

## ACTS 17:1-6

### THE DEVIL IS A BORING PREACHER

“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 to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, 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.’”<sup>1</sup>

**R**ecently, I read a blog posted by Professor Russell Moore, Dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Doctor Moore had entitled his blog entry, “The Devil Is a Boring Preacher: The High Stakes of Dull Sermons.”<sup>2</sup> The title of Dr. Moore’s blog post is too good to ignore. In fact, I found it so compelling that I could not permit it to go unused in my own preaching schedule. However, more compelling than the title are the issues raised by the good doctor.

The vital point that Dr. Moore emphasised in his blog is that the devil is a preacher. The devil does not, however, present some strange, occult ritual that blatantly contradicts the Bible. Throughout Scripture he quotes the Bible, putting his own peculiar spin on God’s Word. He deceives the unwary through saying what they want to hear, giving them a good feeling about their efforts to be religious. However, when we stop and think about what is said, his message is boring. Hence, there is no lasting impact for good. Those who feel good about their own efforts make no contributions to the progress of grace, and ultimately, no one listens to “nice” sermons.

In contradistinction to the soothing message that the devil brings, those who preach the Word of God are disturbers—they turn the world upside down. The message they bring, when it is received, will cause trouble, create division, and compel disruption in staid lives. However, it is an exciting message whether or not it is received. Join me in thinking about this vital subject, applying our best thoughts to seek God’s glory through the ministry of the congregation.

**THE IMPACT OF BIBLICAL PREACHING** — Jesus was a shocking preacher. Indeed, He is the Prince of Peace. However, this same Prince of Peace warned those who thought to follow Him, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” [**MATTHEW 10:34-39**].

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Moore, “The Devil is a Boring Preaching: The High Stakes of Dull Sermons,” <http://www.russellmoore.com/2009/04/14/the-devil-is-a-boring-preacher-the-high-stakes-of-dull-sermons/>

Earlier, the Master had spoken pointedly to some who said they wished to follow Him. He said, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” [MATTHEW 10:16-22a].

These words anticipate a warning given to His disciples immediately before His Passion. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause’” [JOHN 15:18-25].

It is an axiom of the Faith that the message of the Living God will always generate opposition from individuals who imagine they can control either God or the message He sends by the hand of His messenger. The messenger of God who faithfully delivers the Word of the Lord will be met with rejection and hostility by many within the world. The reason this is true is because the divine message assaults human pride. The unthinking and ignorant imagine that they are the centre of the universe, and therefore any message that threatens their supposed sovereignty over their own life elicits resentment and antagonism.

Perhaps you will recall an incident that is recorded of a time when Jehoshaphat had allied himself with Ahab. All the prophets were prophesying success in a military venture they were planning. In fact, one prophet became absolutely theatrical in his prophetic pronouncement.

“Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron and said, ‘Thus says the LORD, “With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.”’ And all the prophets prophesied so and said, ‘Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph. The LORD will give it into the hand of the king’” [2 CHRONICLES 18:10, 11].

These prophecies had been delivered because Jehoshaphat had insisted that the kings inquire for the word of the LORD [2 CHRONICLES 18:4]. Despite multiple prophecies of success in war against Ramoth-Gilead, Jehoshaphat was uncomfortable and demanded that Ahab find a “prophet of the LORD” [2 CHRONICLES 18:6]. Therefore, Ahab reluctantly agreed to send for Micaiah. His reluctance in wanting to hear from this Prophet of the LORD lay in the fact that Micaiah “never prophesies good concerning [Ahab], but always evil” [2 CHRONICLES 18:7].

When the messenger who went to summon Micaiah found him, he cautioned him to agree with all the other prophets. He was warned to speak favourably before the king. As you know, Micaiah did agree, and the text implies that the tone of his voice betrayed his disgust at the command performance. Ahab, therefore, put him under oath to speak the truth. So Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master; let each return to his home in peace.’”

As you might expect, Ahab was less than thrilled, and so he complained to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

Now focus on Micaiah’s response to Ahab’s pouting. “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ And the LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets. The LORD has declared disaster concerning you” [2 CHRONICLES 18:18-22].

