

Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1

Scripture: Acts 17:1-3, 10-11

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As we approach the 17th chapter, the Apostle Paul, along with his friend and co-missionary, Silas, have just been released from jail in Philippi. Actually, God did the releasing. Shattered the jail by an earthquake. The church in Philippi has been established in the name of Lydia and her household and the jailer and his house. There's a little congregation of believers there.

The pressure was on. The local gendarmes, along with the rulers of Philippi, didn't want Paul and Silas or Timothy around. Or for that matter, they probably didn't want Luke around, though he remained.

As we come to chapter 17, Paul and Silas and Timothy have left Philippi after a harrowing experience. Paul and Silas having been beaten with rods and just bruised and bloodied, had been thrown in a dark inner dungeon. They had gone through all kinds of pain in the stocks that stretched their limbs and cramped their muscles. Through it all, Jesus Christ had been glorified and consequently they had rejoiced.

And now, they have left Philippi. It might be a time when you would assume that maybe they would go about thinking about whether or not it was worth it and contemplating whether this whole idea of missions couldn't be done some other simpler way with less pain. That is not the case.

As they left Philippi, they went immediately, verse 1 of 17 says, "To Thessalonica." And here we see, again, this tremendous undaunted spirit that characterized Paul. David Livingston said one time, "I am prepared to go anywhere as long as it is forward." And he really echoed the sentiments of Paul.

The idea of going backwards of say, "This is rough. Let's go back and retrace our steps and get back with some people we know and get a little comfort before we blast into territory," that kind of concept never entered his mind.

Now, Paul and Silas were characterized by the people at Thessalonica with the most interesting characterization; it's verse 6 of chapter 17. I want to use it as a jumping off point. At the end of the verse, the people in determining the characterization of Paul and Silas chose some interesting words.

They said this, "These, that have turned the world upside down have come here also." Now, that's a very interesting definition of two people. "These that have turned the world upside down."

Now, let me say that that's amazing. It's amazing, just the statement itself, that any man or any men could be men who so affected the world that the people said, "They're turning it upside down." That's tremendous. I mean, there are people who live their whole life and the world doesn't even know they're alive. There are Christians who have absolutely no effect on anything. Here were two people of whom the world said, "They've turned us upside down."

But if you think that's amazing, get this. They've only been to one town, Philippi in Europe, and already through the events of one few days in one town; the world is convinced these men are turning it upside down. And the rumor has drifted all the way to Thessalonica, which is over a hundred miles away. When you turn the world upside down in your lifetime, that's gonzo. When the world says, "You're turning it upside down," and you've been around a few weeks, that's really gonzo.

As we look at these two individuals, Paul and Silas, the amazing consequence of their ministry in Europe can really be based on some very, very key factors. There were reasons that they did what they did and there were reasons that they had the effect that they had. Somebody said one time, "There are people who watch things happen and there are people who make things happen. Then there are people who don't know what's happening." These were people who made things happen. Every time they took a step, the world shook. They had an effect. They mattered.

One writer said, "There are only two people that count in the modern world, a committed communist and a committed Christian. Everybody else is along for the ride." Some people count. Some people are just sort of - I used to call them kind of "eternal ding-a-lings." They just never amount to anything. They just go along. They float. They're in limbo. Then there are people who count. There are people who make waves in this world. There are people who upset the system. There are Christians who disturb the comfort of sinners. Paul and Silas were those kind of people.

You know, God's always had those kind of people. God's always had people who made waves. God's always had people who upset Satan's apple cart, who took a placid, sinful situation and threw it into chaos.

There was one that I particular like and I'll just share a few illustrations real quick. Elijah, poor Elijah made waves all over the place. He was always hassling Ahab. Ahab would have made a black mark on a piece of coal. He was bad and he had a woman that was just as bad by the name of Jezebel. But it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Are you he who troubles Israel? You're the guy messing up the system." Well, I love Elijah's answer. He says, "No, I haven't troubled Israel, you have. You and your father's house and that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed Balaam." Elijah made waves.

There was another guy and he did it in a different way, this fellow. He was kind of more of a soulful, kind of sensitive person. His name was Jeremiah. Jeremiah created havoc because of the kind of man that he was.

In Jeremiah 38, let me just read you a couple of verses here, verses 2 through 4, listen. Here's Jeremiah's message, he tells Israel this; get this, "Thus says the Lord, 'He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. Jerusalem is in for it. But he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live for he shall have his life for a prize and shall live.'" He's talking about the Chaldeans are gonna come down, wipe out the city and take some people captive. "Thus saith the Lord, 'This city shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon's army, which shall taketh.'" He says, "Babylon's gonna knock off Jerusalem. Now, that is what God says."

Now, he wanted to get the reaction. What an announcement, you see. The Israeli army at that point may say to themselves, "Now, we've got get armed up and get ready to go because Babylonia may come over here. We've got to have this thing in hand." Therefore, the princes said to the king, "We beseech you. Let this man be put to death. Kill Jeremiah." "What do you want to kill him for?" "For thus he weaken at the hands of the men of war that remain in the city." "What do you mean?" "He's wrecking the morale of everybody. Here we're getting ready to fight Babylon and he's saying, 'No, God says you're all gonna get wiped out.' What do you think that's doing for the morale of the army? He's speaking such words and this man seeks not the welfare of the people, but the harm of the people."

