

The Power of Perseverance
Paul's Ministry Overcomes Challenges
The Empowered Church Series - Part 30
September 30-October 1, 2023
Acts 17:1-15

Introduction

- **I have two concepts I want to begin with that will help us personalize the message today.**
- **1.) Reverse Engineering Our Lives**
 - **Paul's End in Sight** - 2 Ti 4:1-8 – *"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."*
 - **Problems presented to me in ministry** – Throughout the years I have been presented with so many problem situations that there is **no human fix for**. I'm given impossible situations that outside of a miracle there is no solution.
 - **For example: Marriage situations** – I will be given this scenario – **My husband is abusive, well we are both abusive, but he hurts our 5 children as well as me both verbally and on rare situations even physically. I know divorce is wrong but it's so unhealthy in our house. We are both recovering addicts. I can't leave with the kids because I have no money and I'm estranged from my family. Pastor, what do I do?**
 - **Solution?** – do you see the catch here? there's no solution. It's saying we have **two significantly broken people who cannot help themselves from hurting themselves, each other and their kids and they have no support system to assist. Divorce isn't good. Abusing everyone in the house isn't good. There are no options...fix it.**
 - **How these situations happen** – No one starts out their life wanting it to end up in a situation like this. It was **a series of choices** that got us there. There is no clear cut solution that is practical. You can't say, both of you get into **counseling** because not only is there **no money** but if you can find a free program, the **length of time** to solve the abusive mindset will take **years**. You can't say that staying in an **abusive situation is MORE honoring to the Lord than divorce** or separation. There is **no money for healthy separation-to-reconciliation options**. There's **no friends or family** that can sustain **five kids** even if there were sufficient relationships. There seems to be **no**

capable emotional maturity for either adult to make good decisions and 5 kids are waiting the entire time.

- **An Ounce of Prevention** – you’ve heard that old adage from Benjamin Franklin that says, ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,’ right? It means **stopping a mess is far easier than cleaning up a mess**. It is this concept that drives me to preach and teach **wise decision-making**. **What we choose today is going to affect our tomorrow**. Living a natural life, choosing to be ignorant and living for today will take you down the path of chaos. Let me give you an example from our prior illustration:
 - Although we can’t choose what family situation we grew up in, we can choose to get healing from it early. If we don’t, then we tend to look for friends and partners that fit our dysfunctional history. If we choose bad friends, we’ll tend to find bad options for dating. If we date bad people, we will end up marrying one of them. If we marry a bad person, we will tend to stuff our lives with things to feel better which may include substance abuse or trying to fill the void with more children. If we bring children into a bad homelife, we are dooming them to the same vicious cycle and we, ourselves, are more stuck than ever. If we choose to self-medicate, we will tend to overtax our relationships and chase away all of our support systems and we find ourselves alone. Holding down a steady job is difficulty when we are dealing with chaos inside and in our home and so we have no money to assist us in a solution.
 - **Then How Do We Prevent?** – We reverse engineer our lives. **We look at what we ultimately want in the end and we figure out what will get us there today and along the path**.
 - **Example 1: Financial Retirement Planning** - If we want to be secure and independent financially in retirement, we have to have a retirement plan. To do that we have to have money to put into it and the foresight to save it away. To do that we have to have a good job that provides that money. To do that we need to get a good job by doing well in education. To do that we need to go to school consistently and pay attention and put in the hard work.
 - **Example 2: Relationship Planning** – if we want to be those grandparents who spoil their grandkids, enjoy our spouse, take trips with friends, then it means we will have to relationally plan along the way. To have connection to grandkids, means not just that we have kids but that we have to have a long-term healthy relationship with our kids. That means we need to provide them a good home and a good home is dependent on a good marriage of the parents. This means that we need to be careful who we marry and put thought into it. It means that we watch who we date (as mentioned above). But it also means that if we want to take vacations with friends, we need the money to do that (see above) and we need friends to do that. That means that we need to continue to be flexible to make new friends. We need to continually build relationships with many, so that a few can become solid and healthy relationships that we would want to vacation with.
 - **Paul ended well due to living well** – Paul the Apostle was able to say at the end of his ministry/life that he did his best. The only way to say that is to do your best every

day. He didn't say he did everything, but he was obedient to the Lord and completed what the Lord put before him. That's all that we can do. But it did demand that Paul give up any dreams of building his own kingdom on this planet. It did demand that ministry was a priority. It did demand that he watched out for the relationships he nurtured. It did demand that he not fall into sinful scandal and that he maintain his Christian reputation. And the list goes on.

