



Gospel Impact – Part 1

When It Disrupts Our Lives

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We are here doing this morning something the church has been doing for 2,000 years. What we hope to do is to open the Bible and to explain what it means, to prove the propositions that we assert about what the Bible is teaching. Nothing could be more important than that. It's been the centerpiece of the Church, sometimes lost in the background and then brought to the fore. But it's about the teaching and the preaching of the Bible. Today there's a lot of static in the background of culture that is making it increasingly unpopular to teach the Bible.

And there are preachers who are standing up in their pulpits and are conceding that maybe the Bible is not as important as you think it is. That it's not God's word, that we can't settle disputes by quoting it, that it is not authoritative, it's not inerrant. It is man's best thoughts about God and sometimes they're wrong and it certainly is filled with errors. And these are men and now women, of course, who stand in pulpits and they hold up their Bibles and they deny that it is a God-breathed text.

And of course, that passage that I'm referencing there with that very interesting phrase, God-breathed is in Second Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16, when it's referring to the written text, the Scriptures, that word itself, "Graphé", the writings, graphical, written down, nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, that those words that are encoded and written are God-breathed. It's as though God himself has said those things. And of course, punctuated throughout the Bible are phrases like, you know, "Thus says the Lord." These are the words of God, these words are perfect, these words are pure, these words are transformative. They will change YOU.

All these claims about the Bible that should make our time together as we open it and study it together, the really most important and sacred hour of the week where we are together reasoning through the Scriptures and allowing that text, whatever it might be that we are explaining, expounding, to do work within us. We have to either be persuaded that that's the case or we need to just, as I would say to the pastors in these big churches and some small ones saying these kinds of things, it's like, "Wow, why are we even here?" In other words when we move our view of Scripture from being God's written, God-breathed word, that these are not the thoughts of men, these are not, as the Second Peter 1 says, they're not just men's interpretation of God. They're not just pondering and, you know, considering what God is and then writing them down. But these are men who were moved by the Holy Spirit, that they are writing down the things that God is directing them to say, well, then I just say we do other things with our time.

It's much like Paul saying in First Corinthians 15 if the historic doctrine, which is a cornerstone doctrine, of the resurrection of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, if that did not happen then this is for nothing. Then there's no use in this. And I would say the same about our doctrine of Scripture. We cannot take the Bible and take it into some place of just men's opinions and then just assume somehow we still have a reason to be here, a reason to meet, a reason to study, a reason to sit around talking. I mean, there's no need for us. We will



define ourselves into irrelevance, which in the ebb and flow of Church history we've seen. Once you lose a high view of Scripture you see those movements turn into irrelevant movements, relics and empty churches and no one cares. And in time they don't know as they stand up and try to capitulate to the culture that you're basically signing your own death warrant. There's no need for you to be on a stage talking to us at all, which some movements within Church history have done. They've just basically said, you know, why am I here as a preacher telling you what it is by reading this ancient book? And I mean, you're right, there's no need for this. You can just sit around and have coffee, walk your dog in the park with a friend and try and figure out reality.

Either that or God has spoken. And if God has spoken then this becomes the most important thing that we have, this divine library where God has put his thoughts on paper. And it's always going to come back to that. That's why when you study systematic theology it always starts with bibliology, our study of this book, what does this mean? What are we claiming that it is? Has God spoken, right? J I Packer's quote put it right, "He has." Or Francis Schaefer, "he is there and he has spoken." God has spoken. He's revealed himself. And we assert that not because this is another book like, you know, the wise sayings of Confucius, but it has the fingerprints of divinity all over it. And that is unique and it makes this book unique. And I don't expect you to just believe some guy standing up and saying that about the Bible. Of course I want to reason with you through the Scriptures. And that's what we do when we study the Bible together week in and week out.

And it's good to get back to it. And I got to tell you that when we have special services and holidays and all the things that we have and I mean, I'm out doing other things and I come back to the regular schedule of my life, I think nothing could be more important than what we're doing right here. And I sense that afresh. It's more urgent and more important in terms of the need for it than ever before. You need what the Bible says. It is the God-breathed words of God that are profitable for you in every way, teaching, reproof, correction, training and righteousness, so that you can be equipped to do all the good that God has designed you to do. Without it, we're lost. It's a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Do you want my opinions? They don't matter. Do you want your opinions? They don't matter. What matters is that you are created by a God who is going to then reveal himself in space and time in a book. And then he says to you, you need to learn from that. Of course there's the book of nature and we can learn some basic things about God, but the specificity with which he has given you his communication, he says he's going to judge you one day on those things. You will stand before God and he's going to hold you responsible. He's going to open the books, which aren't just going to contain your deeds, but also what he has written. It is the canon, it's the measure. That's what the word canon means. It's the measure of all things. And you and I are going to really look back on this life and we're going to say what was really important is how I view this book.

I mean the glory of man, it comes and goes. You are going to live here for a short time and then you're going to be gone. "But the word of our God it stands forever," Isaiah 40. And that is something that we need to align our lives to. And you can be so concerned about what the



culture thinks. You can be so concerned about what the surveys say and how outdated our book is. And you can get so petrified and you can be such a wimp and say, well, then we've got to change our view on this. Or if it's true and there are reasons to be persuaded that it's true, then we're stuck preaching this book every week, as we should. Matter of fact, we should find joy in it.

We've been studying through the book of Acts. When I think about the need for the Bible and the need for it in your life, the need for it in our church, the need for it in your family, the need for it in your relationships, in your job, in our county, in this state, in our country, in this world, I think for us, the Acts of the Apostles becomes a challenge for us to make sure we think about what's being written right now, which is not, you know, which is our story. The Acts of Compass, the acts of your life. The acts of my life. And what matters really is the place of God's truth in that and we've got to think seriously about that. And it's modeled for us in the book of Acts.

We stopped before our short break between Chapters 16 and 17. We were ending our study in that last series right in the middle of Paul's second missionary journey, if that helps orient you. We were in Philippi, you might remember he was trying to go, my contention is, to Ephesus on the Roman road from where he was and God prevented it, took him up and around to a port city. And then he had the Macedonian call. Macedonia is the northern part of Greece, modern-day Greece. Achaia is the southern part. And he's brought over there. God sends him over there. He goes to Philippi, he's got Luke and Silas and Timothy and others, and they go to Philippi. Remember he ends up in jail and he's driven out of town, basically. Right? That's what happened. That's where we ended.