So Zedechiah turns him over and says, "Okay. He's in your hands." You see, Jeremiah made waves and they want to get rid him because he disturbed the complacency of sin.

There was another man, simple man, he was kind of a farmer really, but he made some waves. His name was Amos. In Amos 7:10, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, said to Jeroboam, king of Israel, and this is what he said, "Amos has conspired against thee" - of course, it was a lie. Amos was speaking the truth and these guys are propagating error. "Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel." Listen to this. "The land is not able to bear all his words. Get rid of that guy. We can't take him." And it wasn't that he was personally offensive. It was that what he said offended.

Our beloved God has always had people that made waves when they confronted the system and the sinners that make up the system, you see.

When you come to the book of Acts, you've got another guy and it's Paul. Every time he put his foot down, something rattled inevitably. In Acts, he didn't go into a town and just gently leave an impression. He turned the towns into chaos whenever he ministered there.

Now, in Acts 21:28, he had been in Jerusalem just a little while and they were so upset they just stirred up all the people and had a riot. He created riots everywhere. They started yelling, "Men of Israel, help!" See. "You got this Paul. Help us! This is a man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place. And further, he brought Greeks into the temple and polluted the holy place." It didn't say he did that all. It says they saw him talking a guy named Trophimus, who happened to be from Ephesus, so they assumed he took him into the holy place. It's all trumped up.

Well, verse 30 says, "The whole city was moved. The people ran together, took Paul, drew him out of the temple at once, the doors then were shut. And as they went about to kill him - we'll stop there. You know that they didn't. But everywhere he went, he created a mess. He created chaos. Why? Because of what he said. Keep that in your mind - "Because of what he said." Now, if you create trouble because of what you are, you got personal problems. If you just make trouble and you say, "Well, I get out there and I try to witness and I get into all kinds of trouble," well, maybe it's because you're an offensive person. That's a personality problem. It wasn't Paul that offended. It was he said that offended.

All right. Chapter 22 gives us another illustration, verse 22. "They listen to him until this word and then lifted up their voices and said" - listen to this - "Away with such fellow from the earth." Now, that's serious. It's not getting out of town. It's get him off the globe! It is not fit that he should live! Now, these people were upset. You know how I know they're upset? The next verse, "As they cried out, they threw their clothes off." They were upset. They started tearing their clothes off.

Now, if that weren't bad enough, it said, "They threw dust in the air." It were like they'd gone bananas, tearing their clothes and throwing dirt, see. What does that express? It expresses a tremendous frustration. They're trying to release their hostility and they're just tearing their clothes and throwing dirt. They were really upset. All he'd done was preach Jesus. You see, he made waves.

And he did the same thing in chapter 24, verse 5. I love this. "We have found this man up a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." Isn't that interesting? They thought this guy had - he had actually turned the world on its ear. "He's a ringleader of the sects of the Nazarenes! He goes about them purveying the temple," and so forth and so forth.

And they said the same thing about him in chapter 28, verse 22. "We desire to hear of thee what you think, for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." Do you know what he had done? He had made Christianity the issue everywhere he went. Now, what is that makes it maliga? What is it - makes a difference between a known name and a Jeremiah, between an Amos and a Paul, and a nobody? A Christian who just never amounts to anything. He's just there, but no one really cares. No one knows.

Why have we forgotten 10,000 times, 10,000 missionaries, and only vaguely remember names like Livingston and Cherry and Maritene and Ediron Jedson? Why? And why have forgotten hundreds of thousands of preachers and vaguely remember Savannah, Rolla, and Huss, and Wesley, and Luther, and Calvin, and Malengthin, and Edwards, and Hurgin, and Moody, and vaguely remember those names? But we don't remember most.

What is it that makes a man who really shakes the world? Well, I think the characteristics are right here in our narrative in chapter 17. It's not listed here in order. It's in the text implied. As we watch these men operate, I'm not only interested in what they. I'm interested in why they do it." You see. I want to get behind the actual activity. It doesn't do me any good to say, "Well, they went to Amphipolis and they went Thessalonica." I don't have to go there. What were the principles operating in their ministry that made it what it was?

There are five things here that we put down in a little outline for you and you have one there in your bulletin. There are five things that made these men men who shook the world, men who turned it upside down, who upset the system. The five are these and they need definition and we're gonna define them, courage, content, converts, conflict, and concern.

Now, because these two stories are so closely parallel, we're gonna take them together rather than going through Thessalonica down to verse 9 and then straight on through Berea, we're just gonna take the passages together. We'll compare the verses. That's why we put them visually in the outline. We're going to see spiritual principles that made these men men that really turned the world on its ear. These are exciting principles.

Now, these two towns, Thessalonica, they were in in the first nine verses, and Berea, they were in verses 10 to 15, were very different towns. Thessalonica was big time. Thessalonica had been named in 315 B.C. by the wife of Cassandra, one of Alexander's main men. Cassandra's wife, who named this town, incidentally, after herself, was the, I think, stepsister it was to Alexander the Great.

This had become a very famous city. It was a city of 200,000 people, at least. It was a city that was the capital of Macedonia. Three great rivers came through it and converged into the sea and so it was a very important port. Also, the Egnation Highway went right through the middle of Thessalonica, which made it the great place where the armies all marched through and everybody was travelling east and west came that way.