- **An Important element of Paul's living well was Perseverance.**

- **2.) A Key to Paul's Ministry Success: Never Stop Never-Stopping** - Paul always pressed THROUGH difficult situations. The reason he could say, at the end of his ministry, that he fulfilled the ministry is that **he kept going**. It's so tempting to do ministry based on inspiration or motivation, but when our internal motivator is obedience to God and our hearts truly love people, it's impossible to give up.
 - **Expect Opposition** – Opposition is going to come. How do we know that? It's **promised in Scripture**. It may come with **internal** challenges or with **external** challenges. It may come **overtly** or **subtly**. **Since we cannot know how it will come we must determine that at the end of the day, we are not going to stop serving the Lord no matter what.**
 - **A Helen Keller Ferocity** – Paul seemed to have a ferocity that very few have. One of the most fascinating stories in history, for me, is the story of Helen Keller who at **19-months** old lost her sight and hearing. Instead of imploding inward, she fought through life and scratched her way to interacting with her world. In the end she had gone to **college**, **wrote 14 books**, **toured 35 countries** as an ambassador for the blind. She **fought for women's suffrage, labor rights, world peace, and was a founding member of the ACLU**. All of that was done while being blind and deaf. Makes me wonder what I'm doing with my life!
 - **Paul's Version** – Paul had this stunning perspective. He said **to live is Christ and to die is gain**. He said, "I suppose I should go on living to do more ministry, but I really want to be with my Lord in Heaven." That mentality allowed him to look at life through a tenacious set of lenses because **he didn't allow fear of man or death stop him**. He was afraid, but he pushed through. He would do whatever the Lord laid before him with this attitude, **'what can they do to me? My Jesus has secured every good thing for me that they can't take away.'** And **so he pressed on**, and pressed on, and pressed on.
 - **If we want to finish life well...**

We can't get DERAILED by OPPOSITION

- **Recap: Last Time...**Last time we were together in this series (roughly AD 55-58), **Paul and Silas had been arrested**, beaten with rods and imprisoned. God sent an **earthquake** that broke off their chains and opened the doors and they ministered to the **jailer** who got saved along with his family. The authorities wanted to **release** Paul and Silas secretly because they knew they messed up by not realizing they were Roman citizens with special rights. Paul demanded they **publicly** apologize and escort them out of the city personally. They did.

Lesson

- **Ancient Jesus**

- **Paul & Co Minister in Thessalonica**

- **Acts 17:1-15** – “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead,¹ and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” ⁴ 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.^{2”}

- **They** = Paul (Apostle & prophet), Silas³ (leader & prophet), Timothy (protégé), Luke (Doctor & chronicler)
- **Amphipolis⁴** – 32 miles SW from Philippi (2 days). It was a Roman capital in the area. It was almost fully encircled by a river and was a key port city on the river (it was 3 miles inland from the ocean), and a gateway to key trade routes.
- **Apollonia⁵** – 35 miles SW from Amphipolis (2 days). Another main town on the trade route. This is a connecting town to the bigger city of Thessalonica. The town name means, ‘from Apollos.’
- **Thessalonica⁶** – 33 miles from Apollonia (100 mi SE from Philippi – 2 days). Renamed from ‘thermal bath city’ (Thermae) to Thessaloniki after Alexander the Great’s sister, it was the **most populous city of Macedonia** (the whole Greek region).
- **A synagogue** – unlike Philippi, there WAS a synagogue in this city which meant there was at least a slightly larger Jewish population here. that was good news for Paul initially because he could reason with the Jews on a biblical level instead

