

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

MINISTRY NOTES

- A. The Second Missionary Journey
 - 1. Paul sought to revisit churches from the first missionary journey in order to encourage them.
 - 2. God had bigger plans that included taking the Gospel where it had never been proclaimed, to what is now Europe.
- B. Ministry in Philippi
 - 1. Paul was confronted by demonic activity.
 - 2. Paul and Silas rejoiced despite being beaten and placed in jail.
 - 3. The power of the Gospel transformed Lydia, the jailer and their families.
 - 4. The first church in Europe was planted in Philippi.

AT THESSALONICA AND BEREA, ACTS 17:1-15

- A. Ministry in Thessalonica (1-9)
 - 1. Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica (1), *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.*
 - a. Paul and Silas headed west to Thessalonica which was about 100 miles from Philippi.
 - 1) Some believe Timothy remained with Luke in Philippi to continue the work there.
 - 2) Others believe Timothy accompanied Paul and Silas to Thessalonica.
 - b. They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia along the Egnatian Way.
 - c. Why didn't they minister in those cities?
 - 1) Probably, he chose Thessalonica strategically. It was the largest city in the region at the crossroads of trade and travel.
 - 2) Thessalonica became the primary center for evangelizing the entire region, 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, *so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.*
 - 3) Richard Lenski, *The fact that some cities were passed by when the gospel was brought to a province must not be taken to mean that the gospel was not to be offered to them. This would come later. After it had taken root in the proper centers, the intervening cities and territories would be reached in due time.*
 - d. The importance of the synagogue to Jews
 - 1) It served as the religious, cultural and social center of every Jewish community.
 - 2) Functions of a synagogue
 - a) School - it served as a school for children and for study for adults.
 - b) Court - it administered punishment to offenders of Jewish law.
 - c) Hall - it was a meeting place for religious as well as political meetings.
 - d) Hotel - it served as a hostel with rooms set aside for Jewish travelers, merchants, and the poor.
 - e) Treasury - it was a place where money was collected for charitable purposes and the Temple.
 - 2. They made Gospel presentations in the synagogue (2-3), *And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."*
 - a. Paul proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogue three straight Sabbaths.
 - 1) He probably stayed in Thessalonica longer but spent his first three weeks teaching in the synagogue.
 - 2) Reasons why his stay was longer than three weeks.
 - a) He supported himself while there, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*
 - b) He received monetary support from the church in Philippi, Philippians 4:16, *Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*
 - c) His extended ministry was to Gentiles as noted in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, *...and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*

- b. It was his custom to speak first in a synagogue when one was available.
 - 1) Paul had a burden for his fellow Jews.
 - 2) The Jews had a theological background that would make them more familiar with Paul's message.
 - 3) God-fearing Gentiles would be there and they might open opportunities in the non-Jewish community.
- c. Paul's method of evangelism in the synagogue
 - 1) Primary tool
 - a) The Scriptures.
 - b) We do not know which passages he used but a good guess would include Isaiah 53.
 - 2) Key points in proclaiming the Gospel
 - a) Messiah must suffer, die and rise again from the dead.
 - b) Jesus is the Messiah.
 - 3) His teaching method
 - a) He reasoned with them from the Scriptures, *dialogue*, discuss with reasonable interaction.
 - b) He explained Old Testament Scriptures, *gave proper interpretation*.
 - c) He proved His interpretation, *showed to be true*.
 - 4) His power
 - a) The enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Luke 24:32, *They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"*
- 3. Some received the Gospel (4), ***And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.***
 - a. Some responded positively to the message; they were persuaded, *convinced*.
 - b. The Gospel had an impact at every level of society in Thessalonica.
 - 1) Some were Jews.
 - 2) A larger number were devout Greeks (non-Jewish God-fearers) who turned to Christ.
 - 3) A number of leading women responded who were from the upper class and/or wives of powerful men.
- 4. Reaction by others in Thessalonica (5-9)
 - a. A mob formed against Paul and Silas (5), ***But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.***
 - 1) Some Jews responded with jealousy to others who received the Gospel message.
 - a) Jews possibly referred to Jewish religious leaders.
 - b) They were offended by the effectiveness of Paul's message.
 - 2) They assembled into a mob a group of bums, literally, *men of the marketplace*.
 - a) They were individuals who hung around the marketplace because they had nothing else to do.
 - b) Merrill Unger, *Loungers of the type employed here by the Jews to attack Paul and Silas were common in the agora or forum of Graeco-Roman cities. They invariably assembled around the rostrum where an orator was speaking, and applauded or heckled according to who paid them . . .*
 - 3) The mob started a riot and attacked the house of Jason seeking to bring out Paul and Silas.
 - a) It appears that Jason hosted Paul and Silas in Thessalonica as Lydia did in Philippi.
 - b) The mob wanted to bring them out to the crowd.
 - 1] Thessalonica was a free city in which it was responsible for local affairs.
 - 2] The word used here for *crowd* is the name of the local assembly.
 - 3] The instigators wanted to bring charges against them as they did in Philippi where they were accused of disturbing the *Pax Romana*, the peace of Rome.

