



Today's Sermons

Morning: Peter's Portrait of God's People
Evening: Trust in the Lord

Visit Us At:
www.wjchurchofchrist.org
For Audio Lessons,
Past Bulletins, Bible Studies
& More
Wireless Internet Password:
94615548

FOR THE RECORD	
Sunday Bible Study	62
Sunday AM Worship	75
Sunday PM Worship	56
Wed. Bible Study	58
Offering	\$2012

many Jews, including priests; Acts 8 – eunuch from Ethiopia; Acts 9 – Saul of Tarsus; Acts 10 – Cornelius; Acts 16 – Lydia, a Jewess; Acts 18 – Crispus, the ruler of the Jewish synagogue; Acts 19 – those who had already received the baptism of John the Baptizer. No, no, not all religious people will accept the gospel. The great majority of those that count themselves as members of some "church," will reject the truth. But, dear ones, like Paul did in Athens, we must make an effort to reason with and teach those that we know are religious people. We must not immediately look elsewhere for a prospect just because someone we know and care about is stooped in false religion, even if they are "strong" in it.

We must make a d-a-i-l-y effort to reach the lost. Paul did (17:17). Open your Bible and read the details of the early saints teaching or preaching on a daily basis. God was adding saved people to His church every day (Acts 2:47), so what do you suppose was going on every day? Would it be daily teaching? The apostles were threatened and beaten, *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"* (Acts 5:42). Paul also taught on a daily basis in Ephesus (Acts 19:9). Why did Paul teach on a daily basis? I do not believe that he did so simply because he was an apostle, and not just because he was inspired, and not just because he was a preacher. No, I am convinced that Paul made a daily effort to teach lost souls because he really loved them and wanted them to be saved. It may be that our personal schedule will not allow each of us to teach the gospel every day, but surely by combining the efforts of all the members of a congregation, it ought to be true that each congregation is working to teach the gospel on a daily basis. We need to be looking for opportunities to teach others the gospel. Such chances just may be more available than we might expect.

The work of establishing the Lord's church in Athens had to start somehow. It had to start with someone. Acts 17:16,17 gives us a record of the beginning phase of the apostle Paul's labors there. In our study we have read the text. We have pointed out six lessons about evangelism that can be seen in that text. Now, let each of us take these truths to heart and make a renewed commitment to be about the Master's business of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10).



A Weekly Publication of the
West Jefferson Church of Christ
130 Robert Street
West Jefferson NC 28694
Phone: (336) 846-5615 | Email: info@wjchurchofchrist.org
Volume XII July 21, 2019 Number 29

Minister:

Tim Canup
tim@wjchurchofchrist.org

Times of Services:

Sunday

Bible Study:.... 10:00am
AM Worship:..11:00am
PM Worship:....6:00pm
2nd Sunday:.....1:30pm

Wednesday

Bible Study:.....7:00pm

Radio Program

Sunday:.....7:30am
"Back to the Bible"
AM 580 WSKK
93.5 FM

**We Extend A
Warm & Cordial
Welcome
To All Our
Visitors!**

THE BEGINNING PHASE OF PAUL'S WORK IN ATHENS

Roger D. Campbell

If mention were made of the apostle Paul's efforts to teach the gospel in the ancient city of Athens, many would probably automatically think of his sermon on Mar's Hill. Paul's message at Mar's Hill (Areopagus, Acts 17:19) about the one, true, living God and Creator of all, was fascinating. It delights us to read it time and again. The Bible record plainly shows, however, that Paul's work in Athens did not begin at Mar's Hill. No, he had already laid some groundwork before he received an invitation to speak in that legendary location.

When we hear of the Lord's work going on somewhere in the world today, we sometimes ask, "How did the work there get started? Who started it?" Each congregation of God's church has its own unique history, including the initial efforts to get it established in a particular location. The church in Athens, Greece was no different. How did it get started? Hear what the Bible tells us about Paul's earliest activities in Athens: *"Now while Paul waited for them [Silas and Timothy, rdc] at Athens, his spirit was stirred ['provoked,' NKJV] in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed ['reasoned,' NKJV] he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons [Gentile worshippers,' NKJV], and in the market daily with them that met with him ['who happened to be there,' NKJV]"* (Acts 17:16,17).

Continued Inside

There are a number of evangelistic insights that we can glean from the beginning phase of Paul's work in Athens. Each one of us needs to make an ongoing effort to become more effective in teaching the gospel to others. Our text for this study, Acts 17:16,17, provides some thought-provoking matters along these lines.

