

Trends

“Practicing Christians (59%) are nearly four times more likely than adults with no faith (15%) to believe moral truth is absolute. Those with no faith (61%), meanwhile, are twice as likely as practicing Christians (28%) to say it is relative to circumstances. Americans who adhere to a faith other than Christianity are roughly on par with the national average on this question.”

- via Barna Group

John 18:38: “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’” **John 17:17:** “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

Sentence Sermons

“Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.”

—Mark Twain

Ephesians 4:25: “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.”

News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for Susan Ferrell and her family as she continues to recover from brain tumor surgery. Also, please pray for her husband Shawn and their three boys: Samuel, Micah, and Eli.

Continue prayers for Jennifer Shorter (Garner) a member at Knightsville who is recovering well from her brain tumor surgery. Also, please pray for Elias Dispenett (age 8), son of Rob Dispenett, Knightsville's preacher, who has Type 1 diabetes.

Please pray for my daughter Dawne. She was born with bilateral cleft lip and palate. She has had many surgeries over the years. On July 13th she is scheduled for a major jaw revision surgery at Riley Hospital in Indianapolis. Sherry and I would sincerely appreciate prayers on her behalf.

Pray for the college students as they are now on summer break. Jonathan will be attending IUPUI law school this fall and Rachel plans to return to IU.

Please keep sister Wilma in your prayers! She gives all of us so much encouragement! God bless her and Virginia! Remember both of them in your prayers.

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“Lord, to whom shall we go? You
have the words of eternal life.”

John 6:68



The Conversion of Crispus

Craig Thomas

Introduction: The book of Acts has often been called “the book of conversions” and rightly so. We often hear sermons on the various conversions in Acts such as the Pentecostians (Acts 2), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9), Cornelius (Acts 10 & 11), and Lydia and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16). These conversions are very instructive in laying forth the Bible’s plan of salvation under the New Covenant.

There are, however, many more cases of conversion in Acts. In Acts 8, 18 and 19 we are shown what one might call “group” conversions of the Samaritans (Acts 8), the Corinthians (Acts 18), and the Ephesians (Acts 19). These conversions are also important to study as they demonstrate important aspects of the plan of salvation. However, there is a conversion recorded in Acts 18 that I’ve never heard discussed much, the conversion of Crispus (Acts 18:8). Before examining the details of Crispus’ conversion let’s look at some background information.

Paul Preaches in Macedonia: The conversion of Crispus occurs on Paul’s second missionary journey in Corinth. Just prior to coming to Corinth, Paul had made a swing through Macedonia and preached at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens as recorded in Acts 17. As we consider Paul’s preaching at Corinth it is important to read Acts 17 and develop an understanding of those events and consider their effects on Paul. If I were to entitle Acts 17 it would be: *A Tale of Three Cities*, for in each city the preaching of the gospel received a quite different reception.

In Thessalonica, the chief city of the province, there was a large synagogue. Paul preached in it for three consecutive weeks (v. 2). The Gentiles in the synagogue welcomed Paul’s preaching as “a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas” (v. 4). Among the Jews, on the other hand, only “some were persuaded” (v. 4). Then “the Jews who were not persuaded” (v. 5) turned on Paul and Silas and caused a near riot which forced them to flee the city.

Paul and Silas fled to the town of Berea about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. Here the reception of the gospel among the Jews was the exact opposite of

Thessalonica. Why? *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”* As a result of their fair-mindedness, unlike the Thessalonian Jews, *“many of them believed”* (v. 12). However, Paul was not done with the Thessalonian Jews since when they found out Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel in Berea they came there *and stirred up the crowds*” (v. 13). As a result, Paul had to flee once more, this time to Athens.

In Athens Paul began his preaching, as was his custom, in the synagogue (v. 17). Unlike the Jews in Thessalonica and Berea, the Jews in Athens were neither opposed nor accepted Paul’s preaching, but seemed to be so apathetic to the message that Paul took his preaching to the streets. The Athenians loved to *“either tell or to hear some new thing”* and Paul’s preaching certainly peaked their interest. However, when Paul preached the resurrection of Christ *“some of them mocked”* which marked the end of his labors in that place. *“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.”* (Acts 18:1)

As Paul comes to Corinth he has just received three quite different responses to the gospel message. He was threatened with persecution in both Thessalonica and Berea and received a lukewarm reception, at best, in Athens. If one reads chapter 18 it is pretty easy to conclude that Paul is in a fearful frame of mind. Why? In verses 9 and 10 the Lord appears to him in a vision and allays his fears by saying, *“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”* (Acts 18:9-10) One can understand Paul’s apprehension concerning the preaching in Corinth if one considers the nature of that city.

