

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Mission Accomplished in Macedonia

Acts 17:1-15

Let's take our Bibles together and turn to the book of Acts. We are working through the book of Acts verse by verse as part of our series, "No Other Name." And today we come to Acts 17, and another episode in a series you might call, "Paul's suffering in order to get the gospel to the world."

Let me start today with a broad-sweeping theological statement. Here it is—God is more interested in his fame and in his glory and in his Name being proclaimed throughout the world than our personal safety and well-being. Case in point—the Apostle Paul.

When I hear preacher's preach "health, wealth, and prosperity," I think to myself "how do you fit Paul and his missionary journeys into that theology?" How do you fit Christians dying for their faith in Christ into that theology? It doesn't work. According to the *OpenDoors* website, twelve Christians die for their faith in Christ every day in our world. That's one Christian death every two hours!¹

When I see preachers preach "God wants you to be healthy, wealthy, safe, and happy," I think to myself *garbage*. That's garbage. That's not what the Bible teaches about life and ministry and serving Christ.

Now there is something that the Bible teaches about that is greater and more wonderful than anything that this world has to offer. It's more wonderful than wealth. It's more lasting than health. It's more prosperous than prosperity. You know what it is? It's a relationship with Christ. It's joy. It's love. It's peace. And it's an everlasting relationship with Christ and his people. I'll take those things every time! You can have what this world has to offer; I'll take Christ.

The title of our message today is "Mission Accomplished in Macedonia." Last time we saw the Apostle Paul travel to Macedonia for the first time as he took the gospel to the city of Philippi. And despite severe persecution in that city, God was at work. Paul and Silas got pummeled for preaching Christ. They were stripped, beaten, and imprisoned with no legal justification. Yet despite that, a church was birthed (see **Acts 16:11–40**). The church of Philippi now has Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailer and his household. Not a bad day's work for Paul and Silas despite their suffering.

Well God's not done with them yet in Macedonia. And they are not done yet with the conflicts that come with a commitment to Christ. Look at **17:1**.

¹Now when they

Notice, it's "they" not "we" here.² Probably that's because Paul left Luke in Philippi to help that new church. But Paul, Silas, and Timothy moved on.

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica,³ where there was a synagogue of the Jews.⁴

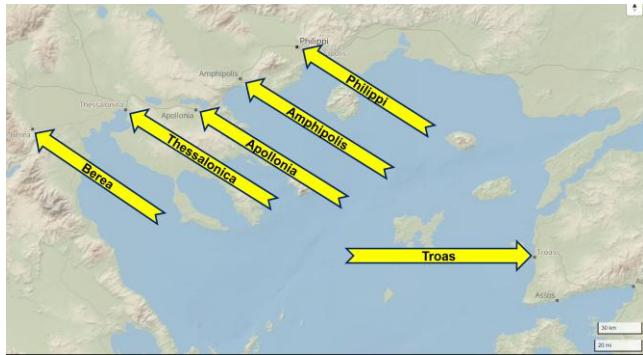
Here's the map again of Paul's journey to Macedonia. Let's follow this route.

¹ Opendoors.org, 01-22-25: <https://www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/stories/12-Christians-killed-for-their-faith-each-day/>

² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703n910: "Luke seems to have stayed in Philippi: the first 'we passage' ended in 16:17 in Philippi, the next 'we passage' begins in 20:5–6, with 'we' sailing from Philippi to Troas."

³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 550: "Thessalonica was a vital link to the Balkans with routes by land and sea."

⁴ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 60: "Thessalonica became not only a business-friendly economic environment and a free city, but also a city of refuge for the Jews after their expulsion from Rome sixteen years previously. Jews had sought another city that resembled Rome, and Thessalonica came to be that hospitable place."



Paul and Silas's Travels in Macedonia⁵

Remember now, Paul was in Troas when he had that vision of the Macedonian man. That vision led him and his team to board a ship and set sail for Europe. Paul traveled first to Philippi, and now he travels about a hundred miles⁶ from Philippi to Thessalonica on an ancient road called the *Via Egnatia* (the Egnatian Way).⁷

First, he and his team pass through Amphipolis, that's more than a day's journey from Philippi. Then they travel through Apollonia, which is more than a day's journey from Amphipolis.

Some people think that they just “passed through” those cities without even mentioning the gospel. I’m not so sure that was possible for Paul. But what’s interesting to me is that the Greek Word translated “passed through” (διοδεύω [*diodeuō*]) here is only used twice in the NT. The other time it’s used is in **Luke 8:1** where Luke says of Jesus, “Soon afterward he went on through [passed through: διοδεύω] cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.” It’s possible Paul did the same in these cities.

Amphipolis and Apollonia were not inconsequential cities along this route. They were as big, or even bigger, than Philippi. But for whatever reason, they didn’t stay long in these communities. They kept moving, probably to distance themselves from the angry people of Philippi who had essentially chased them out of town.

And eventually they came to Thessalonica, the largest, most influential city in Macedonia.⁸ This is the city which later housed a church to which Paul wrote two of his thirteen letters, namely **1 and 2 Thessalonians**.⁹ But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. There’s no church yet at the beginning of **Acts 17**. There are no believers as of yet in **verse 1** when Paul and Silas step into a synagogue in Thessalonica.¹⁰

⁵ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), November 1, 2025. Some geographical points added by author.

⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703: “From Philippi along the *Via Egnatia* via Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, a journey of about 102 miles (165 kilometers).”

⁷ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 503: “17:1 narrates a considerable journey along the main Roman road, the *Via Egnatia*, which eventually turned west and went across Macedonia. The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was some one hundred miles, and we are told that Paul and his coworkers passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way.” I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 292: “Paul’s missionary campaigns were greatly eased where good highways, the motorways or autobahns of the ancient world, aided his progress.”

⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 358: “Thessalonica was then (as now) the second largest city in Greece, with a population estimated at 200,000.” D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 532 estimate the population at 100,000. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703 suggests a population between 40,000 to 65,000. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 470: “Paul knew that Thessalonica (our modern Salonika) was a strategic city for the work of the Lord. Not only was it the capital of Macedonia, but it was also a center for business, rivaled only by Corinth.”

⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703: “The city was founded by the Macedonian king Kassandros in 315 BC, combining the old city of Therme with two dozen other settlements; he named the new city in honor of his wife Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great.”

