Reconsideration

(Acts Session 28—November 8, 2026)

Acts 17:1-3

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.
2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,
3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying,* "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

So here we have an example of Paul's approach to evangelizing the Jews. Later on in the chapter we will see him preaching to a bunch of Gentiles, and his approach communicating with them will differ quite substantially.

The core message in both cases was the same. In vs. 3 Luke gives Paul's method of conveying the gospel to a Jewish audience.

He "…reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying,* "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

His method of preaching to a crowd of Gentiles was very different, although the central message remained the same. Here's a quote from a Gentile later on in the chapter who had heard Paul preach.

Acts 17:18b

…Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," ***because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.***

Let me just point out a couple of things very quickly in this regard. We need to adapt our means of communication to fit the culture and the time period we are currently in. As the saying goes, "***There's more than one way to skin a cat***." (***Origins?)***

If I can borrow an analogy from last week's sermon, it's all about making the catch. We need to make sure that our throw is catchable by the intended receiver. Does that make sense?

Alright then, back to Paul's message in the Synagogue. It was a mixed group—I need to point that out. It wasn't just Jews turning out for the sermons. It was the Jews who belonged to the synagogue, and a group of Gentiles who also attended, with the Gentile numbers increasing dramatically during that 3-week period.

Acts 17:4

And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

"***Devout Greeks***". These were Gentile men who believed in the Scriptures. In this particular situation, many of these devout Greeks may have become convinced of the truth of the OT Scriptures during the course of this three-week period at the synagogue.

I say that because of the size of their particular crowd— a great multitude of the devout Greeks.

That definitely speaks of more than just the few God-fearing Gentiles in a typical synagogue.

The effect of Paul's preaching was much more pronounced in the lives of these Gentiles, when compared to the Jews.

Luke tells us that when it came to the Jews. ***some*** of them were persuaded and believed. But as we just noted, "***a great multitude***" of the Gentiles joined Paul and Silas.

But then the synagogue members who were not persuaded began to stir up trouble. The motivation was envy.

Now here's the thing about envy: it is such a vile characteristic that it quickly erodes a person's character, allowing for possibilities that an individual would never have considered before.

These upstanding members of the synagogue decided to procure the services of some local thugs to disrupt Paul's ministry efforts.

Acts 17:5
But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

They were not persuaded. Which means they would not reconsider their position, even though Paul proved his point. Rather than reconsider their position, they conspired to have Paul and Silas punished by the local authorities. But they can't find them, so they target some friends of theirs instead.

Acts 17:6-7
6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.
7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus."

Luke doesn't tell us much about Jason, other than he seems to be Paul's host. But there is a striking label placed on Paul and his associates, given by the complainants here:

"***These who have turned the world upside down***..."

Well, they were doing their best to accomplish that. The world was topsy-turvy anyway, and the only remedy for that was the gospel of Christ.

And so it is I our day as well. You can't fix the world without fixing people, and the message of Jesus is just what is needed to fix anybody who will listen.

Acts 17:8-9
8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.
9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

So they took security from Jason. As in terms of a bond, I suppose. Paul and Silas slipped out of town at the insistence of their friends, and they end up in a town called Berea.

But before get into that part of their journey, let's pause and consider what they just left behind in Thessalonica. There were a lot of converts left in the wake of his visit.

And the question was—with Paul and Silas gone, would these folks fall away in their absence?

That was a concern that troubled Paul himself. He speaks of this in the first letter to the Thessalonians.

That letter is believed to be the earliest of Paul's New Testament writings. It was written around a year or so after Paul left them for Berea.
He conveys his emotional state regarding them.

1 Thessalonians 3:5
For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

The Thessalonian believers were dealing with tremendous resistance right from the start. Paul told them that persecution would be likely.

I Thessalonians 3:4
For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

So Paul sends Timothy back, because he has to know how these new Christians were doing. Timothy reports back with good news:

I Thessalonians 1:6-8
6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,
7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.
8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

In spite of all the pressure from the anti-Jesus crowd, that church managed to withstand the storm and was actually thriving.
Needless to say, Paul heaved a huge sigh of relief.

1 Thessalonians 3:8
For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

Alright, back to Acts 17. Paul and Silas have just been hustled out of Thessalonica, and they end up in a town called Berea. Their reception there is very different from what they had just experienced.

