

# Paul's Second Missionary Journey: Thessalonica and Berea--Acts 17:1-15

by J.R. Miller

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*J.R. Miller's sermon explores Paul's missionary journey through Thessalonica and Berea, highlighting the urgency of sharing the gospel and the varied responses to it.*

**Scripture:** Acts 17:1

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Openness to Truth"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the relentless dedication of Paul and his companions during their second missionary journey, highlighting their mission to spread the gospel despite facing opposition. In Thessalonica, Paul passionately preached in the synagogue, revealing Jesus as the awaited Messiah, and encouraged new believers to openly associate with Christ's followers. The contrast between the receptive Bereans and the hostile Thessalonians illustrates the importance of being open to truth and examining Scripture diligently. Miller notes the significant role of women in the early church and the challenges posed by those who opposed the gospel. Ultimately, the sermon calls for earnestness in sharing the gospel and a readiness to accept and act upon the truth of God's Word.

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## Transcript

The passage begins with an account of the passing of Paul and his company from Philippi to Thessalonica. These missionaries never rested. They went on continually from place to place. They were men with burning hearts. They had a great mission, and were intent upon fulfilling it. They had entrusted to them heavenly blessings which they must hasten to carry to a perishing world. Sometimes they only passed through a town, finding no way of reaching the people. But whenever they came to a place where they could stop and speak their message, they lingered. Thus, at Thessalonica, they found a Jewish synagogue, and at once began to tell there the story of Christ. We should get a lesson of earnestness, from the example of these men. God has given us the bread of life. All about us everywhere are hungry souls perishing! Are we eager to pass the bread to those who need it so sorely?

We have a glimpse of Paul's earnestness in this narrative. He had no missionary board back of him to support him. He worked at his trade of tent-making during the week, and then on the Sabbath went to the synagogue and preached. They were Jews to whom he spoke, and he sought to make it plain to them that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting and hoping. As a rose with all its

beauty and fragrance lies folded up in the unopened bud, so Paul found the whole gospel of Christ with all its preciousness wrapped up in the Old Testament. To him the Old Testament was like a nut. He broke the shell and found food in it, which he gave to the hungry people. "The Jews were like little children who had a fruit tree in their garden. They had gathered the nuts and laid them up with reverence in the storehouse--but they knew not how to break the hulls so as to get the meat out of the nuts." Paul does this for them, extracting the fruit and giving it to them.

The result of Paul's preaching was not entirely discouraging. Some of his hearers were persuaded and joined the company of the missionaries. They became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed their Messiah. As soon as they were thus convinced, they came out openly and joined Paul's party. This was the right thing for them to do--just what young people should always do when they receive Christ. They should consort with Christ's people, finding their friends among them and taking them for companions. They should come out and be separate from the world, thus casting all their influence on Christ's side. Too many people in these days join the Church--and yet stay in the world, keeping their companionships, their friendships, their pleasures, their business, and their amusements in the world.

It has always been true, that women were ready in great numbers to accept of Christ and enter his service. Jesus had many personal women friends. There are many Christian women named in the Acts. In these modern days, it is said that at least two thirds of all church members are women. Many of them are engaged as teachers and physicians on mission fields. Women's boards are gathering a large proportion of the money that is used in sending the gospel to heathen lands. Women's hearts and hands make the Christian homes--whose influence is so rich in the world. It is good to hear that in this ancient city, where Paul preached, there were many prominent women who took their place on Christ's side.

But there were enemies, also, rejecters of Paul's teaching concerning the Messiah. They were not content merely to reject--they became active enemies. "The Jews, moved with envy, took . . . certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar." The two parties which were formed were very distinct, with marked differences. Those who attached themselves to the missionaries were of good character. But it is a very different class that we see gathering on the other side, "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort." These were the idle, worthless men, like those who, in modern cities, are found about saloons and pool rooms, who are always ready for anything that will cause excitement. Not all those who are outside of churches, belong to this rough class--there are people of refinement and culture who do not accept their place among Christians. But the vile fellows of the rabble are still found among the opposers of Christ and Christianity.

It is good to make the enemies of the gospel write its history and describe its triumphs. Many of the finest and truest things said about Christ, are words that were spoken by his bitter foes. For example, when the Jews saw the publicans and sinners drawn to Jesus they said, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." Again, when Jesus went home with Zacchaeus, they said that he was "gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." Both these bitter words really expressed great truths which were the very glory of Christ's commission. In their charge against these missionaries, the Jews first gave a striking testimony to the influence of the gospel in the world at the time and the work Christianity had done. They confessed that the missionaries had been turning the world upside down. And one says, "The world is wrong side up, and needs to be turned upside down to be right side up."

It is sometimes a duty to flee from opposition and persecution. The missionaries, when they could no longer preach in Thessalonica, went quietly away to Berea. Here they found themselves in a different

atmosphere. The people of Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The Thessalonians refused even to listen to Paul or to give him any opportunity to verify his statements from their Scriptures. The Bereans, on the other hand, were ready to listen and to consider carefully what the apostle said. Not only did they listen--but they listened with childlike teachableness, ready to receive every word of truth which they heard. They were willing to know the truth, whatever it might be--even if it made havoc among their pet ideas. That is what everyone should do who listens to a sermon or a Sunday-school lesson. Do not say that what you hear is not true--but take it to the Word of God, and compare it with this divine rule, and see whether it is true or not.

The result of this examination of the Scriptures was that many of the Bereans believed. They found that what Paul had said was according to their scriptures, and they received Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. When we find that the Words of God are true, we should unhesitatingly accept them. Believing, in the Bible sense, means the shaping of life and conduct according to the divine teaching. If you are satisfied that Jesus is the only Savior, you should immediately receive him as your Savior, by personal faith.

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