

Acts Chapter 17

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: 22 July 2018

Preacher: Robin Singleton

[0 : 0 0] and from verse 1 Acts chapter 17 and verse 1 again I think my numbers in my Bible match yours it's 1113 page number yeah I'm going to nod that's good page 1113 you may remember that we're dealing in this passage with part of what's called the second missionary journey Paul and Silas and Timothy and others are preaching the gospel visiting churches that they've been to in the past going to new places and seeing the Lord work incredible things and at the same time being persecuted so this is their time in Thessalonica Acts chapter 17 and verse 1 when they had passed through Anthipolis and Apollonia they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue as his custom was Paul went into the synagogue and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead this Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ he said some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women but the Jews were jealous so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace formed a mob and started a riot in the city they rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd but when they did not find them they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials shouting these men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here and Jason has welcomed them into his house they are all defying Caesar's decrees saying that there is another king one called Jesus when they heard this the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil then they put Jason and the others on bail and let them go before we come to consider that together we're going to re-sing again this song is going to be on the projector

Holy Spirit living breath of God so we come we're just going to pray and one of the things that's just come to my attention just recently and it's certainly true of me as I look back it's so easy when we come to the scriptures isn't it to perhaps think of it either with a bit of an intellectual mind or just coming to not quite have our fancies tickled but you understand what I mean the things that we want to hear etc but and often one of the big dangers that we face I won't ask you to put your hands up but I've certainly been there is when we listen to the scriptures and we apply it to everybody else but ourselves and there's a danger in that so we're going to ask that as we come that God would apply the scriptures to us individually and make us willing to actually do something about it because we don't want to just be hearers of God's word we want to be doers of it too let's pray

Father God we thank you again for your word Lord it's majestic Lord it stirs our hearts Lord sometimes it excites us sometimes it pierces us right to the very soul it cuts us to the heart Lord we thank you that Lord you're able to change us through your word by your spirit and we pray that we would be ready to hear what you have to say to allow you to apply your word to our hearts save us we pray from distractions or from applying it to other people but Lord help us to think about what you're saying to us we ask it in Jesus name Amen a few weeks ago we were I think it was on the internet really I saw this first but there was an audio clip going around you know these virus things it sort of goes viral they say don't they everywhere you look there's this thing going on and it was a sound clip that it was on the BBC website

I think that made a sound and different people seemed to hear different things so I've asked Martin with his wizardry if he wouldn't mind just playing this clip for you I don't know the debate was this on the internet is that everyone's hearing the same thing and a whole load of people were saying I hear it saying Yanny Yanny Yanny and the bizarre thing is that's what I normally hear but I heard it different that time and another load of people so a load of people are hearing this strange word Yanny and another load of people are hearing the word Laurel like Laurel and Hardy go home and look it up on the internet you'll hear it a bit clearer and make your own mind up what a strange thing I'm sure there's scientists can explain why we hear it differently we hear exactly the same to be

honest I was so sure when I first heard it that it was Yanny I thought the whole thing was a hoax I thought this is some kind of joke and then

I realised when we sat at home and played it that some of us could hear Yanny and some of us could hear Laurel and I thought this is bizarre we're both looking at the same evidence or listening to the same thing but coming up with completely different conclusions now the events that are described in this passage particularly in verse 6 are having a similar effect Paul and his gang arrive in Thessalonica some people are listening and are changed others of them hate what they hear and they want to punish him to the point at which actually if we'd have read the next verse in verse 10 it says as soon as it was night the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea it got so bad the persecution they had to run away by night now in verse 6 this is what it says in the NIV it says but when they did not find them they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials shouting these men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here in the ESV and many other translations

[7:20] I'll explain why in a moment it says this these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also their view as they heard about this message about the Lord Jesus as they heard Paul speaking their feeling was that these people have been all around the known world and they're turning the world upside down they're causing trouble they're causing upset everywhere they go they're spreading chaos it's unsettling the Jewish community it's unsettling the Roman world and so they used as I say in the ESV it specifically says they turned the world upside down the NIV translates it they were causing trouble now the the Greek word I don't very often go into Greek and I'm no expert at all but the Greek word that's being translated in one by causing trouble and by the other upside down literally means turning up to down so you can see why the ESV went for turning the world upside down and perhaps you can see the similarity in the word upset as turning the world upside down we're talking about something that unsettles society something that causes a commotion something that's causing trouble quite literally a revolution was happening so some look at the evidence and say this is causing trouble this is causing upset things are changing we don't like this and they do everything they can to stop it but of course as Christians when we read that Paul and Silas and the others have been to lots of other places and they've turned the world upside down we think great the world's been turned upside down the Lord is doing a work he's changing people's lives we don't dispute that the world's been turned upside down but we say yes what a great thing that

