

Simple Sharing Of A Simple Gospel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 May 2019

Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 0 0] So at 17 and looking at verses 1 down to round verse 15 and looking at Paul and Silas and Thessalonica and also then in Burea. It's funny how two people can listen or read the same thing and I was in the National Gallery the other day and that was my art appreciation isn't the best but some wonderful paintings in that place, some beautiful paintings. Then you see other paintings which from my perspective are perhaps are not as great. It's funny to see where the crowds of people actually are. Big crowds around some paintings which are just a bit of a paint on a paper and yet other paintings, beautiful landscapes and deer and sunset sunrises passing them by. It's all subjective isn't it? It's all how we see the world. You might read a story and think it's amazing. Sometimes we read the same story and I think it's just rubbish. Simple read up poem and think it's wonderful. We read the same poem and think it's just some rhyming words. So much of our life is so subjective as we see here in Acts 17. Some things require us to listen to them. Some things require us to stop and to pay attention as to what's being said to us. Some things are not subjective.

Some things are not just up to us to take or leave. Some things are true and some things are incredibly important. In the previous chapter in chapter 16 Paul and Silas of course were imprisoned for sharing the Gospel and we then see the jailer and his whole family come to hear the Gospel because of that and we see their lives transformed. Of course Paul is a Roman citizen so he's set free and eventually allowed to journey on. So their journey has now taken them 90 odd miles west through Macedonia and now here we join them in chapter 17 in Thessalonica. So what are we told about this impressive city? Are we told of the great wealth in Thessalonica? Are we told of its renown as a trading city?

This was the place you would go to buy and to sell. This was your main hub of activity in the area. All we're told about this place is that in it there was a synagogue. We see that in verses 2 down to verse 3. Paul and Silas, they're not there to see the sights and get the sounds of the place. We're not there for a tour of the place. We're there for a purpose. We're there for a reason. We're not there to marvel at what's around them. Paul and Silas are there to share the simple Gospel. That's our first point of like. The simple sharing of a simple Gospel. So they make their way to the synagogue and to the place where Paul knew fine well he could share the good news to folks who would have known something of what he was talking about. He was going to share the good news to these practicing Jews to tell them the Messiah they've been waiting for. The Messiah, the

King have been waiting for years for centuries that he had come. Don't wait any longer. He's here and he's called Jesus. So as we look at these verses, let's look at what we can learn about sharing the simple Gospel from one of its best communicators from Paul. First of all, like we said, what do you do? He went straight to the place he knew the Jews would be gathered. He searched out the area and he found the synagogue. He met the people where they were. He didn't wait for them to come and find him. He went to the people. He found them and he went straight to them. He does this again and again even later on in the chapter he does the same thing. He's sharing the Gospel where the people actually are.

Paul was ministering and silenced in a land of many Gospels, of many accounts, of many supposed Messiahs, many supposed saviours, many other religions, all claiming incredible things. Many people shouting loudly that they have the truth, that they are right. We see that in verse 18. We see that some of Epicurean and some of the Stoic philosophers also convert with him and said, what does this babblers wish to say? Our study seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities preaching Jesus and the resurrection. They hadn't heard us before.

[5 : 43] They heard lots of other things. This was new and for them it's strange, strange things. And the reality is nothing has changed. Here in the island and here in this area we are still, in many senses, one voice among many, perhaps even in our own homes. As of yet I don't know many here and I hope over the next few weeks to get to know you all as best we can. Just now I don't know your situations. Perhaps even in your own home you have a sole voice talking about Jesus, perhaps no one else cares in your family. We are one voice among many. Many say that in our society today we are, I'd like to say, post-truth, that now we exist in a world where everyone, what you believe is what you believe and that's good for you. And that's what we hear, that's what we see. That truth is subjective, it doesn't really exist. It's what you feel to be right and that's truth for you and that's okay. And in this kind of society we live in today where that is the case, to say that we have the truth, that Jesus is the only way then we are speaking some dangerous words.