¹ “‘It was necessary’ for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead in order that the scriptures might be fulfilled. Cf. Luke 9:22; 24:26, 44. Cf. also 3:18 above; 26:23. Paul (1 Cor. 15:3–4) and Peter (1 Pet. 1:11) emphasize that the death and resurrection of Christ took place in accordance with the scriptures.” NICNT

² “Macedonian women had a well-earned reputation for their independence and enterprising spirit. If some of the women who believed the gospel at this time were the wives of leading citizens, the initiative was theirs, not their husbands’.” NICNT

³ “Respected leader in the Jerusalem church, also called Silvanus (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 Pt 5:12). “Silas” is most likely the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name “Saul,” which when given a Latin form became *Silouanos* (Silvanus). Silas thus carried two names—a Latin and a shorter, Semitic name. The name was known in the Hellenistic era and appears in various inscriptions. Luke used the name Silas when he narrated the history of the Jerusalem church in Acts. Paul and Peter used the Roman name in their epistles.” Tyndale Bible Dictionary

⁴ “**Ἀμφίπολις Amphipolis**; gen. *Amphipóleōs*, fem. proper noun. Amphipolis, an important strategic and commercial center at the north of the Aegean, situated on the river Strymon, about three miles inland. This important Macedonian city commanded the entrance to a pass leading through the mountains into the great Macedonian plains. It was almost encircled by the river, as its name *amphi*, about or around, and *pólis* (4172), a city, indicates. The Romans made it a free city and the capital of the first of four districts into which they divided Macedonia. It lay on the Via Egnatia, which connected Dyrrachium with the Hellespont. From Philippi, it was thirty–two miles to the southwest. It was on the way from Philippi to Thessalonica, and apparently the Apostle Paul and his fellow travelers remained in *Amphipolis* overnight, the next day going on to Apollonia (Acts 17:1). It belongs to Greece and the village near it is called Neochori, new village.” The Complete Word Study Dictionary

⁵ “**Ἀπολλωνία Apollōnía**; proper noun. Apollonia, meaning belonging to Apollo. A Greek city through which Paul passed (Acts 17:1). Apollonia is on the Egnatian Road between Philippi and Thessalonica in Macedonia, located about thirty–six miles east of Thessalonica and thirty miles southwest of Amphipolis.” The Complete Word Study Dictionary

⁶ “**Θεσσαλονίκη Thessalonikē**; gen. *Thessalonikēs*, fem. proper noun. Thessalonica, a city of Macedonia, known in ancient times by the name Thermae (Hot Baths). Cassander, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, rebuilt the city and called it after his wife, Alexander’s sister, Thessaloniki. It is situated at the northeast corner of the Thermaic Gulf. In Paul’s day, it was a free city of the Romans, the most populous city in Macedonia and the capital of one of the four Roman divisions of Macedonia which extended from the river Strymon on the east to the Axios on the west. The rulers of the city (Acts 17:6, 8) were called “politarchs.” Paul and Silas, in A.D. 58, came from Philippi to Thessalonica, which was one hundred miles northeast on the Via Egnatia where there was a synagogue of the Jews. For at least three Sabbaths, the apostles preached to their countrymen. The Church which gathered there was primarily composed of Gentiles. At length the persecution became so violent as to drive the apostle away. He desired to revisit the Church there and sent Timothy to minister to them. Among his converts were Gaius, Aristarchus, Secundus, and perhaps Jason (Acts 17:1, 11, 13; 20:4; 27:2 [cf. Phil. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:10]). Paul wrote two epistles to the Thessalonian Church from Corinth (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).” The Complete Word Study Dictionary

of having to get creative in cross-cultural communication with the Gentiles/Greeks/Romans.

