

Subject	Lessons from Acts Series	4417
		Acts 17
Title	7 Lessons from Acts 17	
Proposition	To study Acts 17.	
Objective	To consider seven lessons which Acts 17 helps me to consider and appreciate and apply in my own life.	

7 Lessons from Acts 17

Introduction:

1. Verse 2 of chapter 17 tells us that Paul had a customary approach he made when coming to some new city.
 - 1) He would first go to the synagogue.
 - 2) At Thessalonica Jews who did not accept the gospel opposed Paul's work.
 - 3) At Berea there were those whom all of us ought to follow in that they searched the Scriptures and accepted those things which were in agreement with the Scriptures.
 - 4) At Athens Paul preaches to the educated elite of the day and preached the same message he preached everywhere else.
 - 5) Some mocked, some put off obedience, some believed (17:32-34).
2. OUTLINE:
 - 1) Paul establishes the church at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4).
 - 2) Unbelieving Jews oppose Paul's teaching by stirring up a mob (5-9).
 - 3) Paul and Silas are sent to Berea where they found a NOBLE people (10-12).
 - 4) Thessalonican Jews come to Berea to oppose Paul (13).
 - 5) Paul is sent away to Athens (14-15).
 - 6) The heathen environment of Athens stirs up Paul with an understanding of their need for the truth (16-21).
 - 7) Paul's sermon on Mars Hill (22-31).
 - 8) Paul's listeners respond in various ways to his preaching (32-34).

DISCUSSION: Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

- I. Teaches me an APOSTLE'S APPROACH to studying the saving message with the lost (2-4).

Acts 17:2-4 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, (3) Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. (4) And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

1. First, we should be clear about Paul's purpose in going to the synagogue.
 - 1) He did NOT go there to worship or have fellowship with the Jews.
 - 2) He went there because of his great love of the souls of his fellow-Jews.
 - 3) He knew well that they were LOST without Jesus Christ.

- 4) **Listen to Paul: Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**
- 5) **His ONLY purpose was to present God's plan for saving those lost Jews.**
2. **When we go, what we should do is REASON.**
 - 1) **The word in Greek is *dialegomai*.**
 - 2) **We can see in our English word DIALOGUE a likeness to this Greek word.**
 - 1- **Webster defines it as—interchange and discussion of ideas, esp., when open and frank, as in seeking mutual understanding or harmony.**
 - 2- **This is QUITE different from a MONOLOGUE—a long speech by one speaker, esp., one monopolizing the conversation.**
 - 3) **Maybe we are not as effective in our efforts to evangelize because we have more MONOLOGUES rather than DIALOGUES.**
3. **We must notice that Paul was PERSISTENT in presenting the truth and seeking mutual understanding in that he did so for 3 Sabbaths.**
 - 1) **He would have done so for even longer periods except that they stirred up such opposition that he was endangering the lives of other Christians by staying in Thessalonica.**
 - 2) **He moved on to Berea.**
4. **His source of authority was the SCRIPTURES.**
 - 1) **Before anything will be accomplished in our efforts to convert others we will have to have agreement concerning the ;;SOURCE of AUTHORITY.**
 - 2) **These Jews accepted the OT Scriptures as the word of God and Paul could use the prophecies contained therein to lead them to Christ (cf., Lk 24:25-27).**
5. **A part of Paul's reasoning involved OPENING.**
 - 1) **Thayer says this word is used figuratively to speak of EXPLAINING the Scriptures ... OR to rouse in one ... the desire of learning.**
 - 2) **Paul knew they accepted the Scriptures as God's word, but that they had not properly understood many of the prophecies of the Messiah which those Scriptures contain.**
 - 3) **His intention was to EXPLAIN, to help them properly understand.**
6. **Another part of Paul's reasoning included ALLEGING.**
 - 1) **72.4 παρίστημι^f; παρατίθεμαι^b: to establish evidence to show that something is true— 'to show to be true, to present evidence of truth, to prove.'¹**
 - 2) **Barnes says—maintaining that it must be so.**
7. **That which Paul opened and alleged as he reasoned with these Jews was the DEATH, BURIAL, and RESURRECTION of Jesus, and that He is the Christ.**
8. **This approach is one that Paul used very effectively and should work for us in the 21st Century as well.**

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 672.

