

Lecture 16 – Acts: A Challenge to Mission, Part 4

“If anyone else thinks he has reason to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”
Philippians 3:4-9

Key Terms

Walls, Gospel identity

Objectives

- *Identify some of the walls that prevent the church from sharing the good news with the world.
- *Identify biblical themes and passages that address issues of division and separation.

Acts: A Challenge to Mission (cont.)

Assignment: write a one paragraph summary of “What I believe” using no “Christian-ese” and a second paragraph stating “Why I believe this.” Reflect on the effort: how does the difficulty of stating what I believe without using “Christian-ese” reflect walls that I have inherited or built?

3. The missionary God (cont.)

- e. God’s infinite variety of means
 - Professor Barrs’ story (cont.)
 - His wife’s story

Review of the infinite variety of means:

4. Through the wall, or, letting go of our culture for the sake of the Gospel

Why was the church so reluctant to go to the Gentiles? Why were there such obstacles once they were reached?

- a. The wall built by Judaism between itself and the Gentile world
 - Food, ceremonial and ritual laws brought separation
 - Their intent forgotten, they induced a back-breaking legalism
 - Grace, forgiveness and humility replaced by works righteousness, zeal for the law and pride
 - Moral law made null and void by tradition
 - ‘Love your neighbor’ hedged with restrictions
 - ‘Love your enemy’ nullified by the rules of separation
- b. This tradition in Judaism influenced the early church.
 - Examples from the book of Acts
 - Examples from the Epistles
- c. Paul’s insights on this dilemma – the meaning of the Gospel
 - 1) What is our identity as believers?