Chapter 17 picks up the story where he's going to continue to go west, southwest and make kind of an arc down. He's going to end up in Athens before we're done with this chapter. But we see the cities that are described here at the beginning of Acts 17 verse 1, as they're all like a day's walk between each, Amphipolis and Apollonia. And then he's headed to, and I think because much like his desire to get to Ephesus, he wants to get to Thessalonica because Thessalonica is a very important city. It's a bigger city. It was the seat of the Roman government, at least regionally. And it's a very important city in Macedonia.

So he gets his way, he makes his way to Thessalonica. And we are going to look at what happens there. But before we even get to that, we'll look at the first nine verses, I want to go to... the reason you know the city so well is because there are two books in the New Testament, obviously, that are named after it. Matter of fact, First Thessalonians is the first book Paul wrote. So he's going to write back to this city after we get some good news about their strength spiritually and their growing. And matter of fact, I remember thinking back and a long time ago I was trying to think about the most encouraging and positive New Testament epistle that I could preach from. It was a season of the church that I was leading that was like, I need to really encourage them and be positive. And, you know, that's not First Corinthians and it's not, you know, Galatians.



It's like, okay, I settled on First Thessalonians because to me it was there was no competitor when it came to a book that's just so excited about the good things that were happening. And that's where I was in my heart at that particular time. And I said, this is the word we need to encourage a good church. And what's funny is if you study with me this morning, what's interesting is you read those first nine verses of Acts 17 and you think this doesn't look like it went very well. Matter of fact it's going to look a lot like Philippi in that he's run out of town and has to be, you know, let down in verse 10 at night, you know, under the cover of darkness to scurry off to Berea. And you think, it doesn't look like it went so well.

But First Thessalonians shows us there's a lot that went well there, even though Luke only gives us one verse about the good things that went on there in terms of Paul's preaching of the word, or as it's put in the passage, his "reasoning with them through the Scriptures." So let's look at their reception of the word in summary fashion in First Thessalonians Chapter 2. Let's start in verse 13 and let's read what happens as Paul looks back on it, having gotten a good report that they were growing and thriving spiritually. And here's what he says about their relationship to the word of God, which to me is what this series is all about. I want to preach, Lord willing, eight sermons here back-to-back through Chapter 17 and almost through the end of Chapter 18, looking at the impact of the gospel.

And when I say gospel, by the way, as you're finding your way to First Thessalonians Chapter 2, the gospel is the good news. You know that's what it means. It's the good news of a message that's supposed to make me right with God. And one of the words it's given, a very common word in the New Testament early on especially, is the word "disciple." You're going to be a follower of Christ, a disciple. So the Greek word "Mathétés," we get the word mathematics from it. A learner, you're a pupil. You become a pupil and a follower and a learner of Christ. That happens, of course, when you hear the core message of the gospel, which is repent of your sins, put your trust in the finished work of Christ, to fill in some of the theology of that.

But when Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles there in Matthew 28, he said, "Go make disciples of all the nations," right? And the first thing, once they become disciples you're supposed to "baptize them." These disciples who were made "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," and then it says, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded." So everything about the New Testament truth of what God wants his people to do, and all that Jesus taught in those three years that he was teaching publicly, three and a half years, was to be taught. You're supposed to train people to do it. So I want us in the next eight weeks to think about the way the message of the gospel is going to come to you, which I hope a lot of you are saying, "Well, at the first stage it's already happened. I've already become a disciple of Christ. I've been convicted of my sins. I put my trust in Christ and now I'm a follower of Christ."

Well, there's a lot that comes with it, and it won't end until you're dead and glorified. Those words seemed oxymoronic, but when you die, you will now be like him because you're going to see him as he is, and you will have sanctification to the full. You will be like him. You'll be holy. In the meantime, you're in the process of learning to observe all that Christ commanded.



Are you following along with this? So when I talk about the gospel coming to you and the impact the gospel should make, of course it changes us initially to become Christians. And then we've got a lot to do. As I taught in Men's Bible study this week, this is the process of what we would call "progressive sanctification." We want to be increasingly more like Christ. We need to learn to observe all that Christ commanded.

So I want to look for the next eight weeks about how that information is supposed to change us, which is all now written, it's all inscripturated, it's all codified in the New Testament. And so we want to look at our relationship to the word of God. And for us, it is written. And I want you to turn with me as you already did. Right? You faithfully dutifully turned to First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 13. Is that where I said to go? Verse 13. Let me read through verse 16. Paul, looking back at the church that we're about to study his historical encounter with. "And we also thank God constantly for this." What is he thanking God for? "That when you received the word of God, which you heard from us." Now he was reading from the Old Testament as we're going to see, the 39 books of the Old Testament. But he was teaching them how these are being fulfilled and had been fulfilled in the life and teaching of Christ.

So part of what we're talking about here is the written word, even as I quoted Second Timothy 3:16. The Scriptures, as they would say that they were at the time of Acts 17, the written Old Testament. But he was telling them verbally the word of God, and as an apostle he would end up writing some of that, which his first letter that he does write under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is this book First Thessalonians. So the word of God was coming to them as he taught them in Philippi. And he says, you responded to my exposition of the Old Testament, my proclamation of New Testament truths. How did you hear it? "You received the word of God, which you heard from us, you," now this Greek word is important here, "you accepted it," which I love some translations, or at least some explanations of this word, it's sometimes translated to "welcome it." You opened your arms to this and you brought it in. You welcomed the word, "not as the word of men." It's not like you sat there and said, "Well, let's hear what this guy has to say. Maybe he's got an angle on God that we should listen to." No, "but what it really is," Old and New Testament, right? Verbally presented in Thessalonica or read from the Old Testament scrolls in the synagogue. "The word of God."

Even that phrase, you're so used to that being just nomenclature for a written Bible. But notice what we're saying here. This is the word, this is the articulation of God's stuff to you, his data, his information. And you didn't just listen to it and it wasn't just that you nodded at it. It's not you just took a few notes on it. You embraced it. This Greek word "Dechomai." You reached out and you grabbed it and you said, "Yes." And as we'll see in the passage we're about to study because they were persuaded, they had to be intellectually persuaded to do that. And then God granted that grace for them to go, "I get this. I understand it now." They did more than that as we'll see in our passage. "You accepted it not as a word of men but for what it really is, the word of God."