Incidentally, today, if you go to the area that was Macedonia, you'll find that city is still the most important city in that part of the world and the name of it is Salonica.

On the other hand, Berea was nowhere. Berea was strictly the boondocks. Approximately 50 miles, some say 40, some say 50, some say 60, the original site, south and west of Thessalonica was an off beaten track out-of-the-way place called Berea that never would have amounted to anything probably had not Cicero reflected upon it and had not the Apostle Paul gone there.

And so, you have different cities, one on the highway and one on the byway, but you have the same thing going on in both places that illustrate to us the principles that make a man the man that turns the world upside down.

Now, I don't know about you, but one thing I've always wanted to do all my life and I hope it's a holy ambition, is I've always wanted my life to count. I couldn't think of anything worse than to think that I never would have any effect on anything. Where I used to grow up, my dad always used to use reverse psychology. Whenever I'd goof off, he'd say, "Oh, you'll never amount to a hill of beans." That is always what he said to me. It was wise because I always convinced myself, "I will amount to a hill of beans." That's just about what I've amounted to.

I've always had this fear that I would never really count for God and that's a haunting fear. I hope it's one with you. I hope you want to matter. I hope you want to be somebody who because you live there's difference.

Well, as we look at these men in these two cities, we're gonna see the same features that illustrate to us in a double dose what the principles are that make a man, a man who changes the world.

Principle No. 1, courage. Courage. We'll see it in Thessalonica. We'll see it exhibited in Berea. I want to go over again, before look at a passage, we have seen that courage and boldness was a part of the early church genius. We saw from the very beginning how they would go into a town and they would go into a town and they would run into pressure and immediately they would get courageous, wouldn't they? And the more pressure, the more courage, the more courage, the more dynamic message they had. It was a fantastic ingredient in the ministry of the early church. It still is. Courage, boldness, fearlessness. The Apostle Paul had this. There's no question about it.

Over in Act 20:22, he says, "I go bound in the spirits of Jerusalem and I don't know what's gonna happen." Well, you know what he meant by that? He knew it was all gonna be bad. He just didn't know what kind of bad. He said, "I didn't know it was gonna be bad. The Holy Spirit witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me. But none of these things move me, neither count on my life dear onto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry. I'm gonna finish the ministry God gave me to do if it kills me." And it did.

But you see, he was that kind of a man. He was an undaunted man. Believe me - and this is so basic - no one ever, I'll say it again, no one ever really affects the world for Christ who doesn't have the

courage of his conviction and the courage of his calling. You can be convicted about things, but if you're not willing to tell somebody about it, it doesn't do any good. You need not only the courage of your conviction, but the courage to carry out the calling God gave you. It is courageous people who make a difference.

Look at verse 1 and let's see the courage illustrated. Well, they finished up in Philippi. They left. You remember, they had made situations secure for the Christians here, Paul telling them that he was a Roman citizen and that kind of set things in order. They were scared of him from then on 'cause they had persecuted a Roman citizen, which was against the law. So the Christians were gonna be able to rest for a while at Philippi, so they press on.

When they had passed through Amphipolis, now that was 33 miles from Philippi, they went from Amphipolis to Apollonia that was 30 miles from Amphipolis. And then they went to Thessalonica, which was 37 miles from Apollonia, which was 30 miles from Amphipolis, which was 33 miles - and don't you ever forget it - from Philippi.

What's the significance of that? The significance of that is that they had minds set on Thessalonica. They probably stopped for the night in Apollonia and Amphipolis. If they went that way and did cover 30 miles a day and stayed overnight at those two places, which were perfect points - it is as some scholars tell us, evidence that Paul didn't walk everywhere he went. He probably hired horses, which is an interesting thought. Nevertheless, they just stopped overnight at Amphipolis and Apollonia, likely, that isn't in the text. That's a likely conclusion. "And they came to Thessalonica." Now, watch. "Where there was a synagogue of the Jews."

Now, hang on. What had happened on the first missionary journey - every time Paul went into a town, where did he go first? The synagogue. And the what every time? One word that starts that with P. Persecution. Every time they went to the synagogue, they got it. Now, there was a synagogue in Thessalonica - say, "Oh, oh, I'll bet he's learned" - look back in chapter 13. Every time he got near a synagogue, wham, he got it. And that's right. He did.

Chapter 13, verse 6, they had gone to - they met a sorcerer. In verse 6 of chapter 13, the first place they went, the island of Cyprus, they met a sorcerer who was a Jew. Every time they got close to the Jews, they got persecuted and confrontation with Satan.

Go to verse 45. It says that when they came into the area of Galatia, the whole place came together to hear the word, verse 44, "When the Jews saw the multitudes filled with envy, spoke against these things as were spoken by Paul and contradicting and blaspheming."

Look at verse 50. "The Jews stirred up the devout and honor of women. The chief thieves raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, expelled them out of their borders."

Chapter 14, verse 1. "They went to the synagogue of the Jews. There were some Jews who believed that just stirred up trouble."

Verse 2. "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles." They tried to stone them in verse 5. They fled in verse 6.

Go down to verse 19. They threw him out of the city of Lystra. Stoned them there. It was always the Jews, the Jews, the Jews, who persecuted Paul in his ministry.

