

25. Right side up

January 26, 2014

When was the last time you heard a TV reporter or celebrity with all sincerity warning about Global Warming? In light of the recent record-breaking cold weather this winter, it seems that nobody is talking about Global Warming anymore. By the way, they no longer call it Global Warming because they realized that people become more and more skeptical about the whole thing, so they came up with a new name – “Climate Change.”

What many people may not know is that there is one well-known person who made mega-cash hand over fist out of this Global Warming hoax. Do you know who that is? Former vice president of the United States Al Gore who claimed that he invented the internet. No reason not to believe him, right?

When Al Gore left the government in 2001, he reported a net worth of less than \$2 million. Since then his personal net worth has skyrocketed. He has a net worth of \$300 million. In addition to that, he is a board member of Apple Inc, and owns \$35 million worth of Apple shares. He is also the chairman of Generation Investment Management which has \$7 billion in assets. I don't have a problem with Al Gore making a lot of money, but I have a problem with him making money with his deception at many people's livelihood.

Al Gore even received the Academy Award with a documentary movie “An Inconvenient Truth” in 2006. It is not surprising, because Hollywood loves make-believe stuff anyway.

Not bad for making every nation around the world believe in Global Warming hysteria and those governments undertake drastic measures to counter the fear of Global Warming – like Caps and Trades in America.

To your surprise, I must agree with one thing about Al Gore. There is another kind of “warming,” actually “burning” the church should focus on preventing. This is “THE inconvenient truth” to the entire mankind – the fact that all the unbelievers will spend their eternity separated from God in hell where they will be burning nonstop.

We've been following Paul and his missionary team for sometime. Last time they left Philippi where Paul and Silas were beaten up and thrown into the inner prison. They were released from there and now they are heading to Thessalonica which was about 100 miles away to spread the truth of the Messiah Jesus Christ.

A. WELCOME TO THESSALONICA

Acts 17:1-4 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

You remember that in chapter 16, I pointed out to you guys that the pronouns were changed from ‘they’ to ‘we’ because Dr. Luke, the author of this Book of Acts joined

the missionary team. But we now see that the pronouns in chapter 17 changed back to 'they' because Dr. Luke was left behind in Philippi to take care of the infant church.

Modern 'Thessaloniki' of which ancient name was 'Thessalonica,' often referred to internationally as 'Salonica,' is the second-largest city in Greece and the capital of the geographic region of Greek Macedonia.

According to some of the history books, Thessalonica was the crown jewel of Macedonia, placed in a striking setting on the Thermaic Gulf by the Aegean Sea with Mount Olympus at the background. It also lay right in the path of one of the major commerce paths and busy harbor, and it was only rivaled by Corinth.

The city was predominantly Greek, even though it was controlled by Rome. Thessalonica was a "free city," which meant that it had an elected citizens' assembly, it could mint its own coins, and it had no Roman garrison within its walls.

We don't know how long Paul stayed in Thessalonica exactly. He was there at least three Sabbaths and long enough to receive financial help twice from the church in Philippi according to the Book of Philippians chapter 4.

Can you tell that nothing slows down or stops this apostle Paul from telling the truths of Christ to the people in Thessalonica? He probably still had scabs on his back from the beatings that he received at the Philippian jail.

He communicated the Gospel using an effective two-pronged approach:

1) He reasoned with them: 'Reasoned' in Greek is "dialegomai" of which we get our English word 'dialogue'. He was not coming with his own authority, rather using the OT Scriptures that pertain the Messiah.

2) He explained the Scriptures to them: 'Explain' in Greek is "paratithemi". It means "to place beside or near or set before". By using the O T Messianic Scriptures, Paul expounded the passages to the people in the synagogue that Jesus of Nazareth indeed was the Messiah they've been waiting for.

In the sermons in the Book of Acts, you will find an emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because the believers were called to be witnesses of His resurrection. Please note this: The entire doctrines of Christianity are based on two most important elements – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without them, it is no different than any other dead religion.

1 Corinthians 15:14-15 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise.

As the result of three weeks' ministry, Paul saw a large number of people believe, especially Greek proselytes and influential women. Luke's phrase "not a few" is one way of saying, "It was a big crowd!"