And we see that in the news, we see that even in our own country, we see slowly and slowly to say that Jesus is the only way, that there's no way to heaven but Jesus. Say there's no other Lord but Jesus. Dangerous, dangerous words for us to say these days. And I get through the action. If we follow the example of Paul, the people won't come to us, we have to take the truth to them. Paul went to find the Jews, he went to find those who desperately needed to hear the good news that their Savior had come. We must take the Gospel to where it needs to be heard. Whether that's at our homes, at our places of work, at our places of study in this area. Wherever we find ourselves, we have to be ready to share the Gospel openly, lovingly, carefully, but to share it either way. Like the people in Thessalonica, those in our own villages, our own area, our own island, they won't hear the Gospel unless it's shared with them. Who's going to share it with them if it's not us? That burden lies with me and it lies with the Elisha here today. It doesn't lie with the minister, it doesn't lie with just the elders, it lies with every believer here. If we love our Lord, we must share the Gospel wherever chance arises. That wonderful section, I won't read it all but in Romans 10, that wonderful phrase Romans 10, for everyone who hears, who ever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And the question then is asked, how then can they call on him and then they have not believed? How are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard? How are they to hear without someone preaching? How are they to preach unless they're sent? Well, we know as Christians we are being sent into the world, we have in the Great Commission, we have that again and again in the scripture. As Christians we are being sent in to share the Gospel. Not one of us, and myself, trust me, very much included in this, very, very much included, of an excuse in doing so. We can't all perhaps preach like this, we can't all go on and study for a few years in a few church colleges and become a minister, we can't all present, we can't all do this or that, we can all do something for the sake of the Gospel. We're all part equally, equally part of the body of Christ. And we've been saved and set apart to serve God. So Paul went to where the people would be. We also see that this was, as it says here, his custom. There was his custom to go there, there was his custom to, to, in verse two, as Paul went in, as was his custom.

This wasn't something Paul decided to do one day, this was naturally part of his life. Quite literally here, the phrase as was his custom is, as he continually did, or as was his continual actions, it's a continual action. This was something Paul just did quite normally quite naturally. He would quite easily often share the Gospel. This wasn't some special thing he did. This was part of his life. Naturally, he shared the Gospel wherever he went and whoever he talked to. It was, it's an action based on habit, it's part of his routine.

His day to day routine is to share the Gospel. We might well, if we're being honest, say to ourselves, well, of course it was easy for Paul. He was that apostle, of course it was easy for Paul to do that. Easy for him to go and share the Gospel. He'd had always great experiences of Jesus. He had been saved in that miraculous way. He performed, or he would perform sort of signs and healings and miracles. If we look at the text, does Paul do anything miraculous in these verses? Does anything incredible happen in these verses?

No. He simply shares the Gospel. That's something every one of us can do. Paul didn't use his 30 odd years of education to craft a wonderful and convincing speech. To the elders and to myself, that's a great comfort. You quickly realise, as you stand up here, just how ineffectual your words actually are. Praise God, that's the case. Paul doesn't craft an eloquent speech.

[12:11] He doesn't give out a four hour lecture trying to convince these people. What does he say? Every proclaims to them. From the scripture, it was necessary for Christ to suffer, to rise from the dead. And saying, as what Paul said, this Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ. Ultimately, Paul brings all things back to that point. He is sharing the good news of who Jesus is and why they must believe in him. In many ways, we're even more privileged. Paul was arguing for the Old Testament. We can argue from the Old Testament. We have God's complete revelation in front of every one of us here this morning. Paul shares a simple gospel, quite simply to these people, proclaiming that this Jesus, he is the Christ.

That's a good news. We have this morning to proclaim. We should be so enthusiastic about this, which is just being incredible for us. We have a great privilege, but not a person beside you, not a person behind you, not a person up here, but each one of us, if we're going to go to God's people this morning, we have a privilege of this gospel of sharing the good news that Jesus has come, that Jesus has done the work necessary, believe in him, trust in him and be saved. So what is a response to Paul's gospel? First of all, in verse 4, we see a positive response in verse 4 onwards. In verse 4, we're told that his preaching, his sharing of the gospel was not in vain. In verse 4, some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas. That's the great many of the devout Greeks, not a few of the leading women. It's funny that women are mentioned twice here. In many ways, it's important to note that these leading women would have been the society, women, the important, looked up to women in the society. The ones who have kept everything, taken over, the ones who were in charge in many ways, even if perhaps the men didn't realise at the time. But we see in outside scripture, in history, we see that in these culture, in that area, these kind of high-up women, the elite class, they kept things taken over pretty well. And for them to believe this man and his babblings must have been quite a situation. These women who were in charge, these women who were smart, these women who kept things going, who kept the temple wash up going, all this stuff, all of a sudden these leading women are now believing this man, this rubbish guy, he's talking, he's believing him. So some did believe. It's important for us to see that, that wherever the gospel is preached, no matter how unlikely the recipient lives can change, lives do change. We see a great many people believed, a great crowd in verse 4, a great many if I divide Greeks, and not a few of the leading women.

