

Slide 1

For What Will We Be Remembered?

Acts 17:1-9

Introduction

1. Have you ever stopped to consider how you and I remember people?
 - a. Their relation to us or someone we know (i.e., another person's mother or father, brother or sister, aunt or uncle, etc.)
 - b. A position they held (school, work, business, sports, military, government, etc.)
 - c. A personal accomplishment (discovery made, record set)
2. For what do you most want to be remembered?

Slide 2

3. In Revelation 14:13, as the apostle John is telling us about what he is permitted to see beyond this realm, he hears a voice from heaven, saying to him, "Write, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."
4. What does the Holy Spirit mean by this statement, "for their deeds follow with them"?
5. He means that the character, faithfulness and spiritual impact of our lives as Christians will go with us into eternity — we will be recognized for the life we have lived in Christ.
6. What about here on Earth? How will we be remembered? For what will this congregation of God's people be remembered?
7. Take a minute and look again at the charge brought against Paul and Silas there in Thessalonica:

Slide 3

- a. “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also” (Acts 17:6b, NKJV, ESV, HCSB).
 - b. “These men who have upset the world have come here also” (Acts 17:6, NASB95).
 - c. “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here” (Acts 17:6, NIV84).
- 8. This morning, I want us to look closely at what Luke tells us about Paul and Silas’ journey to the city of Thessalonica and what led up to this charge being made against them.
 - 9. Then, I would like to focus upon Paul’s first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica to see how we can make a difference here in our own community.
 - 10. My desire is that you and I are remembered for the spiritual impact we have upon our community and for the lives which are transformed.

Slide 4

I. Paul and His Companions In Thessalonica

A. THE JOURNEY THERE

- 1. Luke uses one verse to tell of their journey from Philippi to Thessalonica , the capital of Macedonia.
- 2. Paul, Silas and Timothy traveled the great Roman road known as the Via Egnatia from Philippi through Amphipolis and Apollonia to the city of Thessalonica.
 - a. Amphipolis is 33 miles from Philippi.
 - b. Apollonia is approximately 30 miles from Amphipolis.
 - c. Thessalonica is 37 miles beyond Apollonia.
- 2. At 100 miles, it took Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke at least three full days to reach the city of Thessalonica.

Slide 5

B. PAUL'S METHOD OF TEACHING

1. When he arrived in Thessalonica, Paul sought out a Jewish synagogue.
2. As was his custom, he reasoned with them from the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - a. "He reasoned (*dialogomai*) with them from the Scriptures" — **dialogue**, to discuss, converse (i.e., questions and answers)
 - b. "Explaining" (*dianoigō*) — to open, to explain, to make evident
 - 1) This is what Jesus did with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, following His resurrection.
 - 2) "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining (opening) the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:31–32, NASB95)
 - c. "Giving evidence that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead" (v. 3).
 - 1) Proving, presenting evidence of truth (*paratithēmi*)
 - 2) No doubt, he pointed them to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53:7.

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7, NASB95)
 - 3) He may also have used David's

"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."
(Psalm 16:10, NASB95)

3. He then proclaimed Jesus to them:
 - a. His miraculous birth (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2)
 - b. His life and ministry (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3-5; 42:1-3; 9:1-2; 53:4; 56:7; 61:1; 62:11; Zechariah 9:9; Jeremiah 7:11; Psalm 8:2; 78:2; 118:22-23)
 - c. His death and resurrection (Zechariah 13:7; Jonah 1:17; Zechariah 11:12-13; Psalm 22:1,8)
 - d. His exultation and gift of the Holy Spirit
 - e. His present reign and future return (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Daniel 7:13-14; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15)
 - f. His offer of salvation and warning of judgment
4. He persuaded them that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah).
5. He did this for three Sabbaths.

Slide 6**C. THE RESPONSE HE RECEIVED**

1. Some of the Jews of the synagogue were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas (v. 4).
2. A “large number of the God-fearing Greeks” were also convinced (v. 4).
3. Several of “the leading (prominent) women” (v. 4).
 - ❑ Simply put, the Gospel message was believed and obeyed by people of various nationalities and social positions.

Slide 7**D. THE REACTION TO PAUL’S SUCCESS**

1. The Jews who refused to believe were jealous.
2. They went to the marketplace and found a group of “wicked (evil) men” (“bad characters” NIV84, “scoundrels” HCSB) who were willing to join them.
3. They used them to “form a mob and set the city in an uproar” (v. 5b).

