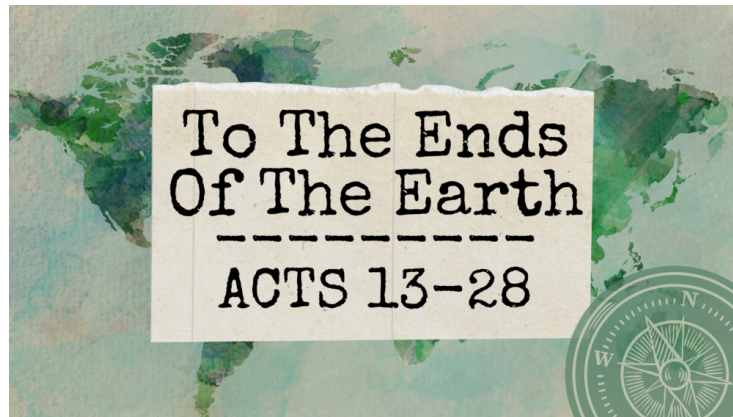


Living Right Side Up in an Upside Down World



Acts 17:1–15

Bro Kory Cunningham

Very seldom when a 76-year-old florist retires does it make national news in almost all the headlines of newspapers. But this week, a 76-year-old florist retired and it made national news. If you do not know about Barronelle Stutzman, she is the owner of Arlene's Flowers, and I want to read a few things that were said from these various news sources. Here is where the story picks up. It says this, "In 2013, the florist declined to make flower arrangements for the wedding of longtime customer and friend, Rob Ingersoll and his partner Curt Freed. She said as a Christian, she believes such a union would violate her faith and she could not make a floral arrangement for a same sex wedding." She says this, "I had always been happy to sell him flowers" [talking about Rob] in a November 18th letter. "Celebrating his marriage," she said, "was a line I could not cross even for friendship. I'm a Christian and I believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

That word makes it clear that God loves all people so much that He sent His Son to die in their place,” she said. “And it also teaches that He designed to be marriage to be only a union of one man and one woman. I could not take the artist’s talent God Himself gave me and use them to contradict and dishonor His Word.” In an opinion piece that she wrote in the USA Today, she wrote this, “Rob deserved a floral designer who could give her all to make his wedding a success. Because of my faith, I couldn’t be that person, but that is why I gave him the names of three other floral artists.”

So here is a lady, she owns a flower shop. And there is a potential situation where she would have to disobey her conscience, her beliefs. In a very loving, very kind, very convictional way, she has to say no to something that is very culturally normative. Now she thought at that moment that everything would be fine because she and Rob are really, really good friends. She has been serving Rob for a decade. She loves Rob. She loves making flowers for Rob. She has done all sorts of things for Rob, but this is one line that she could not cross. And she thought that would be fine because they are great friends. He left. And then the attorney general got ahold of the story and filed a lawsuit against her. And for the last eight years, she has been in a court battle that was going to go to the Supreme Court but it got declined. And now, with legal fees and all the things, she just cannot pursue it anymore. She says I am going to bow out and I am going to retire and I am going to give the flower shop to my employees because I just cannot fight the fight any longer. But I am not going to cross this line that I think is convictional about my faith.

And we read a story like that, I think for the outside world it looks really upside down. To the outside world, it seems so strange. Why would someone give up her livelihood? Why would someone give up her shop for just something so simple, so normal, something that is so widely accepted? Why not just cave? Why not just give in? To the watching world, to all these news outlets, it seems so upside down. It seems so backwards.

We are going to see from Acts Chapter 17, when we see Paul and Silas and Luke and Timothy, they are also living in a way that appears very upside down. It appears very strange; so much that they are going to have the

reputation of being those men who turn the world upside down. But hopefully, we are going to see from their examples and from Ms. Stutzman's example that as Christians we are called to be those who live right side up in an upside down world, that we actually inhabit a world that is turned upside down, a world that does not always agree with the Kingdom of Christ. So what do we do as Christians? Well, we live right side up in a world that is upside down so that perhaps those who are upside down might see right side up.

