

Acts 17:16-18; 22-23**Passage Guide**

In Acts 9 we read how Jesus saved Paul and drastically changed his life. Paul deserved wrath and death for his persecution of the church but Jesus chose to give Him grace and mercy. Paul deserved condemnation and isolation but Jesus chose to strategically call other believers to reach out to Paul and care for him in his time of need. God developed a faith in Paul that changed everything about who he was and how he lived out his remaining days on earth. Paul's core belief about Jesus and His kingdom directed his life and it is evident throughout the pages of Acts. Paul rejoiced when he faced persecution and death knowing there was a greater good. Paul faced ridicule over his preaching, but relied on the Holy Spirit to take his feeble words and change hearts. Everything changed for Paul after He Jesus saved him. He was provoked to action by the great love he had experienced.

We too have conversion stories of how God pursued us relentlessly and revealed his unending love and grace to us. We have stories of how He has given us victory over life stealing addictions, stories of His continued grace in the midst of our struggles and stories of how God has used us in miraculous ways to reach the city for His glory. God has been very good to us. He has saved us and given us life in Him. In 2 Corinthians Paul beautifully sums up this love in one verse. He writes, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus is our only hope and only in Him do we have right standing before the Father.

How does this truth of Jesus work on our behalf change our lives? How has it directed and driven the way we live? The book of Acts reveals believers whose actions display their beliefs. They believed Jesus was God and they worshipped Him with their entire lives. They knew they were indwelt with the Holy Spirit and through His power reached the cities they entered with the gospel. They believed Jesus was the ultimate treasure and they gave everything they were to make much of Him.

Are we provoked by the gospel in the same manner the early believers were provoked? Are we provoked to take action against the brokenness in our city? Paul looked around at Athens and he was provoked to engage the lost in hopes they would come to experience the ultimate joy of worshipping Jesus. Paul greatly distressed over the brokenness of the city. We too should be provoked by the brokenness in our city. Understanding that thousands upon thousands of people in our city don't know Jesus should prompt us into action. However, we must be effective in the action we take. Paul looked around and engaged the society he lived amongst with reason. This was the adequate response of action in Paul's culture. How should we strategically engage our culture with the gospel? If we believe Jesus is the only way to life and victory of our cities brokenness than our lives will be directed by His mission to save and redeem the world. Let us be believers whose lives are directed by our belief in Jesus. Let this belief change everything about how we live. Let us dialogue with one another in developing the best methods for reaching our city. Let us sacrifice all we are and all we have to make Jesus known in our city. Pray that God would help us be provoked by the joyous message of the gospel which is too great to keep to ourselves!

Application Questions

- What are some ways we can reach our city with the gospel? What methods would work given the city in which we live? What methods would not?
- How are our idols removing our affections from Jesus? How are these idols keeping us from reaching our city with the joyous message of the gospel?
- What brokenness in our city breaks your heart? Are you provoked to action? What would be the most

- effective course of action in dealing with these issues?
- Who in our city will you invite to Vintage 21 Church on December 4th?

Prayer

- Ask God to help us be provoked to action and engage the brokenness of our city.
- Ask God to reveal any idols in our lives and help us to remove them from our lives.
- That God would use us to reach our city and build His kingdom.
- That God would not let us feel any guilt or condemnation while examining our lives. Rather, that we would run to Him in our failures knowing He is full of grace and mercy.