¹⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 705: “Paul’s letter to the Thessalonian believers, written within a few months of the establishment of the church in Thessalonica, reminds the believers that they had turned away from idols (εἰδωλα; 1 Thess 1:9), which suggests that Paul’s ministry was probably not limited to the synagogue and to Jewish audiences while he stayed in the city; the majority of the new Christian community consisted of former polytheists.”

Look at verse 2.

²And Paul went in, as was his custom,

Remember Paul typically went to the Jews and God-fearers in a community first, unless it was a city like Philippi that didn't have a synagogue. And even there he went to Jews and God-fearers meeting outside the synagogue.¹¹

and on three Sabbath days

I don't know if that was three consecutive Sabbaths or three Sabbaths over a period of time. I'm inclined to think the latter.¹²

he reasoned¹³ with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining¹⁴ and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer¹⁵ and to rise from the dead¹⁶

Now just look at those verbs with me again. He “reasoned” with them.¹⁷ Also he was “explaining” and “proving” from the Scriptures that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead.¹⁸ Let me just make an obvious statement here. This wasn't a “relativistic, all-roads-lead-to-heaven, type of conversation.” This wasn't a “your opinion is valid... my opinion is valid... let's just hold hands and sing Kumbaya” kind of conversation.

Paul was reasoning with them. Paul was arguing with them. Paul was even proving to them that the Hebrew Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead.¹⁹ Paul was trying to persuade them with all of his cognitive and rational powers to receive this truth, just like he did before in Philippi, Lystra, Derbe, Antioch, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Damascus.²⁰

Now undoubtedly what Paul did was reference the OT Scriptures that he used previously in **Acts**. Luke doesn't tell us specifically what Scriptures he used to prove that Christ must suffer and rise from the dead. Probably he used **Isaiah 53**. “[H]e was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed” (**53:5**).²¹ Probably he used **Psalm 2** to describe Christ's deity and Christ's kingship. Probably he used **Psalm 16** to explain Christ's

¹¹ JOHANN SPANGENBERG: “Because he was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin! He could not abandon the Jews, his brothers; instead, he diligently turns to them wherever he is able, and he would like to lead them to Christ. He continues to hope for this.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 237–8.

¹² See Carson and Moo, *An Intro to the NT*, 532–3. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 360 says “three successive Sabbaths.” Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Ac 17:2–3: “Paul had to be there long enough to receive support from Philippi (Phil 4:15–16), about a hundred miles away.”

¹³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703: “The verb (διελέξατο) describes Paul's activity and can be defined either as ‘engage in speech interchange’ and translated as ‘converse, discuss, argue’ or as ‘instruct about something,’ translated as ‘inform, instruct.’ The prepositional phrase that follows the verb (ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, ‘about the Scriptures’) makes the first meaning more plausible.”

¹⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 704: “The basic meaning of the first verb (διανοίγων) is to ‘open’ or ‘reveal’—Paul opens the Scriptures by showing how they anticipate and teach about Israel's Redeemer.”

¹⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 359: “Paul opened the Scriptures; he expounded their meaning, just as Yeshua had done in Luke 24:32 and 45.”

¹⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 704: “The insistence that Jesus the Messiah had to suffer and die and that God raised him from the dead, is a key theological theme for Luke.”

¹⁷ Greek διαλέγομαι. For a discussion on how this Greek word is used in the NT, see Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 460–1.

¹⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 548: “Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles here and does so with an argument that almost looks syllogistic: Scripture said that the Messiah would suffer and be raised. Jesus experienced this. Therefore Jesus is the promised Messiah.”

¹⁹ CHRYSOSTOM: “For it is natural for him who tries to persuade people by miracles alone to be suspected, but one who persuades by the Scriptures does not arouse this suspicion. Indeed, we often see Paul persuading people by his teaching.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 211.

²⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 713: “In Thessalonica and Berea the mixed reaction was not faith on the one hand and indifference on the other, but conversions of some listeners and opposition by others—just as in Paul's earlier missionary ministry in Damascus, Jerusalem, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Philippi.” John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 129: “If we dispute about matters which concern men, then let human reasons take place; but in the doctrine of faith, the authority of God alone must reign, and upon it must we depend.”

²¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 360n51: “That the Scriptures point to the suffering of Christ is a common theme in Luke-Acts: Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 26:22f. Cf. 1 Cor 15:3f.; 1 Pet 1:11. The servant psalms of Isaiah would have comprised a major part of these OT proofs of the passion of Christ.”

resurrection. “You will not let your Holy One see corruption” (16:10). He’s done this before. We’ve seen him already in the book of Acts use OT Scriptures to argue that it was necessary “for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.”²²

And here’s the climax in verse 3. Are you ready for it? Here’s the greatest thing these Jews have ever heard in their lives. Here’s that “eureka moment” that every first century Jew was waiting for. Look what Paul says at the end of verse 3.

and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim²³ to you, is the Christ.”

“The Messiah is here!” says Paul. The Messiah! The Christ! He’s here. The Jews had been waiting for centuries for the coming of the Messiah, the anointed one—מָשִׁיחַ in Hebrew; Χριστός in Greek. And Paul is relaying to them now this good news: “**Salvation is here. Not only did the Christ have to suffer and die according to the OT.**²⁴ **But the Christ has already appeared. He’s already suffered and died. He’s already suffered and died and risen from the dead.**”²⁵

Now Paul’s done this before. Paul’s preached these truths before. Paul’s taken this message to other places before. And some things never get old. Some things need to be told again and again and again. Because they are so precious, and they are so wonderful, and they are so glorious, they bear repeating.

Let me encourage you this morning, church. Don’t just talk about sports and weather and news with your constituencies. Talk about this! Talk gospel! These truths bear repeating again and again and again. Because some have never heard. These Thessalonians haven’t heard. And now they are getting a chance for the first time to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and respond in faith.

Go ahead and take your notes and write this down. I want to give you today “Three Components of a Christ-honoring Mission” from Acts 17. Here’s the first.

Three components of a Christ-honoring Mission:

1) **Preaching** that is **Christ-centered** (17:1-3, 10-11)

Several years ago I read a biography of my great-great-aunt, Thyra Caffey Ragsdill. She’s the younger sister of my great-granddaddy, Rupert Caffey. And in the early 1900s, they moved from Big Sandy, Texas in East Texas all the way to Seagraves, Texas in West Texas which is about five-hundred miles away. Only in Texas could you travel five-hundred miles away and still be in the same state!

Well in East Texas, my ancestors didn’t really go to church. My great-great-granddaddy and my great-great-great-granddaddy were Russellites or Jehovah’s Witnesses. And when they all moved to West Texas, there wasn’t a church anywhere. There were just cotton fields and rattlesnakes.

But in the summer of 1922, my great-great-aunt writes that “a preacher came [to Seagraves] by the name of Ball.” And that preacher held church meetings for about a week. And one night, my great-great-aunt Thyra, at age 13, got saved. In her own words, “She obeyed the gospel.” And the next morning she got baptized in a horse trough. Water’s in short supply in West Texas. And then my great-granddaddy Rupert got saved and baptized too, despite his father’s objections.

Now why do I tell you that story? A faithful traveling pastor named Ball preached the gospel to my great-granddaddy and my great-great-aunt in West Texas, and they got saved. Just like Paul and Silas did in Thessalonica two-thousand years ago. The message is still the same.

²² Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 504n151: “Presumably texts like Psalms 2; 110; and Isaiah 53 would be discussed.” Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, 293-294: “We can be reasonably sure that the Scriptures used would include Psalms 2, 16, 110; Isaiah 53; and possibly Deuteronomy 21:23.”

²³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 550: “The use of the verb καταγγέλλω (*katangellō*, proclaim) is frequent in Acts (3:24; 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:13, 23; 26:23).”

²⁴ JOHANN SPANGENBERG: “They imagined the Messiah would come in royal splendor and would establish the kingdom of Israel like David and Solomon did. They did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth crucified under Pilate was the Messiah but rather a deceiver of the people.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 238.

²⁵ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 60: “From the Scriptures, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue by giving evidence, arguments, and reasonable explanations for the claim that Jesus was the Christ (v 3). That message was a stumbling block for the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:23). For them, the Messiah would come to release Jews from Roman oppression, and he would establish a new nationalistic state. To accomplish these goals, they believed that the Christ would rise up as a king and a military leader. Thus, claiming that Jesus—who died on a Roman cross instead of conquering Rome—was the Messiah offended the Jewish worldview.”

And that message was passed down to me and my family. And I'm passing it down to others. And here's the message—Believe in Christ! Obey the gospel! Receive Jesus as your Messiah, your Savior! And live your life as a disciple of Christ in obedience to his Word. These are the greatest truths the world has ever known, and I get the privilege of sharing those with you as your pastor.

Now that's not all that happens in this passage.²⁶ Watch what happens next. Inevitably when you teach this Word, and when you engage in Christ-centered preaching, you will have responders and rejecters. You will raise up disciples and you will raise up detractors. There will be people who want to listen to you and there will be people who want to lynch you (metaphorically speaking or otherwise).²⁷

Here's what happened to Paul in **verse 4**. Paul preached the gospel...

⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined²⁸ Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.²⁹

So, there you go—the church in Thessalonica is born.³⁰ And at least some embraced the truth of what Paul was telling them, that “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ!”

Write this down as the second point from our message.

Three components of a Christ-honoring Mission:

1) Preaching that is Christ-centered (17:1-3, 10-11)

2) **Persuasiveness** calling for **conversion** (17:4, 12)

Now let me ask you something, “Should preachers be persuasive when they preach the gospel?” “Should preachers be compelling?” “No, no Pastor Tony. If God wants people to be saved, he’ll save them.” Is that Biblical? Now don’t get me wrong, “Salvation is from the Lord” (Jonah 2:9; see also Pss 3:8; 37:39; Isa 43:11; Rev 7:10). And we even saw last week how God opened up Lydia’s heart to respond to the gospel (16:14). God is always at work when people get saved. God is the one doing the saving.

But that doesn’t mean that our evangelism shouldn’t be persuasive. That doesn’t mean that your testimony shouldn’t be compelling. That doesn’t mean that when you share the gospel with a family member or a friend or a coworker, you shouldn’t be confident and convincing and compelling as you plead with them to turn to Christ. There’s a mystery at work when people get saved. Every salvation is a miracle. Every salvation is a work of God. But don’t let that absolve you (or me, your pastor) of your responsibility to preach, to persuade, to reason, to convince, to prove Christ from the Scriptures. We see Paul do that in this passage.

Just look at the verbs used in this passage. Paul was reasoning and explaining and persuading the Jews (17:3–4). He was laboring intellectually and spiritually to lead people to Christ, and we should do that too. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 to “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

And as Paul does this, some people were persuaded. And they “joined” Paul and Silas. That word “joined” in **verse 4** (Greek: προσκληρόομαι [*prosklēroomai*]) has the idea of “throwing your lot in” with a

²⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 705: “The citizens of Thessalonica worshiped the customary pantheon of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and traditional gods: attested are cults honoring Aphrodite, Athene, Apollo, Dionysos, the Dioscuri, Heracles, Kabeiros, Nemesis, Theos Hypsistos, Zeus, and the Egyptian gods Isis, Sarapis, Osiris, Anubis, and Harpocrates, as well as Roman benefactors and the emperors.”

²⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 714: “But a gospel proclamation that is never offensive is, perhaps, never authentic.”

²⁸ The verb προσκληρόομαι (“joined”) is a NT *Hapax Legomenon*. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 551 states that the passive use of the verb in this verse may be a divine passive (i.e. God made them part of the new community). Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 705: “The second verb, ‘associated with’ (προσεκληρώθησαν), describes the emergence of a community of believers in Jesus, taught (initially) by Paul and Silas. The people who became believers in Jesus ‘joined’ the two missionaries. The verb could also be translated as ‘were assigned to’ (LSJ), which underscores more explicitly God’s initiative (indicated again in the passive voice of the verb) not only in the conversion of the new believers but also in the foundation of the new community.”

²⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 551: “The major success is with the Gentiles.”

³⁰ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 458: “Paul’s comment in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 indicates also that many of those converted were pagans: ‘You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.’”

group. So in other words, they made a break from their old commitments and their old religion and joined the Christian church.

And it's not just Jews either. There were also God-fearing Greek men and "not a few" (meaning "many") of the leading women in the community. It was well-known at this time that Macedonian women were strong and influential in the community.³¹ And that's being borne out in the church as well. Women like Lydia and others in Thessalonica (and also in Berea) were extremely crucial to the growth of the Macedonian churches.

