Acts Chapter 17 Verses 1 – 3

* Paul for three weeks ***reasoned*** with them…the idea is that there was a **dialogue** and I like that. I was thinking about this just this week…how Christianity is so set apart from any other spiritual offering you find in this world. ***Christianity is entirely reasonable!*** And that is important to me because there are so many *unreasonable* things in this world!! Like why can you *drink a drink* but you can’t *food a food*!? **HA!!**
* Religion instructs to follow a set of *motions*, perfectly choreographed in order to appease God and negotiate entrance into heaven. ***That’s simply not reasonable.*** Eastern mysticism guides one to find God within oneself. ***That’s explicitly not reasonable.*** That ultimately God is everywhere and in everything including you…and therefore you yourself are God. Middle Eastern religion puts you on notice that God is merciful but you must give Him reason for mercy in terms of obedience and ritual…***again, not reasonable.***
* And yet God Most High has given through His Word what has happened from the very beginning. How creation was as it should be and that ***should-state*** was lost with free will sin…***perfection was made imperfect…ruined.*** And now the problem is not a God that needs to be appeased or obeyed or negotiated with…***the problem is man***. **So God became the *Fix*.** Jesus came on the scene…a debugged, *restored to factory settings* Man…and through Him, we all now have access again to God.
* Sin is dealt with, paid for, done away with…not hidden, not weighed against good in each life…***its gone.*** If God is good and if God is holy then sin being completely dealt with is the **only reasonable solution.** That is ultra important to me! That Christianity is truly the only reasonable spiritual offering on earth…the math works, it makes sense…***it is reasonable.***
* And Paul reasoned with them for weeks…not a debate…not an argument…that was not his goal…and folks are rarely won over that way. Isaiah 1:18 says, *“Come now, and let us reason together, you’re an idiot!”* **Not** what it says! The whole aim is this…that you would be made well…is that your heart when you are reasoning with someone about the Lord? If I’m honest, I struggle with just wanting to win the argument or just thinking the other person is such a FOOL!!! But the heart to have is to wash them and to cleanse them…to plant the seed that God will water.
* Paul explained to them that Christ ***had to suffer*** and that Christ ***rose again***, why? Because they had scriptures like Psalm 2:9 that talk about the Christ ruling with a *rod of iron* and yet they also had scriptures like Isaiah 53 that say by His *wounds and stripes we are healed* and so there was confusion. There were some that even thought there were two coming Messiahs…one that would rule and one that would suffer…but Paul demonstrates that those two roles, ***all of the scriptures perfectly join in the person of Jesus Christ!***

Acts Chapter 17 Verses 4 – 5

* It’s interesting, so many years before, this is ***exactly*** what Paul was doing…I wonder if he had compassion in his heart? I wonder if this drove him to go to the Lord again about *those* days. I wonder, do you get angry and frustrated and worked up when folks do and say the same things to you that you once said to others? We have forgotten haven’t we? We’re not ***better people*** now. We’re not ***more educated*** and ***learned*** and ***accomplished*** now. All we were and are now is 1 Corinthians 6:11, *“But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* So where is boasting and bigotry? God alone has that right and He would never…

Acts Chapter 17 Verse 6

* What they say is ***wonderfully right!*** They **were** turning the world upside down! But the result was not Stranger Things! ***HA!*** The result of turning this world upside down is men and women who are ***right side up!!*** Why? Because *when you turn upside down, upside down, you end up with right side up!!*
* This world has been upside down since Adam flipped at the beginning of creation! Man, made in the image of God…just as God is a ***Triune God***; Father, Son and Spirit…man is a ***triune creation***…created spirit, soul and flesh. Our spirit, alive eternally, the real us, the us that *communes with its creator* and *seeks the everlasting*…our soul, the personality we have grown into through experience and existence…and our flesh…that which is ***focused on the finite*** and ***centered on self.*** Man is a triune creation, created originally with this as his/her order…spirit, soul, then flesh.
* Adam walked with God in the cool of the day…pleased God as he named the rest of creation…working communicably side by side with his creator. **Adam was led by the spirit.** Then second was his soul…and finally, a far finality…his flesh, untainted with sin and self sickness. Then sin entered, and everything was **flipped** upside down…now man ran from God, hid from God, sought to cover up and hide…blaming others for his current state…***everything flipped.***
* Now man by nature, by birth, by fallen sinful state…man is first flesh, then soul…and because of sin…***dead*** spiritually. These men and all that seek to free souls, most certainly, turn ***individual world by individual world***…**right side up**…that they and you might have a right relationship with God through Jesus…and only then do you ever get life priorities straight! Until that, things are *naturally an incurably* ***backwards and upside down.*** (What do you get when you turn a Country Music song upside down? You get BACK your truck, your dog and your wife! **HA!** – How do talk to a cow walking backwards? OOOOOMMM! **HA!**)

Acts Chapter 17 Verses 7 – 11

* We are going to stop here today because I have a **major** point that I don’t want to be missed or lost with ***information overload***…this is very important. I want to say again how the Bible describes those **willing to listen and willing to engage.** I love this, they are called ***fair-minded.*** Your Bible might say, *“noble.”* Same Greek word…this will help you…
* It is *alright, just fine, a-okay* to listen in a **fair-minded fashion** to what folks have to say. I begin every conversation with every Mormon, or every JW, or every Muslim…with spiritual/biblical guns drawn and one in the chamber…***but God is teaching me.*** Something in me triggers and it’s almost frightening, painful, and intimidating to discuss spirituality with someone openly living a lifestyle of what the Bible would call sin. This scripture and the Spirit of God would say today, *“Settle down.”*
* **The gifts aren’t all for me**…God has sent me with some for them…not to win the argument but to *win the person.* Not to love my intellect but *to love them…* There is no sin in listening and receiving with all readiness what they are saying. And if I end up challenged in my faith…FINE…go and search the scriptures! But ***nobility is Godly…and to be fair minded is in direct alignment with the fruit of the Spirit.*** Now, that is the extreme…let me take the temp down…
* Are you *fair minded* with your wife? With your husband? With your parents? With your children? In that meeting at work or with that supplier or subcontractor? Have you any nobility…or have you changed the name tag on all the gifts under the tree to your own name?

Acts Chapter 17 Verse 12a

* ***Therefore, many of them believed.*** Do you know what that means? Many were turned *right side up.* Many came into right relationship with God… **I pray to be fair minded.** Consider Jesus as we close. ***Perfect knowledge. Perfect intellect. Perfect doctrine. Perfect superiority***…and yet in ultimate eternal nobility, He humbled Himself (Philippians 2:8) and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross. ***He changed every tag on every gift…to your name.***