- **His custom** = start at the synagogue. That was both a practical plan and a religious plan (Jew first; Gentile second).
- **3 sabbath days = 3 weeks** in the city doing this. A Sabbath day is our Friday night to Saturday night. It's considered the end of the Jewish week.
 - **The power of commitment** – **one of the keys to effective missions work around the world is consistent presence.** Although there are a lot of exciting things that we can do on a short-term mission trip, if we want to have lasting impact in the most significant way, we need to continue to have a presence, relational connection, and investment in a region. At Bridgeway we have tried to be consistent and committed to this.
- **Paul reasoned with them from the Scriptures = Bible study.** He dug in and showed them from the Word of God that what he was saying was true. **You have to know your Bible really well to do this. Do you?**
- **Explaining and Proving the Messiah had to suffer and die – The Jewish mindset** was that when the Messiah comes he would be a warrior king that would lead them in military victory and set up a kingdom so that the Jews would be victors and conquerors over their physical enemies. That was one of the greatest challenges with them accepting Jesus Christ from Nazareth who was a humble revolutionary who suffered and died on the cross. They couldn't see how that fit with Old Testament prophecies. Therefore Paul went through the Old Testament explaining in detail how the prophecies actually spell that out.
 - **New cars everywhere** – Have you noticed that when you are looking at a car or buy a new car, you start to see them everywhere? That's because the lens that you are looking through is dialed into it. **The same thing happens when we have theological systems locked in our minds.** We start to see evidence for our viewpoint everywhere in Scripture. In fact it seems like we can't see anything else. That is both helpful and very dangerous. It's helpful if it's an accurate viewpoint. It's dangerous if it's not because then you can't enter into healthy dialogue because you can't see otherwise. **We need to hold our views strongly but always be humble enough and open that we are seeing it incorrectly. At the end of the day we need to both follow the Holy Spirit and assess the evidence.**
- **Where does the Old Testament say the Messiah must suffer and die?** – It's a fair point and time to discuss where in the Old Testament it really says that. What was Paul pointing out? Although the Old Testament is full of references⁷ to what the Messiah would be like (some say 351), most of them have to do with Him being a Jew. Jews didn't need to be convinced that the Messiah was a Jew. They needed to be convinced that it was THIS Jew (Jesus of Nazareth). So what did Paul show them? We don't know his list or what he

⁷ <https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/bible-study-resources/351-old-testament-prophecies-fulfilled-in-jesus-christ/>

capitalized on but we imagine that it may have been some on this example list - **Old Testament Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus:**

- **The promised sinless sacrifice:** Lamb of God (Abraham's story – Gen 22:8; Ex 12:5, 13; Isa 53:7c) who would die for the sins of the world (Isa 53:8-12; Dan 9:26).
- **Jesus' Jewish lineage** through Judah (Gen 49:10), then through David (2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:35-37), through Mary & Joseph (Isa 9:6), yet son of God (through Virgin birth – Isa 7:14; 9:6; Jer 31:22). God-Man (Jer 23:5-6). Descendant of Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23).
- **How the Messiah would die:**⁸ not a bone broken (Ex 12:46; Ps 34:20); suffering outside the 'camp' (Lev 16:27); the blood that makes the atonement (Lev 17:11); lifted UP to die (serpent on a pole – Num 21:9); hung on a tree/cross (Dt 21:23) pierced (Ps 22:16; Zech 12:10); what He said up there (Ps 22:1, 31; 31:5); darkness for 3 hours at Calvary (Ps 22:2); the mocking (Ps 22:8; 109:25); piercing of His side (Ps 22:14); agony (Ps 22:14-15); thirsting (Ps 22:15) and given vinegar (Ps 69:21); stripped publicly (Ps 22:17-18); dividing his garments (Ps 22:18); beaten/scourged (Ps 129:3); betrayed by 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12-13)
- **His character and ministry style** – a prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15-16; Isa 46:9-10); holy (Psa 2:6); Good shepherd (Ps 23:1); began in Galilee (Isa 9:1-2); called a Nazarene (Isa 11:1); called Jesus/Yeshua (Isa 12:2); to have a ministry of miracles (Isa 35:5-6); preceded by a forerunner (JTB – Isa 40:3-4; Mal 4:5-6); a servant meek and lowly (Isa 42:1-4); opens the eyes of the blind (Isa 42:7); a teacher (Isa 48:16-17); a light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6); ordinary looking (Isa 53:2); a healer (Isa 53:4a); Born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2); Triumphant entry to Jerusalem as King (Zech 9:9); ministers to the poor (Zech 11:7)
- **The resurrection** – predicted by Job (Job 19:23-27), Psalmist (Ps 16:9-11; 17:15; 22:22; 30:3; 68:18) and others.
- **Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ/Messiah** – this was Paul's main point here and the heart of the gospel, at least to the Jewish people.
 - **Properly Tailoring the Gospel** - To the Jews Paul didn't have to lay out concepts for sin and the need for forgiveness. He didn't need to prove that there was a God, or that there was only one. He was able to jump ahead a bunch of steps and talk about the gospel part that the Jews eagerly needed: A Savior. **Whenever we are sharing the 'good news' (which is what gospel means), we need to start at a place that people can understand and care about.** Too often we are jumping to talk about things that don't relate to them or are over their heads. In the next story (**next week**), we'll see how Paul tailors the gospel to a **pagan audience** and it's very, very different. We