Now, here's the thing, and this is the impact I wanted to make, "which is at work in you believers." You believed it because you were persuaded it was true and you did something about it, as we'll see in our passage. And then that word did work in you, the word of God.



"You accepted it not as the word of men." Now, there are people on platforms right now that got me all fired up inside and I'm trying not to be angry and preach angry, but they're preaching that this is NOT the word of God, that these are the best words of men about God, and they're gutting this publicly and trying to defend that this is not the word of God. And I'll say this, that when you do that, you are now presenting stuff to people where they're supposed to accept it as the word of men, and it will not be at work in them, because they don't believe it as the word of God.

We're here every week and I hope our tribe grows and I hope we continue to plant churches and multiply this congregation because we need more expositors preaching the word as the word of God, authoritatively as a high-ranking, most supreme thing in our minds, that this is the most important thing that we have. The book, the deposit of God's words as a trust, and it should be important to us. We should be all about it, and we should receive it "not as the word of men, but as the word of God, which is at work in you believers." And it will change your life. It will make an impact.

"For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus who are in Judea." Now Paul came ultimately from Judea and where Jerusalem is, the surrounding region there. And he says they were suffering under the persecution there, which, by the way, Paul was a big part of. Right? Remember that? He was standing there holding the coats for the people who were stoning Stephen to death and all that persecution that broke out, which then he was converted and went on the other team and he says, you became like them. You imitated them in what sense? Well you were willing to stand your ground. "You suffered the same thing from your own countrymen," there in Macedonia, "as they did from the Jews," in Judea, who, by the way, go back further to when they killed Christ.

These Jews there who were opposing Christ, the opposition, "they killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out." That's why the church was scattered and he started these missionary journeys from Antioch because they couldn't even take up their headquarters there in Jerusalem anymore. They "drove us out and they displeased God and opposed all mankind." How do they oppose all mankind? "By hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved." And I told you, I already gave you the synopsis. They're going to get run out of town and sent to Berea. Even in their town, much like in Judea. Right? The microcosm of what's going on in Thessalonica, it already happened in Judea. We're going to kick them out. And Paul and his team get kicked out.

And he says, But you imitated those who stood faithful and stood firm. You stood up and you went through the suffering and the difficulty. They're "hindering the speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved -- so as to always fill out the measure of their sins." They're opposing the word of God. They're opposing the truth of God. They're opposing the propagation of the truth of God. "But wrath has come upon them at last," either in the end in that they will incur it and it's on the way, like he says in Romans Chapter 1 verse 16. Or it's the sense that some of these guys have even died since he wrote this and perhaps, you know, they've met their maker now and they know what the terrible things they've done. The point is the punishment is coming.



And Paul says, but you guys here "you received the word." There are just so many things in this passage we don't have time to look at. But go back up to verse, but I'm going to do anyway, verse 2. "We had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi." If you're with us in the last series, "They were shamefully treated at Philippi." They were put in stocks there in prison in Philippi. "As you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God amidst of much conflict. For our appeals did not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts."

And so I will say our commitment, my life commitment is to proclaim the word of God and not try to please people. And if this turns into a congregation of 25 people because no one else wants to hear, as long as I can, I will try to preach the word of God and say, I believe this is the authoritative word of God. I think it's proven itself, and I'm going to speak it, not to please people, to please God. And that's my commitment. And I think we need that now more than ever, which I hope the culture should be testifying to that just by how absolutely ridiculous the culture has become. (audience applauds)

All right, that's what Paul looks back on as he had the experience that we're going to look at now. Let's read it together. In the longest introduction ever to be recorded in the history of homiletics. Let's get to Acts Chapter 17 verse 1. We'll read nine verses here. "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaimed to you, is the Christ.'" What does the word Christ mean? That's the Greek word transliterated into our English text for the word Messiah. "Mashiach" in the Old Testament and Messiah is the transliteration of the Hebrew word mashiach. Messiah. And that means one who is anointed. If you were thinking out of the context of the coming fulfillment of the prophetic one, it would be a prophet or a priest or a king who had this special anointing oil poured over their head in a ceremony to say, "Yes, you are now ordained and authorized to be a prophet or a priest or a king."

The problem is those things didn't merge together like they would in the ultimate son of David who was going to come and be the prophet, priest and king. And that's what the Old Testament kept looking forward to. And every now and then we had these prophecies about the coming of the Son of Man, to whom all the authority of the world should bow to and he was coming. And this is the promise of the coming of the Messiah or the Christ. And so he says, "I'm telling you, I'm giving you this guy, and his name is Jesus and he is the Christ."

Now verse 4, Luke gives us one verse. "But some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, and as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women." So there's the positive. And then we've got a contrasting conjunction in verse 5, which is "but" and then we get all these verses from verse 5 to verse 9 about the negative reaction that eventually drives them out of town. But in verse 4, we get a positive reaction.



"Some were persuaded" by that, some of them, "and they joined Paul and Silas." Now persuasion is one thing, but joining, that shows it's a kind of persuasion that says, "I get it, I believe it, I'll submit to it, and I'm ready to break even with this synagogue if they're not willing to see that Jesus is the Christ, and I'll go and join your Bible study." Short-lived in that town because he's going to be driven out of town.

But they join Paul and Silas and the other people they brought with them in this missionary band. And we got some of the devout Greeks who probably were there in the synagogue as well. We call them God-fearers. They were listening and affirming the God of the Old Testament, but they weren't of Jewish lineage. And then, as we saw in the last chapter in Philippi and Macedonia, he had some key women like Lydia, who had a prominent business life, and so we have some prominent women here in Macedonia, in Thessalonica, who also become converts.

"But the Jews were jealous." It was not a statement about ethnicity. This is about the leaders of the Jewish synagogue. So we have the Jewish leaders and maybe some non-leaders, but people in the Jewish synagogue were jealous. And that's not a new theme for the book of Acts. We see it everywhere. They get jealous of the fact that Paul is preaching and in essence, if the leaders don't change their view, well, then you get a whole bunch of people who are going to leave the synagogue and go follow this new thing called The Way, the followers of Christ. So they didn't like that. You just shrunk our congregation and we don't like it. "And taking some of the wicked men of the rabble." Did you use the word rabble this week in a sentence? Probably not. Rabble. It comes from the Greek word "Agora." And agora means marketplace and the marketplace, these are like the marketplace people.

