

9/16/07

**Preaching Means Opposition**  
**Acts 17:1-15**

Paul and Silas have been released from their imprisonment at Philippi, they went to Lydia's house and encouraged the brethren who had excepted Jesus Christ as Savior and then departed.

The Holy Spirit is still guiding and directing the steps of Paul and Silas, in the continuation of the second missionary journey to Europe.

They were directed to two cities, Thessalonica and Berea, revealing the consistency of persecution, due to the preaching of the gospel of grace.

The persecution in these two cities unfolds for us in three movements.

- I. The custom of Paul preaching. vs. 1-4
- II. The opposition of Paul preaching. vs. 5-9
- III. The rescue of Paul for preaching. vs. 10-15

**I. The custom of Paul preaching. vs. 1-4**

- A. Paul preached only where the Holy Spirit directed him. vs. 1
  - 1. The Holy Spirit did not lead Paul to preach in two cities on the way. vs. 1a

- a. The passed through Amphipolis.
  - 1) Amphipolis was named because it was almost surrounded by the river Stryman, situated on the east bank.
  - 2) It was 33 miles from Philippi.
  - 3) It straddled the Via Egnatia about three miles from the sea.
  - 4) It was the capital of the northern district of Macedonia between 167-146 B.C.
  - 5) It also was a military station.
- b. They passed Ampollonia.
  - 1) Ampollonia means "belonging to Apollo".
  - 2) It was 30 miles from Amphipolis.
  - 3) And both were on the famous Egnatian Way, that ran from east to west.
- 2. The Holy Spirit led Paul and Silas to Thessalonica. vs. 1b
  - a. Thessalonica was 37 miles further, traveling a total 100 miles, from Philippi.
  - b. Thessalonica was strategically located on the Thermaic Gulf, also straddling the Via Egnatia.
  - c. It connected the rich agricultural plains of the Macedonian interior with the land and sea routes to the east.
  - d. Founded by Cassander in 315 B.C. and named after his wife, the daughter

- of Philip the II., step-sister to Alexander the Great.
- e. When Rome conquered Macedonia in 167 B.C., Thessalonica became the capital of Macedonia, the largest and most important city of all in Macedonia, with a population of 200,000.
  - g. In its second civil war it sided with Mark Antony and Octavian against Cassius and Brutus, due to its loyalty was declared a free city in 42 B.C.
  - h. The criticism that Paul should of preached at Amphipolis, being bigger than Philippi and Ampollonia instead of passing through is presumptuous and ignore the constant record of the Spirits leading.
    - 1) Remember the Holy Spirit had prohibited Paul and Silas from preaching in Asia Minor and Bithynia, leading them to Troas, where they received a vision to come to Macedonia. Acts 16:6-10
    - 2) The Holy Spirit led them to Philippi and verified the guidance of God by the work of God's Spirit in the heart of the wealthy woman Lydia, the demon possessed slave girl and the suicidal Roman jailer. Acts 16:11-40

- 3. The Holy Spirit brought them where there was a synagogue of the Jews vs. 1c
    - a. The place of gathering for the Jews, the people of God.
    - b. The place where the Scriptures were studied.
    - c. It was the place of worship but never sacrifice.
- B.** Paul preached to the Jew first. vs. 2
- 1. This was Paul's custom and habit, to go to them, the Jews first. vs. 2a-c
    - a. We saw it at Cyprus, in Salamis. Acts 13:5
    - b. We saw it at Antioch of Pisidia. Acts 13:14
    - c. We saw it at Iconium. Acts 14:1
    - d. We see it again at Thessalonica, not having to lay any groundwork, since they knew the Old Testament Scriptures.
      - 1) Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth as His custom was going to the Jew first. Lk. 4:16
      - 2) Paul points out the Jew first in terms of God's time-table, not importance. Rom. 1:16, 2:9, 10
    - e. The audience would be of Jews and God-fearing proselytes.
  - 2. The time element was three weeks by the phrase three Sabbaths. vs. 2d

- a,** Some say that Paul was longer than three weeks in Thessalonica but the reality there is no scriptures to prove to the contrary. Lenski points out that the aorist implies that Paul's work was completed in the three weeks.
- 1) They point to the fact that Paul worked night and day. 1Thess. 2:9, 2Thess. 3:8
  - 2) The gift sent by the Philippians. Phil. 4:16
  - 3) The establishing of leaders. 1Thess. 5:12  
\* These are all subjective, for all these could of taken place in three weeks, Philippi to Thessalonica was only 100 miles, three days travel.
- b.** We do know that the Philippians sent to Paul two offerings, the first while he was at Thessalonica. Phil. 4:16
- c.** Have you ever noticed the amount of doctrine that Paul taught to the Thessalonians in just three weeks as you examine the first epistle!  
\* Faith in Christ, the Second Coming, being the most prominent. the Trinity, sufferings, Satan, sanctification, the rapture, the seven year tribulation, etc.

