

## 10. Sharing the Gospel Through Creation

In our last three topics, we have shared the fact that Christ, and the disciples, used various approaches when sharing the Gospel. We have seen that Christ, and the disciples, used:

- Confrontation - when sharing the Gospel with those who thought that they were “good” like the religious leaders and the rich young ruler.
- Clarification - when sharing the Gospel with those who had some background of the Bible and were searching for answers in their lives.
- Compassion - when sharing the Gospel with those who felt they were so “bad” that God would never accept them because people did not accept them.

Today, we are going to see how the Gospel was shared through “Creation” by the disciples. Creation was used when they were sharing the Gospel with those who had little or no background about the Bible. Paul usually began with creation when he shared with the Gentiles who had little or no background of the Old Testament. Illustrations of this can be seen when Paul shared the Gospel with the people of Lystra (Acts 14:14-17) and the people of Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

In Acts 17:16-23, we see that Paul did several things in preparation for sharing the Gospel through creation:

- ◆ Paul observed what the people of Athens worshiped (verse 16) - they were wholly given to idolatry
- ◆ Paul talked with people daily in the marketplace (verse 17) - he built relationships with people where they lived, worked and spent their free time
- ◆ Paul spent time talking and listening to their philosophers (verse 18) - he wanted to understand what they thought and believed
- ◆ Paul spent time listening to their way of thinking (verses 19-21) - he was observing so that he knew where he needed to begin. In their case that was with creation
- ◆ Paul observed and tried to understand their worship (verses 22-23) - he recognized that they were very religious but lacked a personal relationship with God
- ◆ Paul found something in their culture that he could use as a beginning point (verse 23) - the altar to the unknown god

Then, as we come to Acts 17:24-34, we see how Paul used creation as the beginning point to share the Gospel with the people of Athens. We see that Paul did the following things:

1. Paul began with creation (verse 24) - he talked about the God who made the world and everything in it.
2. Paul moved from the creation to the Creator (verse 24b-26) - he:
  - a. focused on the fact that God is Lord of heaven and earth
  - b. focused on the fact that God cannot be worshiped through idols
  - c. focused on the fact that God does not need anything
  - d. focused on the fact that God is the One who gives life and breath
  - e. focused on the fact that God made all men of one blood (created all men equal)

- f. focused on the fact that God is the one who created all of the nations
- g. focused on the fact that God determined their predetermined times (He controls the rise and fall of nations)
- h. focused on the fact that God set the boundaries of their dwellings (He established the nations and their particular identities as nations).

3. Paul moved from the Creator to the need for man to seek the Creator (verse 27) - he pointed out that man gropes for God (conscience) and seeks to find Him (looks for Him in creation) and that He can be known because He is not very far from each one of us (this answers the question that God is unknowable).

4. Paul used illustrations from their own poets (verse 28) - he took what they did understand to help them begin to understand the unknown about God.

5. Paul focused on the Godhead (verse 29) - he pointed out that we are the offspring (children) of God and that we should not think that the Divine Nature can be created from gold, silver or stone by the works of our own hands.

6. Paul then focused on the need to repent (verse 30) - God overlooked these times of ignorance but now commands all men everywhere to repent (the message of repentance toward God [turning to God from idols] is often neglected today but was central in the New Testament) - 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Matthew 3:2, 8, 11, 4:17, 9:13, 11:20-21, 12:41; Mark 1:15, 6:12; Luke 13:3-5, 15:7, 10, 16:30, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, 8:22, 20:21, 26:20; Romans 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9 and many times in Revelation.

7. Paul focused on the fact that God would judge the world by the Man that He has appointed (verse 31a) and that Man is the One He raised from the dead (verse 31b) - he focused on the fact that the central message of the Gospel is the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

8. Paul gave them time to think recognizing that the message of the resurrection always calls for people to make a choice and that choice usually takes time (verses 32-33) - he knew that there would be those who would listen and talk with him further about the resurrection.

9. Paul spent additional time with those who believed (verse 34) - he knew that those who believed now needed much additional teaching to help them begin their spiritual growth.

When I begin working with a person who has no background of the Bible, I always begin with the first chapters of Genesis. This helps lay a foundation for understanding the Creator and His relationship to His creation and to us as His created beings. This makes it possible to share how sin changed our relationships with God, with ourselves, and with others (Genesis 3:7-13):

- with God - separation
- with ourselves - fear, guilt and shame
- with others - blame

That foundation makes it possible to share the need for repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) as the answer to that separation from God. As we faithfully share this message, there will be some who will talk with us further about the death and resurrection of Christ, and we will see the Lord working in their hearts as we continue to pray for them. The day will come when we see the Lord of the harvest draw those people to Christ. The New Testament gives us at least four approaches for sharing the good news of salvation, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you use:

- Confrontation - to share the Gospel with those who are religious and think that they are “good” enough to be accepted by God.
- Clarification - to share the Gospel with those who have some background of the Bible and are searching for answers in their lives.
- Compassion - to share the Gospel with those who feel that they are so “bad” that God would never forgive them.
- Creation - to share the Gospel with those who have little or no knowledge of the Bible and need to be led from creation to the need for repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.