II. Indicates 1st Century Christians Considered Jesus their King (7).

Acts 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, **saying that there is another king, one Jesus.**

1. There are many ways the church is pictured for us in the New Testament.
2. When the subject matter is: **HOW IS THE CHURCH GOVERNED**, it is a **KINGDOM**.
3. Jesus is **KING**.
 - 1) He was prophesied to be king...
 - 1- **Psalms 2:6** Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
 - 2- **Isaiah 9:7** Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
 - 3- **Daniel 7:14** And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.
 - 2) **WISE MEN** understood that Jesus was to be **KING** of God's people—**Matthew 2:2** Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
 - 3) Jesus certainly understood His position as **KING**... **Matthew 16:28** **Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**
 - 1- **Mark 9.1** informs us that the people to whom He was speaking would see the kingdom come **WITH POWER**.
 - 2- **Acts 1:8** **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**
 - 3- **Acts 2.1-4** is clearly **THE WHEN** that the Holy Spirit came with power.
 - 4) Paul quotes from Isaiah to prove that the Gentiles were also included as eligible to be a part of this kingdom—**Romans 15:12** **And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.**
 - 5) informs us that God set Jesus at His own right hand in the heavenly places and... **Ephesians 1:22** **And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,**
 - 6) **YES, Jesus is KING—our KING—King over the church of Christ!**
4. The **1st Century Christians** recognized this fact to the degree that the enemies of the gospel in Thessalonica, et.al., tried to use their claim to cause trouble for them before civil authorities.

5. **Do you have that concept of Jesus?**
- 1) **Do you think of Him as your KING?**
 - 2) **To be a subject of King Jesus is the most wonderful blessing anyone could ever have.**
 - 1- **It is only possible through His shed blood.**
 - 2- **How very much our KING loved us!**

Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

III. Describes some people as NOBLE (11).

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

1. **MORE NOBLE... SOURCE: ESV-SB**
 - 1) **NOBLE** translates the Greek term: *EUGENES*.
 - 2) The meaning, originally, was **OF NOBLE BIRTH** or **WELL BORN**.
 - 3) The word was also applied to people who exhibited noble behavior—open-minded, fair, and thoughtful.
 - 4) Thus Luke saw the people of Berea as **MORE NOBLE** in the way they received Paul's message.
2. **What made them MORE NOBLE was that they were STUDENTS...**
 - 1) They were **STUDENTS OF THE BIBLE. ...THE WORD.**
 - 2) They were **DILIGENT. SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES. ... 27.44 ἀνακρίνω^a**: to try to learn the nature or truth of something by the process of careful study, evaluation and judgment—'to examine carefully, to investigate, to study thoroughly.'²
 - 3) They were **HONEST. ...WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.**
 - 4) They were **REGULAR. ...DAILY**
 - 5) They were **PREPARED. WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND**

<http://www.pblcoc.org/media/sermons/audio/2011/08-28-AM-Those-Noble-Minded-Students.pptx>

Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

IV. Suggests a GOOD REASON to be STIRRED UP (16).

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

1. **HIS SPIRIT WAS STIRRED...**
 - 1) **88.189 παροξύνομαι**: to be provoked or upset at someone or something involving severe emotional concern—'to be provoked, to be upset'³
 - 2) **Paul was observant of his surroundings.**
 - 3) **I am confident that he would be searching for anything that would AID him in delivering the message of the cross in a more effective way.**

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 330.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 762.

2. It was a grief of heart to Paul that so many lost souls had turned from worshipping the Creator to worshipping the creature.
 - 1) **Romans 1:20-23** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
 - 2) Any Christian who travels to INDIA will surely feel similar thoughts to the ones Paul had at Athens.
 - 3) Paul knew that the multitudes who were believing in these false gods were lost eternally.
 - 4) He knew they were headed to a devil's hell and it provoked him.
 - 5) He would love to see every single IDOL torn down and destroyed.
3. When you and I open our eyes and observe ERROR, soul-damning error, it OUGHT to be the case that our spirit is stirred.
4. The only way to fight against the idols of men is to present the truth of the gospel in such a way that the hearts of the lost are touched and changed.

Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

V. Shows that a strength in Paul's Teaching was that HE SEARCHED FOR COMMON GROUND (23).

Acts 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.**

1. As Paul observed his surroundings in the city of Athens, he saw something that would serve as the INTRODUCTION of his sermon to these unbelievers.
2. He would get their attention and seek to reason with these people by beginning with a common interest.
3. Paul wanted to please the God of heaven; these unbelievers likewise had gods they wanted to please.
 - 1) Their zeal for pleasing the gods was demonstrated to Paul by the fact that they had constructed an idol to THE UNKNOWN GOD.
 - 2) They wanted to make sure that if they had not covered all of the gods that this special idol would get that covered.
 - 3) Kind of hard to imagine how their reasoning came about, because one would think a god might be **even more offended** with a BLANK PLAQUE or just the word UNKNOWN.
 - 4) Nonetheless, Paul saw it as a good way to start his message to them about the TRUE God.
4. As we seek to teach others the truth of God's word, we can benefit from Paul's method.

- 1) It seems that we are becoming more and more a secular nation.
- 2) So many of our neighbors and friends do not know anything about God or really care anything about Him.
- 3) Of those who do know and care, MANY have been filled with false ideas and presented Scripture-twisting arguments.
- 4) Some attempt to “get on the same page” in order to begin a study of the Bible would seem quite a good and productive procedure.
- 5) Sometimes being observant like Paul obviously was will be a helpful way to know where to begin.

Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

VI. Demonstrates a LACK OF TIMIDITY in setting forth the COMMANDS of God (30-31).

Acts 17:30-31 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

1. Lest these unbelievers get too comfortable in their idolatrous ways, Paul begins to WARN them that a Judgment Day is coming.
2. Yes, God had not yet destroyed them.
 - 1) God had OVERLOOKED the ignorance that motivated the idolatrous worship these Gentiles of Athens practiced.
 - 2) He OVERLOOKED certain things done by the Gentiles in the OT
3. Not only so, He had also OVERLOOKED certain things done by the Jews of the OT.
 - 1) BUT, Paul is making it clear that such is not the case NOW.
 - 2) The full and complete will of Almighty God was NOT available in the PATRIARCHAL AGE.
 - 3) The full and complete will of Almighty God was NOT available in the MOSAIC AGE.
 - 4) The full and complete will of God DID BECOME AVAILABLE when the kingdom was established in Acts 2.
 - 5) God continued to have patience with the Gentiles until the time of Acts 10 when the gospel was preached to the household of Cornelius.
4. Paul is saying that we have NOW arrived at a time when the OVERLOOKING phase is DONE, it is FINISHED, it is NO MORE.
 - 1) There is coming a LAST DAY, a Day of Judgment.
 - 2) John 12:48 **He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.**
 - 1- IF we pay attention to Jesus’ words, it is a simple matter to be READY for that day to come.
 - 2- All we have to do is to read, study, and apply His WORDS to our lives.
5. Paul was not the least bit shy about letting these lost souls know about the coming Judgment Day.

6. Neither should you and I be shy about informing others that this day is ahead.
7. Some we know are not ready for that day—let's pray that we can help them to know of it and of its eternal significance!

Acts 17 Helps me in that it—

VII. Mentions THREE very different RESPONSES to gospel preaching (32, 34).

Acts 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, **some mocked:** and others said, We will **hear thee again** of this matter. + **Acts 17:34** Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and **believed:** among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

1. Some **MOCKED**—Dallas sermons two weeks during PTS.
2. Some **PUT OFF** their response.
3. Some **BELIEVED!!!**

Conclusion:

1. Acts 17 is a valuable chapter.
2. Let's be sure to use it to mine many lessons for Christian living.