

## **PP Acts: To the End of the Earth**

### **Part 46 Acts 17:1-9 *The Birth of a Church***

5/21-22/2022

There is such joy at the birth of a baby, and incredible excitement with the birth of an idea, and celebration in the birth of a nation, but have you ever had all of that-joy, excitement and celebration at the birth of a church?

We are looking today at just that, the birth of the church at Thessalonica and though it will seem insignificant, this will become a church of whom Paul would say, ***'your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.'*** 1 Thessalonians 1:8

It all started after our missionary group left the city of Philippi where Paul and Silas were beaten. Luke, the author, wrote ***'Now when they...'*** signaling that again Luke was no longer with them.

It may be that Paul asked him to stay and help the new church at Philippi establish themselves. Paul, Silas with Timothy joining them later (17:14) move on toward Thessalonica, traveling along the *Via Egnatia*, a 700 mile long road 20 feet wide, overlaid with stone pavers.

At the peak of the Roman Empire, there were 29 military highways, and 372 great roads covering 250,000 miles.

Many of the large roads began with the Latin *Via*, which means *way*, and they were roads built to quickly ferry troops, transport Roman taxes and increase trade, but in Acts 17, the *Via Egnatia* was used to take the gospel straight into Greece.

Our trio traveled 35 miles from Philippi to Amphipolis, 30 miles to Appollonia, and 33 miles more to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia.

What we will see are some of the core requirements for successful church planting.

#### **PP 1-The importance of a strategy**

***"they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews."*** 17:1

It may seem obvious to say this, but to plant a church, Christians have to go, have to move.

It will not happen without faithful effort or the carrying out of a strategy.

Did you notice that Paul and his team traveled through Amphipolis and Appollonia but stopped at Thessalonica?

They had a strategy and what an opportunity this was in this city.

Thessalonica was a port city, and a cosmopolitan city, meaning it had a diverse range of ethnicities, people groups from all over the world.

Rewarded for its loyalty to Rome, it was declared a free city, exempt from Roman taxation and given the right to democratically set up five rulers called Politarchs.

Ideally suited by the sea, it had both sea and land routes for trade and travel, perfect for the good news of Jesus Christ to spread.

***"And Paul went in, as was his custom"*** 17:2

There was no record of them going into a synagogue at Philippi, but here they do, which tells us there is a Jewish population in Thessalonica that wasn't in Philippi.

Jewish law required 10 Jewish men to start a synagogue, and reminds us that a core group is a good lesson as we will soon be looking to plant churches.

He began with the Jews, but he would soon expand to the Gentiles as he would move from the synagogue to the marketplace, to those who would **PP *"[turn] to God from idols to serve the living and true God"*** 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Planting a church does not just happen, it requires strategy, obedience and faith  
We are a church that is looking to multiply worshipers, disciples and churches  
We believe that to be successful, we must **PP simplify, shift in order to spread**  
We are asking for God to show us areas that have few Christ-preaching churches, or none  
That is where we want to plant churches, to bring the gospel of Jesus to dark places  
Paul and Silas, walked in Thessalonica and amazingly would leave with a church having begun

## **PP 2-The importance of the gospel**

*“And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’”*  
17:2-3

The 19th Century Charles Spurgeon shared a story that profoundly underscores this second point  
It was a story of a young man who preached a sermon and an older preacher was there to hear it  
Afterwards, the young man asked the older preacher what he thought of the sermon and the old preacher said ‘A very poor sermon indeed’, to which the young man replied, ‘It took me a long time to study it, did I not explain the text well?’

‘You did very well’ said the old preacher, but the hurt young man pressed him ‘were my metaphors not good or were my arguments not conclusive?’

‘They were good as far as that goes, but it was still a very poor sermon because...there was no Christ in it’

‘But’ answered the young preacher, ‘Christ was not in the text and I preached what was there.’

‘Young man, don’t you know that from every town, village, and little hamlet in England, there is a road to London? In the same way, from every text in Scripture there is a road to Jesus Christ. The sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.’