Something similar occurred during the ministry of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was instructed by God to write out a strong message and see that it was read to worshippers in the Temple. Here is the account of the reading of that message as found in JEREMIAH 36. “In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ‘Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin’” [JEREMIAH 36:1-3].

Jeremiah’s message generated a startled response, and some took the message to read to the king. Jehudi was appointed to read what Jeremiah had written to the King, who was in his winter home, a fire pot blazing before him. “As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments. Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them” [JEREMIAH 36:23-25].

Jeremiah embodied the lonely position of one who is faithful to the Lord who appoints to His service. Throughout his service before the Lord and to the people of God, Jeremiah faced continued, unrelenting opposition. Here is one account of the response of the people to his message, because it did not comport with their supposition of God’s blessing on them.

“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ‘Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’”

“The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, ‘You shall die! Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, “This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?”’ And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

“When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, ‘This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears’” [JEREMIAH 26:1-11].

At one point, Jeremiah was so distressed by the fact that his message was so negative that he cried out before the Lord, “Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me” [JEREMIAH 15:10]. This pitiful cry came because everyone grumbled that his message was too hurtful. Couldn’t he say anything positive? God responded to Jeremiah’s whinge,

“Even your brothers and the house of your father,  
even they have dealt treacherously with you;  
they are in full cry after you;  
do not believe them,  
though they speak friendly words to you.”

[JEREMIAH 12:6]

One thing is evident—the Word of the Lord is not boring. It is shocking, disturbing, disquieting, difficult, unsettling, aggravating, agitating—but it is not boring. It excites the passions precisely because it condemns human goodness as inadequate to meet the righteous demands of the Living God. The Word of the Lord generates opposition because it exposes mankind as sinful and in need of divine mercy; and that message assaults human pride. God’s Word will accomplish what He proposes and succeed in fulfilling His will [ISAIAH 55:11].

**THE DEVIL’S PREACHING** — The normal Christian life disturbs the complacent and agitates those who are at home in the world. Sinners are condemned by the mere presence of the godly individual; and they resent the knowledge that the saints express confidence and hope though they live in the midst of a world that lies under condemnation. Peter encouraged believers comprising the Diaspora to live holy lives when he wrote, “Maintain good conduct among the non-Christians, so that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when he appears”<sup>3</sup> [1 PETER 2:12]. He writes as though the world will speak against Christians—it is a probability and not a remote possibility.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul has written a pointed warning for all who even think to live godly before the eyes of the watching world. Listen to a pointed warning to believing saints. “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” [2 TIMOTHY 3:12, 13].

While we often think of the progress of the Faith as inevitable, perhaps even invincible, we must bear in mind that as the age draws to a conclusion, faith in the Living Son of God will wane. The world will continue to be intensely religious, and it seems as if the religious sentiments will be superficially Christian; however, it will not be the Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. It will be a religion that cries out, “There is peace and security.” However, it is important to know that the corollary to that cry is “sudden destruction,” coming upon the world “as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman.” Moreover, those that will have embraced this new religion “will not escape” the divine judgements [see 1 THESSALONIANS 5:3].

---

<sup>3</sup> The NET Bible First Edition (Biblical Studies Press, 2006)

To add emphasis to this warning we need but recall the musing of the Master after He had told the Parable of the Persistent Widow [see **LUKE 18:1-8a**]. Jesus assured His disciples that the Father would give justice to those who continually call out to Him, and then He added, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, *will He find faith on earth*” [**LUKE 18:8**]?

Jesus indicated that the progress of the Age would be toward a society with scant tolerance for the Faith. As the age draws to a climax, He warned that “the love of many will grow cold” [**MATTHEW 24:12**]. Jesus also said, “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed” [**LUKE 17:26-30**]. Life at the end of this age will be indistinguishable from life as we know it, save for one significant exception—there will be few who follow Him or obey His Word.

