

Acts 17:1-15
Boldly Proclaim Christ
20181216
Declare me and do not be afraid!

Introduction:

The other day in my home we were having a discussion about fear. It was something my children were asking me about. They wanted to know - when I was a child, during the time while I was growing up - they wanted to know when I was most afraid. When was I most fearful? So, I thought about it and came up with two separate incidences that I would be able to describe as when I was most afraid. I'm not going to go into the details of my childhood fears here. But this conversation got me thinking about fear, and now maybe it has you thinking about fear too? Maybe you have a fear of the unknown, not sure what might happen in a dark and scary place. The fear of loss, parent's often times have this fear when they consider the fragileness of life as their baby sleeps in the nursery. The fear of being in an uncontrollable situation. Or what I think is quite common is the fear of being separated from the person we love most in this life. Such as a spouse for those of us who are married or the loss of your mom or dad if you are a child. Sometimes, it is unfortunate but true, we are even afraid of what other people will think or do if they were to know certain things about us.

In our study through the book of Acts, this past week we saw what many of us might consider an outright terrifying experience. Paul and Silas were violently apprehended by a crowd of angry Philippians and then beaten and thrown into prison and put in stocks! When we consider the situation that they had found themselves in we might say, for the sake of your safety Paul and Silas, in the future be more careful in the way you exercise your Christian faith. Now I hope we wouldn't really say that, but with our propensity to seek comfort it might be more common to our counsel than we would like to admit.

What was it that caused such a violent reaction to Paul and Silas in Philippi? They were standing up for truth, truth that they were convinced of from Scripture and carried along in by the Holy Spirit. In essence this is what they were attacked for. The largely Gentile population of Philippi had developed their own set of ideals and practices that were suddenly being affronted by these Christian missionaries. This is what happens when an individual or a group of individuals are ignorant of God's revealed will; when they are ignorant of the Scriptures. Apart for God's word they are invariably led to establish false beliefs and ideas which then become staunchly engrained as part of life. Then of course when those false beliefs are challenged with the truth of the Gospel...watch out! Because tirades of jealous outbursts and anger issue forth. That is what happened in Philippi and as we continue in our study of Acts 17 this morning, we will see such attacks arise again in Thessalonica, this time by the practitioners of Judaism.

Now that Paul and Silas along with the others have Philippi behind them should they change their message? Should they remain silent about their beliefs? Of course not. Believers we know that Jesus did everything to bring about salvation for those who believe in him. We have the treasure of the Gospel. As we study this passage as we seek the Lord's heart in this text. What we find is Jesus saying, **"Declare me and do not be afraid!"** Declare me and do not be afraid! This simple truth should manifest itself in our loving declaration of the gospel. Only God knows who he has appointed to receive the message with eagerness, our charge is to Declare Christ and to not be afraid. Our eternal condition is secure through the blood of Jesus and the temporal hostilities that are promised to be part of our lives as faithful witnesses of Christ are to be counted as joy ([Acts 5:41](#), [1 Peter 4:16](#)).

Scripture Passage Acts 17:1-15

Outline: The Gospel Revealed (vv1-4), The Jealous Response (vv5-9, 13), The Joyful Reception (vv10-12), and The Journey Resumes (vv14-15).

The Gospel Revealed vv1-4

1.v1 “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where...”

a. This is already a different situation from what was going on in Philippi. As they come to Thessalonica an established Jewish population is there, and it was significant enough to have a synagogue.

b.vv2-3 “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from...”

c. Immediately what we see is that Paul goes to this place of worship. He goes to the people who know and fear the One True God. He goes to the people who have the Torah, the Writings, and the Prophets; collectively the Scriptures.

i. Previously in Philippi, where no synagogue was apparently present, him and his companions had gone to a place of prayer (**Acts 16:12-13, 16**). In Philippi Lydia and her household became believers in Jesus. Through their prison outreach the Philippian jailer also became a believer in Jesus and the beginnings of that church there in Philippi began taking shape.