Now that's not all that happens in Thessalonica. Look at **verse 5**. Paul preaches the gospel, people get saved, and nothing bad is going to happen whatsoever. Is that what you expect? No. We know that wherever salvation is taking place, Satan is going to mobilize.³²

Here, remember this. Don't ever forget this. Where disciples are being made there will always be detractors! When Jesus made disciples, there were detractors. When the early church made disciples, there were detractors. When we make disciples in San Antonio, Texas, or elsewhere, there will be detractors.

Look at **verse 5**.

⁵ *But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble,³³ they formed a mob,*

"Do you hear what those outsiders are doing? That guy Paul and his friend Silas! They are stealing our people. They are bewitching our people with some guy named Jesus."

"Yeah! Let's get 'em!"

they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar,³⁴ and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them [that's Paul and Silas] out to the crowd.³⁵

Now we've seen this before. This is not going to end well for Paul and Silas. **But this is "par for the course" for missionaries.** What's surprising here is that the persecution of these missionaries leaks out onto the new believers in Thessalonica.

Because look at **verse 6**.

⁶ *And when they could not find [Paul and Silas], [the mob] dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned³⁶ the world upside down³⁷ have come here also³⁸*

³¹ Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Ac 17:4: "Macedonian women had earlier gained a reputation for their influence, which they probably still exercised in this period. As patrons within church or synagogue, upper-class women could also enjoy higher status than was available to them in society at large due to their gender. Social conditions thus made it easier for well-to-do women than for men to convert."

³² Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 26: "A spiritual nobility was beginning to form in Thessalonica. But as usual, that meant trouble was on the way."

³³ ἀγοραῖος in Greek, which means market (ἀγορά) people. But the connotation of this word is broader referring to loafers, loiterers, or even the modern rabble-rousers (see BDAG, "ἀγοραῖος," 14 and DBL Greek #61, ἀγοραῖος). Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 507: "There is an overtone in the word ἀγοραῖος suggesting it means something like malcontents, agitators... which is not surprising if we are talking about people who have been marginalized by the highly stratified society of the ancient world and reduced to catch-as-catch-can work when someone needed temporary help. The word also had the sense of loafer or ne'er-do-well or even lowlife."

Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 360: "These rabble-rousers were common in Greek and Roman cities. They were Gentiles who congregated around the marketplace and either applauded or heckled anyone according to the desire of those who paid them."

³⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 706: "They 'started a riot' (ἐθορύβων); i.e., they threw the city into disorder, causing disturbances among the citizens. This can be interpreted as an unofficial but organized demonstration, a feature of Hellenistic city life."

³⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 549: "Accusations against Paul in this journey are raised twice by Jews, in Acts 17:5–7 and 18:12–13, and twice by Gentiles, in 16:19–21 and 19:24–27."

³⁶ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 124: "They formed a mob and set the city in an uproar—ironically, the very thing they accused the missionaries of doing (v. 6)." Who truly is causing an uproar?

³⁷ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 62: "First, they accused the Christians as those who had 'turned the world upside down.' Second, they accused Jason of being hospitable toward Paul and Barnabas—who, they claimed, were acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar (v 7). Third, the mob charged the Christians with proclaiming the rule of another king named Jesus. To all three counts, I hope every Christian would say, 'Guilty as charged!'"

³⁸ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 26: "In effect these critics of Christianity were saying, 'These men have turned the world upside-down.' In one sense, what they said was true, though in its natural state the world is already upside-down. The

I guess their reputation precedes them.³⁹ Word had gotten out about Paul and his activities in the Roman Empire. And look at **verse 7**.

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar,⁴⁰ saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

Poor Jason. I don't even know who this guy Jason is.⁴¹ I assume that he's one of the new believers in Thessalonica. And he's probably a Gentile convert, because the name Jason isn't a Jewish name.⁴² So, this new convert, Jason, is in hot water because of a dispute concerning Paul and his gospel.

Presumably this guy just got saved, and from what I can tell, he's opened his house to these missionaries (see **verse 7** and the verb “received”). He's been hospitable to them, just like Lydia was in Philippi.⁴³ And what does he get for that? Persecution! His reputation in the community is being besmirched by these traveling missionaries.

⁸ *And the people and the city authorities⁴⁴ were disturbed when they heard these things.⁴⁵*

Why are they disturbed? Well, if people started believing Jesus was the king instead of Caesar (see **verse 7**), that could get this city into some serious hot water with the Empire.⁴⁶ What's ironic here is how the Jews are the ring-leaders in this whole thing. Because the Jews of this day had no love for the Empire or for Caesar. They're just trying to stir the pot to get rid of Paul and Silas, and quash all this talk about this guy Jesus as the Messiah.⁴⁷

world was turned wrong-side-up at the Fall and has been going in reverse ever since. So when men and women in Thessalonica were turned around by Christ, everyone else saw them as upside-down. A believer lives right-side-up in a topsy-turvy world.”

³⁹ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 63: “When Christians try to blend into the flow of the culture rather than turn it upside down with the gospel, they no longer practice faithfulness. Faithful Christians disrupt because they carry a message which pierces hearts and offends corrupt minds. When Christians faithfully proclaim the gospel, they seek to dismantle Satan's hold on the world. Make no mistake, gospel preaching will turn the world upside down, and that is glorious.”

⁴⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 708: “The term ‘emperor’ (lit., ‘Caesar,’ Καῖσαρ) was originally the cognomen of the *gens Iulia*, one of the old Roman families. It was linked with Julius Caesar, the general and politician who brought the Roman republic to an end and established the Roman empire; when he adopted Octavian and designated him as his successor in his last will, the Roman senate recognized Octavian as Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (later given the title Augustus). Thus the name ‘Caesar’ was used as a title for subsequent Roman emperors.”

⁴¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 551: “[Jason] may be the person mentioned in Rom. 16:21, but this is not certain.”

⁴² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 361 thinks Jason may have been a Jew since Jason (Greek Ιάσων) was a name often taken by Diaspora Jews, and close etymologically to Jesus (Greek Ἰησοῦς) and Joshua (Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ). Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, 295: “We do not know whether he was a Jew or a Gentile; if the former, his Jewish name may have been Joshua, with Jason as a somewhat similar-sounding Greek name for use in a Greek environment.”

