

Part 43 Trouble in Thessalonica

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, July 13, 2016

✚ Acts 17:1-14

In our last study we looked at Acts 16:11-40 which covered a whole lot of information. We studied about Paul's journey into the European continent into Greece where he spent time in Macedonia. Philippi was the chief city and that is where they devoted most of their time. It was there they had their first European convert, Lydia, the seller of purple and it was there where they met the damsel with a spirit of divination and cast the evil spirit out of her. Because of this they were beaten and arrested. We saw the earthquake the Lord made happen that shook the prison doors and shackles off and then the Philippian jailer and his family got saved. After going back to Lydia's house and encouraging the brethren they set out toward Thessalonica, and that is where we pick the story up from tonight.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

The distance from Philippi to Amphipolis is 33-miles and then from there to Apollonia is 30-miles and from there to Thessalonica is 37-miles. So about a 100-mile journey by foot which would take about 3-days.

And true to Paul's nature the first place he goes to is the Synagogue. It says in **verse 2**, "as his manner was." Paul made sure that he was in the house of the Lord when it was time for services. You didn't have to wonder if Paul was going to show up. He was like a lot of you folks. If you aren't here then something is bad wrong because you are always faithful. That was the same as Paul. Of course he used these opportunities to try and reach his fellow Jews with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is what we read in the next verse. **and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.**

Remember, there was no New Testament then. It hadn't been written yet. So when it says that he reasoned with them out of the scriptures it means the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophets. This was how Paul would convince these dyed in the wool, strict, by the letter of the law Jews that Jesus was the one the Old Testament was prophesying about concerning the Messiah. I'm sure that he compared the Prophet Isaiah's words in Isaiah 53, which was given over 700 years before Jesus was crucified, how every single word of the prophecy was fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:3-5 and 7-10:

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

"some of them believed, and consorted." Those are Jews that believed what Paul preached about Jesus being the Messiah prophesied of in the Old Testament, also "consorted," with them. That means they "took up with them," or "united with them."

"of the devout Greeks a great multitude." These are very religious Greeks that have renounced idol worship and were now worshiping God and meeting with the Jews in the Synagogue.

"and of the chief women not a few." These are influential women who were connected with families of high rank. Their husbands or family members may have been the political or military leaders in the town. It says "not a few," that means a whole bunch.

Notice that Paul was in an unknown place. He's never been there before. He doesn't know the people there. He goes into the Jewish synagogue and immediately begins preaching Christ to them, and of course the Jews don't believe in Christ. They still don't believe in Christ. You think it was easy for Paul to be a witness? He stood boldly even after being beaten and imprisoned not knowing how they would receive him. Notice that he reasoned with them. That means he took the Scriptures that they knew and pulled Christ out of them. He presented the Gospel to them in its rawest, most complete form. Jesus Christ was born, crucified, and raised from the dead! This was new to their ears. They met with opposition.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Anytime the Gospel is being preached and people are getting saved and the Church is growing the Devil will rear his ugly head up. He uses these unbelieving Jews to try and cause problems for Paul and everyone connected with him. It says that they "moved with envy." They were jealous of Paul's success and the crowds that he was gathering to hear the Gospel.

We've got a lot of that going on these days. I know I mention the Burlington Revival a lot but I want you to know there are certain people, pastors, preachers, evangelists, and Church members that are in opposition of everything that is going on there. They are skeptical of the salvations and they criticize the methods and the preaching and the invitations that are given. They do this because they are envious so they allow the devil to use them to post negative comments on Facebook and other social media to try and get other people over on their side. And that is exactly what these unbelieving Jews are doing. They even go out and find what the Bible calls "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort." These are men that hung around in the marketplace where all the people were. You could say these were "rude, crude, dudes." They were vulgar men that would gladly take your money to tell a lie on someone. The Jews have rounded up some of these men and paid them to disrupt things. "and set all the city on an uproar." The Jews certainly got their money's worth from these guys as they caused the whole city to be in an uproar. It has now turned into a lynch mob.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

When the lynch mob can't find Paul and Silas they instead turn on Jason. This man Jason has apparently let Paul and his missionary team to stay in his house while they were there. The angry mob pulls Jason and some other men out of his house and bring them before the rulers of the city.

Since this was a Roman ruled city the Jews had to abide by Roman law. They had to have something to charge them with. Notice what the charges are: "These that have turned the world upside down," and things "contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

The charges are actually true. You better believe Paul and Silas had turned the world upside down with the Gospel! In fact the world would never be the same again. They also were guilty of doing things contrary to the decrees of Caesar by declaring there was another King. If there was one thing that the Caesar hated, it was being made to feel like they were not in control or that someone had power over them or trying to take their throne away.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

All of this has got the rulers of the city worried. They probably were in fear of all of this big angry mob that had assembled. The Roman rulers were always afraid that their superiors would hear about things like this and would remove them from office or punish them.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

The rulers make Jason take responsibility for Paul and Silas. It says they took security of Jason. That means that he paid bail or put up some kind of collateral. He most likely agreed to send Paul and Silas out of the city.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

So they send Paul and Silas out of the city in the night time. This was so they wouldn't attract any attention. They could slip away and be gone before anyone realized it. This was a safety precaution in case another lynch mob showed up.

Despite Paul and Silas having to leave Thessalonica, they accomplished what they set out do and that was to preach the Gospel and see souls saved. A Church was established there and Paul would later on write the Epistles of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians to them.

This time they go to Berea which was about 50-miles from Thessalonica. Just like times before Paul goes into the Jewish Synagogue to teach and preach the Gospel.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

The Jews in Berea were different than the ones in Thessalonica. The Bible says they were "more noble." Here in East, Tennessee we would say the Bereans had a lot

more sense than the Thessalonians. They were willing to consider what Paul was preaching and they didn't just take his word for it they studied the Scriptures for themselves so they could see whether or not what he was saying was true. That is what we all should do. I wouldn't intentionally mislead you in what I preach or teach from the Bible but I think you ought to study it on your own and not just take my word for it. I may be wrong about something. I know there have been times when I've written down the wrong Scripture reference and haven't caught it while preaching and afterwards somebody will come up and ask me about it. So you need to study the Bible for yourself. You may be listening to another preacher that don't have your best interest at heart or trying to push his own agenda and will preach something that is not true. You need to be able to catch that.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

After the Bereans heard the preaching and studied the Scriptures for themselves, they believed in Jesus. Here the women are called "honourable," instead of "noble," but both have the same thought behind them. Also more Greeks believed.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

Those unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica were determined to make Paul's life miserable. They were willing to walk 50-miles just to stir up trouble. And it worked. They got the people in Berea stirred up.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

So Paul is sent away for his own protection and he boards a ship and sails 250 miles across the sea to Athens.

†ⁱ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible