

c. Romans 1:16

iii. They do not know or properly worship the true God.

iv. The resurrection proves God judged Christ as righteous. God has therefore given all judgment to Him.

E. The Effect (32-34)

*In all three settings, the Word of God has confronted all and converted some. Paul's confidence for confronting and converting religious man, whether in Judaism or pagan idolatry, is securely placed in the effectual power of God's Word.*

#### LIVE THE STORY

*We must not only love the Gospel Story, we must begin to live the Gospel Story, indeed, to have the Central Character live in us.*

- Can you find indications in the text that Paul relied on the authority of God's word in each of the 3 cities in Acts 17?
- How does this chapter confirm the truth that Paul declares in Romans 1:16? What does that speak to us in our desire to see the lost saved?
- What is it about the nature of the Gospel that makes the unbelievers in Berea the ideal soil for the Gospel to bear fruit?
- Why do you think Paul needed to start by defining God as Creator in His presentation of the Gospel to the Athenians?
- How does Paul tell the Athenians that they do not know or properly worship the true God?
- In Acts 17:4-5, some from the Jews were saved, and the rest of them were jealous. What does this jealousy lead to?
- In Acts 16–17, who are those who have been saved? Who has not? What confidence are we to gain through these accounts?
- Explain the statement, "In Acts 17, the Gospel *confronts all and converts some*"? What does this mean for us today?

### Three Settings – One Message

Jerry Cisar — November 9, 2014

Text: Acts 17

*Paul's confidence for confronting and converting religious man is securely placed in the effectual power of God's Word.*

#### I. Thessalonica – the stubbornly religious (Acts 17:1-9)

A. Paul reasoned from the Scriptures (2-3).

i. Explaining: To open up...

a) Luke 24:32 Opened the scriptures

b) Luke 24:45 Opened their minds

ii. Proving: Laying out before them in logical fashion.

iii. *from the Scriptures*: God's Word has authority over this audience!

B. Paul's reasoning from the Scriptures had an effect (4).

i. **Some** of the Jews were persuaded and joined...

ii. *a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.*

iii. But the [rest of the] Jews were jealous (5)

iv. They attacked the house of Jason (5b-9)

### C. The Effect

## II. Berea – *the pleasantly religious* (Acts 17:10-14)

A. Berea, the ideal setting for Gospel proclamation

### B. The Effect

## III. Athens – *the ignorantly religious* (Acts 17:15-33)

A. Paul was being *provoked* in his spirit by the idolatry.

B. Some Epicureans and Stoics debate with Paul.

Both of these groups were materialists – meaning they believed that matter is all that exists. That doesn't mean they didn't believe in gods or a soul, however. They just believed that the soul was made of really fine particles, and the gods, even finer.

i. **Epicureans:** Epicurus taught that matter was eternal, uncreated and without a divine purpose. The gods had immortal bodies, dwelt apart from the world in supreme happiness and did not interfere in human affairs. Their core values were: tranquility, friendship, and disengagement from civic life (like their gods, uninvolved and tranquil).

ii. **Stoicism:** Stoics believed in one divine controlling principle that directed all of nature (immanent). Like some eastern religions, they were pantheists. God permeates all of nature, from the cosmos as a whole down to the lowliest physical object. Since this 'god' is present in the whole universe and gives everything in it its character, god is essentially identical with the universe. Their belief led them to be highly involved in civic life (like their god).

iii. Paul is proclaiming the God revealed in Scripture, Who is not a part of this world (transcendent), yet intricately involved in every human endeavor (immanent). Paul's belief leads one to prepare for the judgment to come.

iv. Their charges against Paul are significant.

C. They “took” Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus.

i. This was not a friendly stroll down to the forum.

ii. The Areopagus: a council responsible for maintaining order in the city, especially related to religious issues.

iii. The speech that follows is Paul's defense.

D. Paul *connects with them* and *condemns their idolatry*.

i. Paul is not proclaiming something foreign.

ii. Paul begins by defining God.

a) Paul proclaims the Biblical God.

b) Lev. 26:1; Deut. 32:8; 28:29; 29:16-17 Isaiah 40:18-20; 42:5; 45:5-6, 15-22; 46:6; 55:6-8; Daniel 5:23