We are read the reputation of these men in Verses 6 and 7 of Acts chapter 17, and then we are going to walk through this story together.

Scripture

"And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authority shouting, 'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them and they were all acting against the decrees of Caesar saying that there is another king - Jesus.'"

Before we get to this charge, before we get to their reputation, let's look at what preceded this, what brought them to Thessalonica. We are going to see that Paul is going to go into a Jewish synagogue, and we are going to learn some important things about the gospel before we get to this reputation that they are turning the world upside down.

Look back in Verse 1. It says, "...they came to Thessalonica." We have heard of Thessalonica because there are two letters in the Bible from the apostle Paul to this city: I and II Thessalonians. So we know that God does some amazing things in this city. Let's see what happens when they come to Thessalonica. It says, "...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.'"

Right off the bat, Paul goes into a new city and he finds the synagogue. We are told that on three different Sabbaths (so that is three Saturdays), he goes into the synagogue. This would have been normal Jewish worship. He goes in there and he opens their bible. Their bible is the Old Testament. He opens the Old Testament and it says he reasons with them, he explains to them, and he proves some things to them, mainly that it was necessary for the Messiah...now you have got to understand, the Jewish people, they believe in the Messiah. They have been promised a messiah. The whole Old Testament story is there is a messiah coming whose going to save you from your sins. There is a messiah coming whose going to set up God's Kingdom, so they all know a messiah is coming. What Paul does is he reasons with them on three different Sabbath days showing in the Scriptures that the messiah they were hoping in and waiting for actually has to die and rise again, that it is necessary for the messiah to both die and raise from the dead. — He said, and by the way, the guy you are looking for? He has already come. He has already died and rose again, and His name is Jesus.

For three weeks, Paul is doing this. Now if you read I and II Thessalonians, we can put it together that Paul probably spent more time than just three weeks in this city, but we know at some point he is spending three consecutive Sabbaths going into the synagogue and teaching them from the Scriptures that it is necessary for Christ to both die and raise from the dead, and that Jesus is that Christ. He has come. He has already died. He has already risen from the dead. So you can believe in Him.

Paul Tethers Jesus to the Scriptures

I want us to see a few things in this stop in the synagogue. First, Paul tethers Jesus to the Scriptures. He does not come bringing some novel message...*Hey, I have got some good news that is apart from the news you have...*No, he tethers Jesus to the Old Testament Scriptures and he shows them how the Old Testament is really about Jesus, that Jesus is that Messiah. But he also says two important things about the Messiah, about Jesus. He must die and He must raise from the dead. So why is Paul so emphatic about making sure they know it is necessary — he uses that

word, necessary — for Jesus to die and rise again? Why is that necessary for our salvation?

Some of this is going to be like Christianity 101. If you have been in the faith for a while, this is going to be old news, but hopefully it is still good news. I had a conversation just last week with an adult who asked me, “What is the gospel? I am really confused about the gospel.” I thought that is a really good question. And this conversation happened here at church. So I know even for some of us who have been coming, maybe it is your first time, you are having questions about what is this gospel. Who is this Jesus guy and why does He matter? Paul is going to say it is necessary for Him to die and rise from the dead. Why is that necessary? Why is our salvation hinging on, did Jesus die and rise from the dead?

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

We will start with His death. Why did Jesus have to die? Well, the Bible will answer that question because Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” In other words, because of our sin, we owe a payment to God, and the payment to God is death. He told Adam and Eve — the moment you sin, you will die. So our wage, our payment, we owe God a check, and that check is death. Our own death is what we owe to God. That is our payment. Why did Jesus die? He died in our place for our sins. In other words, Jesus paid our sin debt. Jesus paid your sin debt, which is death, to God. I should have died on a cross. You should have died on a cross because you owe God eternal death, but Jesus took your place so that your death penalty could be paid. That is the first part of the good news.