You don't have to wait for a bunch of fellow workers to arrive on the scene before you can begin working. Paul didn't. It is fine to invite brethren from other places to come assist us in a special effort to reach out to our community with the gospel. We might even call such a concentrated effort a "Campaign." When we read of Paul in Acts 17:16,17, he was on a one-man campaign! True, he was waiting for Timothy and Silas to come work with him, but while he waited on their arrival, he went to work! The bulletin and announcement-maker said anyone interested in knocking doors to distribute booklets and try to set up Bible studies should meet at the church building at 9:30 Saturday morning. It is now 9:50 Saturday morning, and no one showed up but you, and it is plain that nobody else is coming. What to do? Go to work and do the best you can, just like Paul did in Athens! It is pleasant and encouraging when several of us can work together in a special effort to teach the gospel. But Acts 17:16,17 shows us that we don't have to wait on the rest of the troops to show up before we can get busy!

Our hearts must be moved by people's lost condition before we can effectively teach them. Paul's was. He knew that idolatry is wrong and causes people to be separated from God. He also knew that idolaters must turn from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9). When Paul saw how widespread idolatry was in Athens, his spirit was "stirred" ("provoked," NKJV, Acts 17:16). We, too, must be stirred up by the unrighteousness that causes people to remain lost. Paul wrote that his heart's prayer and desire was for lost Israelites to be saved (Rom. 10:1). Do you and I really care about lost souls?

Our concern for the lost must cause us to take action. Paul's did. Inside Paul there was a strong desire to help folks get out of their sinful state. That desire, though, could not really assist anyone until his desire was coupled with action. Paul took action: he spoke with people. "*He preached unto them*" (17:18), speaking what they considered to be a new doctrine (17:19). It is wonderful to pray for the lost. It is uplifting to sing songs about going out to bring in a harvest of lost people. It is extremely helpful to have personal evangelism classes. It is profitable to have planning sessions. It is inspiring to have experienced workers tell us of their past success in teaching others. Good! Each of the five items mentioned above is a good one – praying, singing, attending classes, having planning sessions, and learning from others. Excellent! But the time must come, beloved, when each of us personally takes action! You and I must not only express care for lost souls in our prayers, songs, and conversations in which we talk about the lost, we must step up and try to teach the lost,

whether it be one-on-one, offering a Bible correspondence course, handing a person a tract, or whatever. Paul took action in Athens. Are you and I doing the same?

When we teach others the gospel, we must reason with them. Paul did. He "disputed" ("reasoned," NKJV) with people in the synagogue and in the marketplace (17:17). Before one can "receive the word" (Acts 2:41; 8:14), he/she must first accept the truthfulness of the message. That means that he/she must be convinced. Part of our role in teaching the gospel to others is to reason with them in order to help them see God's truth and how it applies to their lives. God wants us to be ready to give an answer to the questions that we are asked (1 Peter 3:15). He wants us to answer according to "*the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). Let each of us rejoice at the chance to tell lost people what Jehovah said to the Jewish people of Isaiah's day, "*Come now, and let us reason together*" (Isaiah 1:18). People do not believe and obey the gospel at the snapping of our fingers, nor can we sneak up on them and make them into Christians without them knowing what happened. No, we must reason with them from the scriptures. It takes an open Bible, the open mind of the hearer, and the open mouth of the Christian that is teaching. The teaching process involves reasoning with people. Do not make fun of reasoning or using logical thinking. God said, "*Prove all things*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Reckon that involves any reasoning?

We must not shy away from those that say, "I already have my religion/church." Paul did not shy away from trying to teach those that already counted themselves as religious people. He talked with Jews that were worshipping in the synagogue, as well as others with religious convictions (17:17). We may sometimes feel like we would do much better if we could just find somebody that had no religious background, maybe such a person would be easier to teach. In truth, it has been my experience, as well as the experience of others, that in some cases it really is easier to teach a person that does not have a mind that is cluttered with false religious teaching. That being said, when you and I read the Book of Acts, we find that in the first century, many of those that were taught and converted were already religious people before they heard and obeyed the gospel.

Just think of the examples of conversion in Acts, and you will note that many of them were already religious people: Acts 2 – devout Jews; Acts 4:4 – about 5000 Jews; Acts 6:7 –

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- July 28 – Song Service
- Aug 1-3 – Tent Meeting in Lansing
- Aug 4 – Men's Business Meeting & Ladies' Class
- Please give support money for Chinese orphans to Minnie Kennell