Acts 17:10-11
10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.
11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

These were "***fair-minded***" people. Open to the truth. Open to reconsideration. Willing to let the Bible speak for itself.

That's not a bad quality to emulate, is it? I mean, we've all got a few things left to learn, right? Of course.

We don't know everything yet. You're getting closer every day, but you're not there just yet.

Here's the thing—when a person thinks they've got nothing left to learn about their religion, it is much more likely that they will read the Bible without understanding it properly.

Why is that? Because the Bible can't speak to us regarding a change we need to make in our thinking, if we always view it through a rigid theological filter.

Sometimes we've got to relax our mental muscles so we don't sprint ahead of God. That's the only way we will ever reconsider something that needs reconsidering. Let me assure you—God is trying to change your thinking on a regular basis.

Let me give you an illustration that comes from my own life. Over the years, I have developed the habit of finishing my wife's sentences for her.

And I get it—you would probably expect her to be grateful for that. Because look at how I'm making the effort to save her time and trouble by finding just the right words to finish her sentences. Am I right?

But to my surprise, she doesn't seem to appreciate it at all. Now admittedly, her reaction may have something to do with the fact that I'm wrong most of the time.

She has often had to stop me and tell me, "***That's not what I was going to say. Let me finish saying what I'm thinking***."

And I have tried to do that. I've really tried. But the temptation is strong...so pray for me.

But enough picking on me. Let's talk about you for a moment. I would bet that you have on occasion done pretty much the same thing with God. I know I have.

We'll start reading a verse or a passage, and halfway through we think, "***Oh yeah, I know what that's saying***."

And at that point, we end up mentally superimposing a familiar, pre-packaged interpretation over what the Bible is saying. When that is not what it's saying at all.

And I can just imagine God is saying, "***That's not what I meant. Let Me finish talking***."

You know what? It takes discipline to guard against finishing God's sentences for Him. But we have to do that, or we will never reconsider what needs reconsidering.

I remember one time when the disciples did this. It had to do with something Jesus said to the Apostle Peter about the Apostle John.

Jesus was having a conversation with Peter, and predicted a difficult death for him. And Peter reacted to that by dragging John into the scenario.

John 21:20-22
20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"
21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what *about* this man?"
22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me."

So Peter brings the subject of John's future into the conversation. "***Well, what about him***?" Pretty much implying that if John wasn't going to face a similar fate, then it wouldn't be fair.

And in response to Peter's accusation of potential favoritism, Jesus responds with these words:

John 21:22b **MSG**
"If I want him to live until I come again, what's that to you? You—follow me."

Taken in context, that statement was rhetorical in nature. Jesus framed a hypothetical situation just to get a point across.

In effect, Jesus was saying this: ***John's future is my business Peter, not yours. Your business is to follow me. Mind your own business, and leave John to me***.

But when the other disciples got wind of what Jesus said, they took His words well beyond their intended meaning.

John 21:23
Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remains till I come, what *is that* to you?"

You see, it's not just us. The Apostles ended up finishing the Lord's sentence for him. Or they reconstructed it, because they weren't listening closely enough to get His intended meaning.

It's just something we all have to be aware of. That's why when we read the Bible, we must be careful to pay close attention to the details.

Just do your best to let the text speak for itself before settling on an interpretation just because it's familiar. Or comfortable.

Letting the Bible speak for itself is the only way you can reconsider when it's called for. And you will grow spiritually as a result.

Essentially, that's what the Bereans were doing here, only it was working in reverse order.

Paul was preaching from the Old Testament Scriptures, sharing the good news about Jesus through his interpretation of those Scriptures.

They subsequently evaluated his preaching in a fair-minded way. How? By comparing Paul's assertions about Christ with the Scriptures. They let the Bible speak for itself, and saw that Paul's preaching was right on.

That fair-minded approach led them to reconsider their previously held views, whatever they might have been.

Statistically speaking, the outcome here was the reverse of what took place in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:12
Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

In Thessalonica, it says that some of the Jews were converted. But here in Berea, it says that many of them were converted.

Well, what made the difference? Luke puts it pretty plainly: fair mindedness.

