



TROUBLEMAKERS

ACTS 17:1-9

What's do you want to do this year? In the 1870s Alexander Graham Bell was trying to discover a better way to help his mother hear better. In the process he discovered the principle of our modern telephone.

A hundred years later (1975) William Gates, better known as Bill Gates, started Micro Soft right here in Albuquerque. If you've used a computer you've used their technology. In fact, technologically, we wouldn't be where we are without it.

On December 17, 1903, two brothers, Wilber and Orville Wright, in a funny looking, spindly, fragile craft, flew the first controlled, powered, and sustained heavier than air airplane.

Almost 60 years later, before a joint session of congress on May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy committed the United States to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade. That commitment was fulfilled on July 20, 1969.

In 1928 Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, one of the greatest life-saving medical discoveries of all time. In 1955 Jonas Salk gave us the polio vaccine, and polio was basically eradicated.

Back in 60 AD—the 1st century 60s—the Apostle Paul went to Thessalonica and caused trouble.

Where would we be if the Wright brothers hadn't flown that funny looking, spindly, fragile first aircraft? Because of the telephone, computers, airplanes and so on, the world is a smaller place. We live longer and better lives today than at any time in our history. Thank God for the tremendous advances in medicine; for penicillin and the polio vaccine.

There are and always have been people who have made such an impact on the world that you could say the world was changed. So, what was Paul doing in 60 AD? Only the most important of all

You see, as wonderful as all these inventions, and discoveries are, and no matter how much they have added to our lives, a person still needs Jesus Christ as their Savior, no matter what kind of life they live.

Chuck Colson, advisor and hatchet man for Pres. Nixon, wrote, “I spent the first half of my professional life in politics and public service. I really believed that people could be changed by government being changed.

“But when I became a Christian, I gained a new perspective on the actual influence political structures have over the course of history. I began to see that societies are changed only when people are changed, not the other way around.”

(Read Acts 17:1-9) On their second missionary journey Paul and Silas stop in Thessalonica. Paul, as he always did, preached Jesus Christ in the synagogue (vv. 2-3). People, both Jew and Gentile, were being saved.

This ticked the religious leaders off. They were jealous! So they recruited some riffraff from the local bars to go to Jason’s house to drag Paul and Silas out (v. 5).

Paul and Silas weren’t there. So the mob grabbed home owner Jason and some others and dragged them before the magistrates. Look at verse 6: “These men have caused trouble all over the world.” They were talking about Paul and Silas.

The charge against them was serious and dangerous. “They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” (v. 7) If true, this was high treason!

We Christians are called to be conscientious and law-abiding citizens—not revolutionaries. On the other hand, make no mistake about it—Jesus is our king! Our ultimate allegiance is always to Him and His word. This is why we make our voices heard about moral issues.

We are loyal to Jesus. We refuse to give to any earthly ruler or earthly ideology the supreme homage and total obedience which are due to him alone.

Paul and Silas were not preaching treason, or advocating the overthrow of the government. Paul wrote in Romans 13 that believers are to submit themselves to the governing authorities because government is established by God.

Christians have a high sense of civic responsibility. We cooperate with the authorities. We vote and pay taxes (Rom 13:6). We work for the preservation of peace and for the protection of liberty at home and abroad.

We also know the Good News of Jesus Christ changes lives. And there will be people who resent this and consider us trouble-makers because of it. So be it!

I love the game of football. I played it hard, and I love to see a good, clean tackle or hard block—a real “slobber knocker” of a hit. Some of you need a real “slobber knocker” of a spiritual hit on you today.

You need to get up off of your pew and determine that you are going to be a troublemaker for Christ—that it’s time that you become a trouble maker with the Good News of Christ.

The book of Acts outlines the first 30 years of the history of the Church. There were 120 people in the upper room when the Holy Spirit empowered them.

It’s a wonder the church grew. Those early churches were not market driven. They did not make Christianity user-friendly. New Christians had to go through extensive examinations before they were accepted for baptism.

And talk about the ultimate barrier to getting new members, those who did become Christians faced the death penalty.

Still, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the commitment of those new Christians, the church grew like wildfire. In twenty to thirty years the good news of Jesus Christ had spread around the entire known world.