Not one person here this morning is beyond the saving power of our Lord. Whoever you think you are, the excuses you think you have, as you read this, you should see that there's no excuse you can bring. There's not one reason why you should not come to Jesus. Any reason you do have, it might be serious for you, it might be real for you, but surely it's not more important than knowing and serving the God who made you, the God who knows you, and the God who will be almost one day answered to. A great crowd believes the message of Paul, again at this time, the gospel, we have a mystery, it was dismissed later on as just some kind of cult of the peasants. Romans especially after this and years after this would see the gospel as just something the poor, poor guys believed in. This cult of the peasants would follow these small minded, simple people, not for us. It's interesting again to mention that the high ups, the well known, the elite here are believed in the gospel, not just the poor workers, but those who are looked up to, the gospel impacts, all levels. The gospel is not concerned of your status, not concerned of your age, not concerned of who or what you are, it can change you. God can transform your life. When the gospel is shared, we're not just throwing words out to the wind, hoping something sticks, it's not what we're doing here this morning. We're reading God's word and studying God's word. When we read the God's word and we see the gospel being shared, it's a powerful weapon, we're reading and handling the very living words of God, that's not a small thing this morning. We should have the confidence that despite our lackluster attempts, despite our perhaps failures in doing so, that God's word when shared always has an impact on the ones who hear it. Either hard or soft or hard. Either way, God's word is working in God's way. He is in charge of what takes place. Not saying of course we can sit back and listen and just wait for things to happen. We see here and we see through the scripture, we have this mandate, this instruction to go and to share the gospel, to be involved in this community in all ways, be involved in all the everyday normal ways, be part of this area, be part of this community and doing so share the gospel. Lovingly, carefully, with wisdom, but share the gospel. If the folks need houses, if the folks in our villages, if the folks leave it in their own homes, they desperately need to hear it. So Paul does receive a positive response to the gospel and of course we do see in verses 5 down to verse 9 the negative reaction. As always, when a gospel is shared, the response is not always positive as I'm sure many of us here today know. Yes, a good crowd had believed the message Paul was sharing, but those that did not believe, they didn't just voice their problems and move on quietly. What did they do? We see in verse 5, the Jews were jealous.

They lost these good men, lost these good women, they were jealous of what's happened. They react to the gospel and they take some wicked men of his city and they make a rabble.

A mob was formed. A mob then sought out where Paul and Silas were staying and of course were staying with poor Jason. They attack his house and they drag Jason out and Jason is now guilty of association. As we said, what caused this anger? Well, we said in verse 5, the Jewish authorities, they're losing their control and power over the people. These well known men, these well known women, they've left their group to join this odd cult talking about Jesus, the Messiah, what other rubbish? How do you believe that rubbish? And a reaction to that is the form of the organized this mob. And what do they say? Well, this mob appears before Jason and they accuse Paul and Silas and their believers. These men who have turned the world upside down, you can just hear the distress in their voice. It's almost comical how dramatic we're being here. They've ruined everything. They've come here sharing this gospel, talking about this Jesus and they've just ruined it all for us. They've ruined the city, they've ruined our plans, they've ruined the synagogue. And Jason has received them. They're all acting against the decrease of Caesar and what are they saying?

[21 : 00] What's the problem? They're saying there is another king, Jesus. They've come here, they've dared to come here and they've dared to declare there is another king, a greater king, a higher king, above Caesar, above us and his name is Jesus. And this reaction of a mob should bring us all to shame. I'm sure those of us who are Christians, we've all been here.

Those of us who are not yet Christians, you are going through this now or you will go through this as you come to Jesus. This is the cornerstone of our sin, of our rebellion against God. We make ourselves and our idols kings. We'll see that this evening in Micah.

We make ourselves the most important thing in our lives. We view ourselves as this incredible creature. We see ourselves as gods. Now, whenever I say that, whenever I think of like that, we're smarter than that. But in reality, we live our lives out that way, thinking we are incredible, thinking we have the ultimate say, thinking that we are in full control.