⁴³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 708: “Jason, who has entertained Paul and Silas as guests (ὑποδέδεκται; v. 7) is implicated in the charges. Since he has provided hospitality to the two visitors and perhaps because he hosts the meetings of the new group of followers of Jesus, he is also guilty of upsetting the stability of the peace and order of the city.”

⁴⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 703: “The city was governed by a group of five or six magistrate officials called *politarchs* (πολιτάρχαι), mentioned in *Acts* 17:6.”

⁴⁵ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 504: “Though officially free, Thessalonica was yet another city caught in the emperor's social network involving patronage and the response of homage and loyalty. Local officials would be expected to enforce loyalty to Caesar in order to maintain the peace and help the city stay in the good graces of the emperor.” Also Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 458 states, “Portraying the evangelists as ‘men who have caused trouble all over the world’ (v. 6b) is severe. But it is true that turmoil often results when the gospel challenges people to change their lives, and usually such turmoil originates with those who reject this challenge.”

⁴⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 362: “They were claiming that there was another king than Caesar—Jesus. This was virtually the same charge leveled at Jesus (cf. Luke 23:2-4; John 19:12, 15). Jesus claimed a kingdom not of this world, and Paul and Silas spoke of the same. But to a Roman, the charge sounded very much like a breach of the oath of loyalty that every person in the empire was required to render to Caesar.”

⁴⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 552-3: “There is a touch of truth to the charge about Jesus and kingship, but the accusation is not entirely truthful, since there is no effort to overthrow Caesar... The charge is important because it shows that Paul preaches a messianic Jesus, one who was proclaimed to be a king, although not in the sense the charge suggests. Those who see what Christians are doing in *Acts* should appreciate that the charge is false.”

By the way, identifying Christ as king instead of Caesar was a big deal at this time.⁴⁸ That was treasonous in this culture and could get you killed.⁴⁹ Treason or sedition was to the Empire what blasphemy was to the Jews. Hundreds and even thousands of Christians were killed in the Roman Empire because they bowed the knee to King Jesus and wouldn't bow the knee to Caesar. People would pay money to see them torn to shreds by wild animals in the coliseums.

So this accusation that they serve a king other than Caesar has teeth. And you might say, “**Okay, there’s a simple solution here. Just tell them that Jesus isn’t a king. Jason, just tell them that Jesus was born in a barn in the backwater city of Bethlehem! Tell them that Jesus was a Jewish peasant. He’s not a king. He’s a Messiah, sure. It’s a spiritual term! He came to die for our sins, but he doesn’t want to rule and reign. Tell them Caesar has nothing to worry about with Jesus!**”

Here’s the problem with that strategy. Here’s the problem with using that argument to “get out of hot water” with the city officials. Do you know what the problem with that argument is? Jesus is a King! These rebel-rousers speak better than they know! There is a *king* competing with Caesar, and he is the King of Kings!⁵⁰ And his name is Jesus.

Here’s why that argument “He’s just a Messiah, he’s not a King,” doesn’t fly. The problem with that is that according to **Psalm 2**, Messiah-ship intimates Kingship. The hope for the Messiah was a hope for a new King David who would come and rule over the universe. They can’t say that Jesus didn’t come as a King to compete with Caesar, because Jesus’s kingship is way more important than Caesar. In fact, Jesus’s kingship outdistances the Roman Caesars by about a trillion years!

And by the way, who was Caesar at the time of this writing? Do you know? At this time, the Caesar was probably Claudius.⁵¹ The fact that you have to look that up in a history book or commentary proves that Jesus is more powerful and important than any of the Roman Caesars. Claudius is a historical blip on the map.⁵² Jesus’s kingship, on the other hand, lasts forever. He is a competing king, and unlike Caesar, his kingdom lasts forever!

But look at **verse 9**. Watch how Paul and Silas get out of this little predicament.

⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Now let me just explain a few things about this last verse, because I know that what happens here looks rather innocuous. They pay a fine. They make a deal with the authorities, and then Paul and Silas are released. Nobody gets stoned and left for dead. Nobody gets whipped or beaten or imprisoned. That’s good, I guess.

⁴⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 361: “To the rulers of the city, it meant that they, as politarchs, could be charged with complicity in treason if they let it pass.”

⁴⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 550: “As a senatorial province, [Thessalonica] was very loyal to Rome.” Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 459: “There had been trouble in Rome in connection with the Jews for some time. The events in Thessalonica may have occurred in the spring of A.D. 50, shortly after Claudius expelled Jews from Rome (in 49) following riots associated with Jews and Christians. The authorities would not have wanted a repetition of such problems, and the Jewish opponents would have exploited that fact.”

⁵⁰ Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, 295: “Now comes the heart of the accusation. Jason is harbouring the missionaries and sympathizing with them; he is implicated in the general charge that they are *acting against the decrees of Caesar* by proclaiming *another king*, i.e. emperor, namely *Jesus*. This is an apt description of the positive content of the gospel with its claim that Jesus is Lord (cf. 16:31); it indicates how the focus had shifted very naturally from the proclamation of the ‘kingdom’ in the ministry of Jesus to the proclamation of the ‘king’ in the evangelism of the early church.”

⁵¹ So Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 708.

⁵² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 708: “In AD 49, around the time that Paul and Silas were active in Macedonia, Claudius issued another edict in which he ordered the expulsion of the Jews from Rome because ‘men of foreign birth’ (*peregrinae condicioneis*) were involved when ‘the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus’ (*Judeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes*). It was this edict that brought Aquila and Priscilla from Rome to Corinth (see on 18:2). This intensification of Claudius’s restrictive policies concerning the Jews was in all probability due to disturbances among the Jewish community in the capital caused by the missionary outreach of Jewish Christians who preached Jesus as Messiah in the synagogues of Rome, measures that may have been inspired by the return from exile of Seneca, the anti-Jewish adviser of the imperial court, and by the intensification of Claudius’s program of restoring the ancient Roman religion during this time.”