B. MORE MOB VIOLENCE AGAINST PAUL AND SILAS

Acts 17:5-9 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and

some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus." 8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

The result of the believers' conversions did not bring joy to everyone, especially the unbelieving Jews. They envied Paul's success and were grieved to see the Gentiles and the influential women leaving their synagogue.

The Jews' accusations were similar to the ones used at the trial of Jesus: disturbing the peace and promoting treason. Their crime was that of "saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

It is no wonder when Paul wrote his two letters to the church of Thessalonica, we see the strong emphasis on the kingship of Christ and the promise of His return.

The kingship of Jesus Christ is unlike that of the rulers of this world. He conquers with ambassadors of His Word, not armies; and His weapons are truth and love. Christianity is setting the world, not by turning people upside down, but by turning them right side up so that they can see the truth of God and their eternal life.

Their godless Roman Empire was not too much different from the world in which we are living right now. Immorality was rampant; the political and religious establishment were corrupt; idolatry, spiritism, and demon worship were openly practiced.

When we read through the Book of Acts, these Christians almost seem radical with their fearless preaching, their expectant prayer, and their willingness to obey the Lord with everything they had. But they weren't radical. What we see in the Book of Acts should be normal for all believers of Jesus Christ. It is the standard that God has set. If we feel it is radical, then it only shows that we are living a watered-down version of it.

To many Christians, Christianity is nothing more than just saying a prayer and getting "eternal fire insurance". That might be your case. Christianity is meant to have a radical effect on the way that you live and your outlook on life, because Jesus Christ not only wants to be your Savior, but also your Lord. I am afraid that those Christians choose to live less than a blessed life in Christ because of their own selfishness.

How did a handful of ordinary Christian people living in the first century under all types of persecutions turn their world right side up? They were disciples of Jesus Christ, not fair weather followers, but true disciples. They were not living anemic, water-down, selfishness of "me and my family only" version of the Christian life. They were living the Christian life as it was meant to be lived.

C. THE CHURCH THAT STUDIES THE WORD OF GOD

Acts 17:10-15 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, and

also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

If I can wish one thing of you guys is being like the people of the synagogue of Berea. These people heard the teaching of the most famous apostle and theologian of the early church, and the human author of at least 13 New Testament books. Yet, they searched the Scriptures when Paul taught, to see if his teaching was truly biblical. They would not accept Paul's teaching without checking for themselves, so they could know if these things were so. I love that.

Here are a few things we can learn from them:

- *they received the word with all readiness – v11a ... willing to listen and learn*
- *and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so – v11b ... willing to seek the truth from the Word of God and verify what they heard*
- *Therefore many of them believed – v12a ... The Holy Spirit personally taught them and revealed the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them*

All of us should imitate these Bereans by faithfully studying God's Word daily and applying them into our lives.

When this kind of wonderful thing was happening, you cannot think that the devil and his demons would do nothing. The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica came to Berea to cause trouble for Paul and his team. How did these men hear that Paul and Silas were ministering in Berea? Probably Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The believers in Berea outwitted the enemy by taking Paul to the sea and putting him on a ship bound for Athens. Once more, Paul had to leave a place of rich ministry and break away from dear people he had come to love.

We will meet Paul and his gang in Athens next Sunday.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Remember that determination is at the heart of any accomplishment.

Paul had the courage to stay on his course in spite of imprisonments, beatings, and public slander. If we have that same determination, we, too, can accomplish many great things for the Lord.

2) Be forewarned that rejection is to be expected when truth is declared.

In fact, if nobody rejects it, we probably aren't telling the whole truth. People will take Satan's sugar-coated lies far easier than God's truth. Actually, many of them spit it out. Remember, they are not rejecting you, rather God.

3) Unfortunately, appreciation is seldom expressed at the right time.

People are fickle. But the Lord is faithful. He is the One cheering us on, reminding us what we're fighting for, and supplying us the power to win the victory.

4) If we want to impact our culture today, then, we, too, must be disciples of Jesus Christ. Take His Word daily and apply it.

Be a Berean.