

WHEREIN DO WE DIFFER?

ACTS 24:14-15 • TV283A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
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by
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Acts 24:14-15

“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

A question that is frequently asked me, regarding our television program, is this; “Wherein do you differ from other religious telecasts and other religious programs?” They say, “Your program is certainly different. It is quite a bit different and your message is different. Your methods are different; the way you approach the Gospel is different. Wherein do you differ?”

That is what I am speaking on today, “**WHEREIN DO WE DIFFER?**” How is this program, its methods and message, different from the average religious telecast, radio broadcast program, or even your service?

I’m turning for my text to the book of **Acts, chapter 24**. I’m going to be reading two verses of Scripture in **verses 14 and 15**. I want you to listen and here is the topic, “**WHEREIN DO WE DIFFER?**” Here is the text in **Acts 24, verses 14 and 15**. Listen carefully.

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This is Paul speaking and he says, “*But, this I confess unto thee that after the way which they call heresy (error or apostasy), so worship I the God of my fathers. Believing all things which are written in the Word of God, in the prophets and I have hope toward God.*”

Let me give you the background of this statement. The days in which the apostle Paul preached were religious days. During the time that Paul preached the Gospel of God, there were pagans, heathens and idolaters. Most people were very religious.

These people were zealous, very religious and they were legalistic. They were self-righteous men and women. Religion was everywhere. There were big cathedrals, synagogues and temples, they were everywhere.

These people hated the Gospel of God’s free, sovereign grace in Christ. They were trying to seek or find acceptance with God by their works, by their deeds and by their ceremonies. They despised salvation by grace and faith in Christ. Therefore, they despised the apostle Paul.

These religious leaders, although they had no particular love for each other, hated Paul more. They hated Paul’s Gospel. They arrested Paul. The whole crowd gathered and ganged up on him. They brought him before the Roman governor to accuse him of heresy, blasphemy and of sedition.

They said that he profaned the temple and that he was stirring up and dividing the people. They had all of these charges that they brought against the apostle Paul when they brought him before the Roman governor. They wanted him sentenced and put in prison, or even executed.

The governor permitted Paul to speak for himself. As he stood before the governor, he was surrounded by his accusers and religious people. These people were zealous, enthusiastic and a religious people.

These were people who were fighting for morality and were fighting for ceremony and were seeking acceptance with God on the basis of what they were doing by their works, their deeds and their religion.

The prophet of God who was sent of God was being accused of heresy, error and blasphemes and profaning the temple. The governor permitted Paul to speak for himself. He said, “*Let the man speak for himself.*” So, Paul spoke before the governor and this is what he said; “I am not a troublemaker. These men have brought these charges against me and they have brought lies against me. I am not a trouble maker.”

“They have never found me in the temple, dividing the people or stirring up the people. I do not blaspheme or profane the temple of God. These men have brought false accusations against me. I’m not a debater; I’m not a disputer; I’m not a troublemaker.”

Paul said, “But what these religious leaders call error and what they call damnable doctrine is exactly what I believe and preach. What these men hate is what I believe. What these men call error

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and heresy is exactly what I believe and is exactly the way that I worship the living God. I believe the Word of God. My faith is built upon the Word of God.”

He said, “I believe all things written in the Law and in the prophets and in the Word of God and have a good hope by grace alone in Christ.”

Here is my application:

I have preached for 36 years, the Gospel of God’s redeeming, sovereign Grace. I have pastored the same church for 35 years in Ashland, Ky. The day in which I live and preach is surrounded with much religion. Many people are engaged in popular religion, zealous religion, and enthusiastic religion. Everyone in America has some sort of religion.

Religion in our country is not only popular but religion in our country is big business. You know that it is. Religion is entertainment. Religion is big business and popular. Religion is on the up-swing. We are having a revival of religion. Religion is everywhere.

But, men who preach the Gospel of God’s grace, the Gospel of God’s mercy to sinners in Jesus Christ, (I call it God’s free and sovereign grace). Men who preach that message, that message of God’s grace in Jesus Christ are even in this day as they were in the days of Paul. They are despised, hated and harassed. They are charged with all kinds of error and blasphemy.

Men who preach the free and sovereign grace of God are held up as heretics, troublemakers and fatalists. They are called “The divider of churches and men who stir up the people.”

