



Series: Acts

Sermon Title: A Wicked World Upside Down

Date: 9/6/2026

Acts 17. 1-9

Big Idea: Without God's Word as my guide, I am one step from wickedness.

There is a difference between being near a Bible and being guided by it. A compass can sit in your pocket while you walk in the wrong direction. God's Word can rest on a shelf, sit dormant on your phone, or even be carried into church while a heart quietly chooses its own path. Acts 17:1-9 gives us a vivid picture of what happens when people stay close to Scripture - and what happens when they reject it.

Paul's Method and Message

Paul arrives in Thessalonica and goes straight to the synagogue - people who already have some knowledge of God and the Scriptures. His method is simple: go to those who might be interested. His message is equally direct: open the Word and show them Jesus. For three Sabbaths he reasoned from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, and declaring that this Jesus is the Christ (**Acts 17:2-3**).

The Word's work: people coming to Faith

He did not come with a motivational speech or a platform to promote. He came with Scripture, and he let it do the work. Verse 4 records the result - some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great many devout Greeks and a number of women.

That is still the heart of the mission: make disciples who make disciples. We gather to hear the Word proclaimed, and we scatter into homes, workplaces, schools, and ordinary conversations to share it with the people we know.

The Result of Rejecting Jesus

Whenever God's Word is received by some, it is often resisted by others. Verse 5 says the Jews were jealous and recruited wicked men from the rabble to form a mob, throwing the city into uproar and attacking the house of Jason. Notice the irony: men who believed they were defending God became willing to use wicked people and wicked methods to do it. They rejected the Messiah the Scriptures had foretold, and in doing so they stepped into the very wickedness they thought they stood against.

Isaiah 53 captures the pattern - the Messiah despised and rejected, bearing our sorrows, pierced for our transgressions. Then the line that should stop us all: all of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. We are tempted to think wickedness belongs to someone else - the criminal, the corrupt leader, the person whose sins are visible. But Scripture will not allow that separation. All of us. Not some. All. Your own way may look respectable. But if it is not surrendered to Jesus and shaped by Scripture, it is still a dangerous path.

Turning the World Upside Down

The mob's accusation against Paul and his companions was meant as a charge - these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also ([Acts 17:6](#)). They were right, but they did not understand what they were saying. The gospel does turn the world upside down - because it declares that salvation is not earned through performance or ancestry or religious effort. It is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. No more work to be done. No more sacrifices. With faith you are changed. You are no longer a rebel but a son or daughter, adopted into God's family and granted eternal life. God's Word is not meant to rob us of joy - it is the guardrail that keeps us from the cliff. Without it, we drift. With it, we can be part of turning the world right-side up. Without God's Word as my guide, I am one step from wickedness. With it, I can turn the world upside down.

Discussion Questions

- 1. The sermon opens with the image of a compass in your pocket while you walk the wrong direction. In what areas of your life is it easiest to carry God's Word without actually being guided by it?**
- 2. Paul's method was to go to those who might be open, and his message was simply to show them Jesus from Scripture. How does that approach compare to the way you typically think about sharing your faith?**
- 3. The mob in Acts 17 believed they were defending God while using wicked methods. How does someone end up in that place - and what role does staying close to Scripture play in keeping us from it?**
- 4. Isaiah 53 says all of us like sheep have gone astray, each turning to his own way. Why is it so easy to see wickedness in others while missing it in ourselves? What does honest engagement with Scripture do to that tendency?**
- 5. The accusation against Paul - that he turned the world upside down - was actually a description of the gospel's power. What would it look like in your daily life to be someone whose faith in Jesus is noticeably disruptive to the world's assumptions?**