⁸ There are so many about the Messiah's betrayal, arrest with false witnesses as well. I didn't mention any of those. Example – Ps 35:11, 19; 38:11-20; etc.

must always adjust how we explain the good news to people without removing any of the necessary elements of it.

- **Some of them (Jews) were persuaded to join Paul & Silas** – that was a very fruitful ministry for them. It must have been nice to have some rapid fruit after all of their difficulty doing ministry so far on this trip.
 - **Understanding *Persuaded*** – there’s an important point to make here. **Although we move obstacles for people in their faith walk, we don’t argue them into a relationship with Jesus.** If we just read this on the surface it sounds like Paul proved Jesus so well that everyone got saved. That is incorrect. Paul closed the gap of reasoning for them and the Holy Spirit opened their heart to both see it and accept it. Only God saves people. We can do a brilliant job explaining the gospel and proving things, but until God opens someone’s eyes and heart, they aren’t getting saved. We do our job; He does His.
 - **A great many Greeks believed** – this was **not just a mini-Jewish revival**, but the word spread, and non-Jews began to believe in the Messiah Jesus. Clearly this wasn’t IN the synagogue but the other ministry that Paul and Silas were doing.
 - **Not a few of the leading Greek women** – why is this mentioned here? Why separate out the women? First of all its showing the new way of ministry that Paul was doing. He, like in Philippi, was demonstrating that **women were included in ministry in a significant way**. The fact that they were leading women means they were likely wealthy and influential just like Lydia was in Philippi. This is looking like a whole new Christian movement in the Western world (Greek side of the Mediterranean Sea – Europe). It’s not just that they were getting saved, but they were influencing others.⁹
 - Ac 13:50 - *“But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.”*
- **Collateral Damage**
 - **Jason & Co are Arrested**
 - **Acts 17:5-10** – *“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. ⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸ And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. ⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰ The brothers [and sisters]*

⁹ “After “believed” (ἐπεισθησαν, “were persuaded”) the Western text continues: “and many of the God-fearers adhered to the teaching, and a large number of the Greeks, and not a few of the wives of the leading men.” (The Western reviser plays down feminine initiative.)” NICNT, F.F. Bruce