It is not that the Faith will have failed—it will have succeeded marvellously. Those who are appointed to life will always respond with alacrity to the preaching of the Word, and they will reveal the reality of the new life they have received through living godly lives that glorify the Son of God. Those who are pretenders to the Faith, though claiming to have been born from above, will have no life in them. They will say prayers, perhaps even being numbered among the great throng that shall call out “to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb’” [**REVELATION 6:16**]. They will worship, but they will not meet God. They will sing songs, but they will not glorify God with “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” that spring unbidden from the heart. They will listen to precisely crafted sermons, but they will not hear a message from God. What is vital to remember is that the devil is a preacher, and has been since the beginning of man’s days. Moreover, the devil is an expository preacher. His messages, however, avoid Jesus.

Tragically, many supposed Christians regularly hear sermons from the devil; and these sermons sound biblical! Indeed, they make the listeners feel as if they have really worshipped! It is the *modus operandi* of the wicked one to quote the Word of God, making it palatable by removing any offending portion so that those listening will feel good about what is presented. Indeed, Paul warned the Corinthians that the servants of Satan—themselves religious leaders—“disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” [**2 CORINTHIANS 11:14**]!

In Eden, the serpent presented Himself to our first mother by quoting the Word she had received from the Living God. However, he placed his peculiar spin on that Word [**GENESIS 3:1**]. Throughout the Old Testament, we witness the devil preaching peace—just like the angels who announced the birth of the Messiah—except Satan does so when there is no peace. The devil points God’s people to the particulars of worship precisely as the Lord commanded—sacrifices and offerings and feast-days; however, the devil’s message leaves out the pre-eminent mandates of love, justice, and mercy. Satan even has the effrontery to preach to God, lecturing Him on the proper motives for godly discipleship on the part of His servants [**JOB 1:9-11; 2:4, 5**].

Throughout the Gospels we witness the same satanic deception as it leads the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees to pore diligently and repeatedly over biblical texts. Yet, despite their strenuous efforts to know what is written, somehow they always just miss the presence of Christ the Lord in those prophetic texts. These avid scholars of the Scriptures came to conclusions that had partially biblical foundations—they just intentionally avoided Jesus. They knew what was written, but they were unable to connect the dots to find the way home.

When the disciples left the upper room at Pentecost to bring the message of life into the streets of Jerusalem, the devil was there. He continued to be present wherever the message went, opposing the messengers of God and suggesting a more appealing option for those who listened. Using false teachers to preach all manner of teachings that seem to be straight from God's word—from libertinism to legalism to hyper-spirituality to carnality, Satan was always present. He never stops preaching, and the unwary to this day embrace his message.

Though the devil is a preacher, he is nevertheless boring. This statement seems exactly the opposite of what we imagine to be true of Satan. We imagine the Tempter, and consequently, his temptations, will be darkly exciting, tantalizing, seemingly irresistible. However, that is not the reality of satanic deception. False teaching, as presented in the Word, is boring. Consider what Balaam was paid to preach compared to what he actually announced through the power of the Spirit [NUMBERS 22:5, 6 contra NUMBERS 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9]. Compare the expositions of Job's counsellors to the proclamation of God at the end of the book of Job.

Satanic preaching is boring because the goal of such preaching is not to transform the listener, but rather to leave the "desires of the flesh" undisturbed, so that the hearers may continue in captivity to "the prince of the power of the air." In fact, for many professing Christians, dull sermons are a sign of godliness. So long as such people leave a church service feeling undisturbed, feeling good about what they are doing, feeling good about themselves, they imagine they have worshipped, and they are convinced that they are pleasing to God.

Satanic preaching is boring because though it may speak against sin, it will always be sufficiently vague to permit those listening to assign what is said to someone else. However, God's man must not permit such passing off of responsibility to happen—he must speak plainly, naming names if necessary. When Nathan was sent to confront David, he did not permit the king to misunderstand his meaning, but pointedly said David, "**You** are the man" [2 SAMUEL 12:7]!

Jesus told parables that were offensive to the chief priests and the Pharisees. When they heard what he was saying, "they perceived that He was speaking about them" [MATTHEW 21:45]. When the disciples expressed their concern that Jesus was offending the religious leaders with His pointed words, the Master used the opportunity to instruct them, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" [MATTHEW 15:13, 14].