I do not know about you, but I really wish Luke would have just spent some more time and given us a few more pages and told us where all Paul went in the Scriptures when he reasons with them and explains to them that Christ had to die. Wouldn't that be cool? Imagine if we found Paul's original bible study that he did at this synagogue and Lifeway got ahold of it and tried to sell it. That would be a pretty good Bible study to buy, The Gospel According to Paul from the Old Testament. I am trying to imagine where all Paul would have gone in the Old Testament. If he started with Genesis 3, where you have the fall and then you have them covering

themselves with fig leaves. Then God kills an animal and brings garments of skin, so death is how you get covered, blood is how you get covered and how that points to the cross. They were covered by the blood of Christ.

I can imagine he went to Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 where Abraham is supposed to sacrifice Isaac. He has the knife and is getting ready to sacrifice his son, and God shouts stop! Then there is a ram in the thicket that Abraham gets to bring and put in the place of Isaac. Isaac gets to live. The ram dies. It is a substitutionary atonement. Paul would have been able to say, by the way, that mountain is the same mountain where the temple is, and that temple is the place that all of Israel have been bringing blood and goats to go and put on the alter as a replacement. We deserve death, but the blood of these bulls and lambs replaces our death. And that temple? Paul would have been able to tell them Jesus said... *That temple is actually me. Destroy me and I will be resurrected three days later.* Think about all the places Paul would have probably gone. I am sure Isaiah 53 would have been one that he would have spent some time in.

Not only did Jesus have to die to be our substitute, to pay our death penalty, but Jesus also had to rise from the dead. Now where did Paul prove that from the Old Testament? He does not say. Maybe he went to Psalm 16 where it talks about death and resurrection. Maybe he went to Psalm 22 where we have the cross and we have statements from the cross, and then we are going to worship that one who dies. Well, how does it happen? It is through resurrection. I do not know where Paul went to in the Old Testament, but the themes of death and resurrection are all throughout the Old Testament. And Paul would have gone to those places and said it is clear...in order to be right with God, someone has to die in your place for your sins and rise from the dead, and He is the Messiah. And the Messiah's name is Jesus. Paul would have walked with them through that.

Let's just think about this idea that Christ had to both die and rise from the dead because maybe some of you don't really understand the gospel either. You want to know what is the gospel. Well, let's read Romans Chapter 4 beginning in Verse 22, here is what it says. "That is why his faith (Paul is talking about Abraham in the Old Testament) was counted to him

as righteousness. But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Paul is arguing both of those things. Christ had to die. Why? He died for our trespasses, our sins. He is paying our sin debt, but He also had to rise from the dead. Why did He have to rise from the dead? For our justification. What does that mean? It means to make us right with God. You did not only need your sins forgiven, you also needed righteousness. You also needed goodness and you needed new life. And so through the resurrection of Jesus, when He walked out of the tomb on that third day, He is giving you, by faith, His very righteousness. He completely fulfilled the law. He completely obeyed His heavenly Father. He is saying if you believe in me, then I will swallow up your sin through my death and through my resurrection, I will give you my very righteousness. You will be one who has always obeyed the law and always obeyed our heavenly Father because you will have my righteousness and you will have life. Both those things are necessary. You do not just need forgiveness. You need righteousness. How do we get righteousness? Through the resurrection of Christ. When He rose from the dead, He is saying I am going to give you my perfect life. I am going to take your sin and give you my perfect life and I am going to give you life that lasts forever.

Paul, he goes into a synagogue. And what does he do? He uses the Scripture. That tethers the gospel to the Scripture. So what is the gospel? It is the good news that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus died in your place for your sins and rose again to make you right with God. That is the good news. So how do we get that? We believe. We believe that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God who died for our sins and who rose to make us right with God. That is the gospel. That is the good news, and Paul wants the synagogue to know the good news of Jesus. He has been talking about it over and over again all through Acts. What we are going to see is the gospel. It is necessary, both the death and the resurrection of Jesus are necessary, to save you from your sins. There is no other way. You need forgiveness and you need righteousness. That happens at the cross and at the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

Responses to the Gospel

But we are going to see the gospel often has two different responses. There is going to be a positive response and a negative response at this synagogue. Let's read and see what happens. It says this in Verse 4, "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." So, some of them were persuaded. Now remember, how is Paul doing this? He is reasoning. He is explaining. He is proving. He isn't browbeating. He isn't yelling. He isn't forcing. We do not force Christianity on anybody. We reason. We explain. We prove from the Scriptures. And we call to repentance. And as he does this, there are people who repent and believe in the gospel. There are people who join into the Kingdom of God.

