

Wednesday, September 6, 2023
SHAKEN
PART 17: THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Tonight, we continue with Paul and Silas on their second missionary journey.

Acts 17:1-6 (NKJV)

Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica. Paul wrote 2 letters to the church there. Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue for 3 weeks. Many are saved. The unbelieving Jews become envious. This is not about a search for truth. A mob attack the house of Jason, a Jewish believer whose house was used as a refuge by Paul and his company. Paul and Silas are secreted away by the believers, and they travel to Berea.

Acts 17:11-14 (NKJV)

Although the people are more open, the Jews in Thessalonica are not. They travel to Berea and incite another mob. The brothers split up – Paul goes by ship to Athens – Silas and Timothy stay in Berea. Having asked Silas and Timothy to join him, Paul waits in Athens.

Acts 17:16-21 (NKJV)

Is your spirit stirred by the ungodliness around you? Pauls was and he preached in the synagogue and the market. In the market, he is heard by certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

Epicureanism: the greatest good was to seek modest, sustainable pleasure in the form of a state of *ataraxia* (tranquility and freedom from fear) and *aponia* (the absence of bodily pain) through knowledge of the workings of the world and limiting desires.

Stoicism: the Stoics are especially known for teaching that "virtue is the only good" for human beings, and that external things, such as health, wealth, and pleasure, are not good or bad in themselves (*adiaphora*) but have value as "material for virtue to act upon". The Stoics also held that certain destructive emotions resulted from errors of judgment, and they believed people should aim to maintain a will (called *prohairesis*) that is "in accordance with nature".

These are schools of Hellenistic thought growing out of the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato. Much of our western way of thinking about life has grown from these philosophies. Paul was asked to speak at the Areopagus. The

Areopagus was a specific meeting place outside of Athens. Over time, it became the name of the Athenian judicial council deciding matters of deliberate homicide, assault, and religion. Paul's discourse there is often scrutinized. I don't focus on that as much as the fact that the stumbling block to the listeners seems to be Christ's resurrection from the dead. Greek philosophy tended to separate the body and soul and downplayed the control of the body.

Acts 18:1-11 (NKJV)

On to Corinth, the recipient of two epistles. The major importance in Acts 18 surrounds people and places. Corinth and Ephesus are two very important stops on this leg of the journey. Paul preaches in Corinth with many converts but encounters more opposition from the Jews. Yet, Paul stays there 18 months. After some time, the Jews make an attempt to have Paul arrested. The attempt fails and Paul heads to Ephesus. There he preaches and the Jews and Gentile converts ask him to stay but Paul, meaning to be in Jerusalem for what scholars believe is Pentecost. The people introduced here are Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos. Aquila and Priscilla accompany Paul to Ephesus. After Paul leaves, a preacher named Apollos arrives there.

Acts 18:24-28 (NKJV)

Here we see an incident of someone saved but not baptized in the Holy Spirit. The man was powerful but not filled. Aquila and Priscilla teach him "the way of God more accurately". Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the accurate way. Next time, we'll see another example of this.

Today's Scriptures:

- Acts 17:1-6, 11-14, 16-21 (NKJV)
- Acts 18:1-11, 24-28 (NKJV)