

# Turning the World Upside Down: Lessons from Paul's Missionary Journey

In Acts 17, we see Paul continuing his missionary journey, being "booted out of one place and into the next" while establishing God's church in various regions. This wasn't about setting up parachurch ministries but establishing local churches that could continue reaching their regions and advancing God's kingdom.

## How Did Paul Share the Gospel in New Places?

When Paul and Silas arrived in Thessalonica, they followed their usual pattern. Paul entered the synagogue and for three Sabbaths engaged in discussion and friendly debate from the Scriptures. He explained the evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah, showing how Christ needed to suffer and rise from the dead according to prophecy.

This wasn't a quick process. It took work, consistency, and investment in people to see the Word of God grip them and bring salvation. Paul methodically went through the Old Testament prophecies, pointing to how Jesus fulfilled them all - where He would be born, how He would die, and how He would rise again.

## Is Christianity Based on Evidence or Just Faith?

Our faith isn't built on myths or religious ideas but on historical truth. There is more historical evidence for Jesus than for many other ancient historical figures. Not just Christian writers but non-Christian historians of the day wrote about Jesus, His crucifixion, and His impact.

While we are called to faith, believing what we haven't seen, what we believe is founded on evidence. Christianity doesn't require us to "kiss our minds goodbye" - rather, God calls us to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul.

You and I are also evidence of God's reality. Our transformed lives testify to His power. When we share our faith, we don't need elaborate arguments - we can simply tell others what Jesus has done in our lives, how He has changed us.

## What Happens When Some Believe and Others Reject?

In Thessalonica, "some of them were persuaded to believe" along with many God-fearing Greeks and leading women. A church was born! Not with buildings and programs, but with a few believers who understood their calling and began reaching others.

However, the unbelieving Jews became jealous. They gathered troublemakers, formed a mob, and attacked Jason's house looking for Paul and Silas. When they couldn't find them, they dragged Jason before the authorities, accusing the missionaries of "turning the world upside down" and claiming there is another king named Jesus.

There will always be people who reject Christ. But the privilege we have is that some will receive Jesus and be saved. Even for those who reject, we've planted seeds for their future salvation. We should rejoice in those who readily believe, but also in the opportunity to plant seeds in those who initially reject us.

## **How Should We Respond to Rejection and Persecution?**

After being forced to flee Thessalonica, Paul and Silas immediately went to the synagogue in Berea and continued their work. They didn't take time to "lick their wounds" - they recognized the urgency of the gospel.

If you've been rejected or pushed away because of your faith, rejoice that you did what you were called to do, and then get back into the fight. The gospel is urgent. There are still more people who haven't heard of Christ.

As Paul wrote in Philippians 3:12-15, we must forget the past - both successes and failures - and press on toward what God has for us. There's too much at stake to live in past victories or struggles.

## **What Made the Bereans "More Noble"?**

The Bereans were described as "more noble and open-minded" for two reasons:

1. They received the message with great eagerness
2. They examined the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul taught was true

We should receive God's Word, presence, and worship with eagerness. We get to worship the King of Kings! We should be excited about our faith and exude Christ's joy.

We should also be like the Bereans in examining the Scriptures. Don't just take a preacher's word for it - check what is taught against God's Word. When we do this, we make the truth our own, and it will naturally come out when we speak to others.

## **How Should We Approach People of Other Faiths?**

In Athens, Paul was deeply troubled when he saw the city full of idols. But notice his approach - he didn't attack their false beliefs directly. Instead, he found common ground, acknowledging their religious devotion and using their altar "To an Unknown God" as a starting point.

Paul said, "What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." He then spoke about the true God who created everything, who gives life and breath to all, and who has appointed a day of judgment through the man He raised from the dead.

When sharing our faith with people of other beliefs:

1. Understand what they believe
2. Find common ground
3. Speak about who God is rather than attacking their beliefs
4. Point them to Jesus and the resurrection

## **What Was the Result of Paul's Ministry?**

In each place, "some believed." In Athens, among those who believed were Dionysius (a judge) and a woman named Damaris. The church was established in multiple cities despite opposition.

We can't focus on the negatives - the doors closing, the rejection, the mockery. Instead, we must remember that as we follow God's leading, He will use us, empower us, and we will see people coming to salvation.

## **Life Application**

God is calling each of us to participate in His mission of reaching the lost. Here are some questions to consider:

1. Have you backed off from sharing your faith because of past rejection or fear? How can you re-engage with God's mission this week?
2. Are you eager to meet with God, hear from Him, and grow in Him? How can you cultivate greater eagerness in your spiritual life?
3. Does it grieve you when you see people worshiping false gods or following false teachings? How might God use that grief to motivate compassionate outreach?
4. What is your story of how Jesus has changed you? How can you share that story with someone this week?
5. Are you examining the Scriptures daily, making God's truth your own? What step can you take to deepen your knowledge of God's Word?

The challenge this week is to be committed to doing God's will God's way - keep praying, keep sharing, keep reaching out, keep serving, keep sending, keep going. God will use our obedience, not our cleverness, to change the world around us.