

Mock; Delay; or Trust and Obey

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In Athens, Paul preached the truth brilliantly to the Greek philosophers and the judges of the Court of Areopagus (Acts 17). After contrasting the one true God with the innumerable idols of Athens, Paul warned them of the approaching day when Jesus will judge the world, and affirmed His resurrection from the dead (vv. 24-31).

Response to the gospel in Athens fell into three distinct categories which still summarize the reaction of countless people today:

Some **mocked** (17:32). Remember, Paul was dealing with Greeks who were well-versed in philosophy. The very idea that a man named Jesus was killed, but arose from the dead, seemed like utter foolishness to them (see 1 Corinthians 1:23, the gospel was foolishness to Greeks). Many Greek philosophers didn't believe in life after death at all. Bodily resurrection seemed so outlandish to them as to be worthy only of mockery.

Even so today, Biblical truth is often scorned by those with a high degree of worldly education. Paul declared that *"not many wise according to the flesh"* will believe and obey God's word (1 Corinthians 1:26). An obvious modern example is the incessant stream of ridicule directed against Christians for rejecting organic evolution.

The second response in Athens was **delay**: *"We will hear you again on this matter"* (17:32). Still today, people commonly stall, wait, and put off their obedience to the gospel. Tragically, this often results in permanent rejection of the way of salvation. Waiting until one understands the gospel is necessary, and counting the cost of a life-long commitment is wise. But once one

realizes he is lost and knows how to be saved, putting it off is utter folly!

Happily, there was a third reaction in Athens: **trust and obey**. *"However, some men joined him and believed"* (17:34). As always in Scripture, the belief that pleases God is not mere mental acknowledgement, but trusting obedience. Dionysius, a judge on the Court of Areopagus, along with Damaris and some others who joined Paul were obedient believers.

God *"is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Mock; delay; or trust and obey. What is your choice?

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God's Color Line

The Bible teaches that God *"hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth . . ."* (Acts 17:26). Through the years, man has drawn racial distinctions of black, white, yellow, red, etc. Racial prejudice was sinful in the life of Simon Peter, whom Paul, a fellow-apostle, withstood to the face (Galatians 2:11-13). In Acts 10:34, 35, we read that *"God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."* God's color line is "scarlet," for in Isaiah 1:18 the Lord says, *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* God's color line is the color of sin, not skin!

All men can be one in Christ by obeying the gospel. Sinners must repent, confess, and be baptized; then they can stand on the common ground of salvation in Christ (Acts 17:30, 31; Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 22:16; 2 Timothy 2:10).

--Bill Dillon (Gospel Gems, Vol. 1) via Sayre, OK

WHAT MOVES US?

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Are there emotions, strong feelings, or depressive moments that move you? In reading the scriptural words describing just how God feels about you, did some part of you stir? Many times I've viewed films about people overcoming trials and tribulations, physical handicaps, or great losses that moved me to tears.

Does a lack of such emotion or stirring mean we've grown callous? The pioneer preacher, Walter Scott, believed so and told the familiar story of the little frog separated from its brothers and sisters in a great rain storm. Without help, the frog was incapable of returning to the safety of its pond and so it lay there in the ruts of the road until a large wagon came along and crushed the helpless little frog. Well, Scott told the story so effectively, the audience wept. It was then that Scott said, "I've told you many times of the love of Jesus and you were not moved. Yet, when I told you about this non-human little frog, you began to cry."

Imagine hearing the story of Jesus so many times we are no longer moved or concerned. Note what Paul said in Romans 5:6, 7. *"Just at the right moment in time, when you and I were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. And it is seldom, if ever, that anyone will give up his own life even for someone else who is righteous."*

That moves me, being that sinner than I was, but if it will not move you, then think on this: What was it Jesus left behind to come to this earth for you? Imagine the agony he endured and how miserable he was for your sake. If we cannot be moved by thinking on these things, we need to seriously ask ourselves what moves us?

--Gordon V. Herrmann (deceased, Santa Maria, CA)