They hang out in the marketplace. They don't have good, you know, daily jobs. They're not the kind of people who are providing for their families. They're the low-lives of the society who are sitting around and ready to riot whenever there's a cause to riot for. That's the rabble. It's a good word. We might as well restore it because there's a lot of rabble in our culture. "Taking some of the wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob," speaking of a riot, "and they set the city in an uproar, and they attacked the house of Jason." You're going to ask the pastor now, "Who's Jason?" I don't know. Now you look them up in a Bible dictionary, at least this particular Jason, they're going to go, he's the guy who housed Paul and Silas and the team. So we don't know anything about him, but they knew about him. And of course, everyone in Thessalonica who was a Christian knew about him because he, much like Lydia, was hosting the Christians in the home.

So they find the guy who's hosting them. They attack the house of Jason, "seeking to bring them out in the crowd." You can just picture them and it's a riot. They're breaking down the doors. They're trying to... We see it on our screens all the time. And here they are going after these Christians. "And when they couldn't find them," they weren't there, "they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, 'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,'" verse 7, "'and Jason has received them,'" that's their accusation, "'and they're all acting against the decrees of Caesar.'"



Now, I'm thinking, okay, what could Paul be saying that's acting against the decrees of Caesar? Well, they add one line of evidence, "saying there's another king, Jesus." Now, that's true theologically. But I just want to ask, do you think Paul is teaching them to somehow subvert the government of Rome in this very important Roman municipality? No. Right? I mean, you've read Romans 13. He's all about obeying. This is not an insurrection. So this is an excuse. Even though when persecution ramped up in the mid-sixties in a way where they would put Christians in a place of saying, "Well, if you think Jesus is the king, then you know, we want you to disavow that by saying that Caesar is Lord and we want to look at you doing that and show your loyalty to Rome." And I get that, right? I understand it's going to come to a head and they're going to use that as leverage.

But right here, what is Paul preaching in the synagogues that's going to subvert Rome? I don't think that's the place of Paul's preaching. He's talking about theology, about Christ, even though there's no doubt this is true. He is teaching there's another king, because if he's the Messiah, he's the king. Jesus. That was their claim. Verse 8. "And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things." And they had a lot riding on a good relationship with Rome, and they did not want, if any of this was true, they didn't want that kind of trouble in their town.

"So when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go." So that's weird, right? They set up this bond to where, you know, you put this money down and just assure us that we won't have any insurrection here, that there won't be any trouble. And so they put money on the table to make sure that this doesn't happen. You get your money back if there are no problems. And so this is how it ends. And if you glance at verse 10, they get sent out under the cover of darkness to go on to the next city.

This is the story of Thessalonica in the book of Acts. I'm glad we have Paul in the first extant letters of the Apostle Paul, God-breathed words to Thessalonica because we can all rejoice in verse 4 and unpack how great it was that good things were going on there. The focus here, though, seems to be, wow, it was a bad response. So we know this: verse 4 even though it's not, you know, there's not correspondence between one verse and verses 5 through 9. One, two, three, four, five verses. We understand this, that there was a great response to the gospel by many to be persuaded and join Paul and Silas. That's a big deal. And we got two books to read about that, First and Second Thessalonians. And then we got the negative. So and there's a lot of the discussion of the negative in the book of First Thessalonians, as we read in First Thessalonians 3 verse 16.

How did it all start? It started with him reasoning from the Scriptures, trying to explain and prove that Jesus was the Christ. He had to suffer and be risen. Rise again from the dead. Okay, so all about Scripture. Scripture's going to do that. Which, by the way, you may think especially around Christmas time, you think, "Oh, it's like we kind of got a Christian culture still. And at Christmas I feel good about it because only the Scrooge over here didn't put his lights up and everyone else is kind of celebrating. The lights are all up, it's pretty. And I drive through my neighborhood, you know, even this guy's got the nativity scene and there's the baby Jesus. And oh, yeah, he's got Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red-Nosed



Reindeer. But at least we're all celebrating Christ at Christmas." And you know that's not true. Right?

You understand that if you were to go to the front door of the people who decorate their lawns and start reading from the words of Scripture about what Christ taught, like "I'm the way, the truth of life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Or you could come up with a lot of different passages where they'd go, "Oh, I don't like that." If you really explain Christ clearly, it's going to divide people. In Luke Chapter 1 that was the promise. Christ was going to be a sign to be opposed. He's going to split people into two camps. It's going to be obvious when you put Christ there, as we read in the book of Matthew Chapter 10, he came not to bring peace, he came to bring a sword to divide and set households against each other. I know that didn't make it on your Christmas card, but that's what Christ taught, is that I'm coming and I'm going to cause a stink here in this world because people are either going to love me or hate me. They're either going to follow me or they're going to hostilely reject me.

But it all comes down now Paul is preaching after Christ has ascended, so Christ isn't there causing the stink, Paul is causing the stink by simply teaching about Christ. And I'm saying we're going to be causing the stink in our culture by preaching about Christ and teaching what he taught and it's going to divide people. But it's all about that scriptural explanation, right? We're going to explain it, we're going to prove it, we're going to apply it, we're going to reason with people through it. And that's super-duper important. And we need to respect that power that's in the gospel. Number one, if you're taking notes, we need to "Respect the Inscripturated Gospel," which comes not just with "be saved," but teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded.

So we're going to affirm the revealed will of God within the pages of Scripture, and we need to respect the power of that. That divides people, that divides culture. Now, we're not going to revel in that. We would love for everyone to be followers of Christ. But we're not going to shy away from it by trying to downplay the authority or the inerrancy or the accuracy of Scripture. We're stuck with a Bible that IS authoritative because God's fingerprints are all over it. Like what? Let's go to Isaiah Chapter 41. Let's spend a little time in the texts of the Old Testament, the scrolls that surely Paul was trafficking in in that three-week sermon series that he did.