And then we get that word "but." Now we are going to have some opposition. Notice what it says in Verse 5. "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." Now just think about the irony there. Here you have these Jews who were in a synagogue. It is a Sabbath day. And you have Paul coming in, and very reasonably, just opening the Bible saying I want to show you who the Messiah is. Let's look at the Scripture. He reasons with them. He explains to them. He proves them. And so here are Jews who have come to synagogue. It is like us. We have come to Sunday morning church. We went to Sunday school. We are excited. We went to preaching. We heard worship. And then we decided that after church we are going to go into the city and go try to find some guys who are up to no good, some wicked men, who might have some clubs and some bats and might be up for a riot. And then we are going to go get those guys and incite those guys to set all of Murray and Marshall County into an uproar. Would that be an odd thing for us to do as Hardin? We have come to worship and now we are going to go set both cities in an uprising. But this is exactly what happened.

They are leaving the synagogue and these Jewish guys who think we are better than those Gentiles, those wicked men, they are going to get wicked men to do their violent bidding against Paul. That is how much they

despise the gospel message. That is how much they despised Paul. They aren't being reasonable. They are being unreasonable. They do not want to have a conversation. No. They just want to break some things to show by violence that they want him to leave. They are going to get their way by yelling, not through talking. And so here is this whole city, it is set in an uproar. There is a lot of pressure now for Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy. They are trying to bring these guys the gospel but they do not want any of it.

Now why such opposition? Why such hostility towards the gospel message? We are going to see what the synagogue leaders had to say about these missionaries. Notice their reputation. Look at this in Verse 6. They are attacking the house of Jason. Presumably, Jason came to Christ and now he is hosting these men in his house, so of course that is a no-no. Verse 6 says this, "And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities shouting..." They are dragging Jason. They are dragging these guys out. They have got this mob mentality. Now they are going after these guys. And here is what they say, "These men (talking about Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke) who have turned the world upside down have come here also. And Jason has received them and they were all acting against the decrees of Caesar saying that there is another King, Jesus." I do not know why but that is one of my favorite little statements in Scripture. I love the reputation of these men have to these Jews who are in the synagogue, who are opposing the gospel. These missionaries are coming into the city of Thessalonica, and what are they accused of? They are accused of everywhere they go; they turn the world upside down. I do not know about you, but that would be a really cool statement to say about your life. Everywhere you go, you turn the world upside down. They are saying it as a bad thing. I am saying this is a good thing. They are doing a good thing in turning the world upside down, although it is seen as a very bad thing.

Now, why is it a good thing to turn the world upside down? Because what it means in the Greek language, John Stott would say, it is a social upheaval. They are upheaving culture. They are causing rifts. They aren't doing the norms. They are acting against culture, against norms. They are

those who are, well, changing things. They are turning things upside down. They are living in a way that isn't in line with the culture they are in. So they are seen as troublemakers. They are seen as rebels. They are those guys that everywhere they go the world turns upside down. Do you know why they are doing it? It is because they say that there is another king. They say Caesar isn't in charge. They say there is another guy who is King, and His name is Jesus.

Why is it a good thing, in my mind, that they are turning the world upside down? Well, because if we think about it, the world that we inhabit, and the world that Paul inhabited, is already upside down. The culture Paul is in is turned upside down. And we have got to understand the culture that we live in, the world we live in, is upside down. Here is what I mean. It is not the way God intended it to be. Things aren't the way they are meant to be, because ever since Adam and Eve turned away from God and turned to themselves, the world experienced a fall. And sin has affected everything. Sin has twisted everything. The world has rocked on its axis. The world is now upside down. We do things, believe things, and behave things that are contrary to how God intended it to be from the beginning. The world was made by God for Him to be the center of it.

