

Date : 9th August 2026
Theme : The work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification and service.
Topic : Reasoning, explaining, proving and proclaiming the gospel.
Passage : Acts 17
Key Verse : *...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... Acts 17:2-3*

Introduction:

There are windows opened for sharing the gospel; when the windows shut, the season is over.

In Acts 16, prayer is highlighted several times to show reliance on divine guidance so as to be in strategic places to share the gospel in unexpected, though difficult, circumstances.

In Acts 17, Paul leveraged on shared foundation of Jewish scriptures as the common baseline but shifted strategy, when he moved from the synagogue to the philosophers, at Areopagus, Athens.

1. Core values undergirding early Christian witness Acts 16 (first missionary journey).

- * Demonstration of the truth of the gospel, conviction of the resurrected Christ and His power.
- * Value of meeting people in their daily contexts, reveals a burden for people without this truth.
- * Prayer, the disciples' lifestyle, as a catalyst for breakthrough, regardless of their environment.

a) Open heart (Lydia) Acts 16:13

- Value (culture) of prayer
In a new place, Paul and his team, looked for a place of prayer. *Acts 16:13a*
- Value of meeting people in the community
While casual public conversation between Jewish men and unfamiliar women was uncommon, Paul and his male companions, rather than adhere to rigid social separation, *...began to speak with the women who had gathered there*. This unexpected meeting led to a conversation about Christ; then Lydia and her household were baptised.

b) Enslaved heart (the slave girl) Acts 16:16-18

- Value (culture) of prayer
Here, Paul and his team were on their way to a place of prayer. *Acts 16:13a*
- Demonstration of the truth of Jesus' power
Rather than be silent about endorsement from a demon-possessed slave girl, Paul, in his anguish for human lostness and zeal for God's glory, commanded the demonic spirit to leave her. By this, he demonstrated that Jesus' authority was superior to the spirit of divination.

c) Awakened heart (Philippian Jailer) *Acts 16:22-34*

- Value (culture) of prayer
This 3rd repetition of prayer in Acts 16, shifted prayer from a routine to Paul and Silas actively praying in the midnight prison cell. Each phase of the mission advancing through spiritual warfare, culminating in an earthquake and the Jailer/household's conversion.
- Demonstration of the truth of the gospel for matters of life and death
Here the gospel moved the Jailer from suicidal despair to profound joy. He witnessed grace in seeing his prisoners still present after the earthquake, their peace and love, was congruent with their gospel of life and forgiveness found in Jesus Christ. The Jailer was transformed, from fear to joy ...*because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family...* as they washed the prisoners' wounds, got baptised and hosted a meal for them.

2. Context and Cultural relevance of the Gospel Acts 17

In *Acts 17:2-3*, with Jewish audiences, Paul's **case making** in the synagogue was 4-fold:

- * **reasoned from the Scriptures** (*Gk dialegomai* = dialogue). A 2-way dialogue, discussing and exchanging ideas rather than just giving a one-way speech. This was not a one-time matter but a series extending over 3 Sabbath days.
- * **explaining** (= opening up), unpacking Hebrew scriptures; unlocking hidden and misunderstood meanings in the text; pulling back layers of OT prophecies to show the plain truth.
- * **proving** (=set side by side), evidences to show the congruence between OT prophecies and the historical facts of Christ's life.
- * **proclaiming** (=declaring) the facts to persuade the mind ...*this Jesus...is the Christ*. Using OT prophecies as evidence, he built a logical case to persuade the Jews to believe by choice.

- a) **In Thessalonica:** (making the case with Jews and Greeks with scriptural background)
Jesus the Christ - His suffering, death and resurrection fulfilled the OT requirements.
...*reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving niv (=demonstrating nkjv setting the facts in perspective) that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ. Acts 17:2-3)*

Result: Large number of God-fearing Greeks and prominent woman believed *Acts 17:4*

- b) **In Berea:** In the synagogue Paul leveraged on study of scripture.

- **Who?** The Bereans were **noble** = dignified conduct, arising from reception and respect for God's Word. Their nobility referred to their conduct – not their birth or social standing.
Both Thessalonica and Berean Jews had been educated in the same prejudices of being God's favoured people and possessor of divine truth.
Both expected a conquering Messiah, not a suffering servant who died on a cross.

Yet, both reacted differently to the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ. The unbelieving Thessalonica Jews, incited riots to protect their exclusive status. The Berean Jews exhibited a noble-minded disposition, testing Paul's claims daily against the Hebrew scripture rather than defensive pride.

- **Why** does God gauge them noble? *Acts 17:11*
 - receiving the preaching readily (be humble to listen)
 - searching the scriptures daily (be hungry to learn)
 - discerning *whether those things were so* (be honest to re-learn)
what were those things?
 - fall of man, sin, condemnation, man's helplessness
 - mission of Christ: His divinity, humanity, sacrifice, death, resurrection, ascension His coming again
 - joys of heaven, terror of hell
 - repentance, faith, love, Holy Spirit
- **Result?**
Many Jews, a number of prominent Greek women and men believed *Acts 17:12*

3. How to preach to those without biblical background?

- **Situation** at Athens
From synagogues to the marketplace and Mars Hill (Areopagus) with people who were there.
Paul was distressed that the widespread idolatry robbed God of His glory.
- **Mission**
To redirect the Athenians' worship from idols to the living God, warning that God had appointed a day of judgement. The times of ignorance were over. From now on Jesus Christ is the necessary object of all saving faith. *Acts 17:30,31*
- **Execution**
Paul **reasoned** = **dialogue** in the synagogues with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as daily, in the marketplace, with Epicurean (pursuit of pleasure) and Stoic (believe in fate) philosophers.
He **preached** the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

The cultural interest in new religious ideas gave Paul the opportunity to be invited to preach at the Areopagus (governing council in Athens).
- **Paul's Message**
 - His gracious introduction: Athenians were religious, but they were worshipping gods whom they did not know. *Acts 17:22-2*
 - His leveraging on local context:
He pointed to an altar addressed *To an unknown God* and quoted local poets to show that their own culture acknowledged elements of truth *Acts 17:23*

- His presentation
 - ✓ Who is this God? *Acts 17:24*
 - * **Sovereign:** the Creator; who made the world and all things. He imparts life to all mankind and all living things *Acts 17:25*
 - * **Knowledge:** He knows how life is given.
 - * **Independent:** He does not live in man-made shrines.
 - * **Eternal:** He is there before creation.
 - * **Supreme:** Authority. He created one mankind from one person, determined where we lived and our times.
 - * **His purpose?** We may seek Him
- **Paul's reasoning**

Since God made us, we are His offspring.
God's nature cannot be like lifeless objects made of gold or stone — man-made objects.
- Paul led them to the point of decision:
 - God forgave your past ignorance.
 - but now you must repent.
 - warning of the day of judgement.
 - evidence of this judgement is by the resurrection of Jesus.

Their response: some believed.

Others said: we will hear you again. (But there may not be another time.)

Application

- 1) How does Paul show us how to engage in dialogue with people of different backgrounds. How would you apply this with our children who are familiar with bible stories but lack application.
- 2) What difference does it make to be noble-minded or not in searching for the truth?