God is doing Paul was so convinced and his companions were so convinced that he was doing the right thing and proclaiming the message that he had been given that he was willing to face persecution and trouble everywhere he went so despite the fact that people thought this was bringing trouble and challenge and difficulty and commotion he thought yeah great we want to see God doing a work and changing people let's keep at it I'm doing what God has called me to do and all I want to do this evening is think about this notion of God turning the world upside down God causing upset in society God turning things around causing commotion causing a revolution and I want to start by saying that the world is upside down the world is upside down if you want any evidence of this you just need to listen to the news a few weeks ago

I was listening to the news and I heard voice after voice after voice telling me that abortion was an equalities issue and that wherever a woman lives she should have the right to kill her baby and even if for a moment we would forget the extreme cases like incest and rape and disability and just concentrate on the vast majority of abortions which are for convenience the world is upside down when people are having a party are celebrating the fact that we are able to kill a baby for our own convenience now if there's anyone here affected by that please hear my heart the Lord is a compassionate God he's loving and gracious and if we have done something wrong in this regard then Lord he's able to forgive there's no sin that's too big for him to forgive but the world surely is truly upside down when it's saying that abortion is a wonderful thing and they're celebrating that it's becoming available for more and more people and surely naturally speaking without the Lord at work our hearts are upside down for Lord we were designed to worship God and instead of having God on our throne we have turned upside down what should be happening and we've put ourselves on the throne we see it everywhere turn your telly on for a few minutes and you know that dreaded moment when you've just got into a program and you start to like it and then the adverts come up is it seven minutes or something it comes up it start you start and of course if you're like me you hit the mute because you think oh I can't stand these adverts why on earth do companies

spend millions and millions of pounds putting on things that we all try and block our ears to it's because it must have an impact on us and they're working on our natural desires to please ourselves to look better to have a nicer car to feel that we're in some way better than somebody else some way trying to make us attracted to their product stirring up the desires within us that we want other things the world by nature and us without God we worship created things and not the creator and the world doesn't just put up with evil it exalts and honors things that are evil in God's sight might be familiar to you but psalm chapter 12 and verse 8 says this the wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men we see it everywhere things that God says are vile being exalted and lifted up things that the Bible says are wrong are cherished by the world think about business as well and politics the people who shout the loudest the people who have the biggest egos those who seem to have the most self-confidence the one who enjoy fame and power they seem to make the most money and everybody looks at them and thinks they're successful look at I must admit I've not watched this and I don't intend to but I hear some of the stuff going on about Love Island I don't intend to watch it but it seems not to me to be sentenced around love but centered around getting celebrity status what did Jesus say the first shall be last and the last shall be first the world truly is upside down it's topsy-turvy if you remember those Mr. [15:06] Men books Mr. Topsy-turvy everything's upside down to how it should be we're at the center and not not God now I don't know how close any of these things have felt so far but this one's really close you know this is not just true of out there it's true it's not just true of the irreligious it's true of the religious in fact it was the strict Jews wasn't it the religious people who were most offended by the gospel they also were upside down we can be religious people that are living for ourselves and not for God that we're going through the motions of religion but the honest truth is we're doing it for ourselves we're doing it to please ourselves to make ourselves feel better we're encouraging a sense of self righteousness and self confidence we're feeding our pride by doing things that are good it's not about pleasing

God but about pleasing ourselves so without Christ the world is upside down and perhaps there's more of it in our hearts than we'd like to admit secondly then so the world is upside down secondly the good news of course is that Jesus turns people up the right way see I like to think about this passage in this way that the world is upside down it's up the wrong way and when the gospel is proclaimed and Christ becomes saviour people are turned up the right way and they find what it is to live in the way that God designed us to live the Jews thought that Paul and Silas were bringing trouble by turning the world upside down the truth however was completely the opposite the world was already upside down and needed to be set up the right way perhaps you've come to see that in your life perhaps at the moment you're going through that process of beginning to see that things aren't as they should be or perhaps you can look back if you're a believer and you can look back and say yeah that was what my life it wasn't just messed up my life wasn't just crazy my life I wasn't just a victim but it was completely upside down I was living for myself and not for God however sinful or however religious you might have been living really and truly you were living for yourself and there is only one way to solve it there is only one way for your upside down life to be put up the right way it's through the Lord Jesus Christ God cared so much about our sin that he gave us the most precious gift he gave us his son Jesus who'd lived a perfect life but laid down his life for us as a sacrifice in completely and utterly selfish selfless life the Jews told the authorities that Paul was speaking against Caesar verse 7 they're proclaiming another king one called Jesus and again the accusers were wrong but right a bit like they were about turning the world upside down they were wrong but right

