

### **Last Week At A Glance: Action Points When Looking At Jesus' Ministry**

1. Intentionally "Dwell" or "go to and get to know" people who need Jesus
2. Don't wait for a dinner invitation – do the inviting

### **This Week: Paul's Ministry Example – How Can We Apply Paul's Method of being "All things to all people"?**

#### **Relevant Texts:**

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 <sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

#### **Exegetical Observations:**

- a. "I became as one under the law" – most likely meaning "I heavily employ & appeal to the OT Scriptures," and not Paul declaring "I act like a legalist to win legalists"
- b. "the weak" – in this context, those whose consciences are bothered by activities declared "good" by God that still feel "pagan" to them
- c. V.23 Paul's aim was not self, not glory, not to feel better because he felt guilty after Spring Training, but "for the sake of the gospel"
- d. Part of the motivation to share the gospel was to be a part of others sharing the blessings of knowing Jesus Christ (joy, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, true freedom, everlasting life, etc.)

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Exegetical Observations: simply note who gives the growth.

### **Paul in the Synagogue (Acts 13:13-52)**

Immediate Context: Jesus works a miracle through Paul to remove an obstruction from the advancement of the gospel amongst the gentiles (similar to the "spiritual" enslavement of the Ruler of Rohan in Tolkein's "Two Towers")

#### **Paul Goes to the Synagogue: why?**

1. Because it's the Sabbath!
2. Because of Rom 9:2, Acts 13:46 (again, you dwell with – seek out – get near those you have anguish for)

#### **What did Paul know, and what do we know about the beliefs Paul & his audience shared?**

1. moral universe, good & evil
2. one true God had revealed himself to Israel
3. OT is inspired & inerrant
4. history of Israel
5. committed to the law

6. expected the Messiah
7. knew about John the Baptist
8. knew about Jesus

**Why is this important** – because being all things to all people is built on knowing the people you are trying to be all things to...

**What do you notice about Paul's communication with them?** What does it mean in *this* context for Paul to be "all things to all people"?

1. **Paul identifies himself with his un-saved Jewish crowd (easy b/c he's Jewish!)**
    - a. V.17 chose "**our**" Fathers
    - b. V.26 "**Brothers**, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to *us* that this message of salvation has been sent.
    - c. V.38 "Therefore, **my brothers**, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.
  2. **Paul uses their lexicon, the language of their common experience**
    - a. How many references to OT people? Samuel, Saul, Kish, Benjamin, David, Jesse,
    - b. OT & Current Events? Egypt & Exodus, Prophets, Kings, the Law, the Sabbath, Pilate
    - c. What does he quote?
      - i. Psalm 2
      - ii. Isaiah 55
      - iii. Psalm 16
      - iv. Habbakuk 1
      - v. Isaiah 9
    - d. Observation – Paul doesn't speak like this in pagan settings, so there's got to be some intentionality behind it
    - e. Applications –
      - i. Be freed from using & be cautious in your use of "Christianese" & "Reformed jargon" outside the Synagogue
        1. Be freed – Don't worry about memorizing a TULIP presentation to a non-Xn,...people who don't know Jesus have bigger things going on than concerns over predestination
        2. Be cautious – why?
          - a. It confuses
          - b. It obscures
          - c. It wastes time
            - i. Think like an outsider - Let you into my world and tell me how it feels –
- [illustration – I custom built my home desktop because your pc is as fast as its slowest component. So I've got a mobo with a 400mhz front side bus, 1 GB of ECC DDR-ram with a CAS latency of 3.3.3., SATA 80GB hard drive with 2MB cache, AMD Athlon 64 3000+ CPU with 1MB cache, Geforce128DDR, PCI-Express graphics card...you get the picture,...actually you probably don't.]
- ii. **ON THE OTHER HAND** Be freed & encouraged **to** use the common language of Scripture & theology within the professing Synagogue
    1. but notice for Paul the focus & terminus of his communication – Jesus Christ

### 3. Paul speaks to them with respect

- a. Were these people worth calling “brothers” who crucified the Lord of Glory? How can Jesus call one group “children of Satan” & NOT “children of Abraham” in John 8, and Paul call these members of the same group “brothers”
  - i. Main difference between Jesus & Paul is omniscience, so Paul gives them the benefit of the doubt
- b. Notice who else Paul addresses that would not normally be addressed in the Synagogue – “god-fearers” & this might not have endeared him to the jews.

### 4. Paul adapts his language & the content of his message to his hearers, but NEVER the content of the gospel which is always stumbling block to some (Acts 13:45, 50) and the power of God to others (Acts 13:42-44, 48-49)

[any more QUESTIONS before we move on to our next context Paul goes to,...and we’ll tie everything up in the end]

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Paul before polytheistic pagans Acts 14:8-18

Immediate Context: a city literally & spiritually divided because of the gospel, and Jesus works another miracle through Paul, which results in an interesting response.

[read]

What do Paul & Barnabas do?

1. they express their frustration v.14 “tore their garments” & “rushed into the crowd”
2. they “cryout”

Let’s look at the content of Paul’s interaction here: What do you notice about his response to the crowd?