You know; most religious leaders are in competition with one another. Most religious leaders and denominations don’t have a great deal of love for each other. But they will all ban together against this message of grace.

They will all band together against this message of God’s elective, effectual, redeeming, grace in Christ Jesus. Men who dare to preach today, that “*Salvation is of the Lord, from Alpha to Omega, from beginning to end*” are accused of preaching heresy and preaching error.

That is the same thing that happened to the apostle Paul. His day was religious. They were men of great morality, strict laws, Sabbath Days and Holy Days. They were doing all of these things to merit acceptance with God or merit salvation. They were trying to make themselves, somehow, to be approved in God’s sight.

Paul came along and said, “Men are sinners and need mercy, grace and Christ. They need a mighty miracle of God’s grace to save them.” He came along saying “*salvation is of the Lord.*” We look to Christ alone. He is our Righteousness; He is our Justification. He is our Sanctification and He is our hope of Eternal Life.”

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They said, “You are a heretic. We are not going to let you preach. We are going to arrest you and put you in jail.” That is when they brought him before the governor. He said, “I’m not a debater; I’m not an arguer. I’m not a divider of the people.”

That is what I am saying; I’m no debater, disputer, or troublemaker. I’m not a divider of God’s church. I don’t preach babies in hell. Someone accused us of preaching double predestination. I don’t preach double predestination. I’m not a fatalist.

I’m very missionary minded. I believe that sinners who come to Christ by faith will be saved whoever they are. It doesn’t matter if they are Jews, Gentile, male or female, bond or free. This I confess, (like Paul of old), what the modern religionist and what the modern fundamentalist, and the modern preacher of today calls heresy, what they call error, what they call damnable doctrine, is exactly what I believe.

This is exactly what I believe. What the average preacher today calls heresy, apostasy and error is exactly what I believe and preach. I confess like Paul said, “*What they call heresy is what I believe.*” That is exactly the way that I worship the God of my fathers, the Living God.

God is sovereign in all things. There is not a question in my mind about that. He is sovereign in creation; He is sovereign in providence and He is sovereign in salvation. He will do what He will, when He will, with whom He will.

“He reigns in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth. None can stay His hand or say unto Him, what doest Thou?” My God is sovereign. What they call heresy is what I believe.

God did elect a people; there is no question about that. He elected a people in Christ “*before the foundation of the world.*” That is what God’s Word says. Paul said, “I believe the Bible; I believe the Law and the prophets. I believe what God said.”

It is not what I think or any of you think or what somebody else thinks. What does God say? “*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.*” Let me ask you three questions.

Did you choose God or did He choose you? Christ said, “*You didn’t choose me; I chose you.*”

The second question is: When did He choose you? The Bible says “*He chose you before the foundation of the world.*” Isn’t that what the Word says in **Ephesians 1:4**?

Why did He choose you? The Bible says, “*According to the good pleasure of His own will,*” God did elect a people. There is no question about it.

Christ died effectually for His sheep. He gave an atonement that atones. Atonement is not atonement if it doesn’t atone. Christ is the Redeemer. Did He redeem? Salvation, does it save? Christ gave His blood as a ransom? Does it ransom? Is the work of Christ on the cross an offer or an effectual gift?

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The Holy Spirit does call men to Christ. All true believers will persevere. They will continue in the faith and they will never be lost, (not a true believer or one of the true sheep). Christ said, *“My sheep hear my voice. I give them eternal life; they will never perish. No man can pluck them out of my hand. My Father gave them to me and no man can pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”*

You can call it, my friend, Augustinianism, Calvinism, Predestinarianism, or whatever you want to call it; call it what you will. All true preachers of God believe that God is sovereign. They believe that God Almighty elected a people in Christ, in a Covenant of mercy and grace.

They preach that Christ effectually redeemed them, the Holy Spirit calls them and they will persevere. In other words, to sum it up, *“Salvation is of the Lord.”*

False preachers all over the country ban together and call that heresy, error, apostasy, blasphemy, and say that true preachers of the gospel are “profaning the temple.” Let them call it what they will. What they call heresy is exactly what I believe. What they call error and apostasy is exactly the way that I worship the Living God.