Because lives were so radically changed, Christians were known as trouble makers. They lived Jesus Christ—their language and activity changed to reflect Christianity. They were the Christ that people saw.

When Christians moved into a place, communities were changed. Those who resented this considered Christians troublemakers. Ask yourself, “Am I a troublemaker for Jesus?” Do your friends and neighbors know you are a Christian? Do they know what you believe about the social and moral evils that surround us on every side?

As Chuck Colson said, it is only in the message and power of Jesus Christ that our communities and world will be changed? Notice two important lessons today. First...

1. The people who make a difference.

Think about the Christian names we know about: Paul, Silas, Barnabas, Phillip, Stephen, Peter, Pricilla and Aquilla, Phoebe, Mary, and so many others.

They came from every walk of life, every culture and class, different races and nationalities. They had been so radically changed that wherever they went the world was troubled.

Because of Jesus they were changed people. They didn't live like the world lived. Their lives reflected the life of Christ in kindness, love and mercy.

They had an uncompromising devotion to Jesus Christ. They were dedicated to the cause of Christ. I don't think they were so concerned with the spread of Christianity as they were in living for Christ.

They were dedicated to the work and ministries of their church. They didn't let things of the world come between them and their church. They were committed to grow in the faith.

John Maxwell, in *Success Journey*, tells about former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. "He continually developed himself, and he did the same with his players, trying to help them reach their potential.

"One of my favorite sayings from him is this; 'It's what you learn after you know it all, that counts.' Wooden recognized that the greatest obstacle to growth isn't ignorance: it's knowledge.

The more you learn, the greater the chance you'll think you know it all. And if that happens, you become unteachable, and you are no longer growing or improving." (p. 101)

Are you still growing in your faith, or have you become unteachable? Look at what happened in Thessalonica. Look at verse four?

Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women."

Those new believers, Jews and Gentiles, started a church right there. They were opposed, sometimes violently, by the religious establishment. Years later Paul wrote a letter to that church.

1 Th 1:2-3, 8, "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." 8The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere."

Filled with the Spirit of God they were on fire with a passion for souls. They were willing to sacrifice themselves to bring Christ to their lost world. They were troublemakers for Christ? Secondly notice...

2. The message we proclaim

There are a lot of good people in the world—people who are trying to make the world a better place to live. But our world is not going to change morally and spiritually without Jesus Christ.

It is up to us to proclaim the biblical message, and to proclaim it clearly and with conviction. Paul reasoned with them from the Scriptures (v. 3), using those Scriptures he proved that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 4).

A lot of people didn't like his, and the early Christian's message. The religious establishment of the day opposed it. Many made fun both of the message and the Christians.

Our message, too, is from Holy Scripture. Jesus Christ is the one and only way of salvation—the Bible says so. So this is what we proclaim and teach.

We Bible believers will also speak up about moral issues of our day, such as Senate bills 146 and 183 introduced in our current legislature to redefine what marriage is. The Bible says that God created male and female, and marriage is between a man and woman.

The voters of this state have already said they believe marriage is between a man and woman, but the governor and others keep coming back trying to change it. Call your senator and tell him or her to vote “no” on both 146 and 183. Be a troublemaker.

There will always be skeptics of our faith. Skeptics are never satisfied. When Mr. Fulton first showed off his new invention, the steamboat, skeptics were crowded on the river bank, yelling, “It'll never start.” But with a lot of cranking and groaning it began to make its way down the river, the skeptics were quiet; for a minute. Then they started shouting, “It'll never stop, it'll never stop!”

The message we proclaim is not our opinion or wish, it comes from the Bible. The moral stands we take are based on what God has said in the Scriptures. We have no other source of authority.

We don't need to defend it. We don't need to apologize for it. God's Word stands on its own, and we must stand on it. God's Word will convict hearts when it is faithfully proclaimed and lived.

In verse 3 Paul said that “Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.” Our message must center on the cross of Christ. Our message must be a victorious message of our living Savior.

Application:

Of all the religions in the world, only Christianity has a living Savior. He is alive! If you really believe this your life will be turned upside down. The pivotal point in every person's life is the acceptance or rejection of Christ as the Messiah. It is the message of Christ that will trouble the world. It must begin with you.