To say, "Well now, when he goes there at Thessalonica, boy, I'll bet he'll avoid that place." Look at verse 2. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them." Stop there. In unto whom? The Jews and the synagogue. Now that, my friends, is courage. He had just gotten over terrible pain. He had just had excruciating agony in Philippi that we described last week, but which bigger words to describe. He had been through pain and terror and threat every time he went to a synagogue on his first journey. He goes to Thessalonica. He'd just been in jail. He doesn't want a vacation. He goes right back into the synagogue again. Why? Because that was God's calling to him. The man not only had the courage to believe what he believed, but he had the courage to do what God had called him to do. That's courage and that's basic to an effect on the world.

You know he said in Romans 1:18, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the power of God for them to believe to the Jew first, also to the Greek." And so the priority in his mind was to go to Israel.

He had said in Romans 10:1, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved." He such heart for Israel. He almost wished himself to be accursed for their sake. He went there knowing exactly what he was to expect and, believe me, he got it. He always got it. I'm not gonna take the time. I could take you the rest of the book of Acts and you'll find that every time he went to the synagogue, the same thing happened. But you see, that did not move him because he did not count his life dear unto himself, but he knew there was joy in finishing the ministry that Jesus had given him to do. That's courage.

You say, "Well, it could have been a new beginning." It wasn't in the synagogue in Philippi, so he hadn't gotten into the deal yet. He'd been in a lot of trouble recently from the Greeks, but not the Jews. Maybe this was a new time. After all, the Macedonian vision had been a man from Macedonia and, after all, he wasn't the apostle to the Jews. He was the Apostle to whom? For the Gentiles.

I mean, here was Europe, a whole new ball game. Maybe we could just kind of cool it and avoid the issue. No, you just don't know him very well. He never avoided issues. He created issues. In spite of all the pain, he had a love for Israel. He had an obedient spirit to the Lord. The Spirit was leading him

to go to the synagogue and he went. It's amazing. He went right in there, as his manner was, and he never had a thought for the pain that he was gonna have.

Now, he did the same thing in Berea. When he got there - look at verse 10. "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night into Berea." Now, look at that. When they sent him away by night, you know they're trying to get him out of trouble. He ran into trouble in Thessalonica. We'll see that later. But what happened when he got to Berea? They shuffled him out at night, down the road there at about 50 miles and they stuff him off in Berea. Figure, "Man, he's safe here. There's nothing going on in this town. This is dead. Just cool it and rest."

And look at this, "By night into Berea, who coming there." What did he do? Went into the synagogue of the Jews. There was no other way. He knew what he believed and he knew where he wanted to take the message. It didn't matter to him one bit that he just jumped out of one fire into the next. He didn't rest in Berea, lick his wounds.

Don't you remember back in Lystra, chapter 14? They stoned him and that was a horrible thing. They stoned him so badly they thought he was dead. They threw him out of town and threw him on the city dump heap. The Bible says, "He was on the dump heap and the people came out to look at him. The Christians did and all of sudden he rose up. Dusted himself off. Say, "What happened? Was that a miracle?" He hoped to tell you it was a miracle. He dusted himself off and beat it for the hills. No, he dusted himself off.

In chapter 14, verse 20, "And went back into town." That's courage. He had the courage of his conviction, but he had the courage to his calling. He not only believed what he believed, but he wasn't afraid to say it to whom he needed to say it.

You say, "Boy, John, I'll tell you. I'd like to have that kind of courage. How do you get it?" Well, you just don't just get it by sitting around thinking about it. You say, "What's that kind of courage based on?" I'm gonna give you three steps to that kind of courage. Write them down. They're very basic. Three steps to that courage. Step 1 - now, this is gonna sound simple. It is. Aren't you glad the Bible is simple? It includes all of us.

Step No. 1, trust God. Now, I'll show you what I mean by that. Trust God. Psalm 27 - this is terrific - David - he was in trouble all the time. So here he is in trouble. So what does he say? Listen to this. "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?" Do you like that? That's like Ephesians 6, "Be strong in the Lord." And in the power of what? His might. You don't go in there and on your strength. You say, "Oh, I don't know if I could handle that. Oh, boy, if I get too much pressure, oh." You're going on your own strength. You know what'll happen? You won't handle it.

He says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Psalm 27, "The Lord is the strength of my life of whom then shall I be afraid." When God is on your side, who are you gonna fear? Who you gonna fear? "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes come upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." He said, "As if I saw my enemies running after me, they all fell down in front of me. I didn't do a thing. God did it all. Though and host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. The war should rise against me and this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in His temple."

You know what he says? The thing to do is when you get all this problem going on and all this trouble coming after you and all this persecution, just focus on the Lord. He's says, "One thing I desire," that's to focus on Him. As long as the believer really puts his trust in God, he has absolutely nothing to fear. Do you believe that? That's easier to believe than it is to practice.

He goes all the way down through it like this - but he comes - I like this - in verse 13, starts out, "I would have fainted unless" - watch - "I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." Do you see that? You know, Christians, you will faint. You will poop out in every stress situation if you don't trust God, 'cause you're going it alone on your own strength. Then he says, "Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage." How could you be of good courage? By waiting on the Lord. By letting it be His battle.

