

## Living out our faith Pt 21

### Acts 17:1-15

#### V1-5

- In this chapter we will see the effect of Paul's ministry upon three cities and how the responses of the people, many centuries ago, are similar to the responses we see toward the gospel today. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, so it was a very strategic city. Located on an excellent harbor it was known to be a center for business. It was a stop for several important trade routes. So, what does this mean? Opportunity. Paul saw a place where people needed to hear the gospel, so he did not mind traveling one hundred miles to share it with them. When he arrives Paul locates a synagogue, where as a traveling teacher he can share with others from the scriptures. Through his ministry Paul outlines three important facts that define the gospel message (verse 3):
  1. The Messiah must suffer. Though it is spoken of in **Isaiah 53:7** this was not understood by anyone.
  2. The Messiah would rise again. Because they did not know he would die none thought he had to rise.
  3. The Messiah is Jesus not just a prophet - **Matthew 13:53-57**. People were amazed and would say we know his family and so they would ask how could he know these things?
- Verse 4 – some did believe and with belief came a hunger for truth (**1 Peter 2:2-3**) and these followers attached themselves to Paul and Silas including some of the influential women. And, there were men like Aristarchus and Secundus, who later traveled with Paul (Act 20:4). Scripture mentions a great multitude and not a few as a way of saying it was a big crowd.
- But not everybody was excited with these new developments. The Jews were used to those gentiles who were interested in God attending their synagogue. But, now they're showing up at a man named Jason's home where he is hosting meetings for Paul and Silas. Verse 5 – the Jews who were not persuaded envied or coveted Paul's success. Instead of their ears listening to the message, their eyes were on Paul and Silas, causing evil to spring up and motivate their actions. They gathered thugs from the streets to form demos – meaning an organized crowd - to attack Jason's home searching for Paul and Silas to drag them to the city assembly. Unlike the city of Philippi, which had to answer to Rome for all of their laws and civil decisions, Thessalonica was a free city and governed their own local affairs.

#### V6-13

- Verse 6 – the accusation was that they have turned the world upside down. What an accusation – may this be said this of all of us! Unable to find the missionaries the mob seizes Jason and some of the believers, and drags them to the authorities. Verse 6-7 – If you take a close look at their accusations they’re the same accusations used at the trial of Jesus. disturbing the peace, and promoting treason (**Luke 23:2**). This should not surprise any of us because Jesus said in **John 15:20** – a servant is not greater than his master; if they persecuted Him they will also persecute you.
- Verse 8-9 – after seeing the riot, and hearing the accusations of preaching another king besides Caesar, the leaders agreed that this was not good for them if they were to keep their positions and their sovereignty from Rome. Verse 9 – so they put a peace bond out on Paul and Silas. This meant they had to leave the city and Jason would have to pay money and probably use his house as a guarantee that Paul and Silas would not return. Paul would later write how this was a device Satan used to try and hinder the gospel, but scripture says it did not (**Thessalonians**). However, we saw in verse 2 that during the three to four week span of Paul’s ministry to the church, that the church continued to spread the word and to win the lost (**1 Thessalonians 1:5-8**). This also shows that growth is not always a matter of time but application.
- Verse 10 – The brethren send Paul and Silas away under the cover of night, and they travel about 45 miles to the neighboring city of Berea. If Paul is in the flesh after all that happened in Thessalonica the last place he would be is at the synagogue of the Jews. Yet that is where he is found. Despite the many beatings, threats and nighttime get-a-ways, he is at the synagogue sharing the word. We saw in verse 4 and 5 that only some believed but that most were jealous and stirred up trouble. However in verse 11 we learn some of the differences between the Jews in Berea and those in Thessalonica:
  1. Bereans were of more noble character and integrity; the Jews in Thessalonica really didn’t want truth.
  2. Bereans received the Word with readiness of mind. They expected to hear from God therefore their minds were fertile to the gospel.
  3. Bereans would search and study the scriptures daily to make sure what is being taught is true. Paul was not offended; we should never elevate a teacher above the word of God.
- Many believed, and again we read how prominent women believed. It is interesting that some say Paul’s writings were prejudiced against women.

Yet when we read about new converts both in Thessalonica and Berea he calls to our attention the type of women who were coming to the gospel are influential and honorable.

- Verse 13 – when the Jews in Thessalonica learn that Paul and Silas are preaching 45 miles away they hurry there stirring up and agitating the people. The brethren then agree that it would be best that Paul leave. This time Paul leaves Silas and Timothy behind to continue to preach in those regions. People are often amazed how believers so young in their faith were able to withstand so much persecution and opposition. However, if you read carefully it is real simple because we know from verse 2 it is through reasoning from the scriptures. Folks who reject it were unable to refute the word and therefore they revert to anger and violence. But those who receive it are unmoved by whatever attacks Satan chooses to throw at them. May all of us become Bereans that we are searching the scriptures daily. No man, ministry, church can keep you, only scripture (verse 11).