But that's not the end of it. For one, Paul and Silas are forced to leave the city.⁵³ So they've got to leave this group of brand-new believers, these impressionable baby Christians, and hit the road. And they've got to leave them in a town that is openly hostile towards them. “**Thanks a lot, Paul and Silas.**”⁵⁴

Actually I doubt that was their attitude, because these new Christians had just heard the saving message of Jesus Christ. And that's worth any persecution that we might face. **They didn't believe in the prosperity gospel that gets preached in our day. The prosperity gospel is stupid.** They believe the true gospel. And they aren't misled into thinking that persecution isn't part of the equation when someone gets saved.

So, Paul and Silas have to leave this church to fend for themselves. And **verse 10** says,

¹⁰ The brothers⁵⁵ immediately sent Paul and Silas away⁵⁶ by night to Berea,⁵⁷ and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.⁵⁸

Here's that map again showing where Berea is in relation to Thessalonica. Berea is roughly fifty miles west of Thessalonica.⁵⁹ That's about a three-day journey by foot.⁶⁰



Paul and Silas's Travels in Macedonia⁶¹

⁵³ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Ac 17:9: “As their host (v. 6), Jason is held responsible for their actions and required to post bond for them, as if they were members of his household. A fine was a lenient penalty as far as Roman courts went, and a bond to curtail troublemakers would not have been unusual.”

⁵⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 362: “Even after Paul and Silas left, the believers in this city suffered some severe persecution (1 Thess. 2:14; 3:1–5; 2 Thess. 1:6–7).”

⁵⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 362: “The fact that Luke called them ‘brethren’ shows that a church was established in Thessalonica. Two of its members, Aristarchus and Secundus, would later accompany Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4), and Aristarchus would go with him all the way to Rome (Acts 27:2).”

⁵⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 709–10: “The Thessalonian believers, who evidently knew all along where Paul and Silas were, send them away to Berea.”

⁵⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, 296: “The missionaries went to *Beroea* (modern Verria) about 45 miles (72 km) west-south-west of Thessalonica. Possibly Paul went no further in the hope that he might return fairly soon to Thessalonica; however, as he later recorded, ‘Satan hindered us’ (1 Thess. 2:18). The time, however, was not spent in rest or idle waiting. Nor was Paul discouraged by his recent experiences. He made straight for the *synagogue* to commence evangelism.”

⁵⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 710: “The *synagogue* was a place of study where the scrolls with ‘the Scriptures’ were kept—either in Hebrew or in Greek translation, or both—and where members of the Jewish community as well as visiting Jewish teachers could consult the texts.”

⁵⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 710: “The geographical location of Berea was not a strategic one, and the fact that the city seems to have been the seat of the Macedonian provincial assembly and that the high-priest of the imperial cult of the province resided in Berea did not make the city an attractive destination for missionaries who had just been forced to leave the capital of the province in a hurry. The answer may be a connection between the involvement of the believers of Thessalonica, some of them Jewish Christians, and the *synagogue* in Berea.”

⁶⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 363: “When the three missionaries left Thessalonica, they also left the Egnatian Way, the route they had been following since they first landed in Macedonia at Neapolis (16:11). This main east-west highway went northwest of Thessalonica to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic. It was the main land route to Rome. At Dyrrachium travelers would take a boat across the Adriatic Sea to Brundisium in southern Italy and from there north to Rome. It has been suggested that Paul might have entertained the idea of taking this route to Rome even as early as this point in his missionary career. In his Letter to the Romans (15:22) he spoke of his having ‘often’ been hindered in coming to them. The hindrance at this time may well have been the news that the emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome (18:2). Whatever the case, Paul headed in another direction at this time, going southwest to Berea and well off any main thoroughfare.”

By the way, did you notice in **verse 10**, the brothers *immediately* sent Paul and Silas away? Everyone see that in **verse 10**? I get the impression that Jason and these new believers knew where Paul and Silas were when the angry mob came looking for them. They knew where they were, but they didn't give them up. Instead, they protected them. How's that for a group of baby Christians!

So Paul and Silas suffered and were persecuted for preaching the gospel. And they had to leave town. Listen to these verses from **1 and 2 Thessalonians** that affirm these things.⁶² **1 Thessalonians 2:12** says, "For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict." **1 Thessalonians 2:9** says similarly, "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." Also **1 Thessalonians 2:17–18** states, "But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us."

Some scholars have speculated that what Paul is referring to there is the bond that Jason posted as security with the city officials. If Jason had put his house up as security or even all of his financial assets, then perhaps Paul's return to Thessalonica would have bankrupted Jason and left the church without a place to meet. If that's the case, then Satan had gotten pretty creative at hindering Paul's witness. So Paul and Silas suffered as a result of their witness. They got thrown out of town.

But the new church in Thessalonica suffered too. According to **1 Thessalonians 1:6**, Paul writes, "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." Also he says in **1 Thessalonians 2:14–15**, "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, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind." Also in **2 Thessalonians 1:4** he says, "Therefore we ourselves [**This is Paul, Silas, and Timothy writing**] boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring."

The persecution for the Thessalonians didn't end when Paul and Silas left town. It wasn't like "**Whew, now that we got those rebel-rousers Paul and Silas out of town we can sit back and coast to a comfortable Christian life without opposition.**" That didn't happen. Angry people still persisted in their persecution. But you know what? Here's something to rejoice in. The church in Thessalonica persisted too!

Write this down as the third point from our message.

Three components of a Christ-honoring Mission:

- 1) Preaching that is Christ-centered (17:1-3, 10-11)
- 2) Persuasiveness calling for conversion (17:4, 12)
- 3) **Persistence** despite **conflict** (17:5–9, 13–15)

Now I want to read one more passage from **1 Thessalonians**. And I want you to just sit back and listen to this. It's not on the screen. Just listen to it as I read. Maybe even close your eyes and imagine yourself as Jason or one of the other Thessalonian believers whom Paul is writing to here. And just hear Paul's heart.

And hear the joy that Paul feels at knowing that the church is persistent and perseverant in the face of suffering. **This is 1 Thessalonians 3:1–8:** "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, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer

⁶¹ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), November 1, 2025. Some geographical points added by author.

⁶² For more on 1 Thessalonians, see the series entitled "Kingdom Called": <https://www.messiahbible.org/1-thessalonians-kingdom-called>. For more on 2 Thessalonians, see the series entitled "Kingdom Come": <https://www.messiahbible.org/2-thessalonians-kingdom-come>.

affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. 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—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.”⁶³

In other words, here’s what Paul’s saying. “We have no greater joy than to hear that our children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4). “Our greatest joy in the midst of affliction, is hearing that you, Thessalonians, are standing fast in the Lord in the midst of your affliction.” “I’m energized by that,” Paul says. “I rejoice in that.”

Here’s one thing that I’ve noticed. I’ve been a pastor for almost twenty years now. I’ve been discipling people since I was 18 years old. And I’ve seen enough to say this. You don’t know if a person really gets it. You’re never really sure about a person’s salvation until you see that person persevere in faith through something difficult. Through affliction! Through conflict! Through trials and tribulations!

And when you do see them persevere... you rejoice! And when they don’t persevere... you grieve. I know exactly what Paul is writing about here.

So the church in Thessalonica persists despite conflict. They persevere. But so do Paul and Silas. They just can’t stop preaching the gospel.

Look at verse 10. Talk about gluttons for punishment!

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Take a day off, Paul! No, he and Silas go right into the Jewish synagogue in the city of Berea. And why do they do that? They don’t do that to sit down with the Jewish leaders and play parcheesi.

In fact, the same cycle is going to repeat itself here in Berea. There is 1) Preaching that is Christ-centered. There is 2) Persuasiveness calling for conversion. And there is 3) Persistence despite conflict (17:5-9, 13-15). Boom, Boom, Boom. Rinse and Repeat.

But there is one slight difference. Look at this. Look at verse 11.

¹¹ Now these Jews [in the synagogue] were more noble⁶⁴ than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness,⁶⁵ examining the Scriptures⁶⁶ daily⁶⁷ to see if these things were so.⁶⁸

The conduct of the Bereans was commendable for two reasons: 1) They received “the word,” that is the gospel, with all eagerness. I assume that that means there was less reasoning, persuading, convincing, and

⁶³ For more on this passage, see my sermon “When Satan Scores a Momentary Victory”: <https://www.messiahbible.org/1-thessalonians-2-17-3-5-when-satan-scores-a-momentary-victory>.

⁶⁴ Keener, IVPBCNT, Ac 17:11: “Judaism regarded nobly those who checked everything against the Scriptures and diligently listened to teachers; Greek philosophers likewise praised those who listened attentively.”

⁶⁵ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 26: “Their ‘eagerness’ carries the idea of rushing forward. They could not wait to receive God’s message! Eagerness makes all the difference in the flavor, quality, and nobility of our Christian lives.”

⁶⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 363: “While Paul expounded the Scriptures, the Bereans listened carefully. They did not make an immediate decision based on prejudice, but they examined the Scriptures daily for themselves to see if Yeshua really was the Messiah.”

⁶⁷ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 64–5: “The Christian faith is not a blind faith. The Bible makes claims that require deep contemplation. Indeed, the Bible lays claim to an absolute authority and asserts one way to eternal life. Faith, therefore, must not be seen as ‘jumping off the cliff.’ Instead, we come to understand, by God’s grace, the truth claims of the Scriptures and place our faith in the well-reasoned, well-articulated power of the gospel.”

⁶⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 556: “One of the converts, Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, will be with Paul later (Acts 20:4).” Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 711: “In 20:4 Luke mentions a Berean believer with the name of Sopater son of Pyrrhus as a member of the party that accompanied Paul on his final journey back to Jerusalem. If Paul was accompanied from Berea to the coast and on to Athens by one of the leading believers, it is not impossible that it was this Sopater who helped lead Paul to safety after his missionary work in Berea. If he is identical with Sosipater mentioned in Rom 16:21, he would have been a Jewish believer—a possibility that might explain why Paul was taken to Athens, where his first activity is the proclamation of the gospel in the synagogue (17:17). As the Jewish believers of Thessalonica had (probably) introduced Paul to the Jews of Berea, the Jewish believers of Berea may have introduced Paul to the Jews of Athens.”

proving by Paul then there was in Thessalonica. And 2) they examined the Scriptures *daily* to see if these things were so.⁶⁹ That is so remarkable right there. That never happens elsewhere in **Acts**. These guys were Bible nerds. They were Biblicists—my kind of people.⁷⁰ And they searched the Scriptures daily to see if *the Apostle Paul* was shooting straight with them.

And by the way, it wasn't like they had their own personal study Bibles that they could take home and read during their quiet times in the morning. It's not like each of these Bereans had a library full of Bible commentaries to research with. The OT scrolls were rare in those days. And they were all held in the synagogue. So, every day, they went to the synagogue and pulled the scrolls out and studied them. And they said to one another, “**Hey Paul and Silas say that Christ had to suffer. Is that true? Well look right here, Isaiah 53. ‘He was pierced for our transgressions.’ He’s right.**”

Have you ever seen those churches called “Berean Bible Church” or “Berean Baptist Church” and thought to yourself, “Berean? Where does that come from? Is that the name of the street that the church is on?” No. That’s a reference to Acts 17:11 right here. That’s a church making a statement even with the name of the church that “we’re going to study the Scriptures.”

I think that’s great! Are we going to study the Scriptures here at Messiah Bible Church? Some people might call us “Messiah Baby Church” with the number of babies that have been born here lately. But that’s not our name. Our name is Messiah Bible Church. And the Bible is our middle name. And we are all about the study of the Scriptures just like the Bereans. And that ain’t gonna change.⁷¹ Amen?

Look at **verse 12**.

¹² *Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women*

There’s the Macedonian women making their presence felt again.⁷²

¹² *Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³ But [O No! Here we go again] when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too*

So, just to be clear, these guys traveled fifty miles to stop Paul and Silas and their preaching.⁷³ **And it’s not like they took a taxi or a bus those fifty miles.** They traveled a three-day journey by foot, so that they could put a stop to this. They didn’t want Paul preaching in the same county... they didn’t want Paul preaching Christ in the same region as them! **“Get those guys out of here.”**

they came [to Berea] too, agitating and stirring up⁷⁴ the crowds.⁷⁵ ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea,⁷⁶ but Silas and Timothy remained there.⁷⁷ ¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens,⁷⁸ and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible,⁷⁹ they departed.⁸⁰

⁶⁹ JOHANN SPANGENBERG: “Following the example of those in [Berea], we should gladly read Scripture. For Scripture is the only rule and foundation of our faith. If a carpenter or mason is to build something ably, then he must have a plumbline. If a goldsmith is to test gold, then he must have a touchstone. So then, if we Christians are to judge what is God’s Word or human teaching, then we too must have a touchstone, and this is holy Scripture. From Scripture we must learn about Christ. Whoever teaches something other than what Scripture states about him errs and is mistaken. All human teaching should be tested with Scripture to determine if it is to be tolerated or discarded. Nothing should be allowed in a Christian congregation other than what has a sure basis in Scripture.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 241.