d. Here now in Thessalonica, Paul, who was a Pharisaical Jew, a devoted student under Gamaliel (**Acts 21:1-3, Gal 1:14**). In another word, he knew the Scriptures well and now by God’s grace he also knows Jesus as the Messiah. So, Paul takes the Scriptures and opens them wide, he makes known the hidden treasures (**Col 2:2-4**) which reveal the Messiah.

i. You say, what does this mean? It means for three Sabbath days Paul took them through the Scriptures and showed them all the places that they were familiar with what was foretold about the Messiah, about the one who would come to bring salvation.

ii. Back in Genesis he may have showed them **Genesis 3:14-15** when God was speaking to the serpent in the garden about how one day from the seed of the woman would arise one who would crush the head of the serpent, even while he bruised his heel.

iii. Later in Genesis, such passages as **Genesis 12:1-3** the covenant with Abram about how God was going to use him to bring a blessing to all the families of the earth, or later in Genesis chapter 15 when the covenant was unilaterally solidified by God, or at the end of the book **Genesis 49:8-12** and the blessing made by Israel over his son Judah.

iv. Paul would have likely spent time in the Exodus story, rich in the tradition of the Jewish people, relating to them pictures of the coming Messiah.

v. Remember when we worked through **Deuteronomy 18:15**? ““The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—”

vi. Let alone the rich prophecies found in Isaiah, so many familiar to us this time of year especially **Isaiah 9:6** “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

vii. And I’m sure with three Sabbath days many many more Scriptures, but he did all of this to say I know who it is who fulfilled all that was written!

viii.v3b “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

ix. This proclamation demanded a response, it was radical it was different than what they were expecting, and yet Paul opened the Scriptures up to them about the Christ, and his testimony to Jesus being the one who all these Scriptures were referring too. Paul was faithful to: **Declare Jesus and to not be afraid!**

e.v4 “And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout...”

i. Praise be to God! Luke records that this time invested was not wasted, it was fruitful. We know from letters written by Paul bearing the name 1 and 2 Thessalonians that a thriving church takes root in this city.

f. Realize that this manner of declaring Jesus will not be the same for us. The gospel will not be different...but the way we go about sharing the gospel with someone who is unfamiliar with God’s word is going to be different.

g. It is going to be in large part by you being a living walking testimony of Christ’s work in you. The way you conduct yourself in the midst of hardship, your faithfulness to your spouse, your devotion to loving your family in a sacrificial and Christ-like manner.

h. This will all be viewed by the watching world and you need to be ready to declare Jesus and not be afraid when someone asks you about what they see.

i. You need to be able to relate to them the transformational work of the gospel in your life that has borne the fruit that they witness.

j. You need to be able to tell them that apart from Jesus you are just like them in their unconverted state. The only difference, the only real difference is that you have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior and they have not...and oh what a tremendous difference that makes.

k. You have to be fearless in these times. You have to realize you have what they need for eternal life, you have the gospel. Yes, it might be costly in the temporal, but you must be someone who is ready to invest in the eternal.

Transition: We see immediately that what was taking place in Thessalonica was not received with persuasive for all.

The Jealous Response vv5-9, 13

a.v5 “But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city...”

b. As you can tell, not all was well received. This is immediately reminiscent of Philippi! But now instead of a riled-up Gentile core of discontent people. The mob is instigated by fellow Jews, but those who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah as Paul was explaining from the Scriptures.

c. God’s word says they were jealous. Their motivation was rooted in jealousy. They realized that some who were previously aligned with them were throwing in their lot with the likes of Paul and Silas.

d. But despite this outcome, and the very real possibility that similar reprisals could be made against you: Jesus would still say, “Declare me and do not be afraid.”

i. Do not be afraid to take a stand for righteousness, even when it is unpopular.

