

## Acts 17:1-9 NIV

### "Preaching that ticks people off"

"When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. <sup>2</sup> As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,' he said.

"<sup>4</sup> Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women. <sup>5</sup> But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. <sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: 'These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.' <sup>8</sup> When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were

thrown into turmoil. <sup>9</sup> Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go."

**Today's text raises an intriguing question:**

**Why did Jesus' teaching upset religious leaders?**

Sometimes strong egos inflame controversies.

In our text, personalities weren't the only issue.

**Words mattered.**

**Jesus' teachings enraged Jerusalem's bigwigs.**

**Peter and the Apostles got in trouble when they continued Jesus' teaching.**

Religious leaders outside of Israel were irate when Paul preached what Jesus said and did.

**Ferocity and animosity surround us.**



We often wish for the craftiness to overcome them.

**Long ago, our daughter Janice sent me this story:**

"A wealthy man decided to go on an Africa safari. He took his faithful dog along for company. One day the dog starts chasing butterflies and before long the dog was lost. As the canine wandered about, he noticed a leopard heading rapidly in his direction with the obvious intention of having lunch.

The dog thinks, "Oh boy, I'm in deep stuff now."



The dog noticed some bones lying nearby on the ground and immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching big cat.

Just as the leopard was about to leap, the dog loudly exclaims, "**Wow, that was one delicious leopard. I wonder if there are any more around here.**" Hearing this, the leopard halts his attack in mid-stride, and slinks away into the trees. "**Whew,**" says the leopard. "**That was close. That dog nearly had me.**"

Meanwhile, a monkey had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree and figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the leopard. So off he goes.

The dog, however, sees the monkey heading off after the leopard and figures that something is amiss. The monkey soon catches up with the leopard, spills the beans about the dog's ruse. He and the leopard strike a deal.

The leopard, furious at being made a fool of says, "**Hop on my back, monkey, and see what's going to happen to that conniving canine.**"

Now the dog sees the leopard coming with the monkey on his back, and thinks, "**Oh boy, it looks like I've really had it now.**"

Instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to the leopard and monkey, and pretends that he hasn't seen them. When they get close enough to hear him, the dog says, "**Where the heck is that monkey? I sent him off an hour ago to get me another leopard and he's still not back.**" **The dog and leopard will never be friends, right?**

**The struggle between the dog and the leopard related to survival.**

The aggression in our text went beyond instincts.

**What aroused all that hostility?**

**Much of the intense opposition came because Jesus' followers told Jesus' original message. Paul and Silas stated it perfectly.**

**Recall that Philippi had no synagogue, but Thessalonica did.**

Acts outlines Paul's usual approach.

Attend Sabbath synagogue services.

Politely wait for an opportunity;  
then explain and prove God's Word.

**In our text, Paul followed this routine:**

“On three Sabbath days he (Paul) reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,’ he said.”

**As God’s Messiah, Jesus achieved two realities: suffering and rising from the dead.**



**Why did so many first century and 21<sup>st</sup> century folks reject those two truths?**

**1. The Messiah (Christ) had to suffer.**

When Paul went to synagogues on Sabbath days, he probably asked to read the Isaiah scroll.

**He likely unrolled the scroll and read from this section.**

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.”<sup>1</sup>

**People knew of this prophecy but they never applied it to the Messiah.**

**“Why not?” you ask.**

**The reason: we like strong bold folks who lead us to victory with little effort on our part.**

**The shiny-armored knight rescues us and make things right.**

**He vanquishes enemies and restores order.**

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross,”<sup>2</sup> folks mocked at the crucifixion.

Whether in movies or framed to hang on walls, depictions of Jesus usually feature a handsome man.

**Successful people tend to be taller and are generally judged to be good looking.**

**But Christ the Messiah** “was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”

**When the Sabbath leaders later read from their section known as the *Writings*, Paul likely asked for the scroll containing *Psalms 22*.**

**He would read:**

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 53: 2-4 NIV See Psalm 22’s remarkable details of Jesus’ death and rising.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 27:40 NRSV

"I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. <sup>7</sup>All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads."

**Paul would tell the worshipers about Jesus' kangaroo trial and the mockery he endured when he died on the cross.**

**Jesus showed us how to put God first and patiently wait for him.**

**Jesus' road to victory takes us through testing stages.**

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."<sup>3</sup>

As Paul wrote:

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."<sup>4</sup>



**The world strives for glory, honor, and admiration; it rejects servant-hood.**

When we give testimony, we often suffer.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 4: 15, 16 NLT

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:17 NIV

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Rise from the dead.**

**Except at Easter time, church folks don't say much about resurrection.**

**Yet resurrection is the Lord's core message.**

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup>By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also. . . ." **I Corinthians 15:1-8.**

**Those two factors; the suffering Messiah and his resurrection regularly upset Jewish leaders.**

## **3. Others were jealous.**

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12 NIV

Pilate recognized it in the chief priests (Mark 15:10).

### Three facts keep us faithful through suffering.

- **God controls history.**

#### Regarding King Football: The

Lord sent a reminder of who is in

control when that young player

nearly died on the field a few

weeks ago and players knelt to

pray. People talked about prayer's power,

yet few gave God credit.



#### Earthquakes and storms testify to His control.

The world might not see the connection;

but God's people should.

**Events move according to God's will, not human plans.**

#### God controls history.

We should rejoice that our loving God rules.

- **Here's the second reason we endure.**

**The Lord will correct every wrong—He will hold unrighteous folks accountable.**

**There are lots of angry people--so angry at the actions of others they can't get anything done.**

**God assigned us the task of telling Good News; not straightening out other people.**

A young girl once consulted with her minister.

"I can't stick it out any longer.

I'm the only Christian where I work.

I get nothing but taunts and sneers. It's more than I can stand I'm going to quit."

"Will you tell me," asked the minister, "where lights are placed?"

"What's that got to do with it?" the young Christian asked rather bluntly.

"Never mind," the minister replied, "answer my question: 'Where are lights placed?' "

"I suppose in dark places," she replied. "Yes, and that's why you've been in that work place . . . where there is no other Christian to shine for the Lord."

She later led nine young women to Jesus.

In the judgment, the Lord will take care of evil.

**That's a second reason we endure with Him.**

- The third reason relates to Jesus' resurrection. If we are children of the resurrection, they might kill us but they can't keep us down, because we are God's children; heirs with Christ.
- We rejoice because God is in control.
  - He will correct all wrong.
- In the resurrection, He will raise all who trust him.

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