

Read: Acts 17**The Acts of the Apostles**
"Truth on Fire"**Introduction**

Everywhere Paul went he preached Christ. No matter what opposition Paul faced he was not put off. What a lesson for us who are so easily shut-up, discouraged or distracted from Christ's command to preach the Gospel to everyone.

It is our responsibility to preach Christ; we are not accountable to what the listeners do with the Gospel.

In chapter 17 Paul preaches in three cities {Thessalonica v:1, Berea v:2, Athens v:3} preaching the Gospel and gets three different reactions.

Paul's Preaching

- Based upon the scriptures (v:2). Much preaching to day is not based on the Word of God. The ecumenical movement teaches that we can join with anyone to worship God - totally contrary to God's word ref:- Ez 8 v 6-12, 2 Cor 6:14-18, Eph 5 v 11, Titus 1:16.
- Based on who Jesus Christ is: His virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, burial and resurrection. Many to day dispute who Jesus is. The tragedy is that some who profess to be Christians and charged with the purity of God's Word changed the original Greek Text e.g. Westcott and Hort produced the "Critical Text" which differs in some 16% of the texts versus 95% of available manuscripts. Also many modern translators have been prepared to deliberately change key doctrines of the Word of God about Jesus Christ.
- Based on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. God commands all men everywhere to repent v30. Sincerity will not save: we see many in our land to day who are earnest and whose sincerity cannot be questioned, but it's leading them to a Christless eternity.

Application

- We must live strictly by the Word of God. God's demands that we "not to add to, take away from or change His Word" Deut 4:2, Prov 30:6, Rev 22:18. Remember he is a Jealous God and Jealous of His Word. To despise this is to break the 3rd commandment and come under His condemnation.
- The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is under attack by Satan. If Satan can get us to dilute this then he knows "there is no salvation in any other" especially not in a false gospel. Let's dedicate ourselves to the purity of God's word and His Person and Work.
- Sincerity is a wonderful attribute, but not a saving one if misplaced. We must first of all ensure that our faith is in Christ alone for Salvation: then ensure the Gospel we preach is clear for "*there is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved*" Acts 4:12.

Attitudes to Gospel Preaching ...

The old saying that the Gospel makes some mad, some sad and some glad is only partially true. A fourth category exists: those who are indifferent.

- **Mad.** Many especially the religious Jews, or Gentiles v 5, 32 reacted to the Gospel and some even attached the messengers seeking to kill them.
- **Sad.** Many realise they need the Saviour, but the love of this world takes them to Hell. Think of the rich young ruler Matt 19:16-22.
- **Indifference:** Verse 18 mentions “the Stoics”. These *“thought themselves altogether as good as God, and indulged themselves as much in the pride of life”*. Also mentioned are *“the Epicureans did in the lusts of the flesh and of the eye; they made their virtuous man to be no way inferior to God himself, nay to be superior. Christianity is directly opposite, as it teaches us to deny ourselves and abase ourselves, and to come off from all confidence in ourselves, that Christ may be all in all”*. (from Matthew Henry's Commentary)
- **Glad:** In every town and city where the apostles went there were those that heard the word and believed. It's amazing how the Spirit of God prepares hearts so that an apparent stranger to the Gospel is convinced just as those who are familiar with it.

Application:

- **Mad:** We can expect this reaction to day. Right down the history of the church many have given their lives for the Gospel; and if time lasts we in N. Ireland may also be called to do likewise.
- **Sad:** As you unsaved because of your love of the world. Is it worth going to Hell for?. If you're a Christian think of your influence. Is your attitude to worldliness snaring an unsaved and taking them to Hell. We must walk right – and that's difficult at times, but God's demand that “if ye love Me keep My commandments”.
- **Indifference:** This is the worst reaction and the one most observed to day. People treat the Gospel with total indifference. Too often we see this as good to day as we have no opposition: everyone is happy to do that which is right in their own eyes and allow is to do the same.
- **Glad:** It's great to see a positive response to the Gospel. When we see a glad response to the Gospel that is only the start. Remember the last part of the 2nd commandment in Exodus 20:4-6 *“And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments”*. The promises of God are for those who obey Him, not for those who believe on Him. Think of the implications on generations to come of disobedience to his Word!!.