ii. Do not be afraid to state plainly that you live the way you do because of your faith in Jesus.

e. These jealous Jews in Thessalonica resorted to cutthroat tactics. Going into the marketplace where they assembled those who were considered down out, the loiterers, the purposefully unemployed, and incited them to more-or-less riot. All for what? To get rid of these new comers who were sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

i. This was a jealous response! And it continues.

ii. We don’t know a tremendous amount about this man Jason, but he was someone who was showing hospitality to Paul and his companions. He opened up his home to them, and because of that he bore the brunt of this mob’s anger and rage.

iii.v6 “And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city...”

f. All of this was being done because of their affiliation with Paul and Silas.

g. Do you recognize the irony in some of the words that are used to describe those who are sharing the gospel? It is meant to be slanderous, “men who have turned the world upside down!”

i. But it is also true! The proclaimers of the gospel were smashing through barriers that had previously kept people apart, barriers that caused people to belittle those who were not part of their culture.

ii. The barriers have been getting toppled one by one – Jesus is saying, “Declare me and do not be afraid!

1. Jews and Samaritans their barriers were undone through the power of the gospel.

2. Those who would have been unable to worship God in the same way because of their physical blemishes or disfigurements were accepted.

3. The long-standing barriers between Jews and Gentiles were being erased.

4. The common practice of looking down upon women was indeed being turned upside down.

iii. Now, we say these words as if they are a badge of honor: “men who have turned the world upside down!” I want to be such a Christian who is fully committed to the transformational work of the gospel, to be similarly labeled as one who is turning the world upside down as an ambassador of Christ’s.

iv.v7 “and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there...”

h. Now before the city authorities, they couldn't find Paul so they bring Jason and some of the other brothers. Wagging their finger in their faces – shouting Jason received these men who are turning the world upside down.

i. Once again, this is true, but it is being used out of context. Jesus is the preeminent king, the ruler of kings. But, he is not the king they want! If he is not coming to overthrow Rome, their thought was then he must not be much of a king! The Jews therefore pick an alliance with the rest of the city to use the Roman rule and reign to their advantage to inflict harm upon this missionary endeavor.

j.vv8-9 *“And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things...”*

k. The consensus is that what these Christians are declaring is most certainly unwelcome in Thessalonica. Jason is made to pay for his release, **think of it like bail money that he had to post to gain his freedom once again.**

l. This jealous response becomes a rallying call for these Jews in Thessalonica. So much so that even after Paul and his team depart and go to the next city down the way they go along to disrupt them there too.

m.v13 *“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea...”*

n. From the description of Paul's teaching to the Bereans we aren't told explicitly what he was preaching, but Luke describes it in this verse as the word of God – likening it to what was preached in Thessalonica.

Transition: The jealous response in Thessalonica was enough in this case to get the missionary team moving again. However, they don't leave to quit the work – but to see it continue! The next place they land they are received differently.

The Joyful Reception vv10-12

a.v10 *“The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went...”*

b. Talk about being undeterred. Paul and Silas know that what they possess **are the very words of life.** They don't hesitate. Leaving Thessalonica by night, really for the safety of all involved, they go to Berea and right to the Jewish synagogue.

c.v11 *“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness...”*

d. The Bereans are recipients of the same message as those who were preached to by Paul in Thessalonica. In the last portion of this verse, the phrase “these things” is written to send us as readers back to the Thessalonian synagogue account from verses 2 and 3.

e. Paul and Silas, who have had to leave Philippi in a state of agitation, who fled Thessalonica by night, and who now are in Berea continue boldly to Declare the Savior and to not be afraid.

f.v12 *“Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.”*

g. Gospel preaching proclaims the Messiah of Scripture and the message is only received by those whose hearts are opened by the Holy Spirit. Of course, we don't know who these individuals are do we? Jesus is saying, "Declare me and do not be afraid!"