I always think of the battle of Israel. Remember when the Lord sent Israel out to war? He put the choir in front. Could you imagine? An army with a choir in front. You say, "Why?" The battle is not yours. The battle is the Lord's. Just get the praising out there and don't worry about the fighting. That's the point. "Wait on the Lord and be of good courage. He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." So you see, any kind of courage you're gonna have depends upon your theology. If you've got an inadequate doctrine of God, you're gonna be a coward.

Over in Psalm 31:23 - this is good - "O love the Lord, all ye His saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful." Isn't that good? Just trust God. He'll take care. Well, we could talk about. It's in chapter 34, 42, all over the place; how that if we trust God. Listen, don't ever go out into battle against the foe in your strength. Always trust God. Always trust God.

Second thing, confess sin. You know, if you go into battle with known sin in your life, there's not gonna be much victory. If you go out to witness to the world and you're living a sinful life and you wonder why you get shot down, that's why. If you're gonna be a vessel unto honor, you're gonna a pure vessel, right, 1 Timothy.

Listen to this, Psalm 7:1, "O Lord my God, indeed to I put my trust. Save me from all those who persecute me and deliver me. Must they tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces while there's none to deliver, O Lord my God." Then he says this, "If I have done this, if there be iniquity on my

hands, if I have reward evil unto him who was at peace with me, let the enemy persecute my soul and take it. Let him tread down my life on the earth and lay mine honor in the dust." What's David saying? David's saying, "God, if there's sin in my life, I deserve everything that comes. But God, if I love the pure life, deliver me and show Your glory."

Now, verse 10, listen to this, "My defenses with God" - but listen - "who saveth" - what? "The upright in heart." Boy, if you're gonna go to battle against the enemy, you better be sure, Number 1, you trust God; Number 2, you confess sin and you're pure. Remember the breastplate of righteousness in Ephesians 6?

"If you go out to battle with a hole in the breastplate of personal righteousness, Satan will jab you every time."

Third thing, in the midst of all it, not only trust God, confess sin, but thirdly, thank Him in advance. Do you know what that does for your attitude when you go into battle and say, "God, I'm going out there and be bold and I'm gonna put it on the line. I'm gonna say what I need to say. I'm gonna thank you for the victory that hasn't been won yet." Boy, that's great. You say, "Who ever did that?" Paul.

Acts 28:15, I love this. "He thanked God and took courage."

He just arrived in Rome. He says, "Thank you, God, for victories. We're gonna have great time here and, woom, just move in." So there's how to have courage. Trust God. Then you say, "Well, how can I trust Him?" You've got to know Him? How are you gonna know Him? Read the Bible. Dig into the text. You'll get to know Him. The better you know Him, the better you trust Him, right. The better you trust Him, the better you're gonna be able to enter into battle with confidence and not fear. God will deliver you. He's in the business. Deliverance, one of His products.

So courage then, depends upon your theology. You've got a lousy doctrine of God, you're not gonna have any confidence. So the feature of effectiveness in turning the world upside down is boldness or courage. They had it.

Second thing. A lot of people have courage, but they don't have that second one, which is content. When you go out to really turn the world upside down, you've got to be courageous, but you've also got to be right. You need to speak the truth. There are a lot of people with a lot of boldness and a lot of courage that just don't have anything to say. I may sound courageous to Cults and some of these weird religions. I mean, they are bold, aren't they? Just unbelievably bold. They put us to shame. But the problem is that you've got to have courage with content. They're heavy on the courage. They have none of the content. Amazing how courageous they are in the propagation of error, but that's been true for a long time.

Many people don't make waves because they don't ever say anything that's divisive. They don't ever bring up issues. They just sort of gently slide in and out of every issue. Not Paul. He created waves. He smacked the world head on nose to nose with issues.

When right content is declared, you're gonna have effects. That's when people say, "Oh, you know, I've been a Christian a long time. I work and there's never any trouble. I have not effect." That's terrible to admit. You know why? One, you're not courageous or, two, you haven't gotten anything to say. Paul, you see, he never got into trouble because of himself. He got into trouble because of his message, you see, his content. And that's basic.

There are Christians who are offensive and maybe their personality or their breath or whatever. There's all kinds of ways to be offensive. But Paul was never offensive personally. He was offensive because of what he said. You see. It wasn't just his dynamic person that created the stir. It was his content. You say, "Well, I don't want to offend anybody." Oh, yes, you do, beloved. You've got to offend people. The one thing you do want to do is take a whole lot of complacent placid sinners who are just rolling along in their sin and you want to blast them to pieces. You want to rattle their securities, don't you?

Read Romans, chapter 1, he goes all down through, talks about sin. And then in chapter 2, he approaches all the securities of the Jew and Gentile and blows them to bits and leaves them stripped, bear, stark naked in chapter 3 and then offers them Jesus Christ.

We're in the business of exploding securities and offending sin. Listen, God's been offended long enough by sin. It's time we offended some sinners. The Gospel has to offend. Romans 9:33 says, "I lay in Zion a stumbling stone of rock of offense." Doesn't he? 1 Peter 2:6-8, he says, "The stone which the builders rejected the same, is become head of the corner." And what stone is it? It's the stone of stumbling, the rock of offense. And who is that? Jesus Christ. And people have been stumbling over Him and been offended by Him ever since the propagation of truth in Old Testament, that he was coming. You need to offend sinners.