Paul did not hesitate name Hymenaeus and Alexander as blasphemers whom he had "handed over to Satan" [1 TIMOTHY 1:20]. Remember, these men were professing Christians, and presumed to be righteous. However, they threatened the spiritual health of God's People. Therefore, Paul named them and warned Timothy of the evil they were doing. Later, Paul would warn Timothy to watch out for Alexander as one capable of doing great harm [2 TIMOTHY 4:14]. Though he had previously enjoyed the partnership of Demas in the missionary work conducted, Paul would identify him as a disciple who was "in love with this present world" [2 TIMOTHY 4:10]. By contemporary standards, Paul should have remained quiet about these individuals.

In relating the account of his conversion, the eminent British preacher, Charles Spurgeon demonstrates the power of a personal word. He told how due to a snowstorm he was kept from attending a service of worship as he had planned. Driven by the snow and the cold, he turned perchance down a street that led to a Primitive Methodist Chapel. There were no more than a dozen or so people present that day, and a lay preacher, (Spurgeon thought him to be a shoemaker or a tailor, or some such tradesman), stood to speak, using as his text that which read, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" [ISAIAH 45:22]. Spurgeon noted that the erstwhile preacher did not even pronounce the words right.

As Spurgeon recalled the message in later years, he remembered the preacher saying, “Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pain. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.” And the preacher continued in this vein for a period.

Suddenly, espying Spurgeon as a stranger among them, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” As Spurgeon relates the moment, he recalls, “Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, ‘and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’ Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.’” Spurgeon concludes, “I saw at once the way of salvation... I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, ‘Look!’ what a charming word it seemed to me!”<sup>4</sup> The words were pointed, and young Spurgeon could not dodge what was said.

I know that preaching blessed by God often disturbs those who listen because it seems so personal. Those listening frequently believe they are being attacked personally, or they are convinced that the preacher is attacking others who are good people, or they worry that some unnamed soul will take offence at such plain speech. As Doctor Moore writes, “Jesus was often poorly received—but he never bored. When he preached, demons shrieked, crowds gasped, and services sometimes ended with attempted executions rather than altar calls. The prophets before him and the apostles after him were just like that too. They provoked shouts of happiness or warrants for arrest but they never prompted yawns.”<sup>5</sup>

I have frequently heard the complaint that a message is too plain, that it cuts good people, or that it makes people feel bad. Billy Sunday used to respond to preachers who complained that he rubbed the fur the wrong way to turn the cat around. When sin is exposed, it does hurt those who have embraced that sin. People who live powerless, sinful lives are not simply wayward saints, they are detrimental to the Faith—they threaten the eternal welfare of all who know them because they misrepresent the Faith by their life and they distort the power of God into a pathetic caricature of God’s grace—a pale, anaemic corpse that will destroy all who touch it.

If lost people don’t like the message that is delivered because they’re hostile to the Gospel, the preacher delivering that message is in good company. It is quite possible, even probable, that the professed people of God have been infiltrated by Satan’s henchmen who have insinuated themselves into positions of influence accounting for the hostility. However, if the preacher bores the people of God with the Word of God, something has gone seriously awry. It may be that he has begun preaching just like the devil, and isn’t even aware of what he is doing.

**APOSTOLIC PREACHING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY** — Biblical revelation is anything but boring. The biblical account provides the most exciting, engaging story imaginable, which accounts for the reason the Word of God is repeatedly aped in drama, poetry and song. Sermons typically bore listeners because they rest on abstractions at best, or employ clichés and platitudes at worst. Abstract ideas can easily be distanced from human sin. Satan loves such preaching, because it leaves his authority over human rebellion unthreatened.

---

<sup>4</sup> Compiled by Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrauld, **C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography, Volume 1: The Early Years** (Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA 1962) 87-88

<sup>5</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*

Paul writes of a time “when people will not endure sound teaching.” Instead, he says people will have “itching ears.” Thus, they “will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away into myths” [2 TIMOTHY 4:3, 4]. Remember, Paul is speaking of erstwhile Christians. According to what is written, they are apostate, having turned away from the truth of the Word. Though continuing to maintain their church membership, they no longer walk in the truth.