3. The Apostle reasoned with them from the Scriptures. vs. 2c
    - a.** The word reasoned "dialegomai" means to discussed and argued with them about the word.
    - b.** The idea is to reveal the truth of the Scriptures.
- C.** Paul preached Christ Jesus crucified and resurrected. vs. 3
1. By explaining and demonstrating that Christ had to suffer. vs. 3a
    - a.** The sufferings of the Messiah were throughout the O.T. Ps. 2, 22, 69
    - b.** The substitutionary death of the Son of God was essential for the redemption of sinful man. Is. 53
  2. By explaining and demonstrating that Christ had to rise again from the dead. vs. 3a
    - a.** The resurrection of the Son of God was the guarantee, Hades could not hold Him. Ps. 16:8-11, Acts 2:26
    - b.** The resurrection means that God had excepted the payment for the sins of the world. Jn. 3:16, 1Jn. 2:2
  3. By proclaiming that Jesus whom they preached to them is the Christ, he Messiah. vs. 3b-c
    - a.** The promised Messiah. Gen. 3:15
    - b.** The Seed of David. 2Sam. 7:12-17

- c. The Son of God given. Is. 9:6-7
  - 4. By the words we have a very descriptive method Paul used to proclaim Jesus.
    - a. The word explaining “dianoigo” means to open up thoroughly and is used when Jesus opened up the Scriptures to the men on the road to Emmaus. Lk. 24:32
    - b. The word demonstrating “paratithemi” means to set besides so as to show the relationship, almost like a mini parable.
    - c. The word preach “kataggello” means to declare.
- D.** Paul preached and saw God work in the hearts of people. vs. 4
- 1. Some Jews were persuaded “Peitho”, they were induced to believe the fact concerning Christ. vs. 4a
    - a. By the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit.
    - b. By the exercise of their own will to be saved, Aristarcus and Secundus. Acts 20:4
  - 2. A great multitude of devout Greeks . vs. 4b
    - a. The devout Greeks were proselytes of the gate.
    - b. They had not committed themselves to the rite of circumcision.

- 3. A good number, not a few of the leading women. vs. 4c
  - a. Some of the leading “protos”, the first in influence and honor most likely, perhaps Greek ladies of the upper class.
  - b. Wives of leading citizens.
- 4. All these joined Paul and Silas. vs. 4d
  - a. They had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1Thess. 1:9-10
  - b. It seems that Timothy was left at Philippi with Luke, then brought Paul the first gift to Paul. Phil. 4:16

### Illustration

Jesus taught the priority of time to His disciples regarding the Jews, “But go rather to the **lost sheep** of the house of Israel.” Matt. 10:6

### Application

- 1. The average person in our American society is so clueless about Jesus, much like the days of Paul.
  - a. People are into believing in themselves.
  - b. Human potential and man’s goodness.
  - c. The liberal educators of humanism have done a great job to turn man away from objective truth of absolute right and wrong,

to subjectivism and relativism, every person determines what is right and wrong.

\* “Woe to those who call evil good, and **good evil**; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Is. 5:20

**2.** The Christian faith is reasonable but it is not based on reason alone.

- a. The Scriptures describe the fall of man making him a sinner.
- b. The Scriptures declare the provision of blood for the forgiveness of sins to be right with God.
- c. The Scriptures declare the promise of redemption through the Messiah, the Son of God.
- d. The Scriptures declare He would die for the sins of the world and whoever believes can be saved.
- e. The Scriptures clearly declare that Jesus was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, die and rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God.
- f. The Scriptures declare this is an individual choice, to believer or disbelieve and it will affect a person’s eternity with God or separated from God.