Now, why would he be asked to do that? I just want to remind you, you don't just let anybody speak in the synagogue. But he was a seminary grad. Right? I mean that was part of the pattern of having people come up and read from the scrolls and make some comments. Well, Paul was a Pharisee in his training, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He was someone who you would say, "Hey, Paul, what do you got to say?" And so he took the floor for three weeks reasoning with them through the Old Testament. And the thing about the Old Testament that makes it authoritative is that it does predict things like the coming of Christ. And it's very clear about all that. And just the concept of prophetic texts in themselves ought to set it apart from the Koran or the teachings of Confucius or the Hindu scriptures or the Pali Canon or whatever secular kinds of scriptures you might want to think about. This is a unique book that says things specifically about the future.



You're in Isaiah Chapter 41. Let's look at it, just a reminder of this. I know we talk about this often, but God is going to basically say, hey, you guys got a lot of other authorities you look to, you know, like in our day, we're looking to cultural surveys, we're looking at what people think and how do people feel, let's just go with the flow. But they had their idols and they had their philosophies. He said this in verse 21, Isaiah 41, Isaiah 41:21. "Set forth your case, says the Lord; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them," let those guys who adhere to those things and have allegiance to those philosophies, those theologies, those idols, "Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen." Bring your gods and predict the future and then go back in pre-history, "Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them." How did we get here? Where are we going? Show us all of that. "Tell us the former things, what they are that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome." Where's all this going? "Or declare to us the things to come?"

I mean, God, just basically saying show me your predictive powers. Right? If you're in charge of reality, you should be able to predict the future. "Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know," verse 23, "that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified." Prove it. "Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you." God has no problem offending people by saying If you're going to believe that stuff, your gods are nothing, they're less than nothing. And if you trust in them, believe in them, follow them, choose to be a devotee of them, you are an abomination.

That's the problem, is it not, with the Christ of Scripture? He is not going to in any way share his glory with anyone else. He's not going to join the pantheon of other gods. He's not going to be on the shelf with all these other deities. He is going to be exclusive. And part of the thing in this passage that is put on the table as Exhibit One is can these texts or these gods do any harm or do any good in real time, space and time? Or can they predict the future or give us the past, the pre-history of the world? Now, in terms of doing good and doing harm, there could be some debate there, right? "Well, I don't know. I thought there were some things associated with this idol and he did some amazing things. And I prayed and it didn't rain or I prayed and it did rain." But telling the future? That one, and I love this, is inscripturated. It's put into writing.

And when Moses wrote the predictions about what would happen to Israel, those were put in writing and they were there and you can read them and there was no debate that they were written long before the things happened and then they happened and there was a confirmation, whether it was 20 years before or 100 years before or as many of the promises and predictions in the writings of Moses, which all took place in the 1440s B.C. they came to fruition in about 900 B.C. So we had all this time between the writing and promises and the fulfillment, and all of that sits there as an ongoing miracle. And by that I mean you can read it and say, "Wow, how did Moses know that?" Well, Moses didn't know it, but he was moved by the Holy Spirit to write the things that God wanted to be inscripturated. And there's power in that. You ought to listen to that. If you trust in anything else that doesn't have that kind of power, right? That's nothing. You're wasting your time.



So, Paul comes into Thessalonica, into the synagogue, says, "Let me tell you about the Christ." And I won't have you look back there unless you can do it really quickly. But in the passage he has to reason with them from the Scriptures explaining and proving that was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead. Now go back one chapter to Isaiah 40. In Isaiah 40. These are familiar verses, and I can just kind of tie New Testament truths together really quickly by starting in verse 3, "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for God.'" Now, who was quoting those things right back to his very birth? And Zachariah, his dad, when he heard about the birth of John the Baptist this was the passage that was associated with him.

The texts in Malachi regarding the one who was going to come before the coming of the Lord and the coming of the Lord in passages like in Zechariah, it's not just God's going to show up in a cloud, but God is going to show up with feet. He's going to come and he's going to come to the earth and he's going to be, as Daniel 7 says, like a Son of Man. He's going to be embodied. That's called the Incarnation. So the picture of this coming Christ is going to be preceded by one who's preparing them, preparing a way for the coming of the Lord and the predecessor to that, John the Baptist. I mean, those are just familiar concepts to you. And what happens when the way is prepared? "Every valley will be lifted up, every mountain will be made low; the uneven ground will become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed." Wow, I don't want to miss that. Well, you won't. "All flesh shall see it together."

Okay. If you read that, which you would have if you grew up in a synagogue in Thessalonica, even though it's a Roman municipality. You study the Old Testament scrolls. You going to go when the Messiah comes that's the kind of stuff that's going to happen. As a matter of fact, look at verse 6. "A voice says, 'Cry!' And I'm going to say, 'What shall I cry?' Well, all the flesh is grass, all the beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass," they're nothing. People have opinions and ideas, right? "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." And it's a big way to say this is God speaking and it's going to happen.

Well go tell people this, verse 9, "Go up on a high mountain, O Zion, herald the good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald the good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!' Behold, the Lord your God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense is before him." And he's going to be a good shepherd. "He's going to tend the flock like a shepherd; he's going to gather the lambs with his arms; he's going to carry them in his bosom, and gently he's going to lead those with young." This good shepherd, the embodiment of this God that we saw in the Old Testament saying in Psalm 23, he is the good shepherd. He's going to be here and he'll be so kind. And we can look at that go, yeah, I can see the New Testament connection.

But you know what you can't see very well is what's this stuff here that talks about in verse 10, "the arm of the Lord ruling," "recompense coming." And what's that stuff about the "mountains being made low and the valleys being lifted up and the rough places being made a plain. And the glory of the Lord and all flesh will see it." Why would I need a guy getting



kicked out of Philippi, coming into my synagogue saying, "Hey, I know who the Christ is." I'm going to say, "Buddy, get off the platform. When the Christ comes we're all going to see it. When the Christ comes everything's going to be made right. And guess what? We've been living here in Macedonia and things are not right. We read the papers. When the Messiah comes, all of this is going to be fixed. Can you just move on to the next city, please?" I mean that's what we're going to say.

