

NEW DAY... NEW WAY

Responses to the Word

TEXT: Acts 17

INTRODUCTION: The Book of Acts is of special significance to SABC because we are an Acts 1:8 Church.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Book of Acts not only contains Jesus' command for us to be His witnesses here, there, and everywhere, it tells the story of the early believers taking the gospel to their Jerusalems, their Judneas, their Samarias, and to the End of the Earth.

At the forefront of this first century mission activity was the Apostle Paul, although understand that Paul was hardly alone in taking the gospel to people groups around the world. The truth is that every one of the original twelve, except Judas, was a part of taking the gospel to lost people far, far away from their homeland. We are not as familiar with their stories, and we do not know as much detail because most of their story is not told in the Scriptures but in bits and pieces of history.

And it was not just the twelve apostles and Paul. It was a multitude of other believers who went both with them and without them, being witnesses of Christ in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the End of the Earth.

Our text today is Acts 17 where we have a glimpse into a portion of one of Paul's missionary journeys, specifically the second one. And this glimpse is helpful to us who are witnesses of the Lord Jesus whether it is at our workplace, in school, in our neighborhoods, at the Center of Hope, or in Mumbai, India, because here we see the kind of responses to Paul's word of witness he received.

After departing Philippi, Paul traveled to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. The way the people responded to the Word of God he preached, mirrors the way people respond to God's Word today. As we examine these, you can not only be helped to understand how people may respond to your sharing of the gospel, but also be able to pick out the way you respond when some portion of the Word of God is presented to you.

I. SOME OPPOSE THE WORD

Acts 17:1-9 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." 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.

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. 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." 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.

These are like the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica.

(They did not believe Paul's teaching (1 & 2 Thess. tells some of the content of Paul's teaching while he was with them.)

- **The gospel**
- **The rapture of the church on the Day of Christ**
- **The coming man of sin**
- **The Day of the Lord, filled with wrath and judgment**
- **They moved beyond unbelief and became opponents of the Word of God.**

They stirred up the lost rabble of the marketplace to form a mob.

They attacked the house of Jason, Paul's kinsman according to Rom. 16:21, where Paul had been lodging.

There are opponents of the Word today.

These go beyond personal unbelief to trying to prevent others from believing.

- **These are often religious people.**

They start with not believing certain parts of the Bible.

- **Miraculous 6 day creation**
- **O.T. miracles like the flood and the ark, the parting of the Red Sea, Jonah and the great fish, and men surviving the fire of Babylon's furnace**
- **The named authors of Scripture**
- **The prophecies**

But they end up rejecting it all.

- **The virgin birth**

- **The Miracles of Christ**
- **The atonement of His death**
- **A literal resurrection**

They seldom want to enter a discussion of the Word because the foolishness of their arguments will be revealed. Therefore they stir up an unknowing mob to help them do their bidding and turn people from the Word of God. This is portrayed very realistically and helpfully in the recent movie **God's Not Dead** which ought to be required viewing for every student from grade 5 to Ph.D.

II. SOME RECEIVE THE WORD

Acts 17:10-15 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. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. 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.

These are like the men and women of Berea.

They were fair minded, noble.

They received the word preached by Paul.

They tested Paul's spoken word with the Scripture.

This is the source of the title "**Berean Christian**" - one who checks things out by searching the Scripture.

There is great joy in receiving the Word of God as the Bereans did.

A Berean receives a word offered in the name of Christ

- **gladly**
- **not critically**
- **not looking to find fault**
- **wanting to grow in God's truth**
- **but also not naively**

**A Berean tests the spoken word of man
by the written Word of God
to see if the spoken word is true.**

A Berean comes away from each of these encounters knowing the truth of God on the matter with confidence and certainty.

III. SOME JUST COLLECT THE WORD

Acts 17:16-34 ¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. ¹⁷ Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?"

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

¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? ²⁰ For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." ²¹ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

²² Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: ²⁴ "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' ²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

³² And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*." ³³ So Paul departed from among them.

³⁴ However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

These are like the philosophers at Athens

There were two main philosophies at Athens:

- **The Stoics were nature worshippers.** (These have moved to America!)
- **The Epicureans rejected logic and depended on experience. They lived for pleasure.**

Paul told them about the God they did not know.

- **He is the Creator (24-25)**
- **He is the Sovereign (26-29)**
- **He is the Savior (30)**
- **He is the Judge (31)**

They did not oppose;

they did not receive.

They just treated it as one of many religions, fine for you, not for me.

Our modern world is full of collectors.

They say, "Jesus is fine for you, but I have another way."

Jesus said, "I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through Me!"

CONCLUSION: What do you do when the Word of God comes to you in Lifechange Group , in worship, in reading, on the radio? Do you oppose it, receive it, or collect it?