h. The truth is we are to simply declare Jesus. That is our faithful duty as ambassadors for Christ. But as is so often the case, we don't, we are afraid! Church, we don't have to be afraid. Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ have eternal life! [The temporal discomfort of being run out of a city was taken in stride by Paul and Silas. They were running an endurance race, and their eyes were set upon Christ.](#)

i. [Heb 12:1-2](#) "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

j. You see, the joyful reception is our ultimate reception into God's kingdom, a reception that has been guaranteed for us by the founder and perfecter of our faith, by Jesus.

k. Indeed, what sweet rejoicing it is when those we share the Gospel with are added to Christ's glorious kingdom!

Transition: Even in a place like Berea, where we can only imagine a desire must have been burning in the missionaries to share more about Jesus, it wasn't to be a long-lived stay. Because God used the agitators from Thessalonica to come to Berea also to cause a great stir, prompting another hasty departure.

The Journey Resumes vv14-15

a. [vv14-15](#) "Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained..."

b. At this point in Paul's ministry it seems like he has definitely developed a spiritual target on his back. When the crowd gets stirred up in Berea, it is Paul who is immediately sent off.

c. We know Paul is bold, not fearful, he is a picture of courage. Yet, the good, in fact the immense good that could be done for the church by his moving on was considered by all who were around him and immediately he is sent on his way to the sea.

i. Do you ever consider what drove Paul on, day in and day out? [Have you ever thought if only I had a little more Paul in me, then maybe I would be a better witness for Christ?](#)

ii. If you study the man Paul enough, you will quickly come to realize that he was a man that never got over the grace that was shown him by Jesus. He knew he was a sinner, hopelessly lost, and yet Christ chose to save him.

iii. My desire, and I hope your desire is like mine, is to never forget the depth of love that has been shown to me by the grace of God. Saved from the torment of hell by the blood of my Savior. By grace I have been saved!

d. Paul is sent off, ready to continue going wherever the Holy Spirit leads him to declare Jesus and to do so unafraid.

e. Silas and Timothy are able to remain in Berea for a time. Probably because they did not have the same high level of visibility as Paul and yet priceless in their ability to encourage the new believers in Berea, and to likewise be encouraged.

f. Even for Silas and Timothy the journey resumes when their companion Paul summons them to come to Athens where he is undoubtedly busy declaring Jesus.

Transition: The missionaries had another door to step through and they had kingdom centered purposes in mind.

Conclusion

These men were truly extraordinary in the way God used them. But let me ask you, about your own exposure to the gospel message? Was it a celebrity pastor who shared Jesus with you? Was it by a night vision that you received a revelation about the Savior? Maybe it was just your own sheer determination to sort through the Scriptures and find Christ on your own? Of course, I am speaking in hyperbole because nearly all of us here who know Christ were lovingly shared the truth of the gospel by, well, someone like us. A father or a mother. Perhaps a faithful pastor or elder in the church, or a dear friend who loved you enough to share the truth with you. We started out this teaching with a time of considering fear. Now, I want you to think about the person who shared the gospel with you, do you think they were ever afraid to declare Jesus? Are you eternally grateful that they overcame any such fears? I am. I am eternally grateful for the Salvation that has been granted to me by the only way, by Jesus. Church, we have this gift to give. We have the gospel. I charge you to give it away freely this Christmas season. Declare Jesus and do not be afraid!

Prayer

Family



Table Talk

December 16, 2018

Sing!

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.

(Chorus)
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan's tyranny: From depths of hell Thy people save, And give them victory over the grave.

(Chorus)
O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer, Our spirits by Thine advent here: Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadows put to flight.



Advent Reading... Week 3

1. Luke 2:8-20
 2. Isaiah 40:9-11; Psalm 23:1-6; Psalm 100:1-5
 3. John 10:1-18, 22-30
 4. Luke 1:46-80
 5. Luke 2:21-35
- Scripture Memory**
Isaiah 9:6

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)