In both Thessalonica and Berea, I'm struck by the fact that Luke mentions a specific class of convert twice: the prominent women in Berea, and similarly, the leading women in Thessalonica.

Does this indicate something? It must, because these observations about women are not incidental, but seem to be integral to the narrative.

In fact, in verse 12, Luke gives the prominent women top billing over the men. Unheard of in that day and time.

…prominent women as well as men. See? The women are noted first.

Remember; we're talking 2,000 years ago. A time when the world was predominantly patriarchal in nature.

As you know—in terms of the Old Testament's worship structure—it was mostly an all-male affair. There were a few isolated occasions where women functioned in a prophetic role, but by and large they were situated in the background.

But in the New Testament? The role of women increased significantly. While the primary leadership of pastors and elders in the church remained male, the spiritual ministry of women took on greatly enlarged dimensions.

Consider this prophecy from the Old Testament; the one that Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost. It spoke of something new that God was doing.

Acts 2:17a
And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on ***all flesh***; Your sons ***and your daughters*** shall prophesy…

Is it accidental that the very first declaration regarding the nature of the church includes a statement regarding the feminine expression of the gift of prophecy? No, not at all.

Now very quickly, let me address you theological buffs for a moment. Whether you're a cessationist or a continuationist regarding the gifts of the Spirit is irrelevant. This prophecy in Acts 2 set the tone for the church as it will develop in the book of Acts.

Even if a person believes that prophecy was only for the days of the Apostles, they must admit that women were included in its expression. Not just the men, as was predominantly the case in the Old Testament. But also the women. Prophesying in the church.

Along these same lines, let's take a look at a passage we'll visit when we get to chapter 21.

Acts 21:8-9
8 On the next *day* we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him.
9 Now this man had ***four virgin daughters who prophesied***.

Women were being elevated far beyond what the Jewish community was used to. The church was needing to exercise some serious reconsideration.

And then perhaps most surprising of all, there is an incident where a prominent evangelist of the day—Apollos—is ministering in Ephesus.

Apollos is described with the following adjectives: he is…

- Eloquent
- Mighty in the Scriptures
- Instructed in the way of the Lord
- Fervent in spirit

This man Apollos was a big deal in the early church. Over in 1 Corinthians, Paul lists several prominent preachers of the day. In this list is Paul himself, Simon Peter, and Apollos. Apollos. Not John, or Andrew, or James. Not Barnabas or Silas. Apollos. He's a significant leader in the early days of the faith.

But this same man ends up on the receiving end of ministry that came from a woman and her husband, who were working in tandem.

Acts 18:24-26
24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.
25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.
26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. ***When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.***

So yes, the fact that Luke points out these prominent women as a group of converts in Acts 17 is not incidental. It was consistent with this new place of women that was being unveiled.

The women who were part of the church that Jesus was building were undeniably part and parcel of the witnessing and teaching and administrative ministries of the church.

And yes, let me reiterate, so as not to be misunderstood on an important point:

The primary authoritative leadership of the church was male, and would remain so.

But to overlook the obvious role afforded to women in the days of the Apostles—a role that includes the exercise of substantive spiritual ministry to the church body as a whole—to overlook that role in our day and time is a grave mistake.

Now getting back to our narrative—sometimes it's like they say—***all good things must come to an end***. And so it is of the Berean episode in Acts chapter 17.

The trouble makers from Thessalonica show up once more, and Paul has to leave town in a hurry once again.

Acts 17:13-15
13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that
the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.
14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

I tell you—at this point, Paul was getting bounced around like a ping-pong ball. But that being said; we should never discount the work of divine providence in these matters.

The thing we need to do is stay flexible. And flexibility is just one more aspect of reconsideration.

You see, when you react to a set of unfavorable circumstances that are forced upon you, those very circumstances may be the way God facilitates His will for the next chapter of your life.

Changes that are imposed against our wishes may need to be reconsidered in that light. God is sovereign, and often uses circumstances we would not choose to accomplish amazing things for us.

Final thought: One of the greatest obstacles to discovering truth isn't a lack of information. It's an unwillingness to reconsider what we already think we know.

Reconsideration is a wonderful thing when it flows from what we discover in the Scriptures. And that willingness to reconsider resulted in a new life in Christ for a great many folks in Acts 17.