble, everywhere, hundreds of gods. They had gods for, it's amazing, they had gods for sex, Diana, Aphrodite, gods for war, Zeus.

They had gods for emotions, gods for appetite, for rumor, for shame, for the inlet, gods for the weather. They had gods for everything. Great universities, and they just loved to discuss the religions of the world and debate and talk about life and the arts and science.

And here God's bringing the apostle Paul, using persecution, and at the same time, remember as Paul taught in Romans 5, that through these persecutions and these tribulations, the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you. And so by the time he gets there, he is so filled with the love of Christ, no bitterness, no nastiness, no anger of why God's using him this way and directing and allowing these things in his life, that he's got nothing but, he sees these intellectuals absolutely lost in darkness in the greatest university city of the world. All God's plan, God's love for mankind.

They acknowledged that the word of God was preached to Paul and Berea, they came through there also and stirred up the people. And then immediately, the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to sea, but Silas and Timothy abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens.

And receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed. Paul says, man have we got a harvest field here. The fishing is great here.

We've got intellects. We've got perverts. We've got politicians.

We've got the rich. We've got the artsy folks. He says get up here.

We've got to share the truth here in this major city. God has got me in a place that man where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Remember Paul wrote that in Romans.

Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. You see again, what the grace of God can do to a heart. Well, I'm not staying here.

There's no believers around here. Well, that's why God sent you there. That's why Paul's there.

Because there aren't any believers yet. No, I'm not going to live in this neighborhood. There's no one who believes here.

No, I can't go to that town. There's not a right on church there. Maybe that's where God wants you.

To start the right on church with you. To start the home Bible study with you and have it develop into something wonderful. Or maybe just meet somebody who God has picked is going to be the Timothy, to be the pastor, to be the one that God's going to do dynamic things in that town, that village, or that place where all that degradation is and that pornography and that perversion and violence and lust.

God's got you there. Now, you're going to meet somebody and they're the one I'm going to use. But I want to start with you.

You're going to meet them on a job. And they're going to be nasty. They're going to have filthy language.

They're going to have dirty pictures on the assembly line. They're going to tell nasty things at the water cooler at the office. And don't quit.

Don't leave because they're evil there. That's why I want you there to convert them. Oh, I'd rather go on the mission field.

That's amazing how we want to go. There are more people lost here now than in a lot of other countries. It's getting a little worse here, isn't it? You say, well, I want to go to a, you know, I want to go where the heathen are.

I want to go where the pagans are, where they worship trees and they wear things in their nose and in their lip, you know, the Aborigines. They're walking around here. I've seen, there's white Aborigines in Canada.

Right now, go down to TCBY in Canada and you'll see some white Aborigines with rings in their lip, things in their belly buttons, hanging out of their eyebrows. They stick their tongues out and if they're around a high voltage wire, they get electrocuted. There's so much steel in their tongue.

And you want to go to, you know, Australia or South America or Africa. Downtown Canandaigua, the Canandaigua High School, the Newark High School, Victor High School, Clifton Springs Elementary School. Look at our elementary schools.

And here we are. You say, that's Paul. Paul was there.

He said, oh, we've got a harvest field here. We've got people that are religious and educated and cultural and they believe in the arts and they believe in all kinds of gods and religion, but they don't know the truth. They're blinded by Satan.

And while Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was stirred in him. All he had to do was see the kids on the streets at night or turn on the television in Athens and say, these people are sick. They've got talent, but look at how they portray their talent.

They're sick. When you saw the city given wholly to idolatry. See, the only thing that's changed is technology.

The heart of man is the same. And isn't it interesting, the very things, the very people that Paul debated with, that we'll learn of in a couple of weeks. Next week is communion.

The very people he debated with are the very people that formed the very educational system that you grew up in in the United States today. The philosophies, the architecture, the law, the social studies, everything is from these people. They can build their magnificent buildings.

These artists were so fantastic, they could take a statue and make it look human out of marble and gold and silver. And they were degraded. They were morally bankrupt.

They were living in darkness under the oppression and the bondage of Satan. And it's the very school system that some of you are growing up learning, the very same things, the same Socrates, the same Plato, the same architecture, the same mathematics, the same physics, the same social studies, the same psychology. It all started there.

See, nothing's really changed. As Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun. And so here's this right, Paul sees, oh, what an opportunity to set these people free.

And it's amazing how he did it. The love, not attacking them for their superstition or their false gods, not attacking whatsoever, but giving them Christ in a marvelous way. Shall we all stand? Father, what a privilege and an honor to live in these days and to know Jesus Christ and be handpicked by you to share the truth, to have you move us from village to village or town to town in our everyday experiences with the opportunity to share Jesus Christ with someone in a loving way, not nasty or resentful or bitter because of difficulties, but in your love, Lord, because we've experienced grace and we're understanding the beauty of your grace and your love for the lost and your understanding for the deception that they're in.

We know, Lord, that you hate these things that are happening. You hate what's happening to the youth of America, what the adults are producing and causing. And yet, Lord, you love these people enough to send your son to die for them and to redeem us and free us and then send us as light that they may come forth and come to Jesus Christ.

We pray, Lord, that you'd enable us to walk in that love and to share that grace and to continue on in the love of Jesus Christ, no matter what the difficulty may be, that once we put our hand to the plow, oh, Father, that we'd never look back. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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