

Responses To The Gospel

Text : **Acts 26: 19-29**

INTRODUCTION :

A. What goes through your mind when you hear someone teaching from the bible ?

1. Do you ridicule those with whom you disagree ?
2. When challenged by the word do you just put it aside for future consideration ?
3. Is bible study something you do only when (*and if*) you enjoy it ?
4. When someone is teaching something that you don't like do you refuse to listen ?
5. Do you listen, but check out everything they say.
6. When convinced that you have done wrong, how do you respond ?

B. In short, the question is, "How teachable are you ?"

1. When you come to church are you just here for the service ?
2. Or are you ready to change your life to bring it into conformity with God's word ?

In the Book of Acts we have a record of how many people responded to the Apostles as they shared the gospel message.

With this lesson we will observe several of those responses and see what we can learn from them.

I. Some hearers ridiculed the message and others the messenger.

A. Remember our Text :

Acts 26: 24 - While Paul was saying this in his defense, (Gov.) Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind!
Your great learning is driving you mad."

1. Ridicule is a common debate tactic.
 - a. When one can't adequately address his opponent's arguments.
 - b. If his position can't be ridiculed, disparage your opponent.
2. This is why those who advocate the big bang and evolution ridicule creation.

B. Herod cut off the head of John the Baptizer because he did not like his message.

1. **Matt. 14: 1-2**
2. Many today attack the messenger if his message isn't what they want to hear.

II Tim. 4: 3 - For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;
but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

C. Paul did not back off when faced with ridicule and neither should we.

Acts 26: 25 - But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.

1. The Apostle was standing before a man who had authority to take his life.
2. He did not allow the message of God to be discredited, even by the governor.

D. Christians are commanded to be ready to uphold the truth of the Gospel.

1. The Apostle Peter commanded it.

I Pet. 3: 14-15 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

* ***In our text Paul perfectly exemplified this command.***

2. Jude, our Lord's brother, commanded it.

Jude 3- Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

- a. Contending does NOT imply being contentious or confrontational.
- b. Our presentation of **or** our defense of the gospel must be done lovingly. **Eph. 4:15**
- c. As Peter said, it must be done with gentleness and with respect. **I Pet. 3: 15**

II. Some try to avoid it by delaying a decision. (Unwilling to say yes – Afraid to say no)

A. King Agrippa proclaimed that Paul was going too fast for him. ("so short a time")

1. The king wrongly inferred one or both of two things :
 - a. He did not have enough information. *False excuse ... no more time was needed.*
 - b. He needed time to consider what he had been told. *If one knows, he must decide.*
2. The gospel demands a decision. (*Can't leave Jesus standing with hand extended*)
Joshua 24: 15- If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: ...
3. Not everyone is willing to accept the truth.
 - a. When Jesus taught things people didn't want to hear, many deserted. **John 6: 66**
 - b. Those who do evil do not want to be convicted of doing wrong.
John 3: 20-21 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

B. Governor Felix is one of the best illustrations of this response found in scripture.

1. **Acts 24: 24-25** But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. **25** But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”
2. Felix was convicted in his heart, but did not have the moral courage to respond.
 - a. By postponing his obedience he was actually rejecting Christ.
 - b. When Jesus extends His hand, one must grasp His hand or reject Him.

C. Delay is always dangerous.

1. Remember the parable of the hearts; the seed that lay exposed was eaten. **Luke 8:12**
2. When the gospel is preached a spiritual battle is fought and Satan never rests.
 - a. Like the manna that God gave Israel in the wilderness (**Exodus 16: 31ff**) spiritual food can't be stored.
 - b. ***Satan hardens the heart so the word cannot be “implanted.”***
3. Though he was convicted by the word, there is no record of Felix ever being saved.

III. Some use the gospel message as nothing more than a source of entertainment.**A. Read ... Acts 17: 16-21**

1. At the time of this writing, Athens was no longer a place with political influence.
2. However, it was still one of the preeminent educational and cultural centers.
3. People still came there from all over the world to study.

** **There were idols there of pagan deities from all over the world.***

B. Paul didn't shrink back from proclaiming the gospel to the most learned of men.

1. Paul's love for lost people and for God knew no boundaries.

Vs. 16 “... his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.” (**Rom. 1: 14** .. *obligated to Greeks & barb ..*)
2. This is the response that Jesus had when He came to Jerusalem.