Why is that? It is because He is God. The only way the world is right side up is when God is at the center of it, when He is honored and glorified and all thanks is given to Him. But Adam and Eve decided that instead of a world that is God-centered, they wanted the world to be us-centered, so they walked away from God. They disobeyed His Word. They turned the world upside down and now we live in a world, from Paul's day to our day, where God is not the center. We have put either gods or ourselves at the center. In Paul's culture, it was probably more gods, idols, and emperors that were at the center of the world. But for us, in our culture it is probably more that we are at the center of the world — that everything revolves around us. It is all about me, my story, my life, and living my unique experience and getting everyone else to agree that my unique experience is the absolute best one in the whole world. We live in a world that is me-centered rather than God-centered, and that is an upside down world. We live in a world that isn't under the Kingdom of God but is under the

kingdom of man, and that is an upside down world. We live in a world that rather than being holy, it is very unholy, and that is upside down. We live in a world that rather than being righteous, it is very unrighteous, and that is upside down. We live in a world that rather than loving our neighbor as ourselves, we love ourselves way more than we love our neighbors. That is a world that is upside down, a world that was meant to have an eternity in view only thinks about right now. That is a world that is upside down.

See, Paul is accused of turning the world upside down. He is accused of living upside down, but in reality, he is actually the one who is right side up! He and these missionaries are living right side up in a world that is upside down. So to the world that is upside down, they are the ones who look upside down — but the reality is they are the guys who are actually right side up.

So what do we glean from this? How do we follow in their example? We have to be men and women, boys and girls, who would live our lives right side up in a world that is upside down, because our world is just as upside down as their world was upside down. So, how do we live right side up in a world that is upside down? Well, if you notice what it says about Paul and these other missionaries, you notice that not only is their reputation that they are turning the world upside down, but they are actually saying something. They are saying there is another king — that Caesar is not king but this guy Jesus is King, and in declaring Jesus King, they are acting against the decrees of Caesar. They are acting against the laws and norms of their culture that they have all agreed on, that Caesar has told them are right and true. They are acting against those decrees saying Caesar is not in charge, Jesus is. And this is flipping the world upside down. It is causing a rebellion. It is causing ripples everywhere they go.

If you want to live right side up in an upside down culture, you have to have the right king. The right King is Jesus. Instead of saying culture rules, or you rule, or Caesar rules, you say Jesus rules and reigns, and you obey and follow Him.

For Paul's culture, the obvious thing was to say Caesar is lord. It was the law. By law, you had to say Caesar is lord and there is no other. Roman

guards would come with spears to your neck demanding you say that Caesar is lord and there is no other. And here are missionaries coming in saying no he is not. He is not lord, Jesus is. And that is against the decrees of culture, and it causes mayhem. It causes upheaval. It causes riots. It causes things to begin to change. They are turning the world upside down because they have a different king.

Two Primary Temptations for Our Culture

For the Thessalonians, they believe Caesar is lord. That is what they did. But in our culture, we do not have to believe Caesar is lord. That would be really strange if you went around saying Caesar is lord. But I think in our culture, we have different temptations. It isn't to believe Caesar is Lord, but it is to obey all of the various 'Caesars,' all of the various power structures, all the various narratives that our culture will tell us that become Caesars, become places of authority. I think that is the first of two primary temptations we have — to bow to all of the Caesars of our culture, all of the power structures, all the authority, all the narratives that we are told that are against the Kingdom of Christ. We are tempted to bow to those and to obey those. But the second thing we are tempted with is actually to become Caesar ourselves, to become the place of authority, to become our own lord.