And yet this is all about, look at the beginning of this passage, verse 1, Isaiah 40, "Comfort my people, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly in Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare has ended, and her iniquity is pardoned, that she's received from the Lord's hand double for all of her sins." It's all fine now. It's all paid for. No sin, no reference to sin. As Daniel 7 says, all the sins atone for, he's dealt with the sin problem, his arm is ruling, recompense is coming, scores being settled. The good guys win, the bad guys lose. Yay! The Messiah is here. And you're sitting in a synagogue going, "I don't see that."

That's why the focus is not on any of this. The focus is in our passage just to read it again for you, "he was reasoning from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to be..." triumphant, no, "to suffer and to rise from the dead." Do you mean that the Messiah is going to die and he's going to be tortured? That does not compute.

Do you like John 3:16? "I like that verse." Have you ever heard it before? "Yeah, I've heard it before." Have you ever taught it to your kids? "Yeah. John 3:16. I even know the whole passage. I know the content. It's about Nicodemus, come in the night, you got to be born again and... Yeah, yeah, I know the passage. 'God so loved the world.'" Great. You taught that your children. "Oh, it's in some of the memory verses for our kids in our Awana program, our Sunday school curriculum. Yeah.

Nahum Chapter 1. It's probably not at the same level in your minds. Hosea Chapter 4. "I don't even really know what's in Hosea Chapter 4." Well, you know why? We never quote it. We just don't quote it. You read it once a year in our Daily Bible Reading. Occasionally the pastor, when he's really angry about something, he might quote those passages. But I mean, we don't really hear much about it. But we'll hear about John 3 and we'll hear about Luke Chapter 2. I mean, these are passages we know because they get quoted a lot. I assure you, you can go throughout the book of Isaiah, passages about the strong arm of the Lord coming and him setting up the world, setting it right and setting up a kingdom, and all the bad guys being punished and the good guys winning. Yeah, that's in the Awana curriculum and in Macedonia for all the synagogues.

Do you know what's not even though it's a familiar passage to you? Isaiah 53. Turn to Isaiah 53. And I know you know the passage. But I want you to look at the opening verses and maybe the opening verses of Isaiah 53 for the first time, or maybe at a deeper level today, might for the first time drive you to go, "Now I get why it's set up with these words." Now, this is clearly going to be about the one who God's favor and glory and everything's going to prosper in his hand. This is a passage as it ends, there's no doubt, is about the coming Messiah. You've got to work hard with some real logical gymnastics to get out of that. I mean,



it's a full-nelson to the mat pin. This is the Messiah as it ends, but it opens this way. Isaiah Chapter 53 verse 1.

"Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Look at those two lines. "Who has believed what has been heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Why would anybody doubt? Why would you have anybody wondering? When the Lord comes it's going to be clear. I mean, he's going to come on clouds with angels and the authority and glory of the Father and the Son of Man is going to be set up and everyone's going to be..., of course. No, no, no, no, no. Verse 2. "For he grew up before him," God the Son grew up before God the Father "like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him." What about this triumphant king? "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Now, all I got to say you've heard those words many times before. And you know why? Because you're a Christian living after the cross. If you're in a synagogue in Macedonia waiting for the coming Messiah and you want someone to come in and say I found the Messiah, this is a passage that's really got a lot of cobwebs on it in your head. You're not thinking about this passage. This passage is kind of like Nahum Chapter 1 for us. It's like, "I don't even know. I've read it I'm sure. I didn't like it probably when I read it, and that's probably why I never quoted it." You can't find it on a plaque in the bookstore because it's just not one of those verses that we're going to repeat very often because it doesn't feel good. You know all the feel-good passages in Isaiah are about the coming Messiah being the conquering king.

John the Baptist was a good Sunday school student, wasn't he? Sabbath school student. He grew up knowing the Scriptures. He, as the cousin of Christ, as the forerunner coming in the spirit and power of Elijah was preaching repentance, preparing the way for the Lord. And he pointed to Christ when he was coming to be baptized. He said, "Look, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Was he convinced that Jesus was the Messiah? No doubt. But you do know what happened in Luke Chapter 7. Luke Chapter 7, he's arrested and imprisoned in the Transjordan. He takes two of his disciples and he sends them all the way back to Judea. He goes to Christ and he asks these two emissaries from John, "Hey, are you the Christ or should we look for another?" Does that passage ever bother you? Like, what? This is the guy you've been preaching about. This is the guy you baptized. This is the one that you said "is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

Now, just like we know in Daniel Chapter 9, just like we know from Isaiah Chapter 40, somehow sin is going to be resolved when the Messiah comes. But we're focused and gravitated on all these great passages about him being the victor and the King. He's the King. And yet I don't really know that I've really explored those passages very well that talk about how he deals with sin. Well how he deals with sin is he comes and he doesn't come on the clouds in glory with all the mighty angels with him separating the people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He comes in a stable. He comes in a lowly scene. He



comes from a family that's from Nazareth. He's born because he's traveling in a census, he can't even get out of it. And, oh, it's what we all celebrate, the lowly incarnation of Christ.

And then he gets crucified. And in doing all of that, that's where the problem is solved, verse 4, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Well what are we sorrowful and grief-stricken about? Well, people who are right with God, they're grief-stricken and sorrowful about their sins. And "yet we esteemed him stricken, and smitten by God, and afflicted." Now, that's how I feel when I feel guilty, I feel bad about my sins. I think God's going to punish me. I'm going to be smitten and afflicted by God. But he was one who was afflicted and smitten by God.

See, here's the weird thing. "He," verse 5, "was pierced for OUR transgressions." Wait a minute. He suffers and gets afflicted by God because of what I've done that I feel afraid and grief-stricken that I'm going to be beaten up by God. "He was pierced for our transgression; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him the chastisement," the punishment, "that brought us peace," that satisfied God's justice, that said, hey, all your sins have been pardoned. They've all been paid. "Comfort, comfort my people." Tell Jerusalem to be comforted. All of that. Right? All of that chastisement that brought us peace and all of his wounds, they fixed us. They fixed our problem. They healed us.

