

The Book of Acts, Chapter 17  
The Second Missionary Journey (Continued)

*Acts 17:24-27*

*24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;*

*25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*

*26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*

*27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:*

I. Review

1. In the last lesson, we covered the second part of chapter 16 where Paul and Silas,

after waiting on direction from the Lord, heard the call to go to Macedonia.

2. They journeyed to a chief city of Macedonia, Philippi, and found a group of Jewish women who had a regular prayer meeting by a river, and preached to them, and baptized several converts.
3. After that, on their regular trips to prayer, they were repeatedly confronted by a slave girl who was demon-possessed, and Paul eventually cast out the demon, setting the girl free.
4. But that caused a tumult, starting with the men who owned the girl who then caused a street riot that caused Paul and Silas to be beaten and jailed.
5. But at midnight, Paul and Silas sang from their jail cell, an earthquake loosed their shackles and opened the prison doors, and Paul ended up preaching to and baptizing the household of the jailer.

6. They departed from Philippi and headed to the next city, Thessalonica.
- II. The second missionary journey continued
  - A. Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica (Verses 1-4)
    1. **[map-Via Egnatia, Philippi, Thessalonica]**  
This was a road constructed by the Romans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC that passed across Macedonia. It was about 700 miles long and close to 20 feet wide paved with stone slabs.<sup>1</sup>
    2. The cities of Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica were on this road, making travel between the cities fairly easy.
    3. Paul and his company traveled from Philippi through Amphipolis and Apollonia, but appeared not to stop to preach till they came to Thessalonica, which was the capital of the Province of Macedonia.

*Acts 17:1-2*

*1 Now when they had passed through*

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via\\_Egnatia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Egnatia)

*Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:*

*2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,*

4. Thessalonica was approximately one hundred miles southwest of Philippi. Paul may have chosen it because of its importance as a very large city of around 200,000 inhabitants<sup>2</sup>, it was the capital city of Macedonia, and its Jewish population that had erected a synagogue there.
5. Notice that when Luke writes in verse 1, he says “when **they** had passed through.” It is no longer “we”. It is likely that Paul left some of the missionary team in Philippi to help establish the church there before joining Paul again later.
6. In every place where Paul preached, he attempted to preach the gospel first to the

---

<sup>2</sup> The Archeology Study Bible, p. 1777.

Jews. And after they were given the opportunity to accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ, he took the gospel to the Gentiles.

7. So for the first three weeks in Thessalonica, on the three sabbath days, he preached the gospel of Jesus in the Jewish synagogue, and won many converts from among both Jews and Greek proselytes to the Jewish religion.

*Acts 17:3-4*

*3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

*4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*

8. It is important to note the full gospel message was preached, mentioning Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

9. The Jews would have been well acquainted with such prophecies. He used what they knew to introduce Jesus whom they did not know. Men and women, Jews and Greeks believed.
- B. The Uprising in Thessalonica (Verses 5-9)
  1. And as happened plenty of times prior, eventually some rebellious Jews organized a campaign of persecution.

*Acts 17:5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain **lewd fellows of the baser sort**, and gathered **a company**, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.*
  2. Those Jews who rejected his message became envious of the success of the message about Jesus, and enlisted the help of some lewd fellows to create a

disturbance and throw the whole city into an uproar.

3. It resulted in a street riot with the mob assaulting the house of Jason. Jason was likely Paul and Silas' host in Thessalonica, and it is also possible his house was the location where the new saints gathered as their house church.
4. But when Paul and Silas were not found there, they dragged Jason and some Christian converts with him before the town council.

*Acts 17:6-8*

*6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;  
7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.  
8 And they troubled the people and the*

*rulers of the city, when they heard these things.*

5. Their accusation against Jason and his guests was that they “have turned the world upside down.”
6. But actually, the world in the grip of sin is already upside down, and only by the gospel of Jesus Christ can the world be set right-side up.
7. As we saw in Jesus’ trial, Roman rulers paid attention to an accusation of treason against Rome, and talk of another king.
8. Perhaps if the rulers had gotten their hands on Paul and Silas, it might have involved another beating and time in jail as had happened in Philippi.
9. However, having only Jason and his friends in custody, they merely made him pay “security” or bail, and released them.

*Acts 17:9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.*



- c. Help arrives in Thessalonica
  - 1. Before they left Thessalonica to the next city, they received some financial assistance from Philippi to help them on their journey.
  - 2. Paul was in Thessalonica at least long enough to receive an offering from the new Christians back in Philippi on two separate occasions. Paul wrote about it later in his letter to the Philippians, thanking them for their support while in Thessalonica:

*Philippians 4:14-16*

*14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.*

*15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*

*16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*

- 3. Perhaps it was Lydia the businesswoman of Philippi who suggested sending the offering,

since they had to quickly leave her house after being beaten and imprisoned.

