

Acts 17 and 18

Acts 17:1-9

Everywhere Paul, Peter and the other disciples of “the Living Christ Jesus” went, there would be trouble in camp and disturbance among the people.

What does this mean?

- (1) *The message of Jesus convicts*
- (2) *The gospel is “good news” to them that open their hearts...and “bad news” for the enemies of the gospel*
- (3) *When Jesus is preached, hearts must respond...either positively or negatively*
- (4) *When disciples share the gospel, Satan responds with his character traits ...he wants to “kill, steal, and destroy.”*

But.....there was a city where the Jews were willing to listen (Acts 17:10-15)

In Beroea (60 miles west of Thessalonica), the Jews and Gentiles listened to Paul and Silas tell them the good news....these “men of finer character” than those in Thessalonica, searched the scriptures. The main thing that we see here is that “when people search the scriptures and are willing to listen to their hearts, not their heads, they will come to the right and healthy conclusion.

Acts 17:16-21—

In Athens, Paul preached the message of Jesus...

Athens, a city full of different gods. It was said that in Athens, it was “easier to meet a god than to meet a man.”

Different philosophies in Athens—

- *Epicureans—they believed that:*
 - ⇒ *Everything happened by chance*
 - ⇒ *Death was the end of it all*
 - ⇒ *The gods were remote from the world and did not care*
 - ⇒ *Pleasure was the chief end of man.*
- *Stoics—they believed that:*
 - ⇒ *Everything was God...it is made up of spirit. That spirit sparked man to do things*
 - ⇒ *Everything that happened was the will of God and must be accepted without resentment*
 - ⇒ *Every so often the world disintegrated in a mass of mess...a mass of matter and starts all over again*

Arrogance and Aristocracy are Twins...One a Character Trait...the Other a Class Trait.

Arrogance = a quality of being convinced of one's own importance; overbearingly proud; haughty.

Aristocracy = a hereditary privileged ruling class or nobility; a group of class considered to be superior.

- ⇒ “*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Proverbs 16:18).
- ⇒ “*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom*” (Proverbs 11:2)
- ⇒ “*For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world*” (1 John 2:16)

Have you ever seen an arrogant and prideful person finish his/her life satisfied?

What one thing keeps a person from fulfilling God's purpose in life?

Note: Harvard College was established way back in 1636 with the charge that every student should "well consider that the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life."

- ⇒ ***Arrogance and Aristocracy has stepped in to the picture. Now man thinks he is smarter than God.***

These philosophers took Paul and Silas to Areopagus (Greek for Mars Hill) to place Paul's beliefs before the courts. They were about 30 philosophers and aristocrats on this court.....They wanted to bring the “nuts to trial.” Paul looked at this as another opportunity to witness and profess the name of Christ to the world.

Acts 17:22-31

Many altars to unknown gods in Athens.

The series of steps in Paul's sermon to the court (Athens' philosophers) were:

- *God is not made but is the maker.*
- *God has guided history*
- *God has made man in such a way that instinctively he longs for God and gropes after him in darkness.*
- *The days of groping and ignorance is past....there are no excuses for not believing in the one and only God*
- *The day of judgment is coming*
- *The proof of the pre-eminence of Christ is the resurrection. A “known God...and a known savior in whom we have to deal.*

Acts 17:32-34

The Reactions of the Athenians

- *Some mocked*
- *Some put off their decision*

- *Some believed...two converts named, Dionysius and Damaris....but, there were others.*

Acts 18---

Paul continues to Corinth (90 miles west of Athens)

Corinth was a wicked city....city of pleasure. A large metropolis that had more wickedness than Rome... "more drunks than all the other cities combined" one historian wrote. In fact if you were introduced as a Corinthian, it was a conclusion that you were prone to drink more than your share.

Paul spent much of his time there preaching God's word...

What does it tell us?

- *Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...and wanted the wicked to turn from their ways.*
- *Paul felt a tug to go to the masses where the masses were blind to God's love and willingness to forgive. Paul wanted them to "understand God's grace."*
- *You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.*
- *Resistance to the gospel does not change the truth....God still forgives sinners...but, sinners have to be willing to choose God's way...the only way.*

When Paul saw that men and women did not want to hear the truth and blasphemed the only hope that might save them...he would release them from his conscience...and go on to where the spirit was leading him.