

Only Two Responses to Jesus
International Bible Lesson
Acts 28:23-31
Sunday, November 25, 2012
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“And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not” (Acts 28:24—KJV).

“Some of them were convinced by his words, but others would not believe” (Acts 28:24—GNB).

“Some were convinced by what Paul had said, while others refused to believe” (Acts 28:24—NRSV).

Paul experienced two opposite responses to his teaching: “some were convinced,” but “others refused to believe.” When Paul explained the writings of Moses and the Hebrew prophets, some understood how Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies. However, others disagreed because Jesus did not fulfill their expectations. These opposite conclusions sometimes led to violent disagreements, sometimes to Paul’s arrest, and eventually to Paul’s appeal to the emperor in Rome.

Paul explained why some refused to believe in Jesus the Messiah by referring to what the Holy Spirit said through the prophet Isaiah: “they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them” (Acts 28:27). Understanding with your heart means possessing the willingness to make any changes in your life as you learn more truth; understanding with your heart should lead you to turn

around when you learn that you need to do so.

Understanding with your heart opens your life to the work that God wants to do within you spiritually, mentally, and physically. If those who refused to believe had previously chosen to study the Scriptures because they loved God and wanted to glorify and honor God in their daily ways of living, they would have understood Paul's teaching, turned to God in Jesus Christ, admitted their real needs, and God would have healed them spiritually and saved them for eternity. After they refused to believe, Paul said, "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, they will listen" (Acts 28:28). Therefore, many Jews and Gentiles now love and worship God together through Jesus Christ.

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Thinking Further

1. What would you do if you had a captive audience, similar to a guard, as Paul did, and were under house arrest for a crime that you had not committed, but for your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What do you need to do to prepare yourself, if something like this should happen to you?

2. After all of the mistreatment Paul suffered from his fellow Jews, what attitude did Paul take toward them? How easy is it for people today to take the attitude that Paul took toward those who mistreat them? What can we do to try to maintain a Christ-like attitude toward others?

3. Why does the Bible show at least three different approaches to dealing with those who oppose God and the kingdom of God: the way of Jesus, the way of Stephen, and the way of Paul? [Tradition teaches that Paul was later martyred, but the Bible does not teach this.]

4. Why is the use of reason important in teaching the good news of Jesus? Why is giving an explanation for why you believe in Jesus important? Why is appealing to what the Bible teaches important when you speak to someone about Jesus and the good news?

5. Would you be willing to teach the Bible freely to others at your own expense? Sunday school teachers do this, as well as others. Paul also received support from various churches in his missionary work (see his Letter to the Philippians). What are the benefits of supporting pastors, preachers, teachers, evangelists, and others as they share the gospel in word and deed so they do not need to spend the major part of each day “tent making”?

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