Now, I don't mean you're obnoxious. I don't mean you're belligerent. I don't mean you're distasteful and unloving. I just mean that you hit the issue head on, right? You haven't done anybody any good unless you've confronted them with the honest issues and that's exactly what Paul did.

Now, if you're gonna talk to the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica, what do you think the issue is? The issue is who is Messiah? Not only that, what was the biggest hang up the Jews had about Jesus being the Messiah? The fact that He died. They couldn't see a dead Messiah. Paul says in Romans 11:9 and 1:23 that the cross to the Jews is a stumbling block. They can't see that.

So what's the issue? The issue is Jesus is Messiah and He had to die. Now, what do you think Paul's gonna talk on? The weather, religion, social issues? No, he's gonna talk on Jesus is the Messiah and He had to die. That's the issue. That's exactly what he does. Bangs right in - in verse 2, "And Paul as his manner was, went into them in three Sabbath days" - three Saturdays in a row - "He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have" - what - "suffered." You see. That's the issue. "And risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you is the Messiah."

I'm telling you. I love the fact that he got right at the issue. Some people say, "Well, you can't really witness. You can't really get going. You've got to warm up and get to know Him." You'd have a hard time defending that Scripture. Don't beat around the bush. It took him three Sabbaths and he nailed that thing every time.

I want you to see how the pattern went. "As his manner was, he went into them in three Sabbath days, reasoned" - that's a most interesting word. It's a word from which we get words like "dialog" and "dialectic." It indicates not just a formal sermon. He didn't just get up there and preach. He allowed for questions and dialog. The imperfect tense indicates a renewed kind of repeated questioning. In other words, an interchange there. This is exciting. This guy knew his stuff.

Now, when you're gonna go into the synagogue and you're gonna say, "Now, here's my message. Any questions? I'll be happy to answer them," you know what you're talking about. Why, Peter said we should be able to do that. Shouldn't every Christian be able to give to every man - what? A reason for the hope _____, an answer, an answer.

We present Christianity and then when questions come, we shrivel up. It's amazing how many Christian people are always asking questions. "Well, someone said this and what do I say?" "Well, what is the answer to this?" You see, this is where you need to study the Scriptures.

Now, we're happy to answer questions 'cause that's one way you learn the answers, but you need to pursue the kind of a testimony that can present the content and then defend it, right. Christianity ought to be defensible. And so there's old Paul, standing on his feet, three Sabbaths in a row, firing out the message and they're giving questions and he's giving answers. You know, this became his pattern in the synagogue. It worked so well. God just kept using it.

Chapter 18, verse 4, "And he reasoned into synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." See, he used the mental approach of dialog. Now, keep this in mind, nobody ever got saved by emotionalism. The only people who ever get saved are people who believe in their minds the true facts of the Gospel.

So salvation is then, first of all, a mental thing. It's not emotional. It's mental. You must perceive the truth. Now, it becomes an emotional response, doesn't it? But salvation is a mental thing. You don't want to get somebody all mushed up emotionally into salvation. No, no, no. You want their mind to be clear so they can truthfully apprehend the facts.

Paul used reason and he persuaded them in their own minds that these things were true, then the Spirit had the truth to use to open their hearts, you see, just like Lydia. So that's in 18:4, 18:19 does the same thing again, "Came to the synagogue in Ephesus and reasoned" - the same term again, same idea. He used the dialog approach.

Chapter 19, verse 8, the word disputing and persuading was what he did there in Ephesus. Then in verse 9, he was doing it in the school of a guy named Tyrannus. Disputing, again, is the same idea, dialog. And in chapter 24, you have the very same thing again. There it's translated "preaching," but it shouldn't be. So it was the idea of dialoging and discussing on his feet. He was defending Christianity. Man, this is terrific.

True evangelism is defensible. It is a defensible presentation of Christianity. It's not hit and run. It's being able to stand your ground and give answers. And they say, "Where'd he get his information. Where did he start from?" Look at verse 2. I love this. Here's the greatest approach to apologetics. "As his manner was, he went into them in three Sabbath days, he dialoged with them out of" - what - philosophy? Scripture. You know what? He was an expository preacher.

Now, I don't want to get on hobby horse, but let me just say this, there's really only one effective way to teach in the long run and that's to teach the Scripture. You say, "But he didn't have the New Testament." That's right. And he taught the Old Testament. And if they were expositors of the Old Testament, how much more carefully should be expositors of the New Testament?

What he did was this, he took the Old Testament - whenever you see the word "Scriptures" in the New Testament, it always refers to the Old Testament. Paul took the Old Testament and from it he opened and alleged. That means he did an exposition. "That Christ must needs to suffer." Now, the word "Christ" does not necessarily mean Jesus Christ. It simply means anointed. It is the New Testament word for Messiah. So Paul took the Old Testament and showed that Messiah had to suffer and die and rise from the dead.

Now, say I gave you an assignment. You're gonna speak to a whole lot of Jewish people. Your assignment is to prove to them that Jesus is the Messiah. Here's where you begin, you would take the Old Testament and you would show that whoever the Messiah was going to be, He would have to die and He would have to rise from the dead.