Church, the power of preaching and the power of your witness, is not lofty, convincing arguments, it is the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

The gospel is good news that includes the reality of our terrible situation!

Each person is a sinner, every person refuses to love the Creator, and instead, in unbelief, rebelling and defying the living God as if there is no being higher than they

That defying of God produces terrible atrocities like mass shootings, aborting babies, exploiting the vulnerable and changing your biological sex

I will live the way I want, I answer to no one!

Many can see sinfulness in evil people but how difficult it is to see the self-worship of sin that lives in the hearts of good people

A century before Spurgeon lived another British preacher called George Whitefield, and thousands of sinners came to know Jesus Christ through his outdoor preaching

One of his supporters in England, Lady Huntington supported his ministry, and wrote to her friend, the Duchess of Buckingham to attend one of Whitefield’s meetings

She wrote back to Lady Huntington, **PP “I thank your Ladyship for the information concerning these preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive...It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common lechers that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any**

***sentiment so much at variance with high rank and good breeding."***

Paul went into the synagogue, and then the marketplace, with the gospel, the good news that though we are all rebels defying our Creator, that same Creator sent His Son to suffer in our place, and by His death, he paid for the sins making possible the forgiveness of any who believe

His resurrection, seen and witnessed by hundreds is proof that He was God and saves believers!

He didn't just quote bible verses at them, ***he reasoned with them from the scriptures***

The power of your witness is the Word of God, and the Scriptures center on Jesus Christ!

It is this good news that Paul was ***explaining and proving***: we all need saving, and the Savior has come and accomplished our salvation, you only have to believe in Him!

Paul later wrote this church saying, **PP "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 2:2**

Be competent, confident and committed to God's Word and declare the gospel for its power is to draw people to Jesus for salvation and we see exactly that happen

***"And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women." Acts 17:4***

### **PP 3-The importance of the committed**

***"But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd"***

**17:5**

When God does a work of freeing sinners from unbelief, the devil will work feverishly to oppose  
When a church is begun in the power of the gospel, and sinners are saved, the devil will come in rage and division

In Thessalonica he acted through the Jews, who of all people should have recognized the Christ

Perhaps the greatest threat a Roman city had was the threat of rebellion and unrest

Roman authorities granted many liberties as long as the *pax romana*, the peace of Rome was maintained in their provinces

It was the charge that Jesus was a threat to Caesar as an upstart king that tipped Pilate over the edge and called for his crucifixion

In Philippi, it was the charge that Paul and Silas were 'disturbing our city', causing a riot that prompted the magistrates to beat them

Roman city officials were cowed by threats of insurrection, for Rome had no tolerance for them

So the Jews deliberately ***'set the city in an uproar...'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also...they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus'***

And the city authorities, the 5 politarchs were disturbed, meaning they were agitated by fear!

Caught in the crosshairs were not just Paul and Silas, but the ***'house of Jason'*** where the two were likely staying while in Thessalonica, and where this young church began to meet

Jason and some of the believers were forcibly hauled to court, were charged and then posted bail which would be forfeited if there was another disturbance

Did the devil succeed, was he able to stop this church from starting?

Paul later wrote to this church, saying, **PP "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has**

*chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 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, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."*

**1 Thessalonians 1:4-7**

The devil will try and hinder the work of the gospel but He will not succeed for God will overcome him at every turn

Jesus has promised, **PP** *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* **Matthew 16:18**

Friends, our **PP** *Vision is to be A family of Multi-Planting churches that make disciples of Jesus who will live on mission for the glory of God*

**PP** Our strategy is *M<sup>3</sup> - Multiply Worshipers, Multiply Disciples, Multiply Churches*

**PP** Our priorities are to *Simplify our ministries, Shift everything to making disciples, so that we can Spread by planting churches wherever Christ is not reigning*

**PP** Our confidence is that all of us are witnesses of the Gospel, the Good news that Jesus Christ saves believing sinners through His life, death and resurrection

Paul had a Strategy, the Gospel, and a Committed Core, and they turned the world upside down!!

Pray