- **Bow to Our Cultural Caesar**

The first one, to bow to Caesar — we do not have a Roman guard sticking a spear in our face saying you need to claim Caesar as lord. No, we have Tik Tok. We have Instagram. We have social media. We have influencers everywhere telling us here is the narrative. Here is what is good. Here is what is right. If you believe this, you will be good and you will be right. If you do not believe this, you will be wrong. You will be an outcast. You will be left behind. You will be out of step. You will be backwards. You will be upside down. But in reality, most of these times you aren't upside down, you are actually right side up. It is the culture we live in that is often upside down. So we have all these different power structures. It is just if you believe the right thing and do the right thing, then you will be accepted, so we are so tempted to bow down to whatever power structure

that we come under. Maybe it is a political system and we will just come under that and agree with everything without even thinking it through. And we believe that under that power structure, we are going to be safe, we are going to be good, we are going to be okay. Yet, Paul and these others come along and say no, Caesar isn't Lord, Jesus is. So we are going to bow to Jesus. We are going to bow to Jesus alone.

Now, let's be clear. Jesus said give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give God what belongs to God. So, pay taxes and obey the government, but when it comes to the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world clashing — when Caesar and Christ disagree, we go with Christ.

That is what Paul, Silas, and Timothy are doing, and it is causing...well, it is causing the world to turn upside down. So we are tempted to bow down to all the different Caesars, all the different influences that are against Christ in our own culture.

- **Become Caesar**

But secondly, we are tempted in a way Paul was not. Paul was not tempted to become Caesar. You are. Do you know how I know that? Paul did not have a backwards camera on his phone. It would be very strange for Paul to hear that we have backwards cameras on our phone. Why do I need a backwards camera on my phone? So I can take a picture of me eating my food and share it with people, because everyone needs to see when I eat my food because I am the most important person in the universe, and the whole world needs to know what I ate for dinner. We have selfie cameras! Can you imagine explaining that to our great-great-grandparents?...*Hey, I have got a selfie camera so I can take a picture of myself at all times and let everybody know where I am...* That would be strange to them. It isn't strange to us, right? It is the most normal thing for us because we live in a culture that says — You are Caesar. You are lord. You are the most important being in the universe. You deserve to have your story as supreme so that everyone else notices you, that you live out who you are, that you be who you are, that no one else tells you anything different. You are the most important. You are Caesar.

So, we have two temptations in our culture. Number one is to bow down to all the various Caesars of our culture. The second one is to become Caesar ourselves and to live a self-absorbed life that is all about us. And both of those are appropriate responses if you are living in an upside world. But if you are going to live right side up in an upside down world, you have to live differently.

Living Right Side Up

So how do we live differently? It starts with not bowing to the Caesars of our culture. It starts with bowing to King Jesus. That we would bow to Christ. That we would say, God, I am following you in my word, and I am bowing with what you say about my life. You define me. I am bowing to you. You alone are my authority. So we bow to Jesus, not the Caesars of our culture.

And then secondly, we do not try to become Caesar. Instead, we remind ourselves that we belong to Jesus. Do you see the difference? Be Caesar, or belong to Jesus. Those are two totally different paths. Number one says if I am Caesar, I am creator, I am Lord, I am ruler, and I do what I want. Belonging to Jesus says I am not independent; I am dependent. I am not the creator; I am creation. I did not make this; I am a made being who is meant for God, and so I want to belong to Jesus. I want to give my life to Jesus. I do not want to be; I want to belong. I do not want to define myself; I want Christ to give me my cues so I can walk in His goodness and His mercy and His love.

From this example in Acts, I think what we are charged to do is to live right side up in a culture that is upside down. Now, how do we practically do that? How do we practically make that happen? How do we live right side up in a culture that is upside down? We aren't trying to pick fights with people. No, we just want to live out our convictions in a kind way so that the world would take notice so that those who are upside down might actually see right side up. How might we do this? We take a cue from the Scriptures that we claim Jesus is King, not Caesar, not me — not culture, not myself, Jesus is King, I am going to follow Him. And in following Jesus as King, do you know what would be really rebellious in our culture? Live

out the fruits of the Spirit. Just cultivate the fruits of the Spirit and I promise that you will be a rebel in the culture you live in and you will begin to turn the world upside down. We might not think about this, but if you look at the fruits of the Spirit, they are in rebellion to the cultural norms of our culture. Just notice the fruits of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 says this, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such, there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." We do not think right off the bat about how countercultural that is, but just take that template and put it over the newspapers you read, the cable news you watch, the social media trends you follow, the YouTube videos you look at. Overlay those platforms with the fruits of the Spirit and ask, is that our culture? Are we a culture of love and gentleness and self-control and patience and kindness and goodness? Does that mark our culture, or is that very upside down, according to culture?

When we think about our own culture that we live in, often love is replaced with lust, because we do not live in a right side up world; we live in an upside down world. The upside down world says no, not love — not God's love, not agape love — but let's make that lust. Just gratify your desires. We replace joy with instant gratification. Just be happy right now in the moment. Do not worry about joy. Do not worry about this long-term, abiding joy that you can have in Christ. Just be happy right now in the moment. That is what our culture sells.

Think about peace. We do not have peace. We have Twitter, which if you just look at and read some comments, you will know we aren't a very peaceful people. We do not have patience; we have next day shipping. And if it isn't there, we are calling Amazon looking for our package. We want it today. We aren't a patient people; we are a right-now, instant, have to have it, give me one day or right now shipping.

Think about kindness. Are we really marked with a culture of kindness? Or are we more a culture of rage? Are we more of a culture of anger, especially against people that we do not agree with — those other people, those other tribes, the other party, whatever party it might be. We aren't a culture of kindness; we are a culture of anger. We aren't a culture of

goodness. We are a culture of if it feels good, then it is good. We replace all of these fruits of the Spirit. We aren't a faithful culture. We are an 'as long as I get something out of it.' We aren't gentleness; we are often harsh. We aren't self-controlled. We are an 'I cannot help it.' It isn't my fault. It is just what I do.

Do you see how different the fruits of the Spirit are when you just go into our current culture? Do you want to be a rebel? Do you want to be someone who turns the world upside down? Here is what you do...You follow Jesus and you cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. You become a person who is love, joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If you will live that way among your coworkers, among your family, and among those that you interact with, do you know what will happen? You will start turning the world upside down. Why? Because those things are right side up.

Our Mission

And as we see in this example of these men who come into town, what are they doing? How do they turn the world upside down? They are living right side up in a world that is upside down. So what should we do? As believers, we should be the people who are living right side up in a world that is upside down, so that those who are upside down might see right side up. That is our mission. That is our goal. That is what we want, so that when our coworkers are living for sin (that is the upside down world), we are living for righteousness (that is the right side up world). When we find our family or coworkers doing all sorts of things that are against Christ, we are doing the opposite because they are in the upside down world and we are in the right side up world. We are the ones who live right side up in an upside down world, so that those who are upside down might see right side up. That is our mission.

But notice in Acts, it does not always go well. Here are some guys that are living right side up, but it gets them in trouble. It gets their buddy dragged out in the street and he has to pay some money. It costs him some income. It does not always work well for those who are living right side up in a world that is upside down, but that is our challenge. That is our call.

But it does not always lead to opposition. With the gospel, there are always multiple responses. One is reject, one is accept, and one is riot, in this example. But we are going to see in the next place they go to, there is going to be an acceptance to their gospel message. Notice what happens in verses 8–11. “And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

So there is a totally different response in this synagogue. I think Luke inserts this story to remind us that it isn't like all the Jews were against the gospel. No, there was a whole synagogue who sat down and opened the Scriptures. They looked at them to see if these things were true. They are reasonable. And then as they do that, look what happens in verse 12, “Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” This is a good response to the gospel.

So, Paul gets run out of a city and he has to go to Berea. He is going into a synagogue thinking... *Well, didn't go good those last three days, but uh, I am assuming they are going to hate me.* So he comes in, opens the Scriptures, and they are like... *Really? I didn't know that about the Messiah. Could you tell me more?* And Paul is like... *Wait, you want to hear more? You don't want to kill me?* They are like... *Yeah, could you?* Paul is like... *Yes, the Bereans! I love you guys. Give me a hug. We are going to go and have some good bible study!* He is talking to the Bereans, and they are engaging and they are listening.

