

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Thessalonica and Berea
Acts 16:35 – 17:15

Last time...Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey continued, not according to his itinerary but according to the Holy Spirit's itinerary – the vision of the man from Macedonia

The man of Macedonia turned out to be the jailer of a Roman prison in Philippi, who heard the Good News of Jesus Christ because God allowed Paul and Silas to be beaten and imprisoned in order to preach the Gospel to him unto salvation

This time...the 2nd Missionary Journey continues as Paul and Silas, in con-Spirit-cy with the Lord, are gently escorted out of Philippi and proceed to Thessalonica and Berea with the Gospel

As we have seen in Paul's ministry, the reactions to the Gospel are the same;
a clear pattern remains
We will be in Acts 16 and Acts 17

Acts 16

v35 magistrates sent the serjeants:

When it was day...after a VERY eventful night in the Philippian prison

the magistrates...military governors

sent the serjeants...the “enforcers”, the “goon squad” who beat the criminals with rods (v22-23)

Let those men go...why?

- Given time to cool off and think about it, realize they have no case?
- The hand of God?
- v25-28 reported to them and; clearly, these men are not criminal?
i.e. bad men or guilty men would have run away

God allowed His children to be beaten and imprisoned, now, with their mission accomplished, He sets them free because their work is not done

2 Tim 4:17-18 the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom
until Paul's work was done

v36-37 go in peace...nay verily:

The serjeants give the magistrate's command to the jailer, who is now a brother in
Christ with Paul and Silas and a citizen of heaven (far above Rome)
He gives them a brotherly blessing: "Go in peace."

But now we get a glimpse into Paul's feisty and fiery personality
To the serjeants and the jailer, Paul plays his "Roman citizen" card

They...the authorities, the military governors and their goon squad

have beaten us...wounded us gravely with rods

openly...publicly, before the entire city, a Roman colony (all are Roman citizens)

uncondemned...without a trial and the opportunity to defend ourselves against the
charges leveled, a blatant violation of Roman law

being Romans...a Roman citizen, making the authorities' actions (beaten openly
uncondemned) a capital crime
i.e. the authorities have committed a crime worthy of death

cast us into prison...pretty much reserved for non-citizens

and now...knowing we are innocent men

do they thrust us out...drive us away

privily...privately, secretly, not openly as their crime against us Roman citizens

nay, verily...I don't think so!

but let them come themselves...tell the magistrates to come face us, look in our
eyes

and fetch us out...lead us out of town

Had Paul played his "Roman citizen" card last night, the jailer and his family
would not have been saved

The Holy Spirit held that play until now

The Lord was on His Throne throughout the situation, leading Paul and Silas

The power of Rome now lies with...Paul

v38-39 they feared...besought...desired:

The serjeants, facing a life-threatening situation along with the magistrates,
report back to the magistrates.

Rage is replaced with terror when faced with this all-important piece of
information they had not bothered to learn – Roman citizen

Now they are the ones who are facing the wrath of the Roman Empire

Whom do they fear?

Caesar, not the Living God.

There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom 3:18)

So they hustled to the prison, with their tails between their legs,

led Paul and Silas out of the prison to the edge of town, and begged them
to leave town.

Paul could have exercised his rights as a Roman citizen by staying in town and
exactng justice

But he does not take legal action or get revenge

Having humbled the authorities, he mercifully carries on with the business at hand
– preaching the Gospel, the work of the merciful God

v40 Lydia...comforted...departed:

Freed and vindicated, Paul and Silas walk out of the prison and walk over to
Lydia's house, a place of sweet fellowship with other believers (v15)

There, they comforted the brethren – what happened and why
(his vision seen clearly not then but it is now)

The beaten and imprisoned comforted the baby Christians.

Acts 14:22 we must thru much tribulation enter into the kingdom of
God...which remains true to this day

Me this week: tired...tired of the brazen corruption and blatant lies,
breadth and depth of the pain and suffering

me to the Lord: Please intervene. Please come.

The Lord to me: Acts 14:22, John 16:33, keep moving and praying

Note: Paul would again comfort these brethren, again from prison, in the
form of the Epistle to the Philippians

Then, the missionary team, in con-Spirit-cy with the Lord and having no fear of
persecution, keep moving, leaving behind a healthy fellowship

And that may not be all they leave behind...

Acts 17

v1 they:

As we read our Bibles carefully, who is “they”?

In Ch 16:16-17 we read “we” and “us”, an indication that Luke was a part of the missionary team that came to Philippi

Now, we read “they” as Paul and Silas leave Philippi and we will not read “we” and “us” again until Acts 20 when Paul is again in Philippi

Is this an indication that Luke stays in Philippi to nurture this new fellowship?

According to Irenaeus, a disciple of the Apostle John, in his writing *Against Heresies*, in *Ante-Nicean Fathers* Volume 1, pgs 437-438, Luke was

- “a constant companion and fellow traveler of Paul’s”
- “inseparable from Paul”

Scripture, our Final Authority, does not explicitly tell us where Luke is, but we learn to read our Bibles carefully!