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

- **The Jews = specific smaller group of influential Jewish leaders that opposed the Christian gospel vehemently.** This does not mean all Jews. It doesn't even mean most of the Jews. It means a small loud and angry group that made Paul's life miserable that was stirred up by the enemy in almost every location Paul set up shop.
- **Christianity is never Anti-Semitic** – I want to take a moment to clear something up although it feels totally unnecessary to say in this group. **Christianity is NEVER Anti-Semitic. Christianity is birthed from the Jewish people. Our Messiah and Lord was a Jew** when He was on earth. We LOVE the Jewish people and seek to honor them at any chance. They may reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they are still precious to God and He is still working with them and has great plans for them. Unfortunately due to ignorance and evil influence, radical groups calling themselves Christians have done great atrocities against the Chosen people, and it's horrific and I condemn it completely.
- **Were jealous** – interesting descriptor. Why were they so angry? Jealousy. Jealous of what? Jealous of power and being right. They knew that Paul and Silas were influential, and people were going over to their side and the idea of losing control was freaking them out. They wanted things to be like they always were. They wanted the power structure to be the way that it was. And yes, they believed they were right, and Paul was wrong, so that made them even more angry. But **if they really wanted the truth, they wouldn't have been so angry to start with and so attacking and vicious.** Their behavior shows that it was more than a defending of the truth.
- **A mob led by wicked men form the rabble** – wow, what a way to say that. Mobs, rabble, wicked men. Luke isn't pulling punches here. The influential Jewish leaders were too small to do things themselves, so they used easily influenced other people to do their dirty work. That's how it's always been.
 - **How easy it is to manipulate human beings – recent podcast – how do we rally around the right things and not the wrong things?** The question is never how to get people motivated, it's how to motivate them in a healthy way toward healthy things. We must never believe that we are always on the right side of a situation. No one thinks they are on the wrong side of the situation. **The Pharisees thought they were on the right side of God's opinion when they persecuted Jesus.** So we must always humbly approach any conflict situation and continue seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- **Attacked the house of Jason**¹⁰ – Who's Jason and why are people attacking him? We don't know much about him but it seems clear that he was the hosting house and homebase for Paul & Company. Whether he had prior connections to Paul

¹⁰ **Ἰάσον** *Iásōn*; gen. *Iásonos*, masc. proper noun. Jason, meaning one who will heal. A Thessalonian and probably a relative of Paul whom he entertained and in consequence received rough treatment at the hands of the unbelieving Jews (Act. 17:5–7, 9; Rom. 16:21)."

before this, we don't know. We know that he had connections afterward. We know **the mob was looking for Paul & Silas initially**.

- 1 Thess 2:14-16 - *“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,¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!”*
- Ro 16:21 – *“Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.”*
- **When they couldn't find them** – where were they? Unknown. They were probably either hidden knowing the attack was coming, or simply off doing other things like ministry.
- **They dragged Jason and some of the brothers** – this Greek term means brothers specifically not the general term Adelphoi of ‘brothers and sisters’. This was a dude thing. They grabbed Jason, the homeowner/host and some of the other believers there and dragged them into the marketplace/forum, as is common, and put them before the Roman authorities.
- **The charges¹¹**
 - **These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also** – this is a reference to Paul and Silas (Tim & Luke). What a cool title. Notice they say, ‘came here **ALSO**.’ That means this group is aware of other cities that Paul and Silas went to and the bad things that happened there. Word gets around. We are now **100 miles** from the last place they ministered to (in the ancient world, that's a long way).
 - **Men who turned the world upside down** – now this is what I want to be known for. I know they meant it as negative (disrupted and ruined), but just like the term Christian was once pejorative, I want to be a world changer for Jesus Christ.
 - **Jason hosted them** – this means that he's guilty of aiding and abetting. He is helping them cause disruption.
 - **Guilty by association** – would you be the one to house the rebels? **Would you be the one to hide the Jews in WWII?** Would you be the one to hide the missionaries in communist countries?
 - **They are acting against the decrees of Caesar¹²** – Really? In what way?