Now, wherein do we differ? Well, we differ first of all in this; we differ in what happened in the Garden. Our differences are not form or organization, dress or tradition, days or laws; the difference is the Gospel we preach. That is where we differ.

Our differences start back in the Garden of Eden; that is where it all started. The old-time preachers called it “original sin.” That is what I am dealing with right here, “original sin.” I want to be understood for exactly what I am saying and what happened in the Garden.

Do you know what happened in the Garden of Eden? The old-timers called it “original sin.” When God created one man, Adam, he stood as the surety, the representative and the federal head of the whole human race. We stood in him; we were in Adam. He represented us.

When Adam sinned and Adam rebelled against God and willingly took of the forbidden fruit, he and the whole human race was plunged into spiritual death, depravity and darkness. That is what the Word of God says, *“In Adam all die. Wherefore, by one man, sin entered this world and death by sin: So death passed upon all men, for all sinned.”*

God created one man to represent the whole human race. We all came from the loins of Adam. What Adam did and the condition that resulted from his doing directly affects us; we are His sons and daughters. The Scripture says in **Romans 5:18**, *“By one man’s offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”*

It says in **Romans 5:19**, *“By one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners.”* As I read a moment ago, in **1 Corinthians 15**, it says; *“In Adam all die; death, judgment, condemnation, passed upon all men.”*

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As a result of Adam's fall, the nature of sin, not only the guilt of sin, was passed upon us by imputation, but the nature of sin became ours by impartation. All people who are born from Adam are born into this world, dead in sin, without spiritual life.

David said in **Psalm 51**, "*In sin did my mother conceive me. I was shapen in iniquity; I was brought forth speaking lies and the wicked are estranged from the womb.*" In other words, the only hope that a son of Adam or a daughter of Adam has, (because of that sinful nature), is to be born again and to be born of God and born from above, to be born of the seed of the Word unto new life, unto a new nature, unto a new man.

Sons of Adam, according to the Scripture, are dead in sin. It says in **Ephesians 2:1**, "*You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.*" A few verses later it says, "*We were without Christ, without hope, and without God in this world.*"

You might say, "Doesn't man have a will?" Of course he does. He wouldn't be a person if he didn't have a will. All men have wills. However, our wills are not free. Our wills are in bondage to our nature. Our wills are in slavery to our fallen natures.

When our nature fell, the will to do well fell, the will to walk in holiness fell, the will to know God fell. Christ said, "*You will not, come to me.*" That is called "original sin." That is what happened in the Garden. That is what the Word of God teaches. That is what I believe and that is what I preach.

I preach that men are helplessly, hopelessly, lost. Their need of a Divine visitation and a Divine quickening and a Divine awakening makes them need God to do something for them. They can't do anything for God. There is nothing I can add to God. He must do something for me.

Here is the second thing: We differ on what happened in eternity. Salvation is not by chance; it is by God's choice. Another thing the old preachers talked about was a Covenant of Grace. You don't hear that preached much anymore.

Yet, I say unto you, the word "covenant" is in the Word of God almost 300 times. "*An Everlasting Covenant;*" that is what it talks about. It talks about the Shepherd and the sheep, the blood of the "*Everlasting Covenant.*"

David said, "*God made with me an everlasting Covenant.*" This everlasting Covenant in which the Father purposed to save a people out of Adam's race, chose those people, gave them to Christ, who became their Representative, who became their Surety, their Saviour and their Redeemer. The Holy Spirit in that Covenant of Mercy agreed to call them and bring them to faith in Christ. That is what the Word of God teaches.

Let me read that to you; in **Ephesians 1: 3 through 5**, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus: According, as He chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us to the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of His own will.*"

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2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, *“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”*

Romans 8:28, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. In whom He did predestinate, He called, whom He called, He justified, whom He justified, He glorified. What shall we say to these things?”* Well, we say; *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

In **John 6:37**, the Scripture says; *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me; I will in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him that sent me. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He hath given me; I will lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.”*

In **John 17**, that priestly prayer of our blessed Lord, said; *“Father, Thou hast given Me power over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me.”* In **verse 9 of John 17**, He said; *“I pray not for the world; I pray for them which Thou hast given me, for they are thine and thou gavest them Me. All mine are thine and thine are mine.”*

This is what I am saying, before Adam’s creation, before Adam’s fall, before the foundation of the Word, God knowing all things that would take place, (and permitting them) in His Divine wisdom and will, elected a people to salvation *“out of every tribe, kindred, nation and tongue under heaven.”* He gave them to Christ.