- b. They dragged Jason and other Christians to the city authorities where charges were brought against them (6-7), *And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."*
- 1) Jason was dragged to the city authorities because they could not find Paul and Silas.
 - 2) The Jews made charges against Paul and Silas.
 - a) Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the peace, *these men who have turned the world upside down*, William Barclay, *That is one of the greatest compliments which has ever been paid to Christianity... When Christianity really goes into action it must cause a revolution both in the life of the individual and in the life of society.*
 - b) Jason was accused of encouraging them, he was harboring criminals.
 - c) All of them were accused of treason by saying Jesus is king when only Caesar was king.
 - 1] This was the same accusation brought by Jewish leaders against Jesus, Luke 23:2, *And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."*
 - 2] Such an accusation confirms that the Jewish leaders were the ones bringing the charges since they would be the only ones who knew enough about Paul's theology to make such a statement.
- c. Response of the local authorities to the charges (8-9), *And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.*
- 1) The authorities were disturbed by the accusations.
 - a) They were *agitated*.
 - b) The charges were serious and could not be overlooked.
 - 2) They released Jason after taking money from him as security.
 - a) A bond was paid by Jason to insure that Paul and Silas would leave town, and if not, he would lose his money.
 - b) This may explain why Paul did not return, 1 Thessalonians 2:18, *because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.*
 - c) It appears the authorities were more concerned about maintaining peace than punishing Paul and Silas.
 - 3) Despite the difficulties, the church in Thessalonica grew, 1 Thessalonians 3:6, *But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you.*
5. Results of the first ministry in Thessalonica.
- 1) Christians there endured persecution.
 - a) 1 Thessalonians 2:14, *For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.*
 - b) 1 Thessalonians 3:3-5, *For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.*
 - c) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, *since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.*
 - 2) Converts in Thessalonica and others from the region became travelers with Paul to Jerusalem, Acts 20:4, *Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.*
 - 3) Aristarchus accompanied Paul to Rome while he was a prisoner, Acts 27:2, *And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.*

B. Ministry in Berea (10-15)

1. Paul and Silas traveled to Berea (10), ***The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.***
 - a. Christians in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas to Berea.
 - 1) One other time Paul fled by night from a city, Damascus, Acts 9:25, *but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.*
 - 2) Berea was off the Egnatian Way, 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica, on the road to Athens.
 - b. Paul and Silas began their ministry in Berea at the synagogue.
 - 1) Paul's philosophy of ministry never changed, witness to Jews first and then to non-Jews.
 - 2) Paul will be greatly encouraged by the attitude of Berean Jews toward Paul's message of good news.
2. Response of the Bereans to Gospel messages by Paul and Silas (11-12), ***Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.***
 - a. Luke records a compliment that Berean Jews were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica.
 - 1) Their nobility was not based on a high position in society but on their character.
 - 2) The Thessalonian Jews were jealous but the Bereans wanted to know the truth.
 - b. The Bereans sought truth with Bible study methods that have encouraged Christians to this day.
 - 1) They willingly listened to what was being taught.
 - 2) They studiously compared what was taught with what was in the Scriptures.
 - 3) New teaching was received if it was in accordance with the Word of God.
 - c. Many believed as a result of studying Paul's teaching with open minds and open Bibles.
 - 1) Jewish and non-Jewish Bereans placed faith in Christ.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Anyone who listens to new religious truth would do well to compare it with Scripture, as these Jews did. Many of these noble skeptics believed because Paul's teaching was consistent with the Old Testament.*
3. Thessalonian Jews followed Paul and Silas and disrupted their ministry (13), ***But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.***
 - a. Thessalonian Jews heard of Paul's ministry in Berea and went there.
 - 1) They tried to stop Paul's work.
 - 2) They used the same tactics as the ones they used in Thessalonica.
 - a) *agitating*, to unsettle, as in disturb the peace.
 - b) *stirring up*, to cause a riot.
 - b. The basis of the Thessalonian Jews' concern was the Word of God as proclaimed by Paul.
 - 1) Many who believe a lie are willing to fight for it.
 - 2) May we who believe the truth be willing to live and die for it.
4. Paul and Silas went separately to Athens (14-15), ***Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.***
 - a. Christians in Berea took Paul to Athens when trouble began.
 - 1) It appears that Paul was the leader who the Jews wanted to harm.
 - 2) It is not known whether he went by ship to Athens or by land.

- b. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea until Paul called for them.
 - 1) They stayed behind to encourage the new converts.
 - 2) It appears they rejoined Paul in Athens, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, *Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith.*
 - 3) Timothy was not mentioned since Acts 16, but it is assumed he was part of the trip to this point.

<i>CONCLUSION</i>

- A. The Word of God bears fruit despite personal difficulties encountered when sharing God's truth.
- B. It is important to search Scripture diligently when considering claims from others.
- C. The Word of God is divisive since it is life against death, light against darkness, truth against untruth.