

BIB204 NT2 Early Church

Unit 4c

The 2nd Missionary Journey; Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens

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So in this segment, we're dealing with continued ministry within the province of Macedonia. Philippi has been evangelized. There has been drama in terms of the resistance of the Roman colony to Paul and Silas because of the casting out of a fallen angel, a demon, a spirit of python from a slave girl. In chapter 17, Paul and his apostolic party come to Thessalonica. There is a synagogue there. Paul goes in there and he reasons from the Scriptures for three Sabbaths, three weeks. He explains and proves that Christ had to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. Some of them were persuaded, and they joined Paul and Silas, many of the devout Greeks and a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous and they created social trouble. They created a mob. They set the city in an uproar. They attacked the house of Jason. They dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, accusing them of turning the world upside down against the decrees of Caesar. And they take a fine from Jason and the rest, and they let them go.

Paul and Silas are sent from Thessalonica to Berea. That's starting in verse 10 of Acts 17. They went into the Jewish synagogue. These Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They searched out the Scriptures in line with what Paul was saying and they believed everything that he said and they were converted. But what happens is that people from Thessalonica (verse 13), they learned that the word is proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, and they come there and they agitate and they stir up the crowds. The brothers (verse 14) send Paul, but Silas and Timothy remain there. And Paul is brought as far as Athens. He'll stay there for a while. He commanded Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible. He sent them a message.

So at this point, we get into the composition of the letters of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, which appear to have been written from Athens. So we've seen four letters so far. We've got the letter of James which is written to a Jewish audience. We've got Galatians which is written to the churches (plural) of Southern Galatia. But now we have the evangelization of Thessalonica, but Paul and his party have been driven from Thessalonica to Berea. Berea has been evangelized and the Jews of Thessalonica hear about Berea. We didn't even mention Philippi. The letter to the Philippians will not be written until the early 60s, somewhere between AD 61 and 63. And they seem to be well-established. So Paul is basically brought to Athens and he waits there for Silas and Timothy. Silas and Timothy are going back to the Thessalonians. So this is sort of a context for the writing of 1 Thessalonians where Paul answers questions and expresses his approval of their ministry. He's only been with them for three weeks. When Silas and Timothy come back to Paul, they bring more questions from the Thessalonians to Paul that Paul answers. In the context of 2 Thessalonians, he sends Silas and Timothy back.

In the meantime, Paul is in Athens and he is exercised about the idols that he sees on every corner. So he gets into disputes with Stoics and Epicureans who show no respect or regard for his intellectual gifts. And Paul has considerable intellectual gifts. They call him a babbler, which is from the term *spermologos*, seed picker literally, indicating their lack of regard for his intellectual acumen. He eventually is brought to the Areopagus, the Hill of Mars, where he gives a speech. He cites two of their poets. He talks about God being lenient in times past but now commanding men everywhere to repent. And that runs, this whole content that I've been talking about, from the beginning of Paul's sojourn in Athens up until the Hill of Mars, that runs from Acts 17:16 all the way to verse 34.

In verse 22, Paul stands in the middle of Mars Hill and he cites two of their poets. He talks about all men being God's offspring. If you look at verse 29, "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone." In other words, he's not an idol. "An image formed by the

art and imagination of man.” God has overlooked times of ignorance, “but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” That’s verse 31, that last part there. And of course, as soon as the Greeks hear about the resurrection from the dead, they mock Paul. Some of them ridicule him. Others say, “We want to hear some more about this some other time,” which is sort of a nice way of getting him off the stage. They had no regard for him because they could not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It was foreign to their understanding. The matter was evil for many of those Greeks and spirit was good. And they just could not see the resurrection from the dead. Physical, bodily resurrection. It did not stick for them. It wasn’t a concept that they readily accepted.

Which takes us to chapter 18. Paul leaves Athens. He goes to Corinth. He finds a Jew there named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. And they are there because Claudius Caesar, who reigns from AD 41 to 54, commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. So they are there, and it just so happens that they share the same trade with Paul. They’re tentmakers. He reasons in the synagogue every Sabbath. He tries to persuade Jews and Greeks. Look at verse 5 of chapter 18. Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia. They have delivered the second letter to the Thessalonians. And so Paul is occupied with the word now. He basically drives home the message that he’s been trying to get these Jews in the synagogue to understand: that Jesus is the Messiah. They refuse it and Paul says, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. I am going to the Gentiles.” So he goes to the house of a man named Titius Justus, whose house is next door to the synagogue. Titius Justus is a Gentile, is a worshipper of God. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, had believed in the Lord, which is a remarkable achievement. Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. God assures Paul to not be afraid. So he is there (verse 11) for a year and six months. He teaches the word of God.

Gallio was a proconsul of Achaia. And during that time, which was about AD 51 to 52, the Jews made a united attack on Paul. They brought him before the tribunals. See that in verse 12. And they basically accuse him of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law. And in verses 14 to 16, Gallio basically expresses his lack of caring because it has something to do with the Jews. It’s an in-house debate and he doesn’t want anything to do with it. The Jews have no outlet for their anger and it just so happens that there is a new convert by the name of Sosthenes, who took over from Crispus as ruler of the synagogue. And he’s a convert now, so the Jews beat up Sosthenes instead. But Gallio still shows no hint that he even cares.

Paul stays many days after that (verse 18). He leaves the brothers. He sets sail for Syria back to Antioch, his home church. Priscilla and Aquila are with him. They probably want to see what his home church is like. He cuts his hair at Cenchreae, which is a hop, skip, and a jump away from Corinth. They’re both on the same isthmus. They came to Ephesus. He left them at Ephesus. He went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews, but he would not stay for a longer period of time. He indicated that he will probably come back to them. So there’s an initial evangelization at Ephesus on the part of Paul. This is still part of the second missionary journey, but he doesn’t stay long. He says, “I will return to you if God wills.” And he set sail. Because he has a vow, that’s why he had his hair cut. He landed at Caesarea (verse 22). He went up and greeted the church at Caesarea, and then he goes home to Antioch. He spends some time there. And then he left. Then he was going from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. See that last part of verse 23 which we highlighted before? That is the beginning of Paul’s third missionary journey. As soon as he gets back to

Antioch, that closes the second missionary journey. When he departs again, as we see in verse 23, he's going through the churches of Phrygia and Galatia, strengthening the disciples. That's the third missionary journey. In the next segment, we will pick up with Acts 18:24 and we will finish out this particular unit.