The City of Corinth: The city of Corinth was the largest city in all of Greece at this time with a population of over a half million souls. It was the major seaport and commercial center of the entire region. Unfortunately, wealth and success often brings various and sundry vices. Such was certainly the case with Corinth. Corinth was the home of the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Some 1,000 female prostitute “priestesses” were on hand to tickle the fancy of the “worshippers” frequenting this pagan temple. Many other vices were to be found in the city. In fact, the debauchery and immorality of the people of Corinth became legendary. A common expression was coined that called any person who lived an indulgent and immoral lifestyle as “living as a Corinthian.” Paul enters this large, bustling and immoral city completely alone and probably penniless. The task of preaching the gospel in such a place caused him to later write, *“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”* (1 Cor. 2:3)

Paul’s Preaching in Corinth: Upon his arrival in Corinth Paul finds fellow Jews, Aquila and Priscilla, and stays and works with them (18:2-3). Then following his normal procedure Paul first begins preaching in the local synagogue *“and persuaded both Jews and Greeks”* (v. 4). However, much like at Thessalonica, most of the Jews are not sympathetic toward the gospel message so much so that *“they opposed him and blasphemed”* (v. 6). Paul decides he is casting *“pearls before swine,”* (Matt. 7:6), thus, he shakes the dust off his garments against the Jews and takes the gospel to the Gentiles (v. 6). Ironically, he sets up shop right next door to the synagogue in the house *“of a certain man named Justus”* (v. 7). One can only imagine how much this must have upset and agitated the Jews!

The Conversion of Crispus: Despite Paul’s fear and trepidation he

“testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ” (v. 5). The initial success of Paul’s preaching is recorded in verse 8: *“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”* It is quite easy to read those two sentences and focus on the second one concerning *“the Corinthians.”* Their conversion was no doubt glorious, but the Holy Spirit thought it also important enough to mention the conversion of one specific individual, *“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue.”*

I can understand the conversion of an “average” Jew, but the conversion of *“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue”* is most noteworthy. Today it would be comparable to converting a Baptist pastor or a Catholic priest. Those in positions of leadership, especially of religious organizations are the “toughest nuts to crack” when it comes the gospel. But to Crispus’ credit he, as the other converted Corinthians, *“hearing, believed and were baptized.”* (v.8) With all of the controversy surrounding Paul’s preaching one can imagine it would have been very easy for Crispus to want to side with the majority in the synagogue and reject Paul and his message.

Why didn’t Crispus react this way? Even though the text does not directly specify, I believe I know the reason. Crispus must have had the same attitude as those in Berea who *“were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”* In the parable of the sower Jesus describes a person like Crispus as *“the good ground”*, as they that *“having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”* (Lk. 8:15)

You see, before anyone will accept and obey the gospel their heart must be in the right condition (Lk. 8:4-15). This “heart condition” is a prerequisite to both our initial obedience to the gospel and our continued obedience and submission to it. James says we are to *“receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”* (Jas. 1:21) A person with this type of heart welcomes the preaching of truth *“not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectively works in you who believe”* (1 Thess. 2:13).

Unfortunately the vast majority of people do not have this attitude of mind (Matt. 7:13-14). However, let this not dampen our spirits nor cause us to grow weary in our preaching of the gospel or running the Christian race. The gospel remains *“the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes”* (Rom. 1:16). Our duty is to sow the seed of the kingdom, the word of God (Lk. 8:11) and rely on God to give *“the increase”* (1 Cor. 3:6). As we do so we are honored to be *“God’s fellow workers”* (1 Cor. 3:9). The condition of the heart is key and it is up to us to keep our hearts in good spiritual shape (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 15:16-20). Let us imitate the heart of Crispus that ours too will be *“a noble and good heart”* (Lk. 8:15) *“lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked”* (2 Pet. 3:17). *Bible and do what it says.)*

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

1 John 3:17