The reason these apostates will turn aside from the truth is that they are seeking teaching “to suit their own passions.” Paul is saying that apostates are passionate about their own sin, and they seek myths that support their error. They want sermons that sooth their conscience, that lull them into spiritual somnolence—they **demand** preaching that is boring. Whilst they want to feel religious, in reality they want to be left alone to enjoy their lethargy.

Apostate Christians can listen to a sermon that tells them adultery is wrong, that urges them to be courteous and mannerly, even sermons that tell them that God has sent His Son to die for wicked sinners—so long as the sermon does not declare the whole Word of God to expose their own heart as sinful and in need of divine mercy and grace. Apostate Christians will snivel that they can’t handle meat, whimpering that they need milk whenever the Word is preached in power. Apostate Christians will tolerate anything that preserves their carefully crafted religious façade so long as it demands little change in their relationship to the Word.

Biblical preaching is always subversive. Every sermon prompted by the Spirit of God is a salvo unleashed in spiritual combat against the Evil One. As Christians, we must avoid being “ignorant of [the devil’s] designs” [2 CORINTHIANS 2:11]. More particularly, Christians must insist that those who speak the Word of God demonstrate that they are aware of Satan’s strategy. Christians must insist that the preacher of the Word speak pointedly, that he speak the truth in love, and that he boldly expose sin as heinous and destructive whilst calling to righteousness in Christ all who hear the message. Biblical preaching confronts our supposed righteousness, condemning it as unworthy of Christ, and calls us to submit to His reign in every facet of life.

Paul and Silas preached for three Sabbath days in the synagogue at Thesslonica. They were having an impact in the lives of many who heard the message. However, the Jewish leadership was disturbed because they would not tolerate anyone exposing their comfortable religion as fraudulent. Therefore, they instigated a riot, charging that the preachers were those who had “turned the world upside down.” Only the date has change, for when today’s messenger declares the message of life coupled with the demand that it be applied to each life, religious people that have grown comfortable in their religion will charge that the messenger is turning the world upside down—and in truth he *is* turning their world upside down.

I bring this homily to the people of God because you need the message. You need to demand that sound preaching—pointed and readily understood preaching—be presented whenever the preacher stands to speak. Some have complained that my messages are hard to understand. The appropriate response is to ask why, if the messages are hard to understand, such people are disturbed. These folk obviously understand enough to be upset. The people of God must listen to what is said to avoid falling into the trap of being bored by the lifeless message of the devil, whether such a deadening message should come from me, or from someone else.

I bring this message because I need to hear it. I need to be held accountable before God to ensure that I declare the whole counsel of God, and not simply those portions of the Word that I find enjoyable and pleasant. Let me tell you a secret—I want to be liked, and there is always a temptation to soften the message that God gives me in the study. There is always a temptation to avoid hurting people’s feelings. It is only because I fear God more than man that I refuse to take counsel of my fears, closing my ears to the pleas to soft-pedal the message of the Living God.



I preach a demanding message because there are outsiders who have yet to respond to the message of life. Some of them are appointed to life, and they need to hear that Christ Jesus will reign as Master over the whole of one's life, or He will not be their Saviour. They need to realise that "all Scripture is breathed out by God," [2 TIMOTHY 3:16] and that this Word is given for their spiritual benefit.

This is the message of life that must be declared and that must be heard if lives will be transformed. Christ Jesus, very God in human flesh, gave His life as a sacrifice because of your sin. He was buried and rose from the grave on the third day. He walked with those who knew Him, giving many convincing proofs of the reality of His resurrection from the dead—none more dramatic than His presence with His own disciples. Then, He ascended into Heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Now, He invites all who will to receive the gift of life through receiving Him as Master over their own lives.

The Word of God promises, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That Word concludes with a plea that is actually a citation of the Prophet Joel. It is God's invitation to you. "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].

I pray that you are a Christian. I pray that you will stand with me in declaring this message of life in Christ the Lord. I pray that you will be found complete in Him at His return. Surely, He is coming soon. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.