Now, if you were gonna show that He had to die, what Scripture would you use? Isaiah 53. And maybe we'd go down through Isaiah 53, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter like a lamb before His shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from judgment," etcetera, etcetera. And you go all the way down. His crucifixion with the thieves is even mentioned in chapter 53. The whole picture of the cross in detail.

When you got done with that, you'd go to Psalm 22 and you'd say, "There it is, right there. 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.'" They cast lots for His garment. They looked upon Him and all His bones were visible and so forth and so on. They pierced His hands. And see, all of that's in the Old Testament.

You'd take them to the other places in the Old Testament, all the way through. You'd say, "Now, you see, He must die. You see, He must die." Then you'd say, "Now, I want to show He arrived."

And you'd take them over to Psalm 16 and you take them to verses 8 through 11 and you'd read him this, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt not leave His soul in Sheol." God says, "I'm not gonna leave My Holy One dead. He's gonna rise from the dead." That was the text of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, see.

So you would take all those Old Testament passages and a lot more that I haven't suggested and you would say, "You see now, beloved, what happens? He must die and He must rise!" And then you would say, "Now, may I introduce to you one who has?" Then you would introduce Jesus Christ and you open an allege from Scripture that the Messiah would fit all these qualifications. Then you would open an allege from history that Jesus did.

Beloved, the most convincing arguments for the truth of who Jesus Christ is is the absolute and total fulfillment of prophecy. That's exactly what he did. He just took the Old Testament, did an exposition on it and showed exactly what was gonna happen to the Messiah and then he said, look at it in verse 3, "This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, He is the Messiah," by virtue of the fact that He fits the Old Testament Scripture patterns. He fits it all. I'm telling you, friends, that was a powerful shot.

You know, the Jews didn't hardly know their Old Testament. Did you know that? Do you know that in Matthew 16 - let me read you something very, very insightful into the Jewish problem of ignorance. He says in Matthew 16 - well, let's go to verse 21-22 - "From that time forth began, Jesus to show unto His disciples how He must go to Jerusalem."

Now listen, He started telling them about that, "And how He must suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes" - watch - "and be killed and be raised the third day." Now, here's the Messiah, He's arrived. He says, "I'm gonna have to die and be raised the third day." You say, "Oh,

the disciples probably said, 'Oh, You are the Messiah! You are the Messiah!'"

No. Big mouth Peter opened mouth and let Satan through him and said, "Be it far from the Lord that shalt not be unto Thee."

You know, that even the disciples didn't understand the Scripture? They didn't know the Messiah had to suffer and die. They blew it. There were two of them crying after Jesus rose, walked along the road moaning and groaning, and all of a sudden, Jesus joins them. They don't recognize Him. In Luke 24, He says, "O fools" - you dodos - "slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter His glory, then be resurrected into glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures of things concerning Himself." They were all there. They just didn't know it. They didn't read it. They didn't learn it. And so you see, they only saw the kingdom thing. They didn't see the suffering and the death and the resurrection.

Well, that was his approach. Content, man. He got right to the issue. Presented the truth of Christ and defended it. He knew the Scripture. He could take the Scripture and use the Scripture to present his point. He could match the life of Christ with the Scripture. He was able to do the Old Testament and the New Testament together to be a convincing argument. He was a student of Scripture. That's basic, beloved. If you're gonna turn the world upside down, you got to know the Word. The Word is the lever that does the job.

Now, look at Berea. Same thing. He came to Berea. He gave the same message. Then verse 11 says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica." There's a better class of people there. You say, "Does that mean aristocracy?" No. They were noble for this reason, they received the Word, were all ready to mind and search the Scriptures daily whether those things were so. You say, "Why were they noble, John?" They were noble because they were so open-minded to the truth.

It says and this interesting, catch this, in verse 4 it says, "And some of them believed." The actual Greek there is *patho*, to be persuaded. Some of those people in Thessalonica were actually persuaded. The idea is against their own desires, against their own preconceptions. Paul had to persuade them. But look here, in verse 12 it says, "Therefore many of them believed in Berea," and it's not the word "*patho*." It's the word "*pastule*" and it's not passive. It's active. They weren't persuaded. They believed on their own.

What was the difference in the two groups? One of them Paul had to persuade into the truth. The other one was so ready and so open. They searched it out all by themselves. That's the difference in the nobility of the Bereans. They didn't have any of those terrible prejudices.

Do you know that when the persecution came in Berea, it came from people who followed him from Thessalonica because the Jews of Berea were open-minded and honest seekers of the truth and had not prejudice? They weren't hung by Gentiles getting say. They weren't hung up at all on that. And so they were noble in the sense that they were open to Scripture and they were honestly desiring the truth. And Paul, to them, spoke the same truth, but he didn't have to stand there and persuade them into it. He just spoke to them and they went right back to their own Old Testaments, yanked out the scrolls and started looking it up themselves. The difference in their character was just their open-mindedness and sensitivity to the truth in an unprejudice way.

Notice it says, "That they searched the Scriptures every day." The word for search is "to examine." It was a word to speak of judicial investigation. They sifted the evidence carefully. You know what I believe? I believe that a man who honestly sifts the evidence of Scripture is gonna come to the right conclusion. I think Scripture can defend itself, don't you?