And by the way, this is how people should react. This is how we want to react. We want to be civilized. We want to think and reason and explain. This is how we hope it often goes. From whatever side you are on, we want to be reasonable. We do not want to incite people and do those kind of things. And in Acts, that is what we see, this reasonable response, and many of them believe. So now, there are believers who join Paul and Silas.

They join that rebellion. They become those who are right side up in an upside down world.

And then, we see in verse 13 that the ones from Thessalonica do not leave them alone. They are not having this gospel story, “But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.” So again, they are in the crowds and they aren’t having a good dialogue.

Then, verses 14–15 say, “Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.” This is a different reaction. These people reason it out. They listened. They believed. And then the Thessalonians heard about it and they come down. They cause trouble. And Paul ends up having to flee again. He gets in a boat, he heads out, and he is going to land in Athens. (The next part of Acts that we preach is going to be Paul in Athens, one of those monumental moments in Acts. You aren’t going to want to miss Paul in Athens.)

Four Truths

Let’s just boil this down to see what the Scripture showed us this morning. We are going to see four truths that I think we got from today’s passage.

1. Jesus’s death and resurrection were necessary to save us.

We see that from the Scripture. Paul opened up the Old Testament. He said it is necessary, not optional. Christ had to die. He had to rise from the dead. Why? Because, A, you need your sins forgiven; but, B, you need righteousness and you need life. So the cross had to have the empty tomb. Those things had to go together for you to be saved. So the question would be this: Have you believed in that? Have you believed in the gospel? Have you repented, turned from yourself, and turned to Jesus — that what He did by dying and rising from the dead is enough to save you? It is not anything that you do, not any of your works, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus saves you from your sins and you believe in Him. You

trust Him as your Lord and your Savior. Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and been saved?

2. The gospel provokes both positive and negative responses.

We see this. If you go to work tomorrow and share the gospel with someone, it could go well; it could go bad. Just know that. There are always multiple responses. But we are going to hope, and we are going to lean into the good ones. The bad ones — we are just going to move on. That is what Paul did. But the gospel provokes various responses. Some believe. Some do not.

3. The world we inhabit is upside down.

That is one of those key things I want you to take away this morning. The world you inhabit, the world you live in, the world you look at on your phone all of the time, it is an upside down world. So every once in a while, just take your phone and turn it upside down just to remind yourself that everything you are looking at, everything that is being sold to you and put in front of your eyes, most of it is upside down values, upside down loves, upside down narratives. You have got to know you live in a world that isn't neutral. It is often upside down. So what do we do?

4. We must live right side up in a world that is upside down so those who are upside down might see right side up.

How are the people you know who live in an upside down world going to know they are in the upside down? How do they know that? They are going to know when they see your life is different. Your values are different, your love is different, your allegiance is different, your kindness is different, your generosity is different. The way you carry yourself is just different because you live right side up in a world that is upside down. And hopefully, those people living upside down can see your right side up life and know that there is actually a way the world was meant to be. And it is the way the world will soon be.

No Matter the Cost

One of the sad endings to the florist story is that Stutzman had hoped to give her business to her children, and then her grandchildren. She built a

great florist shop and it was her dream to give it to her kids. But because she would not compromise on this one conviction that she had, — not being mean in any way, just being friends with Rob, loving Rob, being for Rob — just saying I cannot do this one thing because this would be something that I just cannot do because Jesus is my King. By her taking that stance, she was not able to keep her shop. She had to give it to her employees so that she would not be personally sued. So she lost everything at the end of the day. It cost her, her shop. It cost her, her legacy. It cost her greatly.

And the truth is if we are going to live right side up in an upside down world, it can often cost us. Jason was dragged from his house through the streets and pulled in front of the authorities. And then he had to pay some money just to get released. We might face the same. We might be dragged through the mud because we are those who are living right side up in an upside down world. So what do we do? We keep living right side up because we have a King who has promised that He is coming back. And when He comes back, He is going to take that upside down world and He is going to turn it right side up. Let's be the people right now that live right side up in an upside down world so that those who are upside down might see and come to Jesus and be turned right side up.