Thessalonica...synagogue:

[map]

The missionary team, at least PST, leave Philippi, travelling on Roman roads

- through (not stopping at) Amphipolis and Apollonia
- to Thessalonica

Why through and to?

Apparently there is not a Jewish synagogue in either Amphipolis or Apollonia but there was one in Thessalonica

Rom 1:16

The distance between Philippi and Thessalonica is about 100 miles

Roman system of roads

- “All roads lead to Rome”
- 53,000 miles of paved roads
- built by Roman soldiers for use by the Roman Legions
- fast movement of armies and trade...and travelers
- ala Germany’s Autobahn, built by Adolf Hitler for military purposes
- ala USA Interstate system, patterned by President Eisenhower after seeing the Autobahn, also primarily for military purposes
- key component of “fullness of time” for the Incarnation of the Messiah...Gospel to the world by God’s army

v2-3 as his manner was:

In keeping with his Spirit-filled *m.o.*, Paul

- went first to the synagogue in town i.e. to the Jews
 - Rom 3:2 unto them were committed the oracles of God
 - Rom 9:4-5 to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises; Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*,
 - Rom 10:2-3 they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.
 - Rom 11:29 the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.
- reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures
 - not life-application stories or his opinion or his personal interpretation (2 Peter 1:20-21)
 - Scripture interprets Scripture
 - The words of God preserved on his parchments
 - John 5:39, learned in the 3 years with Jesus
- opening and alleging
 - “open thoroughly, expounding”
Neh 8:8 reading distinctly, giving the sense,
causing them to understand the reading
 - “presenting”
- Christ must needs have suffered...necessary to fulfill God's promises
 - God cannot lie!
 - Gen 22, Ps 22, Ps 16:10, Is 53, Dan 9, Mal 4:2
 - Luke 24:44-47
 - Rom 5:15-19
 - Heb 2:14-15
 - suffered unto death, not a “super Moses” as they were expecting
- risen again from the dead
 - 1 Cor 15:26
 - Rom 6:23
- Jesus (of Nazareth) is the Christ...the Son of the Living God

The Christian faith is a reasonable faith, supported by an overwhelming amount of evidence of its Truth, unlike religious that are blind leaps of faith

Noteworthy – Paul was only in town for 3 weeks...plenty of time to cover the imminent return of Jesus Christ (2nd Coming)

- God has delivered believers from the wrath to come
- believers will be snatched off the earth to meet Jesus in the clouds, the Rapture
- The Day of the Lord (the wrath to come) comes like a Thief in the night, but believers are not appointed unto wrath but salvation
- In those last days: apostasy in Christianity, the Holy Spirit in the Church restraining evil in the world until taken out of the way, the counterfeit christ revealed, a strong delusion for those who refuse Jesus Christ

How do we know Paul taught those things in that synagogue?
He reminded them in 2 Epistles, 1 Thes and 2 Thes

v4 some of them believed...consorted:

Some Jews in the synagogue in Thessalonica heard the testimony of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26) thru Paul and associated/fellowshipped with Paul and Silas (neither Timothy nor Luke mentioned),
as did many Greeks (men and women) who worshipped the God of AI&J

God opened hearts, many made rational choices to believe, and Paul's Spirit-filled witness was very fruitful

But...

v5 But the Jews that believed not:

Not all the Jews believed.

Those that did were peaceful, those that did not were agitated and very loud

As we saw in Jesus' ministry,

As we saw in Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (Ch 13:42-45, 50; Ch 14:1-2),
where God is working, so is the devil

The Gospel is either received or rejected, believed or not believed

And the louder, and destructive, of those two responses is always those in rebellion against God and what He is doing

True in this nation also

Who is louder: believers or unbelievers?

As with Jesus in Jerusalem and as with Paul in "the utter most parts of the earth",
the unbelieving Jews are moved with envy, an ugly and corrupted jealousy

The unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica

- “hired” lewd/evil/lawless men of the baser/vulgar sort...gangsters
- assembled a mob
- ignited anarchy/clamor/tumult in the city...like we see in Portland and Seattle and Washington DC (think about who the “unbelieving Jews moved with envy” are in those cities)
- assaulted Jason’s house...where Paul and Silas are staying, a peaceful house (Matt 10:11-13, Luke 10:5-6)
- to bring Paul and Silas before the gangsters and the mob

v6-7 These that have turned the world upside down:

Paul and Silas are not in Jason’s house; where are they?

Hidden by God?

Taking any disciple of Jesus Christ they can lay hands on, the unbelieving Jews and their mob level inflammatory charges against the Christians:

- have turned the world upside down
 - disturbed *Pax Romana*, the “Roman peace” which existed between nationalities within the Roman Empire
 - preventing us from evolving as a society
- refuse to proclaim that Caesar is lord/deity, saying Jesus is Lord/Deity
 - enemies of the State
 - worship and depend on Jesus Christ rather than worship and depend on the Gov’t

Turning the corrupt world upside down, by turning it right side up!