Jesus had said in John 5:39, He says, "Search the Scriptures for in them you think have eternal life." And watch, "They are they which testify of Me." He says, "You go ahead. Study your Old Testament. You know what you're gonna find? Me." In verse 46, the same chapter, John 5, "For had you believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me." And says, "How shall you believe Me, if you don't believe him." Over at chapter 7, verse 17, he says, "If you really want to do God's will, you'll know the truth."

Remember in Luke 16, the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man died and went to Hades and the Lazarus guy that went to Abraham's bosom. And the rich man being in torment said to Abraham, "Abraham, dip your finger in water and cool my tongue, for I'm fermented in this flame. And he says, "Would you please send somebody? Send Lazarus back from the dead to warn my brothers." And Abraham says to him, "No sense in doing that. If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe the One raised from the dead." You say, "You sure that's true? I'm sure it's true. One raised from the dead and they didn't believe Him and they still don't."

It's all in the Old Testament. "They searched the Scriptures and, believe me, God reveals himself." Paul said to Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for correction, for instruction and righteousness that the man of God maybe be mature, thoroughly furnished" - all good words. "You study the Old Testament," he said to Timothy, "and you'll find the truth of righteousness there." And so these noble folks didn't need to be publicly persuaded. They sought it out themselves. They were such noble people.

I notice, beloved, I close with this. The Gospel we preach must have two things. It must have qualities that can be open to public questioning. That's Thessalonica. And it must have quality that can be opened to private research. That's Berea. Do you have that kind of content? Can you present a message to this world and stand on your feet if the case needs it and defend that message biblically.

Secondly, can you present such a message that sends them to the Scripture and find its defense there? Loved it behooves us to know the Book, to know the Book.

People that make a difference in the world, people who turn it upside down, people who affect this world, are people who know the Word of God. I believe that with all my heart. And are people who can stand on their feet eyeball-to-eyeball with people and defend what they believe and there are people who can take people where they're at and say, "Here's what I believe. You take it to the Scripture and let stand the test of Scripture and you'll find it confirmed." If you give men answers that you can defend on your feet and answers that you can defend through the Word of God, then you've given them answers.

You say, John, "I'd like to be able to do that. How? How can I do that? How can I have content like that that can make me turn the world upside down?" One, four points, this is like the three I gave you on courage. Get them real quick. I'm just gonna fire them out. If you're gonna have content, one, confess and repent of all sin. That's where you start. You don't start by Bible study. You start by confession. You say, "Why?" 1 Peter 2:1, "Laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, as newborn babes, the desire the sincere milk of the word." Before you can ever get into the Word to grow by it, you have to lay aside sin. Purify, that's point one.

Two, study. You'll never know the Bible. There's no shortcut. There is absolute - believe me, if there's a shortcut, I'd found it a long time ago. There's none. Paul said to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God." What does that mean? Be such a good student that God is excited about the fact that you know the truth.

You know the thing that haunts you all the time when you're a preacher, when you're a teacher? The fact that this is supposed to be approved by God, not by you. We can get away with murder with people. You can't get away with anything with God. So one, purify, confess sin. Two, study. There's no shortcut, absolutely none. Study the Word. Three, personalize the Word. What does that mean? Translate what is academic into your own life, into your own life.

The things that you're gonna be effectively teaching other people are the things that you have learned by your own living, right? For me to put something on a piece of paper and teach it to you is one thing. For me to teach you what God has been doing in my life is something completely different.

"What do you mean by that?" Paul says, "Be renewed in your mind." In Galatians and in Romans 12:2 he says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In other words, you know the word and it changes your life and you speak out of experience. So you confess sin. You learn the word and then you personalize it.

I'll give you the last one. Share it. You say, "I'm gonna learn it and when I get it all learned, then I'm gonna come out of my room and say it." So somebody, "Oh, that's ridiculous." You be talking about it as you're learning it. There's no better way to learn than to teach, right? We who teach find out that what we teach we learn.

Listen to Philippians 2:15, "Be blameless, harmless children of God without rebuking the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life." That's part of your responsibility. Don't bottle it up. Stick it out. You say, "John, I wish I had content. I wish I could defend the Word. I wish I could send people the Scripture, that they can learn it. I wish I could build a framework for people to really examine the truth." You can do it. Confess sins. Study the Book. Personalize it. Make it your own.

Before you have any right to tell anybody something, you ought to have it in your own life. What does the Bible say? "Be not hearers of the Word only," but what? Doers. For if you're only a hearer you deceive yourself. You say, "Oh, I learned that. I learned that." You didn't learn that. Who are you kidding? You never learned it, so operate it. And then lastly, share the Word. Share the Word.

Well, we'll cover the last three - and they are important - in a few weeks.

Let's pray. Father we're grateful that You have given us patterns of these men and we even hear Paul's words to us, "Be followers of me, as I am of Christ." And we hear him in say to these Philippians, "What you've seen and heard in me do." Father, we pray that we might be able to emulate Paul's courage and Paul's content, that we might have the kind of courage that comes from trusting God, having a pure life, really leaning on His strength and not our own, and praising Him in advance. We might have the kind of content that comes only when we are pure, when we study diligently, that we might know when we make things our own and when we share with them with those who are around us.

God, help us to be people who have an effect, who make a difference, that Jesus might receive all the glory. We pray in His name. Amen.

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