

THE PRICE OF SALVATION

June 28, 1959

Scripture: Acts 17:1-4

"And Paul . . . reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ"—Acts 17:2-3.

So for three Sabbaths Paul preached in their synagogue in Thessalonica. In our scripture we have only the general substance of his sermons, but in this substance we discover not only his method but also his message. Thus we have in these brief verses the price of your salvation.

As we study this incident let us consider, first, the method; second, the message; third, the response.

First, note Paul's method. We are told that he drew his message "out of the scriptures." A sermon from any other source is hardly worth the effort required to deliver it or the time necessary to hear it.

Furthermore, we learn that he "reasoned with them." The word thus translated is from which we get our word *dialectic*. It means to revolve in the mind (Paul's brain cells were working), to converse as in an interchange of ideas, to teach in the Socratic method of question and answer, and to discourse upon the facts which evolve. Paul relied upon every method to get across his message.

Two words tell us how Paul reasoned: "opening" and "alleging." "Opening" is a word found in the New Testament only here and three times in Luke 24. There the eyes of Cleopas and his companion were suddenly opened to recognize Jesus. Later Jesus suddenly opened the apostles' minds that they might understand the scriptures. In our text Paul kept on opening the scriptures as he pried open the minds, hearts, and eyes of his listeners.

"Alleging" translates a Greek word meaning to place alongside or to set out in order. We do not know exactly what scriptures Paul used. But we assume that he used the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. Thus Paul opened the scriptures, showing the relation of one part to another. He set the law of Moses alongside the prophets, and these alongside the Psalms, showing the relation of each to the other. He not only *expounded* the scriptures, but he *propounded* them as well. And all to the end of showing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ.

In so doing he was opposed by the rabbis, as Paul later indicates in I Thessalonians 2:2, where he says, "We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."

Second, consider the message. Paul presented his message by "opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Notice that he began with Christ and ended with Christ. He began with the Old Testament picture of the Messiah, showing that He must die and rise again, alleging that these Scriptures were fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus who was called the Christ. Furthermore, he proclaimed the kingship of Jesus, for his enemies later accused him of preaching "contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

You can almost hear Paul as he expounds Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel." Or as he set forth the blood of Jesus as fulfilling the system of Hebrew sacrifice. He preached Jesus' virgin birth as he expounded Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,

and shall call his name Immanuel." He portrayed His life, and work, and beyond as he opened to them Isaiah 9:6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." With skillful brush he painted the picture of Calvary against the background of Psalm 22. Rising to a crescendo he played the trumpet notes of Isaiah 53. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." And then the grand finale of Psalm 16:10-11. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Note that Paul said that "Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead. . . ." Here is the element of necessity. Why were the death and resurrection of Jesus necessary? The necessity was not for Him but for you and me. In I John 3:5 and 8 we read, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins . . . he that committeth sin is of the devil For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

The problem of evil is one of the unfathomed mysteries of life. While we cannot explain it, we can trace its destructive course through history. At the outset of the Bible we learn not only of the existence of God, the essence of all holiness and strength, but of the devil who is the essence of all evil, and second only to God in power. The origin of the devil is shrouded in the mist of eternity. Probably he is a fallen angel who because of pride revolted against God, and, before creation, was cast out of heaven. When God created the universe Revelation 4:11 says that it was His pleasure. But God, being a Person, could have no fellowship with

material things. Hence His creation of man in His own image. In the Garden of Eden the devil or Satan struck at God through man. When Adam yielded to the temptation of the devil, his fellowship with God was broken. The remainder of the Bible is the story of God's redemptive work to restore that fellowship.

When Adam, the federal head of the race, sinned, all who descended from him, inherited his sinful nature. Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Thus we read in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Thus the Bible says that you were born with a sinful nature.

It is generally conceded that babies dying in infancy, and those mentally incapable of trusting in Jesus, are saved by the grace of God in Christ. But those reaching the age of accountability, when one is able to discern for himself between good and evil, are personally responsible for their sin. In Romans 1-3 we learn that God gave His written law to the Israelites and the law of reason and conscience to the Gentiles. Wilful disobedience to either law is described as sin (Rom. 3:23). Romans 5:13 says, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." "Imputed" translates a word meaning to put down in the ledger to one's account. Thus when you reached the age of understanding, your sinful nature and deeds were put down in God's ledger as a liability against your soul.

Now the Bible says in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death." Thus in Ephesians 2:1 you are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins." When the body is separated from the soul, it is dead. When the soul is separated from God, it is dead. That is what the Bible means when it speaks of you as "lost." In Isaiah 59:2 God says, "But your iniquities have

separated between you and your God. . . .” Separated from God, you are lost from Him. Your fellowship with God is broken.

Now a just God cannot ignore your sin. Nor could a merciful God ignore your hopeless plight. Since “the wages of sin is death,” someone must die for your sins. It is either your death or that of another. Whoever dies for your sin must be sinless. No man could qualify. Therefore, the Bible says that God Himself took the form of a man (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:5ff.), and was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). Thus in Jesus the law of God was justified. On the cross Jesus was made, not sinful, but sin for you. Therefore, II Corinthians 5:19 says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”

But a dead Jesus could save no one. Had He remained in the tomb, sin, death, and Satan would have conquered God. In I Corinthians 15:17 Paul says, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” So in Romans 1:4 Paul says that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead.” Therefore in I Corinthians 15:22 the apostle adds, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Because of this he could also say in Romans 3:26 that all of God’s redemptive work was to the end that He “might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

So Paul says to you as he said to his listeners in Thessalonica, because of your sin “Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead,” that He might become the Saviour of your soul and the Lord of your life.”

Third, note the response. In Acts 17:4 we read, “And some of them (Jews) believed, and consorted (cast their lot) with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks (God-fearers) a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” However, Acts 17:5-8 adds, “But the Jews

which believed not” opposed them with violence.

This twofold response suggests that some through faith were restored to God in fellowship, while others in unbelief rebelled against God and went farther from Him. It is always thus. No man can be confronted with Jesus and ever be the same again. Either he will be saved, or else he will withdraw farther into his lost condition.

Let this be a warning to you. The fact that Jesus died and rose again does not mean that all men are saved. It simply means that He has opened the door of salvation that all men may enter. But your eternal destiny rests with your personal decision of faith or rejection with regard to Jesus. Fellowship between two persons can be restored only by the consent of both. God will not violate your personality by forcing you to be saved, but by His grace He offers to save you apart from any effort on your part other than your faith.

Salvation is a personal matter. Therefore, there can be no proxy faith where it is involved. Your mother cannot be healthy for you. Your wife cannot eat for you. All that she can do is to prepare the meal, place it on the table, and invite you to eat. But unless you eat for yourself, you will starve to death.

God has prepared the banquet table of salvation. Like the king in Matthew 22 He says, “I have prepared my dinner . . . and all things are ready: come unto the marriage (feast).” “But,” he continues “they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise” (V.5). God invites you right now. I beg that you will not make light of His invitation. He has paid the price for your salvation. But you must accept it. And your acceptance is your faith!