4. Paul also wrote of this persecution in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-18:

*1 Thess 2:13-18*

*13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

*14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for **ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen [like the assault of Jason]**, even as they have of the Jews:*

*15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:*

*16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles*

*that they might be saved, to fill up their sins  
always: for the wrath is come upon them to  
the uttermost.*

*17 But we, brethren, being taken from you  
for a short time in presence, not in heart,  
endeavoured the more abundantly to see  
your face with great desire.*

*18 Wherefore we would have come unto  
you, even I Paul, once and again; **but Satan  
hindered us.***

5. Paul recognized satan's influence at hindering their ministry in this city, yet it did not stop him from preaching elsewhere.
- D. Paul and Silas Sent to Berea (Verse 10)
  1. Although Paul and Silas had escaped the hands of their persecutors, the disciples knew that they would likely make another attempt.
  2. So, they urged Paul and Silas to leave immediately, and sent them, under cover of night, to Berea, which was another

Macedonian city about fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica.

*Acts 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

3. **[map: Berea]**
4. As you can see, even though fleeing persecution, they didn't give up. Jesus had instructed the apostles that when they were persecuted in one city, they should flee to another (Matt 10:23) and preach there.
5. So on arriving in Berea, they went immediately into the Jewish synagogue to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- E. The Noble Bereans (Verses 11 and 12)
1. The Jews of Berea were said to have been more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they heard the preaching of the gospel of Jesus with open and unprejudiced

minds, and searched the Scriptures daily to determine if it was truth.

*Acts 17:11-12*

*11 These were more noble [open-minded, willing to learn] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

*12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.*

2. What made them more noble was their emphasis on searching the scripture to prevent being swept into an erroneous doctrine. A love for truth and an open mind and heart to the scriptures will always lead to Jesus.
3. As a result of the Bereans' noble attitude, many of them believed and were converted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Jews, many honorable Greeks, men and women, were converted.
  5. Like Jesus reach during His ministry, the preaching of the gospel went inter-racial, cross-cultural, and equally applied to men and women.
  6. It is not recorded how long the missionaries ministered in Berea, but they were there long enough to sow the gospel seed and have a revival.
  7. But soon as the news of their successful ministry in Berea reached the hostile Jews of Thessalonica, they followed them there to arouse the people of Berea against them.
  8. If you remember from the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had a similar experience with Jews from Antioch who followed them to Lystra and helped stir up trouble against them.
- F. Paul Sent to Athens (verses 13-15)

1. Paul was obviously the main target of the Jews' persecution, so when the people came for him, the brethren sent him away alone by boat. That was thought to be a safer option than escaping on foot:

*Acts 17:13-14*

*13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.*

*14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.*

2. Silas and Timothy remained to encourage the new converts and to set the church in order before leaving and joining Paul.
3. Berea was only a short distance from a seaport of the Aegean Sea, and some of the brethren accompanied Paul on a 200-mile journey to Athens.

*Acts 17:15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a*

*commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.*

4. **[map: Athens]** As the boat which took Paul to Athens returned again to the port near Berea, he sent a message instructing Silas and Timothy to speedily join him in Athens, but for unknown reasons, they did not join him until after he went to the next city of Corinth.

G. Paul's Ministry in Athens (Verses 16- 21)

1. It appears that Paul had not planned to visit Athens to preach, but only to wait there alone on Silas and Timothy while they did their ministry elsewhere. He wrote of this time later:

*1 Thess 3:1-2*

*1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;*

*2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and*



*minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:*

2. Although Paul had left Timothy in Berea, he had instructed him to return to Thessalonica to check on things and then report back to him. And the message Timothy brought back encouraged him:

*1 Thess 3:6-7*

*6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your **faith and charity**, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:*

*7 Therefore, brethren, we were **comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:***

3. But while Paul was awaiting the return of Timothy and Silas, Paul did not sit quietly while in Athens, but was stirred in spirit about the condition of the people:

*Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them*

*at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*

4. At that time, Athens was the intellectual center of the world and it was the place young Romans were sent to study philosophy and debate.
5. Their attitude toward learning and debate is noted in:  
*Acts 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)*
6. Paul used the familiar method of starting in the synagogue but he didn't stop there:  
*Acts 17:17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.*
7. There is no mention of success in the synagogue but from his connections made with philosophers in the common market place, the next door was opened to him.

## *Acts 17:18-19*

*18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

*19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?*

8. What an open door for a preacher!
- H. Paul's Sermon on Mars' Hill (Verses 22- 33)
  1. He proceeded in presenting the gospel but from an entirely different foundation than he used in synagogues.
  2. The idea of a Jewish Messiah was not a subject that would be familiar to this crowd so he began by making an observation about their worship:

## *Acts 17:22-23*

*22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.[margin note: very religious]*

*23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*

3. Then he presented to them the God they were missing—the God who had created everything and gave life to all.
4. He quoted the Greek poets, Epimenides and Aratus , who the people would have been familiar with and used their writings to tie into scripture:  
*Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*
5. He went on to speak of repentance, judgment, and the resurrection of Jesus.

That was a turning point for many:

*Acts 17:32-33*

*32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.*

*33 So Paul departed from among them.*

III. Conclusion: The Results of Paul's Sermon on Mars' Hill (Verses 34)

1. But even though he was rejected, there were a handful who believed Paul's message:

*Acts 17:34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*

2. So even in the most antagonistic scene, the intellectual center of Athens, the gospel message hit its target.
3. Dionysius the Areopagite was obviously a member of the Areopagus, the high court of Athens where Paul was speaking.

