

Acts 17: Thessalonica, Berea And Athens.

I. God's work in Thessalonica: 1-9.

Paul first went to the synagogue, and preached Jesus crucified and risen again to the Jews **and a great multitude believed.**

When Paul was in Thessalonica, he received financial support from the Christians in Philippi (**Philippians 4:15**- *For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities*). They helped with this successful work among the Thessalonians.

As happened in Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra on the first missionary journey, here also Paul is opposed by a mob incited by **envious** people among the Jews. They were not turning the world upside down, they were turning it right-side up.

II. God's work in Berea: 10-14.

Paul and Silas flee Thessalonica quickly, not wanting to bring more persecution on the Christians there. After only a few weeks of leaving Thessalonica, Paul had so much more to say to these Christians, so he wrote to them **1 Thessalonians**.

In Berea, they follow their familiar strategy, and found that their audience was **more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica**. Two things earned this compliment for the Bereans: first, **they received the word with all readiness**. Second, they **searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so**.

This is now the fifth city Paul has been run out of by an angry mob, stirred up by envious Jewish leaders.

2 Timothy 1:13 - *Hold fast the pattern of **sound** words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

Hygiainō, from which we get the English, **hygiene**, literally means, clean; free from mixture of error.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 – *Test/prove all things; hold fast what is good.*

Test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not).

2 Timothy 2:15 - *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

III. God's work in Athens: 15-34.

Paul's practice was to preach wherever he could get an audience. Here it was both in the **synagogue** and in the **marketplace**. Paul faced a challenging audience in Athens. It was a cultured, educated city that was proud of its history. It was an intellectual center, much like Oxford or Cambridge in England.

The newness of Paul's message earns him an invitation to preach at the intellectual center of the city, the *Areopagus*. The *Epicureans* pursued pleasure as the chief purpose in life. The *Stoics* believed that all things, good or evil, were from god and so nothing should be resisted, and they believed there was no particular direction or destiny for mankind. They were all sinful and worshipped idols of every kind.

Ezekiel 10:3-5 - *For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them,*

Pleasure, Possessions, and Position, whose worship is described as "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" in **1 John 2:16**. Sex, food, drinks/alcohol, sports; possessions, accomplishments, education, self, position... Indeed the list of other gods is endless, for anything that anyone allows to run his life becomes his god... Today's idols are more in the self than on the shelf; preoccupation with oneself. It's idolatry for non-Christians, its **syncretism** for Christians.

Paul progresses from knowing who God is (our Creator), to who we are (His offspring), to our responsibility before Him (to understand Him and worship Him in truth), to our accountability if we dishonor Him (judgment).

The results at the Areopagus seemed small, yet some did believe. Among those believing were a man named **Dionysius** and a woman named **Damaris**.

1 Corinthians 10:14 - *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

1 John 5:21 - *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*