⁷⁰ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 26: “George Müller read the Bible over 200 times, and that certainly is a primary reason he was such a man of faith. All of us should be constantly reading, digging, cross-referencing, comparing — rushing with eagerness to feed on the Word of the Lord!”

⁷¹ STEPHEN DENISON: “This should teach the church of God the wisdom that God’s people are not bound to receive every doctrine that they hear, but they must be like good Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily whether these things are so. We ought to be as wary about what we receive into our ears as about what we receive into our mouths; and indeed it is the sin of many, that when they are careful and thoughtful concerning the diet of their bodies and will have a care to eat no food but that which is wholesome and good, in the meantime are careless of the diet of their souls, feeding grossly on the very carrion of human inventions.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 240.

⁷² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 360–1: “That Luke singled out the influential female converts in the Macedonian congregations (cf. 16:14 and 17:12) is very much in keeping with inscriptional evidence that in Macedonia women had considerable social and civic influence.”

⁷³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 363: “When they heard about the successful evangelism in Berea, they came and stirred up this city also, willing to travel over fifty miles to cause the commotion.”

⁷⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 711: “What happened in Thessalonica happened again in Berea—the Jewish opponents of the missionaries incite (σαλεύοντες) and unsettle (ταράσσοντες; cf. v. 8) the crowds in the city. The present tense of the participles indicates that their efforts to disrupt and terminate the preaching of Paul in Berea took some time to be successful.”

Paul departs from Macedonia, but he leaves Timothy and Silas there to minister to the new church. Paul goes all the way to Athens to escape this persecution. Obviously, Paul is the firebrand that is causing most of this conflict. So he does the responsible thing and gets out of town to give the church some relief from persecution.

But just so you know, Paul's not going to quit. Paul continues to preach the gospel, even in the pagan, godless, philosophically minded city of Athens. And we'll look at that next time, when Paul preaches in Athens.⁸¹

Here's the pattern once again. This was the pattern in Thessalonica. It's the pattern in Berea. Here are the three components of a Christ-honoring mission:

- 1) Preaching that is Christ-centered (17:1–3, 10–11)
- 2) Persuasiveness calling for conversion (17:4, 12)
- 3) Persistence despite conflict (17:5–9, 13–15)

Here's how I framed this pattern in the book of Acts—"God calls. God sends. We serve him. Opposition comes. Believers boldly and courageously persevere. And then there's fruit."⁸² Do that about a million times before you die and you will have lived a God-honoring, fruit-bearing, Spirit-empowered life. You up for that?

Let me say it again "God calls. God sends. We serve him. Opposition comes. Believers boldly and courageously persevere. And then there's fruit." Opposition is not a sign that you are out of God's will. It's not a signal that you have missed out on God's best in your life. Opposition, when you serve Christ, is a call to perseverance. It's your rite of passage. You, like Paul and Silas (and Jesus for that matter), are carrying the gospel forward into hostile territory. "God calls. God sends. We serve him. Opposition comes. Believers boldly and courageously persevere. And then there's fruit." That's the pattern we see in the book of Acts. And that's the pattern of our Christian lives.

⁷⁵ JOHANN SPANGENBERG: "How restless the devil is! He is absolutely unable to suffer the preaching of God's Word! So, he must quickly stir up in other lands and cities people who will persecute the gospel." Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 241.

⁷⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 364: "That Paul had to flee Berea and finally wound up in Athens is clear. How he got there is another question. If one follows the Western text of Acts, he traveled to Athens by sea. The generally most reliable manuscripts, however, have Paul going 'as far as the sea.' This is followed by the NIV, which translates 'to the coast.' A third group of manuscripts (the Byzantine text) reads that Paul was sent 'as to the sea.' This latter text has been followed by a number of commentators who argue that Paul was using a 'diversionary tactic,' making *as if* to go by sea but then hurrying down to Athens by the coastal road. Even the 'as far as' text could also allow for his not taking a boat but rather following the coastal road to Athens. It is obviously not a serious matter in any event."

⁷⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 557: "Acts parallels descriptions in 1 Thess. 3:1–6 at this point. Silas and Timothy apparently arrive in Athens, although Acts does not note this; then Paul sends them back to Macedonia and does not meet up with them again until he is in Corinth (Acts 18:5). Timothy goes to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2) and Silas probably to Philippi, although that is less certain."

⁷⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 557: "Paul is sent away and heads for Athens. To reach there, one usually goes to the coast and travels by sea, as Mount Olympus blocked the way by land."

⁷⁹ CHRYSOSTOM: "Even though he was Paul, he still needed them." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 214. Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Ac 17:14–15: "Messengers rarely traveled alone, and travelers over long distances were safer to travel in the company of those they knew."

⁸⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 364: "Of more significance is the question of when Timothy and Silas joined Paul in Athens. First Thessalonians 3:1f. indicates that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens. This leads many scholars to argue that Luke must have been in error in seeing Paul as traveling to Athens alone; Timothy was with him and was then sent from Athens back to Thessalonica. Obviously both Luke and Paul may have been right, each giving only part of the picture. Paul may have traveled to Athens alone, summoning Timothy and Silas to join him there as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). They did so, and then Paul dispatched both from Athens, Timothy to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1) and Silas to parts unknown. One can never be dogmatic about any such harmonization for which the text itself gives no specific warrant, but the possibility of some such simple solution guards against overhasty conclusions about the unreliability of a text. In any event, Timothy and Silas did finally join Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5)."

⁸¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 557: "Athens, the intellectual capital of the Greek world, was 195 miles south-southeast of Beroea."

⁸² MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 125: "In the words of G. Campbell Morgan, 'the measure of our triumph in work for God is always the measure of our travail. No propagative work is done save at cost; and every genuine triumph of the Cross brings after it the travail of some new affliction, and some new sorrow. So we share the travail that makes the Kingdom come' (*The Acts of the Apostles* [New York: Revell, 1924], 405–6)."