\* Come lets reason together, though...Is. 1:18

**3.** The Christian can not proclaim anything but the gospel.

- a. It is the good new of God for man.
- b. It is the only thing God honors.
- c. It is the only guarantee for man to have his sins forgiven.
  - \* Paul recognized their priority of time said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the **Jew first** and also for the Greek.” Rom. 1:16

*The custom of Paul preaching was to go the Jew first!*

## **II. The opposition of Paul preaching. vs. 5-9**

- A. The instigators against Paul are said to have been Jews. vs. 5
  1. The Jews who were not persuaded became envious. vs. 5a-b
    - a. The word “But” marks the sharp contrast between those who believed the gospel of the previous verse and these Jews who did not believe.
      - 1) These Jews were not persuaded “apeitheo”, they did not allow themselves to believe what Paul preached.
      - 2) They refused or withheld belief themselves.

- b. The word envious “zeloo” means to be heated or boiled in mind or spirit, the context determines if it is good or bad.
  - 1) We get our word zeal and jealousy from this word.
  - 2) They were zealous in a bad way, being jealous of the results of Paul's preaching.
  - 3) Paul uses the same word, “For I am **jealous** for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2Cor. 11:2
- 2. The Jews took some evil men from the marketplace, and gathered a mob. vs. 5c-d
  - a. The identity of these men, evil “poneros”, means bad in nature. vs. 5c
    - 1) Not only doing evil but enjoying the corruption of others by evil, lewd lowlifes.
    - 2) The same word is used for Cain and Satan. 1Jn. 2:13-14, 3:12
  - b. The market place “agoraios” was the location where people sold and bought the essentials for life. vs. 5c
    - 1) These hucksters hung around to see how they could make a buck.

- 2) They were not legal honest merchants.
- c. The Jews who were jealous of Paul were gathering a mob of these individuals. vs. 5d
  - 1) The word mob “ochlopoyeo” simply means to collect a crowd.
  - 2) The motive was to have them do their dirty work.
- 3. These Jews instigated a riot in the city against Paul and Silas. vs. 5e-6a-b
  - a. They set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason. vs. 5e
    - 1) An uproar “thorubeo”, a turbulent confusion.
    - 2) The mob mentality was loud, violent and uncontrollable.
  - b. They sought to bring them out to the people. vs. 5f
    - 1) They were looking for Paul and Silas.
    - 2) Luke and Timothy apparently were not targeted.
  - c. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city. vs. 6a-b
    - 1) The word “But” once again marks the contrast, they were expecting to find Paul and Silas but only found Jason and some brethren.

- \* Jason and the brothers were believers in Christ.
  - 2) The disappointment and frustration they dragged them out to the rulers “politarches”, from inscription, it appears there were five chief magistrates, in the first century A.D. vs. 6a-b
  - 3) The opposition by the Jews was consistent and Judaizers.
- B.** The accusations against Paul were three. vs. 6c-7
1. They cried out that these men had turned the world upside down and had now come to Thessalonica. vs. 6c-d
    - a. The meaning is to upsetting the minds of the people in the Roman world by their preaching.
    - b. The implication was that they had heard the preaching of the gospel in Asia Minor and now they were in the city.
  2. The man Jason had harbored them in his house. vs. 7a
    - a. He was liable for the disturbance, as an accomplice.
    - b. He was liable for giving hospitality and security to these law breakers.

3. The men were acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king — Jesus. vs. 7b-d
    - a. Practicing and teaching sedition against Rome, treason.
      - 1) Perhaps Paul mentioned the Kingdom of God?
      - 2) Or Jesus reigning on His throne?
    - b. Disrupting the Pax Roma by an “illicit religion”.
      - \* “From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks **against** Caesar.” Jn. 19:12
- C.** The response against Paul by the people. vs. 8-9
1. The crowd and rulers were agitated by the accusations. vs. 8
    - a. Thessalonians were Romans, they were loyal to Rome and Caesar.
    - b. The rulers were duty bound in their loyalty to Rome and Caesar, as administrators of Roman Law.
    - c. Both were troubled “tarasso”, agitated and disturbed in mind, being one with in sympathy with the accusers.
      - \* Used when Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with Him, Mk. 2:3

2. The rulers held Jason responsible for the disturbance and solution. vs. 9
  - a. They took security from Jason, he had to post bail, paying a bond.
  - b. Jason was guaranteeing that Paul would leave the city, stopping him from preaching. vs. 9