Luke 13: 34- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!*

3. No matter how discouraged the prophet got, he could not withhold God's word.

Jer. 20: 9 - But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

** This is the attitude that every Christians should have about God's word.*

C. Those highly "intellectual" Athenians just wanted to study the gospel to learn.

1. They were not seeking God. (*Simple intellectual curiosity*)
2. They did not feel a need for salvation.
3. The gospel was nothing more than an interesting discussion, an intellectual pursuit.

D. This is an attitude that is still common today.

1. Those who have no respect for God discuss His word seeking to disprove it.
2. Faithful Christians who study God's word must be on guard not to allow it to become an academic endeavor.
 - a. The more one studies, the greater the temptation for it to become academic.
 - b. Many preachers fall into this trap.
 - c. This attitude is the seed from which legalism sprouts.

** When one approaches the word of God,
he must approach it seeking the mind of God.*

IV. Sadly, many outright refuse to even hear it.

A. There are those who won't entertain any thought that doesn't agree with them.

1. The implications of this mindset are horrible, beyond the pale of acceptability.
 - a. It is to say, "*I know all there is to know.*"
 - b. It is to say, "*I could not possibly be wrong about anything.*"
2. The consequences of this attitude are devastating.
 - a. One who already knows everything cannot grow.
 - b. One who feels he is 100% right about everything cannot be corrected if he errs.

B. This was the mindset of the Jews in the day of Jesus.

1. They could not even entertain His teaching because it differed from theirs.
2. Since their system was absolutely correct, any disagreement was of necessity heresy.
3. Because they could not refute the teachings of Jesus, they had to eliminate Him.

C. The most graphic example of this attitude is seen in Acts 7.

1. The Jews didn't accept the teachings of Stephen about the gospel, but they couldn't refute it.
2. They brought false witnesses to bring charges against him before the counsel.
3. When his defense indicted them : (*Esp. Vs. 54-60*)
Acts 7: 57- But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. (KILL)
** They were so intolerant of opposing views they would kill a man rather than listen.*

D. As extreme as this attitude is, it still exists today.

1. The Muslim religion forbids any view point other than theirs.
 - a. Teaching about Jesus is a capital offense.
 - b. If they present their doctrine and one rejects it, that rejection is a capital offense.
2. It's the typical response of the "Christian" legalist. - *Intolerance and condemnation*
** The truth is and always will be so it can stand any scrutiny.*

V. The Jews in Thessalonica were like those in Jerusalem, but those in Berea responded to the gospel in a more proper way.**A. Acts 17: 11- Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (*scriptures* = O.T.)**

1. When the word of a God is proclaimed, respect for God demands that we listen.
2. Respect for God also demands that we verify that the spoken word is accurate.

B. Verification is neither just a good practice, nor just a recommendation; it's commanded of God ... compare :

1. **I Thes, 5: 21 - But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;**
2. The Christian does not have the luxury of casual drifting.
3. We also do not have to option of accepting the word of those we trust.
** Every Christian must examine and verify everything he is taught by anyone.*

VI. Then and now there have always been good and honest hearts who accept truth.**A. Just weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter preached to those who crucified Him.**

1. A crowd was gathered by the sound of a great wind and they saw what looked like fire about the heads of the Apostles.
2. Then Peter preached the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
3. He convicted them of killing the very Son of God.
Acts 2: 37- Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

B. When they learned what was required of them, they did it.

1. **Acts 2: 38-** Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
2. The required response involved :
 - a. A change of heart
 - b. An act of commitment

C. The book of James tells us the same thing; religion is only of value when lived.

James 1: 21-22 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. **22** But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

CONCLUSION :

A. What goes through your mind when you hear some teaching from the bible ?

1. Do you ridicule those with whom you disagree.
 - a. In that case we will ridicule everyone at some point.
 - b. No two people agree on everything and no one know everything.
 - c. One who never listens to anyone with whom he disagrees can never be corrected.
2. When challenged by the word do you just put it aside for future consideration ?
3. Is bible study something you do only when and if you enjoy it ?
4. When someone is teaching something that you don't like do you refuse to listen ?
5. Do you listen, but check out everything they say.
6. When convinced that you have been or done wrong, how do you respond ?

B. In short, the question is, "How teachable are you ?**"**

1. When you come to church are you just here for the service ?
2. Or are you ready to change your life to bring it into conformity with God's word ?

Lessons texts :

Acts 26: 19-29

19 “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, **20** but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. **21** For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. **22** So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; **23** that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

24 While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.” **25** But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. **26** “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. **27** “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” **28** Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” **29** And Paul *said*, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

Acts 17: 16-21

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. **17** So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. **18** And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What would this idle babbler wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. **19** And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? **20** “For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.” **21** (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)