

“Keys Open Doors”
October 22, 2017

ACTS 17

CORE: People (and cities) have unique needs & varied levels of “openness” to the Gospel. But we have supernatural “KEYS” that can open them—receiving them from the Holy Spirit at just the right time. Here are some keys:

1. **PERSEVERE** (through a “closed” door in Thessalonica) (17:1-9)
 - Paul’s persistence (teaching for 3 days in the synagogue)
 - Preaching (declaring with biblical support) Jesus
 - *“Some Jews were persuaded...and a large number of Greeks and quite a few prominent women”*
 - BUT “other Jews were jealous”—often root cause of offense & false accusation—stirred up “some **bad characters**” (Idlers, etc.) with false accusations (*i.e.*, “*these men have caused trouble all over the world*”)
 - NOTE: They faced continued hostility in Macedonia—yet, they remained persistent (*i.e.*, “Acts”—“*unstoppable exploits*”)
 - For the moment, this city seemed to be a “lost cause”—but eventually, this church would explode in revival.
 - Later, Paul wrote: *“We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 1:3)*
 - NOTE: We are not responsible for the responses of others.
2. **STAY GROUNDED IN WORD & SPIRIT** (better days in Berea) (17:10-15)
 - Knowing the Word & following the Holy Spirit
 - Only Word- dry up
 - Only Spirit- blow up
 - Word & Spirit- GROW UP
 - It is vital that we live our lives in RESPONSE to God—not in reaction to the devil. For it is our **inheritance** (Romans 8:14) and our **nature** (John 3:8) to be “led by the Spirit.”
 - Mark 4:24- “Be careful **how** you hear” (*i.e.*, teachable, expectant, faith)
 - Be careful **how** you handle the Word (*i.e.*, as one who “*correctly handles the Word of truth*” 2 Timothy 2:15)
 - NOTE: The Bereans studied in order to see that it “was true” (v. 11)—not to prove that it was **not** true!
3. **KEEP A FAITH-FILLED PERSPECTIVE** (unafraid in Athens) (17:16-34)
 - In Athens, Paul faced his fiercest debaters—with calm confidence

- **NOTE: Some would say this was an “unsuccessful” trip—yet, there was immediate fruit (see 17:32-34)**
 - **Make the most of every opportunity (*i.e., Jesus in Capernaum vs. Nazareth—He met them where they were—did what He could*)**
 - **Look beyond the moment—go for the momentum!**
 - **Guard your heart against discouragement—avoid “calling the game” prematurely!**
- **Face spiritual battles from a faith-filled perspective. Remember:**
 - **Evil spirits have no power over you (Luke 10:19- “...over all the power of the enemy.”)**
 - **Battles come to pass—they do not last forever**
 - **Attacks happen because of who you are—you don’t cause them**
 - **Remember the Lord—Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.” (Nehemiah 4:14)**
 - **Remember the testimonies (of previous breakthroughs). What He has brought you through—prepared you for this moment. Revelation 19:10- “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (i.e., if He’s done it before—He can & will do it again)**
 - **Remember who you are—you are a cherished child & a world-changer. (NOTE: How we feel is not an accurate picture of who we are)**
 - **Remember that God never leaves you. “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” (Psalm 23:4). (NOTE: Walk through Death Valley. Lie down, rest, and camp beside the still waters. Learn to “set your heart at rest in His presence” 1 John 3:19) rather than dwelling in despair.)**

CLOSING:

Exhortative Poem by Marty Zimmerman

I am more than an amalgamation of my worst thoughts,
mistakes, shortcomings, failures, missteps
You cannot relegate me as an inferior; a feeble, frail wisp of a man

I possess a flowing fire, and it is alive in me, wriggling and spiraling about
I have been assigned a purpose;
given the proper equipment for this life-long expedition

I am moving forward, steadily advancing in tandem with God's mighty Spirit
I am immersed in Truth, fully ensconced in protective armor
I am in pursuit of dreams entrusted to me

I am a world-changer, and you, my foe, fear my potential
You tremble and shake for you see
your dominion faltering, your reign crumbling

You are a usurper, the chief liar, an accomplished deceiver
You spin tales and wild fabrications
and I find myself spellbound by the well-crafted delusions

Through the lenses you have manufactured I see myself
as weak, incompetent, unqualified, incapable, useless, insignificant,
but, if I disregard the bluster, the hyperbolic speech
that is blasting my eardrums, I hear an entirely different song

I discern lyrics that empower me, encourage me, fan the flames -
Something happens in that moment, an ignition,
and I am propelled forward

Dreams disembark at the proper time, according to His timetable
My heart awakens, and I breathe deeply
as I step into the appropriate position

There is opposition here, rigid, sturdy hurdles to leap over
Detractors scream insults in a seamless stream,

but my eyes are fixed on the finish line and the prize flashes before me
My stride is steady, it is unrelenting

I have no time to process the verbal assaults that are buzzing all about me
I will not receive any of the barbed, tortuous invectives
that are spewed against me in such a vehement fashion

My Savior was mocked and scorned in the final stretch of his life,
yet, he did not stop along the road,
He faithfully laid down his life,
and breathed his last while hanging on a rough-hewn cross

Love enabled him to persevere, to endure the pain, the sorrow, the fear
and he emerged victorious, stepping away from the tomb
My Lord conquered the grave, dissolved the curse of Sin, paid my debt
and released me to live a life adjoined to Joy, Peace and Hope

I will not be stymied from laying claim to my destiny
I will not be stifled in my pursuit of my calling
You roar, you intimidate, my Accuser, but I will not grow anxious,
for I dwell in the shadow of El-Shaddai

You provoke me to action and I declare a sweeping away of the old,
a shift, an awakening, a jolt of spiritual electricity to course its way through
the heart and soul of this nation

Misfortunes be turned around, justice be served, wrongs be righted,
wicked, sinister plans never be enacted
Springs of refreshment abound in this parched land
quenching the thirst of multitudes

My fire is stoked, it is burning brightly; dense clouds of smoke are rising up
I am set loose, to project my light, to utter words that impart life
I will carry on, delivering Truth, encouragement
allowing my voice to accost your demonic schemes,

and demolish your strongholds in bellicose chants,
delivered in a confident tone,
for I know that I am in the company of my faithful Creator

I was made for this, am filled with energy, a passion
What a sobering thought, that apart from Him I am nothing,
but coupled to Him through Christ I can do all things

I will not shrink back, nor be dissuaded from pursuing the narrow path
which I know leads to everlasting life
May my well-meaning thoughts crystalize into the words that I speak,
and provide nourishment to weary, beleaguered souls

Get thee behind me, I have no time to quarrel, no time to tarry
I am needed, I have a deposit to make, a contribution to offer,
and by the grace of God I will exemplify His heart for humanity

Burdens be lifted, hearts be made receptive, lives transformed
It is truly a great day to be alive,
promoting Christ, being about the Father's business,
inviting the lost to encounter truly deep, upending LOVE

-HMZ (10/13/17)