#### 1. Paul approaches them with passion & yet he is **NOT combative**

#### 2. Paul respects who they are as people

- a. **By identifying** himself with their humanity (**Acts 14:15** <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you,...")
  - i. By saying & believing – we’re no different from you guys,
  - ii. **NOT** – you morons! How could be so dumb!
- b. **By using their lexicon to push them one step in the right direction because he respects where they are in their spiritual “journey” so to speak**
  - i. How does he know where they are at? In this case, by their actions.
  - ii. How does he respect where they are “at”?
    1. he doesn’t spend the whole time ranting against Zeus or slamming Mt. Olympus, he doesn’t blaspheme the things they hold near & dear

[We see this in Acts 19 as well]

- Demetrius rallies the idol makers because Paul's gospel was bad for business.
- They rally & storm this theater, a bloodthirsty mob, outraged over Paul.
- A man named Alexander is put forward, but he's a Jew like Paul so for the next 2 hours (Luke tells us) the crowds shouted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"
- Town clerk in 19:35 defends Paul & his friends,...and we learn something about Paul's ministry here.

**What is it that quiets down the crowd?** That it could truthfully be said about Paul in Acts 19:36-37 <sup>36</sup> "Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. <sup>37</sup> For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess."]

Jerram Barrs: pg 190, "an example of disrespect" concludes: "...when Paul's preaching resulted in a riot, even an unbeliever could acknowledge that he had not uttered blasphemy against Diana or dishonored her or her worshippers. His words to them about their religion were respectful and gracious. This same pattern of behavior is apparent throughout the book of Acts."

### **What does Paul's gospel presentation look like, and what's striking about it?**

#### **Paul's Message:**

We're no different than you

Good news – worshipping me or Barnabas or (by implication) Zeus is vain/empty

Turn from it, turn to the living God

You've known the blessings of the living God, & all your blessings testify to his presence,...blessings like food & gladness

#### **What does Paul's good news presentation consist of?**

**Biggest possible picture** – turn from & turning to

"God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" or "hey, this is sin & a just God hates this sin & must punish sin, but he poured it out on his son,"...

He gets in truth what time permitted & enough to get them thinking

**What does he highlight? The goodness of God in language they can understand concerning the things they value most (crops, harvest, joy).**

#### **App:**

1. **disturbing trend** most often found in evangelical newsletters seems to embody and advocate this kind of interaction with non-Christians "speaking about the judgment of God in language people don't understand, tearing down the things they value most."
  - a. Don't get me wrong – but if a guy loves his family, but is addicted to pornography,...your springboard is his love for his family,...something you can identify with and praise God for.

- b. If your buddy at work, or neighbor loves Ellen DeGeneres, don't forget she's a lesbian,...but your starting point is to recognize that she's one of the few comedians left who doesn't rely on filthy or sexual humor, but makes the simple things of life really funny.
  - c. There is a time for tearing & naming the idols (maybe even in the same conversation – as Paul will do in Acts 19), but look for the image of God in the midst of the devastation left by the fall (we'll talk more about what that looks like particularly with folks you really can't find anything to connect over)
2. **false perception** that anything short of 20 minute gospel presentation fails to be discipleship or evangelism
- a. yes memorize scripture, yes learn EE,...**but don't think for one minute that you are a failure in the hands of God because you didn't say everything you wanted to say or have all the answers.**
    - i. Paul quotes no scripture, doesn't even mention Jesus, just one push in the right direction when the situation arose

**What's the outcome of this particular encounter?** It barely keeps them at bay. No mass conversions, just a dose of truth pointing to the true God.

1 Cor. 3

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Acts 17:16-34

Context: rather than uncultured polytheists, cultured philosophers

**Acts 17:16-18** <sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed (sumballw) with him. And some said, "What does this babblers wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Paul's engagement with this crowd begins with a layover in Athens. As he "dwells" amongst the people, he begins to notice something about the city, that it's full of idols.

### **So what does he do?**

He reasons (as he does) with the Jews, devout persons, and in the marketplace "every day" with whoever happened to show up including Epicurean's and Stoics.

**Not everyone respects *him***, (17:18 "the babblers"), **not everyone *understands him*** ("foreign divinities") – typical academic environment

**Acts 17:19-21** <sup>19</sup> And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." <sup>21</sup> Now all the

Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Not a lot praiseworthy in this crowd – idolaters, professional time-wasters, name-callers,...but they put Paul in a place of influence.

### **So what does it look like in this context to be all things to all people?**

**Acts 17:22-23** <sup>22</sup> So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

We see once again this dominant theme of respect coming from Paul.

NOTE:

1. **He finds & praises the image of God in them:** Paul seems to begin by asking two critical questions: “What is right in their thinking?” & “What can I commend about their way of life?”\* He respects them as people [this bubbles to the surface in at least 2 ways]
2. **He investigates into the things they hold dear** (he had been dialoguing & exploring & learning for days / weeks, who knows) & uses them
  - i. V.28 First he quotes an invocation to Zeus, spoken by Zeus’ son Minos, second he references a poem by Aratus, a Sicilian poet.
3. **He speaks at a level** they can understand & in words they can grasp to push them a step or two towards Christ.
  - i. How,...what’s the content of this message? How is the gospel presented?
    1. (turn from – turn to)

Concluding Comments:

1. “All things to all people” looks different in every context because people are unique
2. “All things to all people” looks & sounds like deep respect in every context because people are made in God’s image
3. “All things to all people” means we are seeking to push people one step farther towards Christ
4. “All things to all people” means we never lose or bury the gospel (“turn from \_\_\_\_ – turn to Christ”), but the length, the language we use, the truths we bring up, are dynamic, not static realities
5. “All things to all people” means we recognize that God makes straight paths with crooked sticks (we’re the sticks!), it is his field, we are his servants.

All things to all people means

LOVE -  
KNOW -  
SPEAK -  
DO -