

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral  
Lesson 35 “Turning the World Right Side Up”

I. We have been studying through *Acts* and how the gospel went viral through various revivals in the first century. This is what caused the gospel to spread so rapidly in the first century.

A. Most recently we have been looking at Paul’s second missionary journey and how everywhere he went he saw both a revival and a riot.

B. Today we are going to study how about his trip to Thessalonica. When he began to minister there, his opponents said, Paul and his associates were turning the world upside down with this message of the radical love of God he brought!

1. They actually weren’t turning the world upside down, they were turning it right side up, however, their opponents were upside down so they saw backwards.
2. Paul’s ministry upset the legalistic Jews so they began to spread rumors about Paul to the Romans. One of things we have noticed and will continue to notice in our study of the New Testament is how the Jews (who hated the Romans) would try to use the Romans to persecute the church. It was a marriage of strange bedfellows.
3. The persecution in Thessalonica was intense. That’s the bad news. The good news is the Thessalonians’ faith sounded out (reverberated throughout all the world so that when Paul went to Corinth they had already happened in Thessalonica. When we process hardship well, it sounds out the gospel to others. This is part of the hope of the gospel.

II. Turning the World Right Side Up

A. **Acts 17:1-9** Preaching Christ in Thessalonica

1. **Verse 1** Paul, Timothy, and Silas passed through two other cities in Macedonia and then came to Thessalonica, which was the capital. Thessalonica was comprised of Romans, Greeks, and Jews. It was an important city politically for the Romans, which may be part of why Satan faulted the move of God so hard. When the gospel takes a foothold in prominent places, it is positioned strategically to go forth to everywhere else.
2. **Verses 2-4** Paul went into the synagogue which was comprised of Jews and Gentiles (God Fearers). He explained (opened up) the scriptures and demonstrated from the scriptures (Old Testament) that Jesus was the Christ.
  - a. The Greek word demonstrate is *paratithēmi*. It means to put forth evidence and to persuade strongly.
  - b. Christ is all throughout the Old Testament. ***Genesis - would strike the head of the serpent, Exodus - the passover lamb, Leviticus - scapegoat,***

*Ruth - kinsman redeemer, Isaiah - the suffering servant, Psalms - the son of David, etc.*

3. **Verses 5-9** While a great multitude of the Greeks were persuaded, the Jews were not and became envious. When people lose control they often become mad, which caused them to gather a mob and set the city in an uproar (sound familiar?).
  - a. Claimed these men have turned the world upside down.
  - b. The Jews told the rulers of the city that Paul was acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar - proclaiming another king - Jesus. This is a bigger deal than we realize. When Julius Caesar was assassinated a comet appeared and many people said this meant he had ascended into the heavens and became a god. This made his son, Octavian, the son of god. Every Caesar after this was seen as a son of god so when Paul came along and preached another king who claimed to be the Son of God, it made the Romans irate!
  - c. Jason was let go after paying a security (Financial payment to guarantee against future riots).

#### **B. Acts 17:10-15 Ministering at Berea**

1. The brethren sent Paul and Silas way to Berea and Paul immediately went to the synagogue (what love of people - it's the love of Christ that compels us).
2. The Bereans were more fair minded and listened with an open heart and then studied the scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. This is what we all should do. Don't take my word for any of this stuff, search the scriptures for yourselves.
3. Many believed in Berea believed! When the Jews in Thessalonica heard this, they came down and stirred up the crowds again! This is how angry those in Thessalonica were!
4. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to flee to Athens.

#### **C. Takeaways - What do we with all of this?**

1. Turning the world right side up is a fight! Satan doesn't want it so he will try to unleash hell on earth against us when endeavor to believe God. **1 Thessalonians 2:17-18.**
2. Because we are turning the world right side up, we have to fight a different way. We fight with love and peace, not fear and hate. **Matthew 5:43-48** We're all good in talking about turning the world right side up until I show us those verses. Loving your enemy is right side up from God's perspective.
3. When we process hardship well, the rest of the world hears it.. **1 Thessalonians 1:7-9 NLT.**
4. God eventually avenges His kids. Approximately 19 years after these events the Romans turned on the Jews and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem (fulfilling Jesus's prophecy in **Matthew 24**). Jewish persecution of Christianity was significantly reduced after this event.

### III. Conclusion

A. Call Up Prayer Team

B. Pray Closing Prayer