Paul wasn't out to undermine Caesar that wasn't true Jesus posed no threat to Caesar you remember he said himself give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God but Paul was saying that things need to change and our hope for that is not in earthly kings not on physical things of this world but on the heavenly things and a heavenly king the Lord Jesus earthly kings have to do with earthly things they can deal with earthly problems governments and commerce and finance etc but Jesus is a king in a spiritual sense he has power to change from the inside he can deal with spiritual problems that are in our hearts only Jesus can forgive sin only Jesus can heal your wounds only Jesus can save your soul only Jesus can transform your life only Jesus can turn your life up the right way I don't know if this is striking home to anyone but it might be that you're living your life thinking that there's something just not quite right about life life I don't know what it is I can't put my finger on it but there's just something not quite right about life and I

want to suggest to you unless Jesus has turned your life up the right way around you'll never find that answer it's only in him that you'll find life makes sense truly makes sense and of course when we come to know him we find that this life is eternal this life is abundant life this is not just about following rules it's about knowing God as our saviour who forgives us and cleanses us who gives us the power to stop living for ourselves and to live for him to stop worshipping ourselves and the things that God has created but to start worshipping the one who made us

[20 : 48] Jesus turns people up the right way and finally I want to spend a bit of time thinking about this you have a part to play you know in verse six they were shouting these men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here or these men who are turning the world upside down have now come here and there's a question to ask hang on a minute I know it's their accusers saying this but they're saying it's these people that are turning the world upside down and of course we would be first to say it's God God is the one that's turning people's lives around that's true and that commotion that upset that trouble that's being caused in society it's being caused because God is at work in people's lives so that's true but he uses people like us he uses people like you and people like me so it is true to say that it was

Paul and Silas and Timothy who were turning the world upside down yes ultimately it's God's power but it was using Paul and Silas and Timothy to bring that change about I find this little chapter absolutely staggering it seems that Paul and his friends were in Thessalonica for just a few weeks it says that they were there for three Sabbath days now whether they were there some days beyond that or maybe even a few weeks and it's not recorded because they didn't go into the Sabbath I don't know it's not covered in that sentence but it seems that they weren't there very long and they had to go and we know later years later Paul is writing to a church in Thessalonica he was there for three weeks proclaiming the truth and a church is born a church was planted in three weeks and it survived when the leaders moved on and it was a church that was born in trouble and trial and persecution so what is it that they did how did it come to be that these people were being turned upside down what were

Paul and Silas and Timothy actually doing while they were there that seemed to have this massive impact through the work of God well if we knew that that would help us a lot wouldn't it if we want to have an impact in Whitby if we want to have an impact in Loftus what was it that Paul and Silas and Timothy were doing well let's look first here what were they doing the first three verses when they had passed through Anthropolis and Apollonia they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue and as his custom was Paul went into the synagogue and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead this Jesus I'm proclaiming to you is the Christ he said so the first thing they were doing was proclaiming Jesus they were speaking from the scriptures about the Lord Jesus turn with me please if you've got your

Bible open to Thessalonians it's just vanished in my Bible Thessalonians because we get some interesting insights from this later letter that Paul and Silas and Timothy wrote to the church at Thessalonica I want to look at chapter 1 4 to 10 first listen to how Paul and Silas and Timothy describe what happened when they were in Thessalonica for we know brothers loved by God that he had chosen you because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction you know how we lived among you for your sake you became imitators of us and of the

Lord in spite of severe suffering you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit and so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia the Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia your faith in God has become known everywhere therefore we do not need to say anything about it for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us they tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath again they heard the message and it came with power it came with deep conviction and how we need to pray if we are to see people one for Christ that that is what we experience that our words are not empty that our words even though they might be true wouldn't be devoid of power but God would minister and work and by his Holy

[26 : 50] Spirit do that for which he has sent his word to accomplish in people's lives and hearts how we need to pray for these folk next week who go out on the beach how we need to pray for ourselves and for one another as we go to work as we meet people during the week as we go to

school or college as we are rubbing shoulders with people we want to be able to speak about God and his word and we want to see people's lives transformed and we cannot do it on our own we need the work of God's Holy Spirit to bring power and deep conviction in the people that hear we need to be willing to speak the truth sometimes the truth is going to be offensive sometimes it's going to hurt but we need to be willing to speak the truth and ask the Lord to bring deep conviction and to work with power in someone's heart and life this isn't new to you