The world, the Govt’s of the world (including ours) think born-again, evangelical Christians are out of their minds, believing foolish tales

Reality: we are the ones in our right minds, having reasoned with the Lord!

2 Tim 1:7

Is 1:18

The world, the Govt’s of the world, think man can govern himself

Reality: History shows otherwise; man cannot govern himself and needs his Creator to govern

Faith in Jesus Christ is the most rational thing an imperfect person could do, rejecting Jesus is the most irrational thing an imperfect person could do!

2 Cor 4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Irony/tragedy: those who reject Jesus do not reason with God in the Scriptures (v2); their hearts and minds are closed and dishonest

Here in Thessalonica, the unbelieving Jews denied Jesus, as did the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem (John 19:12-15)

v8-9 they troubled the people:

What the devil and the children of the devil do: they trouble/agitate the people
Jesus Christ and the children of God bring the peace of God to the people
Matt 5:9

The city leaders in Thessalonica do not want the wrath of Rome to come visit their town (the basis of *Pax Romana* was fear of the overwhelming and ruthless strength of the Roman Legions),
neither because of the charges leveled in v6-7,
nor because of the insurrection threatened by the mob

So they set bail for Jason, who did NOT deny Jesus before men, and release the Christians, pending a trial when Paul and Silas are apprehended

v10 sent away...by night unto Berea:

When released by the authorities, the Christians hustle Paul and Silas out of town, under the cover of darkness,
Off to Berea (~ 60 miles) go Paul and Silas...where to get right to their calling, regardless of the persecution that always arises

[map]

v11 more noble...received...readiness of mind...searched:

The Jews in the synagogue in Berea were more noble, intellectually honest, open-minded than the Jews in Thessalonica

They readily heard what Paul had to say (v2-3) and then did their homework – diligently searched the Scripture, the Final Authority on Truth, to discern if what he said was true (from God, and not from man)

Homework: being responsible and accountable before God to personally study and rightly divide (interpret) the Scriptures...Scripture interprets Scripture

What happens in Berea?

v12-13 many of them believed...stirred up the people:

The response to the Gospel in Berea is as in the other places Paul preached

God was working: Many believed...due to readiness and honesty of mind and diligent search of the Scriptures

Rom 10:17

James 1:21

Soft hearts opened by God

The devil was working: Unbelieving Jews stir up the people against Paul and Silas (and Timothy)

Not noble, not intellectually honest

Enemies of the Cross

The agitators from Thessalonica, 60 miles away, learn where Paul is (in Berea) and storm down there to agitate that town against him

v14-15 sent away...Athens:

As did the brethren in Thessalonica, the brethren in Berea hustle Paul, and only Paul, out of town, taking them to Athens

Once he is safe in Athens, Paul sends his escorts to tell Silas and Timothy (no mention of Luke the beloved physician) to come to him ASAP

Did Timothy come?

Not immediately

1 Thes 3:1-2 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone. 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

After Athens, Paul will go to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy catch up with him (Acts 18:5)

Paul was sent to Europe by the Lord

In Europe, Paul has been blessed with great fruit...and much trouble

The pattern of his ministry holds

1. Go to the synagogue to preach Jesus
2. Some believe
3. Unbelievers stir up the people against him and run him out of town
4. Faithfully goes to the next town
5. And the cycle repeats

And...where God is working, so is the devil

The devil will stop at nothing to hinder the Gospel

But...1 John 4:4

Application/Lessons

The Bible:

No book has been so thoroughly scrutinized, by both believers and unbelievers

believers: How then shall we live?

How can I decrease so Jesus increases?

I want to seek Your face, Lord; please reveal Yourself to me and
lead me in my walk in this strange place that is not my home

unbelievers: digging for errors and inconsistencies they can use to justify their lives and
beliefs

both:

2 Tim 3:16	All scripture <i>is</i> given by inspiration of God, and <i>is</i> profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
2 Peter 1:20-21	no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake <i>as they were</i> moved by the Holy Ghost.

to strengthen, encourage, and comfort believers
To convict unbelievers e.g. Pastor John

Believer:

The Christian faith is a reasoned/reasonable one, not a blind leap of faith as characterized by the
world

1 Peter 3:15 sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an
answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you
with meekness and fear

Needed: an opened heart that is

- intellectual honesty
- reasonable
- willing to make a decision

We cannot reason with unreasonable people; the Gospel is not a debate or argument to
be won, it is an invitation issued with love

Only the Lord can open a closed heart

Our role: pray and speak (1 Cor 3:5-9)...and never grow weary of well-doing,
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal 6:-9)

Always: Acts 17:11

Remember: Matt 5:10-12

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Persecution does not silence the Church, the Church grows during persecution
“Thessalonica” seems to be happening in USA today
And citizens of USA are being trained and prepared for a counterfeit christ

Unbeliever:

In God's eyes, there are only 2 kinds of people on the planet – those saved by faith in Jesus and those lost/condemned by a rejection of Jesus.

If you are against Jesus (via rejection or religion), KNOW this:

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him

1 Tim 2:4-5

Phil 2:9-11

Come!

It will be the most rational decision you ever make!