### Illustration

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Acts 9:15-16

### Application

1. I hope you know that there are Christians in the church like these Jews of Paul’s day, that are Tasmanian devils.
  - a. Beware of believers who want to infect you with gossip, slander and lies.
    - 1) The problem with gossip and lies, is that there may be some truth in it,
    - 2) But because it is done with the intent to hurt and destroy a person, rather than to resolve the problem or reconcile the person, it is a lie from hell!
  - b. Beware of believers who have an ax to grind with a person, a pastor or a church and they try to turn you against them and win you over to their side, the are carnal.

- 1) They usually will approach you by complementing you on your spirituality or how much they admire you.
- 2) Then when they are convinced you might listen to their “trash talk”, they will spring it on you.
  - \* “For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and **divisions** among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” 1Cor. 3:3
- c. The proper thing for you to do is to go back to the person they have just slandered or gossiped about and ask them if it is true.
  - 1) If you can stop them before they say too much, do so and tell them that they need to go to the person they are slandering and you will be asking the person they slandered.
  - 2) If they voice their gossip or slander, then tell them you are going to ask the person they have just spoken against, to verify if it is true or false.
    - \* This the principle of Matthew 18!
- d. Though women are more proficient at gossip and slander, it does not mean that men are not guilty of it.
  - 1) Paul warns young widows, “And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.” 1Tim. 5:13



2) “Whoever hides hatred has lying lips,  
And whoever spreads **slander** is a fool.”  
Prov. 19:18

2. Christians are accused of many things by the non-believers due to our loyalty to Jesus alone.

a. The early Christians were accused of being home-wreckers, having orgies in their love feast and being pyromaniacs, as they were blamed for the burning of Rome.

b. The Christian is accused at times by family members of changing their religion, particularly if you were ex-Catholic, receiving pressure and at times ostracized from the family.

\* “If the world hates you, you know that it **hated Me** before it hated you.” Jn. 15:18

c. The Christian will be accused by the non-believers of not living and having no fun, due to wanting to live moral and ethical, resulting in taunting and mockery.

\* “He who is not with Me is **against Me**, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.” Lk. 11:23

d. The Christian today is being accused by the secular liberals and the religious liberals such as the “Emergent Church” of being the problem in the world by being too narrow and not willing to work with all faiths for the good of the world.

\* “Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather

division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, **mother against** daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Lk. 12:51-53

*The opposition of Paul preaching was by Jew and Gentiles!*

### III. The rescue of Paul for preaching. vs. 10-15

A. The removal of Paul took him to the next place God had for him. vs. 10a

1. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Berea.

a. The danger was great and it was wisdom to go.

1) Paul saw this a Satan hindering him from returning. 1Thess. 2:18

2) Jesus said, “If you are persecuted, flee to the next city”.

b. The person liable to the authorities was Jason.

\* Paul suffered at Philippi, was stoned at Lystra, but now God allowed him to flee.

- c. The crisis could of made life for the church more difficult than it came be at Thessalonica.
    - \* Paul mentions they suffered at the hand of their own countrymen. 1Thess. 2:14, 3:1-5
  - 2. The journey was under the cover of night to be undetected and protection.
    - a. The brethren were those who had excepted Jesus as Savior.
    - b. The brethren could have been Aristarcus and Secundus who accompanied Paul to Asia. Acts 20:4
  - 3. The city of Berea was about 45-50 miles southwest from Thessalonica.
    - a. Berea was a city in the foothills of the Olympian range south of the Macedonian plain, on the eastern slopes of Mount Vermion.
    - b. Berea was an “Out of the way town”, according to Cicero as he commented about an individual who fled for refuge, founded in the 5th century.
- B.** The arrival of Paul allowed him to preached to more open minded people. vs. 10b-12
- 1. The company of believers arrived at Berea. vs. 10b-c
    - a. They wasted no time as they arrived. vs. 10b