Christ came down here and redeemed them and went back to glory where He sits at the right hand of God interceding for them. As they are born into this world of natural parents, the Holy Spirit comes and seeks them out and calls them out and brings them to faith in Christ.

They are brought to seek the Lord because He seeks them. They call on the Lord because He called on them. They love Him because He loved them. *“Herein is love, not that we love God, but He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

In **2 Timothy 1:9**, it says; *“He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the foundation of the world.”*

Men call that heresy. They talk about original sin being heresy. That is what the Bible teaches and that I what I believe. They talk about election being heresy, error or apostasy, no; it is the Word of God.

If God had not elected you, you would not have elected Him. If God had not chosen you, you wouldn’t have chosen Him. If God had not called you, you wouldn’t have called on Him. He called first. You were dead; dead men don’t call on God.

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Third: We differ on what happened at Calvary. Like Paul said, *“What they call heresy is the way that I worship God.”* What happened at Calvary? Listen to Christ; He said, *“I am the good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I lay down my life for my sheep.”*

My friends; who was that hanging on that cross at Calvary? That is none other than the Son of God; it is Christ that died. He cannot fail to accomplish what He set out to do. What did He say when He finished the work on Calvary’s cross? He said, *“It is finished.”*

He prayed in **John 17**, *“Father; I finished the work you gave me to do.”* Why was He on that cross? He wasn’t there as an example. He wasn’t there as a martyr. He wasn’t there because He had no strength or power to stay away from there. He was there to enable a Holy God to be just and justify sinners like you and me.

You see; we were under the bondage of the Law and the curse of sin. We were under the curse of death. Christ came and fulfilled the Law in our behalf. He went to the cross and satisfied and honored God’s justice. From the cross, He said; *“It is finished.”*

I say, He is the atonement. Did the atonement, atone? He is the Redeemer; did He Redeem? He is the Ransom; did it ransom? He is the Saviour; did He save? *“He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.”*

Every believer, every child of God, every sheep of Christ, every one of the elect, everyone who comes to Christ; Christ died for them on Calvary. He shed His blood for them. The reason He did it was because *“He loved them and gave Himself for them.”* They are redeemed.

The Atonement is not an offer; it is a gift, a payment, a full payment. Christ did not fail. There are no people in hell for which Christ suffered and died and paid their sin debt. If Christ paid their sin debt, there is no reason for them to be in hell:

**“Payment, God’s Justice, cannot twice demand,
first at my bleeding Surety’s hand than again at mine.”**

If He paid my debt, it is paid! If He satisfied the Law of God, it is satisfied!

I will tell you something else that we differ on; what happens in regeneration? Salvation is not merely a decision; it is regeneration. Salvation is not merely a profession, it is a new creation. Salvation is a new birth; it is to be born again, *“born from above and born of God.”*

Salvation is not just walking down an aisle. Salvation is not coming to the front; it is coming by faith to Christ. Salvation is a real experience of grace in the heart where men and women and young people, who are brought to see their sins and see their need of the mercy of God. They are brought saved to rest in Christ, trusting Christ and believing Christ.

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That brings me to the fifth thing: What is a Christian? What is a disciple? A Christian is not just a church member. A Christian is not a person who has gone down the aisle and made a profession of faith. A Christian is a true believer, who willingly, lovingly and individually, believes the Word of God and believes Christ.

He is a Son of God forever. He is a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. He is sold out to Christ. He is a disciple of Jesus Christ who walks with the Lord. He wants to live for the Lord. He is dedicated to God. *“He is a new creature in Christ Jesus.”*

A Christian is a person who will continue in the faith. Now days, people are called Christians just because their names are on a church roll or because they have been baptized or for some other reason.

A Christian is a disciple of Christ, a believer in Christ, a lover of Christ, a follower of Christ, a man who has been made by the power of God and the grace of God, who is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Wherein do we differ? What happened in the Garden? What happened in Eternity? What happened on the cross? What happens in a man’s heart when God saves him? What is a Christian?