

Reasoning, Explaining, Proving, and Proclaiming

In **Acts 17:1**, the apostle Paul arrived in Thessalonica. There he set a great example for us as we talk with our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family about the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, in **Acts 17:2-3**, we see the fourfold approach that Paul took toward spreading the gospel. We need to follow this same approach.

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he ¹reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ²explaining and ³proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I ⁴proclaim to you, is the Christ" (ESV).

First, the text claims Paul reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures. The word translated "reasoned" is the word "dialegomai," from which our modern word "dialogue" comes. There is some debate about exactly what the word meant. Some suggest it encompassed what we call a sermon. Most say our modern word provides a good understanding. In either case, whether it included back and forth discussion, the word demonstrates that reason was involved. There was argumentation that was reasonably and logically put forth to show the truth of what Paul was saying. He didn't just talk off the top of his head; he reasoned with them. Notice especially that he reasoned from the Scriptures. He didn't simply reason from his own logic and think-sos. He didn't debate their thoughts and feelings. He reasoned from the Scriptures.

Second, the text claims that he did some "explaining." The word translated "explaining" means "to open up completely." This extends the idea of what Paul did while reasoning with the Jews from the Scriptures. He didn't share his mind. He didn't open up his ideas. He opened up the Scriptures. First, literally. He read from the Scriptures. While he would have used scrolls, we need to see ourselves talking with others with Bibles open. But also figuratively. That is, Paul opened up the sense of the Scriptures. He did not close the Scriptures and push into them his own ideas and meanings. He opened the Scriptures. He made them easily understood. He explained them so that folks would understand what the Scriptures were saying.

Third, he did some "proving." Some translations say "giving evidence" and "demonstrating." He had presented what the Scriptures said and now he gives evidence. The facts of Jesus' life were well known among the Jews as demonstrated by Paul's testimony to Agrippa and Festus in **Acts 26:26**. Paul laid alongside the reasoning of Scripture (the Old Testament) the evidences of Jesus life (which we have recorded in the New).

Finally, he "proclaimed." That is, he announced, declared, made known. He did not suggest. He did not advise. He did not offer as one possibility. He proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ. He did not equivocate. He did not waffle. He did not falter. He proclaimed.

We need to follow the footsteps of Paul. We need to reason, explain, prove, and proclaim. We need to let those around us know what we believe. We need to invite them to believe it.

Let's face it, Paul well knew that many of the folks he spoke with would think him foolish (cf. **I Corinthians 1:18**). Yet, he taught. And what success he had. Though only in Thessalonica for a short time, possibly as short as a month, but no longer than six, he established a congregation that thrived, developed leadership in a short time, and did so in the face of opposition. But that wasn't really Paul's doing, was it? That was the working of God.

Once again, we learn that God works when we work. Paul worked. He taught. He preached. He reasoned, explained, proved, and proclaimed. Because he did, **Acts 17:4** explains, "And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women" (ESV).

Let's make sure we are reasoning, explaining, proving, and proclaiming Jesus Christ, His death, His grace, His salvation.

--Edwin L. Crozier