**Acts:** To Go Where Complacency is King

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| 02.21-22.15 | MHC | Acts 17:1-15 | Conviction beats complacency every time | 30 Min |

Introduction:

Attn: **The world was talking about 21 guys killed by Isis for their faith.** What it would be like to be one? **Fear** of lose, **comfort** in brother hood & promise, **excitement**

Theme: A conviction is a belief that you will not change, even in the face of trial or death.

Relv: **knowing your conviction is vital as a Christian**. Perhaps you’ve heard, “Those who stand for nothing fall for anything.” Your convic. will be tested; how will you react?

Struct: Follow P, S and T fulfill the Macidonian call, face opposition, & test convictions.

**Acts 17:1-15 page 926. A bit of context as we begin:**

* He preached to The Thessalonians: **Some scholars believe the Thessalonians were lazy and easily persuaded people.** Passages like 2 Thess. 3:10-12 where Paul wrote, “some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies”
* **The Gospel calls people away from their crutches** (I am a crutch kicker), their temporary comforts, complacent attitudes, and compliant morals.
* P, T and S convicted/called to Macedonia. The ppl were not ready for what coming

**vv. 1-3: Conviction is the human response to a sovereign call.**

* V1. NASB says that “**they took the road through**” – This a was a great Roman road that went southwest through Macedonia and when on to Italy. **This was called the Via Egnatia**. Began at Neapolis and when through Philippi, Amphipolis (33 m), Apollonia (27 m) and Thesalonica (35 m). A road to Rome, perhaps their Goal.
* **Thessalonica** is one of few cities still a functioning city today—**Salonika**, Greece
* A synagogue in Thessalonica means the population was large enough to support it.

V2 - It **was [Paul’s] custom** to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath to honor God.

* We know that he was there for **three Sabbaths** – at least – several weeks there.
* He **reasoned with them**, from the thing they knew the most, the Scriptures.
  + The original word for *reasoned* is *dialectic* in the Greek. This suggests a deeper conversation. Lit. to “open his mouth” and “Explain, reveal, or let light in.”

V 3- look at what he proclaimed: **The Gospel (good news of God) IS Jesus Christ**.

* The fact he was **explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer** would have been hard for them to accept. The Jews rejected Christianity (and still do) on the basis that the Messiah should not suffer. They want a powerful King.
* Though the Apostles struggled with this (Peter – “Get behind me Satan”), they eventually understood and grew convicted that this was God’s plan.

**What is conviction?** A resolve to live differently; it is a perspective change entirely.

* **It is change of perspective first and a call to action second**. This is why being made into new creation starts with the **Renewing of our minds** (rom 12:2). Our thoughts/convictions drive our actions. This can be fantastic or tragic.
* **Sadly,** we make our doing more important than our believing. **One of the top 5 ways to fail spiritually is to make your acting more important than knowing.**
* Def: “A firmly held belief or opinion”

**vv. 4-9: Conviction gives way to faithfulness and welcomes opposition**

**V 4 The Gospel at work seems to have 3 clear results here in this passage:**

1. **Faith of the people** (v.4): **Greek** (gentile - Eph 2:11-13) and **women** believed. Macedonian women had a reputation for their independence & enterprising spirit.
2. **Fellowship as they joined Paul, Timothy and Silas** and became a part of the growing family of God (v. 4). “Referred to as “The brothers” in remaining psgs
3. **Fortitude** (courage, strength) **rose as those that were opposed** to them tried to kill and attack. The gospel of Jesus has an emboldening effect.

**V 5** – The Jews were Jealous: **Sometimes we hold on to things that hold us back.**

* Paul wrote about them in *1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 [14] For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, [15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind [16] by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!*
* The Jewish leaders stuck in a self-righteous “we already have the answer” attitude.
  + **Complacency** looks at everything critically and thrives on fear.
  + **Conviction** looks at everything and an opportunity and thrives on faith.

**What is Complacency?**

* **Complacency zaps energy, dulls attitudes, and causes a drain on the brain.**
* **Complacency makes people fear the unknown, mistrust the untried, and abhor the new**. Like water, complacent people follow the easiest course -- downhill. They draw false strength from looking back. (*Bits & Pieces*, May 28, 1992, p. 15.)

**V6-9: The Jews overthrow Jason’s House in search for the Apostles**:

* **Action**: When they could not find the Apostles they made a spectacle of those who had helped them. V9, they took bail for them and then released them.
* **Accusation**: treason: They charged them with **turning the world upside down.** A bit dramatic, but great irony in this statement. A’s pledging their allegiance to the one true King, Jesus, (not Caesar) this turned the ancient religious world upside down.

**vv. 10-15: God’s works His purposes through circumstance and conviction**

* **V 10** – “brothers” sent Paul, Silas and Tim to Berea. 60 m SW. Modern city of Veria
  + Ill: There is a modern park that has a small podium entitles “St. Paul’s Pulpit” which could be referring back to what happened in these verses.
  + Cicero described Berea as an “Out of the way town.” A good hiding place.
* **V 11** - Luke says that **the Jews were more noble,** not necessarily better in character (though may be) but they were literally more noble by birth. God reaches all people!
* **V 12** - **many that believed** in the Gospel, truly ingesting it as truth and moving to action. Their reverence for the Word of God led to a reliance on the Word of God, which gave way to a receptivity to the Gospel and a reproduced it in others.
* **V 13** - It wasn’t long before the **opposing Jews** came from Thessalonica
  + This happened earlier in Acts 14 when the antagonizing Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to Lystera to stir up the crowds against the apostles.
* **V 14** – Paul went to Athens but Timothy (and S?) was sent back, “*[1] Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, [2] and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, — 1 Thess 3:1-2*
* **God’s works His purposes (his will) through circumstance and conviction**

**Conviction beats complacency every time.**

**Conviction is the deep root of dependence on God:**

* **This is to “Abide in Him”** (jn 15) – spiritual lifeblood flows between us and Him.
* **A conviction is not something you discover; it is something that you purpose in your heart**. Convictions on the inside will always show up on the outside.
* “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.” ― Abraham Lincoln

**The call of the Gospel is one of conviction**:

* **We are called to take up our cross and follow Him** (Matt 16:24; Lk 9:23).
  + When facing trials threatening their life, **a vow of protection was confronted when JC said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan” –** He was confronting an attitude of human complacency with an attitude of conviction in God’s will.
  + Satan is a “**hindrance**” or “**stumbling block**” for the our resolve to God’s will
* **Come after me** means to become a disciple/student and requires that a disciple:

1. **deny himself** : not simply denying certain things but denying personal control
2. **take up his cross**: a commitment that will lead to rejection and possibly death
3. **follow me**: act on the example and teachings of Jesus. In Jesus’ day

**Two ways to handle pressure (diagram)**

**So how do you know if you’ve grown complacent in your walk with Christ?**

* **The first symptom is satisfaction with things as they are**.
* **The second is rejection of things as they could be in Christ**. "Good enough" becomes today's motto and tomorrow's standard.

Communion