4. They went to the home of a man named Jason looking for Paul and Silas.
5. When they did not find them, they drug Jason and some of his fellow Christians before the city authorities.
6. They made their accusation, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” (Vv. 6b-7)
7. The city authorities required Jason and the other men to post a security bond guaranteeing that Paul and Silas would leave town and not return.
8. However, the seed had been sown and the fledgling church in Thessalonica would grow to the point that the apostle Paul would write these words in his first letter to these new Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Slide 8

“For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.” (1 Thessalonians 1:8, NASB95)

Slide 9

II. How Do We Make A Difference?

A. WE START WITH IMITATION

“... you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us ...” (1 Thessalonians 1:5b,6a).

1. Paul, Silas and Timothy served as examples before the Thessalonians.
2. They lived their lives in a way consistent with their message.
3. The Thessalonians in turn became imitators of these men.
4. Twice in his second letter to these Christians, Paul spoke of them following His example:

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because

we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,” (2 Thessalonians 3:7)

“not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.” (2 Thessalonians 3:9)

Slide 10

5. He was constantly calling upon others to imitate him.

“Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.” (1 Corinthians 4:16)

“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” (Philippians 3:17)

“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9)

6. Ultimately, our goal is to imitate the Lord.

“You also became imitators of . . . the Lord” (v. 6a).

7. Initially, as new Christians, we look to other believers as our pattern, but as we mature we realize that Jesus Christ is the one we must all model our lives after (cf. 1 Peter 2:21).

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,” (1 Peter 2:21)

8. Becoming like Christ is God’s goal for every believer (cf. Romans 8:28-29; Galatians 4:19).

a. In Romans 8:29, Paul indicated that it is God’s desire that we “become conformed to the image of His Son.”

b. He told the Christians in Galatia that he was again in labor “until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19)

Slide 11

B. WE THEN BECOME AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW

“... you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia”
(1 Thessalonians 1:7).

1. In Paul's first letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote, “I exhort you, be imitators of me” (1 Corinthians 4:16).
2. Seven chapters later, in this same letter, he wrote, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Slide 12

3. Twice in his letter to the saints in Philippi Paul encouraged the brethren there to follow his example (Philippians 3:17; 4:9).

“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” (Philippians 3:17, NASB95)

“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9, NASB95)

4. In Paul's second letter to the Christians in Corinth, he utilized the saints here in Thessalonica as an example to follow (2 Corinthians 8:1).

“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,” (2 Corinthians 8:1, NASB95)

5. If others imitate your faith, what will they be like?
 - a. Will they become a student of God's Word?
 - b. Will they be a person who is devoted to prayer?
 - c. Will they be convinced that you are a Christian because of the love you demonstrate for the Lord and your fellow man?

Slide 13

[Finally, if we are going to make a difference for Christ, here in our community and beyond, . . .)

C. WE MUST SOUND FORTH THE WORD

1. In the beginning of his first letter to the brethren in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, “For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.” (1 Thessalonians 1:8, NASB95)
2. As he was finishing his second letter to them, he began his conclusion with these words (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;” (2 Thessalonians 3:1, NASB95)

Slide 14

3. Why is it so important that we sound forth God’s Word here in our community and around the world, and why should we pray that it spread rapidly and be glorified?
4. Two reasons:
 - a. It’s supernatural ability (Hebrews 4:12).

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12, NASB95)

Slide 15

- b. The salvation it brings (Romans 1:16-17).

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”” (Romans 1:16–17, NASB95)

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18,

NASB95).

5. You and I are possessors of the most revolutionary message the world has ever heard.
6. For 2000 years it has affected the history of Western civilization in ways we could never have imagined.

Conclusion

1. I come back to the question which serves as the title of this morning's lesson — "For what will we be remembered?"
2. If we want to be remembered for the spiritual impact we will have had upon our community and for the lives which are transformed for Christ, then all of us must work together, serving our Lord and proclaiming His salvation.
3. Our Lord began with twelve men — Paul had Silas, Timothy and Luke.
4. These men literally "turned the world upside down."
3. Imagine what we can do if we each . . .
 - a. Work to imitate our Lord.
 - b. Become an example which others can follow.
 - c. Sound forth the good news of God's salvation.
4. You and I serve a risen Savior who's in the world today.
5. He has given us *"a message true and glad, for the sinful and the sad."*
6. The question we must ask ourselves is "Will we "ring it out" so that "the sinful world might be won to Jehovah's mighty Son"?
7. If you are a person here today in need of God's salvation, why not give your life to Jesus today.
8. Let Him wash away your sin.