I know but be confident with this message that we have of the Lord Jesus believe that the gospel is the power unto salvation for all who will believe we live in a generation and perhaps a generation of the church that sometimes seems like it's lost its conviction about the gospel and its power and the truth is we feel it as well don't we we don't see people being saved left right and centre but how we need to cry out that God does that work that God does use his word that God does move by his spirit and draw people to himself and bring deep conviction that transforms their lives so be confident this week that the word of God is able to change other people's lives that God wants you to be involved in this ministry this is all they did when they went to

Thessalonica they didn't have a rave with 20 screens at the front and smoke and lights and everything they had the simple word of God to proclaim to the people that were there you might say things have moved on I can't keep their attention find a way to convey simply the message of the gospel we're not about deceiving people are we we don't want to trick people we don't want to cover up the message we just want to speak plainly what God says in his word that people are sinners that they follow themselves that they do their own thing we're selfish naturally and we need to repent and to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus it's the only way to be saved so that's the first thing that they shared the gospel of Jesus from the scriptures they explained they proved they proclaimed secondly this is a something that's really spoken to me and I hope it's a challenge and an encouragement to you one Thessalonians chapter 2 let me read the first 12 verses of 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 you know brothers that our visit to you was not a failure we had previously suffered and had been insulted in Philippi as you know but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition for the appeal we make does not spring spring spring from error or impure motives sorry that tickled me there nor are we trying to trick you on the contrary we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel we are not trying to please men but God who tests our hearts you know we never used flattery and nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed God is our witness we were not looking for praise from men not from you or anyone else as apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you but we were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us surely you remember brothers our toil and hardship we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel to you you are our witnesses and so is God of how holy righteous and blameless we were among you who believed for you know that we dealt with you each of you as a father deals with his own children encouraging comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory there is so much that we could speak about in that passage but I want to focus on verse eight we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well

God doesn't want us just to be people who only go around proclaiming the gospel he does want us to be that he wants us to be people who share the truth he also wants us to love people to such an extent that we are willing to share our lives with others and some of the examples that come out of the passage are things like gentleness love compassion by living a life that is an example for others to follow getting close enough to other people that they see the way that you live and they see that there's something different about your life they see the way you react in trials and they can see there's something different they see the way that you love them when they are in need and they can see that there's something different about your life so if you're a Christian this evening the encouragement is to do both of these things to be speaking the word of God and to be sharing your life with other people in such a way that they can see what God has done in your life now this might be completely stereotypical and I'm certainly not saying anything about this church but churches can be a bit unbalanced with this churches can be full on and full out about getting the gospel right all the

[33 : 40] I's dotted and all the T's crossed but pay very little attention to sharing life together to sharing life with the lost to caring and being gentle for people in the community other churches

spend their lives devoting themselves to the community and saying we've got to love one another we've got to be gentle we've got to be kind and they've lost the place of the gospel message I want to encourage you that we need to do both we need to hold firmly to those gospel distinctives the things that we believe the theology we need to hold on to it we need to proclaim the gospel be confident in it but we ask to open our hearts to share life with other people to open our homes to people who need to just have company to share a meal with someone who is eating on their own to reach out in love to the neighbour that you know there's something happened even someone that you might find it difficult to get on with reach out to them share your life with them show the love of Christ by the way you share your life with other people and don't let go of those gospel distinctives that someone needs to trust in the

Lord Jesus Christ so let me conclude with these two simple questions has your life been turned upside down or I prefer to say turned up the right way by the Lord Jesus Christ if that hasn't happened then you need to resolve that today don't put it off any longer says later on in this chapter Acts chapter 17 that God commands all men everywhere to repent there's something to do but if you have been turned up the right way if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus share the word and share your life this week share the word and share your life what an amazing thing that God has called people like us to have a part in turning the world upside down or up the right way let's pray our father

God we just thank you for your word we thank you again for the challenge of it we thank you for the these accounts of all that's gone on in the past and we believe you're able to do it again today we believe that you're a God who transforms people's lives Lord you've done it for us if we're followers of the Lord Jesus you've done it people in our family people here in Whitby people in Loftus that Lord are seeking answers and we pray that you would send us out to share your word with them and to share our lives with them Lord we know it's going to be costly sometimes it's going to be ugly sometimes it's going to be messy but we pray you'd help us to share our lives and to share your truth with the Amen Oh Lord

God what a blessing it is to think and to acknowledge the changes that you've made in our lives already and this glorious change that one day we will be changed from glory into glory and we will see the Lord Jesus and the scripture says that we will be like him what an amazing transformation from a sinner who deserved hell to a saint that's in heaven face to face with the Lord Jesus how we praise you and thank you for that's what you want to do in our lives and it's also what you want to do in the lives of those around us and we pray you would help us to share your word and to share our lives that many might come to know Christ in Jesus name we pray amen