And we are like those as we hear in Psalm 2. The kings of the earth set themselves and rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, let us break their bonds and pieces and cast away their cords from us. We want to be free like this crowd, like this mob. We want to believe there is no higher king, there is no higher power, that we are the pinnacle of all things. And to our shame, and I say this to myself also, in many ways, we are just like the crowd that surround Jesus at his execution. John 19 and verse 15, and Pilate said to the Jews, here is your king. At this they shouted, away with him, away with him, crucify him. Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asked, we have no king but Caesar. This crowd here and acts and us and our rebellion against God, we say the same thing. We don't want Jesus to be king. We don't want anyone to be king over us. I have no king. I am the God of my life. I am the boss in charge of my life. I do what

I want and no God, no Jesus will tell me otherwise. The very idea of a higher power, the very idea of a God we must answer to, it gives us, it makes us have the same response as the crowd had. We find ourselves saying something very similar to away with him, get rid of him, just leave, crucify him, get him out of my life, get away. I don't want him in my life. Reality is for the crowd here and for us today, Jesus is king, wherever we worship him or not, he is still king. Wherever we love him or not, he is still king. And we either serve him as brothers and servants or he is our enemy. Either he's our king and we love him or he is your king and we are rebelling against him. That's our two options here this morning. We either serve him or we are rebelling against him. And to fight against the Creator of all things is not a fight you will win. Like the accusation here is the gospel of these men, the message, it's turn the city, turn the world upside down and the gospel will in many ways turn your life upside down. Come and believe in Jesus and you'll find your life being changed. But it's not being turned upside down, it's being put back together the way it's supposed to be in the first place. We're made to worship God, made to know God, made to serve God, made to love God. We become Christians, our whole lives are changed, our perspectives are changed and we're being changed back into what we're made to be in the first place. The Christians here this afternoon, I was a read of the account of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica. Let's be encouraged, let's be convicted as we see of Paul's willingness to share with the gospel. Let's have been encouraged as we begin this new week to do the same, to go out and to leave this place and to go home and to go to places of work and a place of study and to share the gospel to people who desperately need to hear it, to our family members and our friends and our colleagues and our neighbours who are in darkness and they're heading towards eternal darkness if nothing changes in their lives. For those here this afternoon who as of yet are not Christians, I know it's my first time to be officially here with you and I'm not here to harass you, it's not my job. I'm from Gravir, I'm 24, I've got no power over you whatsoever. Don't take my word for anything but take God's word for everything. Listen to what God has said to you in His word. Read it yourselves, go home, read the chapter, see again the transformation that the gospel made in the lives of these people. Keep reading through Acts. Start from the start and read through the whole book. It can be read in a few hours. Search online, it's on YouTube, we can have it read to you even. There's no excuse whatsoever. And see even the book of Acts, see how the gospel works, how the gospel again and again transforms lives.

[27 : 22] The King is the King no matter what you think of Him. And our prayer, our genuine prayer is for you this morning that you would see Him as your King, as your Lord, that He would be King of your life. You love Him, you would worship Him, you would serve Him and join with us in doing so. Now let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.

Lord God, we come before you. We thank you Lord for the account we had in your word of how you, for your people, shared the gospel to these new places. The missionary efforts of your people in these early days Lord, the sacrifices Paul and Silas and the others made the hard lives they led, the challenging difficulties they found themselves in Lord, the horrific situations they went through all so that your gospel would be shared. Lord, we do pray as we read these things as your word speak to us. Help us today to be willing to lay all things aside for sake of the gospel. Help us to be willing to lay aside our embarrassment, our awkwardness or whatever else it may be that's stopping us at times of sharing the gospel well. Help us to lay these things aside and to share the gospel, share it to our friends, share it to our family. Lord, you give us the words to say. Lord, that you would inspire us, that you would humble us as we see the magnitude and the greatness of who you are and what you have done. Lord, help us to be humbled as we think again of the beauty of the gospel, the beauty of what has been done for us. Lord, help us never to go tired of worshiping you and praising your name for that. We do pray as we carry on this day, we do so the hearts and minds set on you. If it's your will or as we come again together this evening, you'd open your word out to us so that we'd again see and hear from you.

Help us even just now to sing our final item of praise. We would do so of hearts and minds full of worship to you. All these things are precious in him's sake. Amen.

Bless our way in the house at will. They ever give thee praise. Bless as a man who strengthens our way in whose heart are thy ways. Let's join together to sing.

Bless as a man who strengthens our way in whose heart are thy ways. Let's join together to sing. Let's join together to sing. Bless as a man who strengthens our way in whose heart are thy ways. Let's join together to sing. Let's join together to sing. Let's join together