I'm not talking about your cancer or your arthritis. We're here talking about the problem we have with God. A sickness that a salve cannot fix, as the prophets say. And God fixed it. Why? Because "we were like sheep," verse 6, "that had gone astray; turned everyone to his own way." That's called sin and that's called iniquity. But God, "the Lord, laid on him," the Messiah, "the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he didn't open his mouth." He didn't look like a conquering king. He didn't look like the strong arm of the Lord as he stood before Pilate and he didn't say a word. He wouldn't even answer his questions "like a lamb that has led to the slaughter." And so he was, he was slaughtered "like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

Now, John the Baptist said, "Here's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." He knew the terms, he knew the concepts. But when he was in prison and looking at the fact that the popularity of Christ was not going in the right direction, he said, "Are you really the Christ?" He didn't connect the dots like he should have. I don't blame the Jews in Thessalonica for not connecting the dots. They needed someone to come and reason from the Scripture and tell them the parts of Scripture they hadn't thought much about. To show the implications of Isaiah 53 in concert with Isaiah Chapter 40 and know that perhaps God has got a plan where he comes first as the suffering servant and then comes again, as Jesus promised he would, on the clouds of glory and the glory of his Father with the mighty angels with him, and then comes back and sets everything straight. "Rough places plain, mountains made low, valleys lifted up," and he fixes the world. I guess this is coming in two installments. They didn't see that.

So when they have a guy come into town and say, this guy from Nazareth who died in Jerusalem was the Messiah, they needed some Scripture to back this up. And I don't know if



it was Zechariah 13. I don't know if it was Psalm 22. I don't know if it was Isaiah 53, but he was bringing the passages about the suffering of the Messiah that most of us just looked right past if we were in the first century and didn't know about the suffering and crucifixion of Christ. "He was oppressed and he was afflicted," verse 7, "he didn't open his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he didn't open his mouth. By oppression and judgment," of the Sanhedrin, of the Jewish officials, of the Roman officials, of the Roman soldiers, "he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut out from the land of the living," they thought he's dead, "and he was stricken for the transgression of my people. And they made his grave with the wicked."

The only guy who needs a grave is a dead person, right? So he's going to die. This passage, by clear implication, it's going to say it. "They made his grave with the wicked." He died between two thieves, two robbers, two insurrectionists. "And he was with a rich man in his death." God just throws that weird little line in. Right? Because, of course, he was. He ended up in a tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, "although he had done no violence." He wasn't like the other people he died with, the wicked who he was dying with, "and there was no deceit in his mouth." James says if there's no deceit in your mouth, you're a perfect man. That's an impossibility. "Every man is a liar." Right? Romans 3. You are all falling short in your words. That's the whole point of the Bible. You can't even contain your words from sinning. And yet, here's someone, you want to talk about the perfect Messiah, no sin, no deceit.

And yet the perfect one, "It was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has to put him to grief." Why? "When he makes his soul an offering for guilt." Now, that's the thing. If I didn't put together the prophecies of the triumphant Messiah with the Old Testament sacrificial system, if I didn't realize that the blood that was spilled on your sandals in the worship center when you cut the throat of a lamb, if I didn't put together that somehow to put sin away, to atone for sin, is going to require the death of this Messiah, then I haven't put pieces together that I should. Paul was in there for three weeks putting pieces together in the mind of those people, saying this is exactly what the Bible says would happen. He would be a guilt offering.

And yet, you want resurrection? Here it is. "He shall see his offspring." He's going to see his disciples. He's going to see his spiritual progeny. He's going to see that. "He's going to prolong his days; and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand." How is that? "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and he'll be satisfied." The Father is going to see his justice spent and say, "It's done." Paid in full. Double for all your sins. It's done. "And by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted as righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." So in the Kingdom, when the king is reigning and the Messiah takes his throne, how do all those sinners be accounted as righteous? Well, he has to die first.

Now, little did we know when he left there would be a 2,000-year gap in the assignment that he gave those people in Acts Chapter 1 verse 8. "Go be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth." But here we are on the ends of the earth, on the other side of the planet when Jesus said that, trying to complete this task and the only way we're going to



do it is reasoning from the Scriptures that have the power to change people's lives when they recognize, yes, Jesus is the Christ.

"He shall bear their iniquities," verse 12, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and he was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sins of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." We read that passage and know it. I guarantee you this was a dusty text for the people in Macedonia, in Philippi, in Berea, in Athens, if they were Jewish readers of the Scriptures because it didn't fit. But when Paul says this is exactly what happened to Jesus, some people were persuaded and their lives were changed.

Back to our passage. Look what happens in verse 4. You know it. "Some of them were persuaded and they joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women." These people were persuaded and joined. Go with me to First Thessalonians Chapter 1. First Thessalonians Chapter 1. Sometimes I look up at the clock when I'm preaching and I think it ought to be only 15 minutes into the sermon right now. I hope it goes by as fast for you as it does for me. I can't believe that. I think the clock is fixed. Fix the clock. (audience laughs) We're going to get to the passage where Eutychus falls off the window ledge because Paul was going on and on and on. I'm not sure we're going to change the schedules of everything. That'll be a passage I will enjoy for several reasons. Not for Eutychus' pain, but for Paul's lengthy sermons.

Verse 2. First Thessalonians 1. "We give thanks to God always for you constantly mentioning in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." That persuasion and saying we're going to stand with you, it produced all this in them, as we saw in Chapter 2 of First Thessalonians. "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." Why? "Because our gospel," our preaching, the word that we gave you, the verbal preaching of the New Testament truths and the reading of the Old Testament prophecies, we know this good news, it "came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction." He wasn't there long, but their hearts were taken by this.

And "you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us." We got run out of town and we got opposed and you stood with us. You joined us even though you didn't have to leave your hometown. "And you became imitators of the Lord." You know how he was suffering. "You receive the word in much affliction," and yet, like me in Philippi, Paul would say and yet I was able to sing hymns at midnight because I'm fine suffering for the sake of Christ. I'll bear reproach for the name of Christ "with the joy of the Holy Spirit."

"So that," verse 7, "you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" in northern Greece, southern Greece. "For not only is the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and in Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything." We don't have to tell people about your conversion. "For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turn



to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Even as a synagogue attender, you could be someone who has put in front of God other things that do not take the word of God properly explained and given to these people as the top authority, because people were going to reject this message.