- b. The place they went to once again was the synagogue. vs. 10b
- 2. The Jews were students of the word. vs. 11
  - a. They were more fair-minded than those of Thessalonica. vs. 11a
    - 1) The word could mean well born or generous, here it means more generous and friendly, expressing attitude.
    - 2) Appears five time, the other four regarding our attitude in our giving. 2Cor. 8:11, 12, 19, 9:2
  - b. They received the word of God with all readiness. vs. 11b
    - \* They were eager to hear and learn! vs. 11b
  - c. They searched the scriptures daily to find out if those things were so. vs. 11c
    - 1) The word searched “anakrino” means to examine or investigate continuously scrutinizing, not superficial and daily.
    - 2) Word is used for judicial inquiry. Acts 4:9, 12:19, 17:11, 24:8, 28:18
- 3. The result was repentance and salvation. vs. 12
  - a. Many Jews believed, a historical fact. vs. 12a

- b** A good number of Grecian or Hellenist, men and women, by the phrase “and also not a few of the Greeks”. vs. 12b-c
  - 1) These were prominent women as well as men “euscheman” of good standing and influence.
  - 2) Sopater was from Berea, who accompanied Paul later to Asia, at the end of the third mission. Acts 20:4

**C.** The departure of Paul was necessary again due to persecution. vs. 13-14

- 1. The Jews once again tracked him down from Thessalonica. vs. 13
  - a.** They had learned Paul was preaching the gospel at Berea. vs. 13a
    - \* The word “but” again marks the sharp contrast between the work of God and the work of Satan!
  - b.** They came and stirred up the crowd. vs. 13b
- 2. The brethren immediately sent Paul away. vs. 14
  - a.** The situation was critical and they wasted no time. vs. 14a
    - 1) The word immediately “eutheos” means right away.

- 2) The brethren were those of Bereans who excepted Jesus and the Jew did not interfere.

- b.** The manner of transport was a ship. vs. 14b
  - 1) They took Paul to the Aegean sea,
  - 2) To the province of Achaia.
- c.** The companions of Paul, Silas and Timothy remained at Berea. vs. 14c
  - \* Timothy who had been in either Philippi or Thessalonica was at Berea now.

**D.** The perspective of Paul was not discouragement, rather all that happened merely lead him to his next appointed place. vs. 15

- 1. Paul was escorted to Athens by the brethren from Berea. vs. 15a
  - a.** Without doubt to ensure his safety from the radical Jews.
  - b.** This was Paul’s next place to preach!
    - \* Some think they changed their minds and went by land but it is opinion.
- 2. Paul sent the brethren back with a message for Silas and Timothy to come as fast as they could. vs. 15b
- 3. The brethren departed with the errand. vs. 15c

- a. Silas and Timothy met Paul at Athens they were sent back to encourage the Thessalonians in their suffering. 1Thess. 3:1-6
- b. Paul then moved to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy met Paul at Corinth and gave him the good report of the Thessalonians about their faith and love, along with a second gift from them. Acts 18:5, Phil. 4:14, 2Cor. 11:8-9
- c. Corinth is most likely where he wrote 1Thessalonians and sent it.

### **Illustration**

Paul's life started with persecution, "Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket." Acts 9:23-25

### **Application**

1. There will be some people that will not want to hear anything you have to say about the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - a. Those in your family.
  - b. Those in your neighborhood.
  - c. Those in the work force.
  - d. Those in the public society.

- \* "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1Cor. 1:22-24
2. Then there will be other people that will hear, examine and realize that what you are saying about Jesus, sin and salvation is absolutely true.
    - a. Those who have an open heart to the presentation of the gospel.
    - b. Those who allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth and receive it as the truth.
    - c. Those who respond to the conviction of their sins by the Holy Spirit.
    - d. Those who confess Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.
      - \* "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Jn. 1:12-13
  3. Our entire life will consist of attempting to communicate the truth of the gospel to lost sinners.
    - a. By prayer that God would open the doors to share the good news.
    - b. By following the leading of the Holy Spirit, when He says no or yes.

- c. By recognizing that the gospel will be opposed fervently by some.
- d. By understanding that the gospel will bring about persecution to the herald.
  - 1) “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?” 2Cor. 2:14-16
  - 2) “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” 2Cor. 4:7

*The rescue of Paul for preaching came from the brethren!*

### **Conclusion**

The persecution in Thessalonica and Berea has unfolded by three movements.

- I.** The custom of Paul preaching was to go to the Jew first!
- II.** The opposition of Paul preaching was by Jew and Gentiles!
- III.** The rescue of Paul for preaching came from the brethren!