But these people were believing it and trusting it because they were persuaded and they joined in with them and it gave them repentance and it told them to leave behind their old life and serve the living and true God and to "wait for his Son," where all those Isaiah 40 promises and all the rest of the triumphant passages regarding the Messiah are going to come true, "he's going to come from heaven," Second Coming, "whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

That is the transformation of what takes place in the heart of Christians who hear the word, are persuaded by it, and join those who have it as the center devotion of their lives. Number two, "Expect the Gospel to Transform Lives." And it does. And you ought to be convinced of that. But, verses 5 through 9, as long as your pen is out, jot this down. Number three, "Understand the Hostile Rejections," and there are plenty of them. Let me list them for you really quick. Right? What's the first one? Once you got that down, you might want to take a look back at Chapter 17 verse 5. "The Jews were jealous." There's one reason people hostilely respond to the gospel. And it's not because they're jealous that they're running something that they got less people coming to because now they're going to quit their club to join your club. But because the favor of God rests on those who get right with the living God and submit to his word and it doesn't rest on those who don't.

Think Cain and Abel. Right? Why in the world was Cain so mad at his brother? Why did he oppose his brother and then murder his brother? It was because the favor of God rested on his brother and not on him. And he felt it and he knew it and he became embittered and hostile toward his brother. And all I'm telling you is there's something about that even to your neighbors and friends or maybe to you sitting here, you listen to us who believe the word of God as the authoritative supreme final word in our lives and you detest it, in part because you know we have peace with God. You feel it, you sense it, you know it, and it makes you embittered toward it and you don't want to accept it. And just like God says to Cain, just stop thinking about that toward your brother. "Just do what's right and you will be accepted." Join us. Be persuaded and join us.

The Jews were jealous. Then you got the rabble, which I already said were just the troublemakers. They're just rebels just looking for a riot to join. And there are a lot of people who are contrarians. I could go out on Twitter right now after the service post a bunch of things about the specific exclusive claims of Christ and get all kinds of rabble. That's a good word for them. Rabble, just attacking what I said because they just love to rebel against whatever's good, whatever's right, whatever's orderly, whatever's peaceable, whatever's kind, whatever is praiseworthy. And so you got those people, a lot of people rejecting the gospel just because they like to reject what's good.



And then you've got the people who are saying, well, wait a minute here, this is the problem. They've turned the world upside down and they're acting against decrees of Caesar saying there's another king, Jesus. We kind of like things the way they are. I put it this way in my notes, not that I have time to preach it, but there are the status quo lovers. Like when I go to my neighbors, if I say to them, "You need to become a follower of Christ. It's going to change everything about your life. It's going to change your priorities, your schedule, it's going to change how you invest your money, how you invest your time. You're going to go the extra mile, stay the extra hour, spend the extra dollars. You're going to be like us and you're going to spend and be expended for the souls of people in this world, either through evangelism or discipleship. Come and join me." They're going to go, "I like my life the way it is. I got enough religion. I put my lights up. I'm fine. I don't need more than that." And they love the status quo. They don't want their world turned upside down.

Against the decrees of Caesar. I said that's an excuse. There are a lot of excuse-makers. It doesn't matter what the excuses are. They just love their excuses. They love to hear themselves talk. Like when Jesus in Luke 14 says the kingdom of God can be compared to a man who creates a wedding feast, a banquet, invites everybody, and they just start coming up with all the lamest excuses you could think of. "I got two oxen. I got to go try them out. I got stuff to do. I can't come." And he gets angry because he goes, I don't get it. It's just a bunch of excuses. Excuse makers.

And then I think there's got to be some sense, as the officials hear these accusations, they are disturbed in verse 8. They hear these things. They end up putting this bond together to get money as a security from Jason and the other brothers that there won't be any more trouble. They just want to retain their power. And I do think there are some people, regardless, they go beyond the simple statement of Jesus is king and they start thinking, wow, it has implications. Psalm 2. I don't want my life to be ruled by someone else. As Jesus put it, "We don't want this man to reign over us." We just don't. We want to be the king of our own lives. We could develop all those and it'd be a great two-hour sermon if I could explain it all. But that is a lot of the hostile responses we get that I think are typified here by what's going on in Acts Chapter 17.

And I'm 4 minutes late. Stand with me. Let me dismiss you with a word of prayer. I started this sermon with some really heartfelt, unscripted concerns about what's going on in our Christian culture and I just want you to keep your eyes open for this. We want to make the distinguishing judgment in our mind that we can't do that. God has spoken. He's revealed himself. We need, as it's put in Second Peter 1, we need we do well to pay attention to it. Whereas Hebrews Chapter 2 says if the Old Testament proved to be an unalterable thing you could not dismiss, you better not dismiss the New Testament truths.

Let's pray. God, I thank you for this church and coming back from a lot going on here in the last month and a half, and a couple of weeks of projects and preaching elsewhere and things that I've been doing. But I'm so glad to get back into the pattern here of preaching expositively through your word in this great section of Paul's second missionary journey in Acts. And I just pray, God, that you would give us that hunger, as we'll see in Berea, to be thirsty to see the



Scriptures for ourselves, and to interact with the teaching of your word and to love it, to get into small groups like we have here in our church, to discuss it and to engage with it, and to move from explaining and proving to applying. Keeping each other accountable and stirring one another on to love and good deeds. Make this a real true Compass BIBLE Church where we are all about your word because your word speaks of you. It leads us to your holy hill. We understand what it is to have fellowship with you, as Packer says, it's a means to this end of us as we hold high a supreme view of Scripture, of us knowing you.

So God help us please to know you better as we go deeper in your word. Thanks for this team who are here. And as I said, I would preach if there were 20, but I'm so glad that the room is full and that our church has multiple services. And I just pray you continue to increase this, that you might even accelerate our need to plant more and more churches. Do that God because this is what you're worthy of. And I pray we'd be willing to take the hostilities of our culture and do it gladly with the joy of the Holy Spirit, not reveling in the conflict, but knowing that it's okay that if they hated you, we know they're going to hate us, but we're not going to be returning insult for insult or curse for curse. That we want our non-Christian adversaries to become followers of Christ. Just give us more of a heart for that, God, too. Thanks for your word. Thanks for the clarity of it. Thanks for the ability for us just to get into it from week to week and program to program, day to day here in our campus and even in our own homes every morning as we open up your word. So God dismiss this crowd here, I pray with a sense of your direction and love for your word.

I pray in Jesus name, Amen.