¹¹ “Their seditious and revolutionary activity was not only illegal in itself; they were actually proclaiming one Jesus as a rival emperor to him who ruled in Rome. This was a subtle charge: even an unfounded suspicion of this kind was enough to ruin anyone against whom it was brought. In the present instance there was just enough color of truth in the charge to make it plausible and deadly.” NICNT

¹² “Sedition (*maiestas*) was an offense against public law and required no special decree of Caesar to make it illegal. But it is plain from the summary of the apostolic message which the Thessalonians accepted (1 Thess. 1:9–10), and from other references in the Thessalonian correspondence, that there was a strong eschatological emphasis in the preaching. Such teaching as that reflected in 2 Thess. 2:5–7, with its veiled allusion to the removal of the imperial power, might well have been construed as infringing one or more of Caesar's decrees. Augustus and Tiberius had been very sensitive about the activities of astrologers and other prognosticators and had issued decrees forbidding predictions or inquiries affecting affairs of state or the emperor's personal well-being.” NICNT

- **Proclaiming another king (Jesus)** – now this is something that can **rile a Roman crowd**. Disobedience isn't tolerated. The Romans held their emperor to be similar to godlike and all powerful. It was the key way to keep everyone quiet and orderly.
- **Result: The people and authorities were disturbed** – if you remember my talk last time we were in the Book of Acts, you would remember that the ONE THING that the Roman authorities didn't want to happen is to have their city be disruptive. The Roman Empire was conquering vast territories and spread thin, so they couldn't handle uprisings or revolts very well. It took away necessary military might and leadership from other key areas to quash it. So there was **ONE RULE for local authorities**: keep it all calm and quiet. If you can't you'll be replaced. So, to hear that we have a possible insurrection happening is tantamount to the greatest charge.
 - **Let Jason & Co go after taking security money**¹³ – what is this? Did they get paid off? It was money paid to assure that if Paul & Company did anything else wrong they had already paid the penalty for it and would forfeit the surety money.
 - **They immediately sent away Paul & Silas by night** – there was still a problem for Paul and Silas. The money was only temporary. The mob group still wanted Paul & Silas' heads. They had to go and they ran away into the night.¹⁴
- **They went to Berea**¹⁵ – **50 mi SW (3 days walk)**¹⁶, **medium-sized town** on the eastern side of the Olympian mountains.
 - **Went to the synagogue first** – now this is getting to be a dangerous plan that Paul is leading. I get why he does this, but truly it's the small radical Jewish group, that communicates through their cultural group in the synagogues that are causing all the trouble. So, why not just avoid the synagogues and go to the Gentiles like he was called? Not sure. Maybe it was adherence to the religious reason for doing so (Jew first; Gentile second). And truth be told, they had Jason and Company that hid them who they met at the synagogue, so maybe it's a wash in the end.

• The Secret to Being a Berean

¹³ "Jason and his associates were made responsible for seeing that there was no more trouble; they had to give security for the missionaries' good conduct, and this meant in practice that the missionaries had to leave the city quietly and not return." NICNT

¹⁴ "Paul and Silas were spirited away from Thessalonica by their friends who had guaranteed their departure, and made their way to Berea. They had to leave the Egnatian Way and take the road which led south, to Thessaly and the province of Achaia. Paul, it is thought by some, had conceived the plan of traveling along the Egnatian Way to its Adriatic terminus, where it would have been a simple matter to cross the Straits of Otranto and take the road to Rome. He makes it clear that he had planned to visit Rome several times before he actually did so (Rom. 1:13; 15:22). But if he had tried to do so at this time, he might have found his plan frustrated: he would probably have met Jews from Rome traveling eastward along the Egnatian Way, telling how the Emperor Claudius had expelled them from the capital. His turning south may have been contrary to his plan but, as events proved, it was in the plan of God." NICNT

¹⁵ "**Βέροια Βέροια**; gen. *Beroías*, fem. proper noun. Berea, a city of Macedonia, Greece (Acts 17:10, 13) on the eastern side of the Olympian Mountains, a fair-sized city still in existence today." Complete Word Study Dictionary

¹⁶ "A trained walker can walk a 26.2-mile marathon in eight hours or less, or walk **20 to 30 miles** in a day. Steadily building your mileage with training allows you to walk long distances with less risk of injury." Outdoorqueensland.com

"Beroea is described by Cicero as an "out-of-the-way town," but all that he means is that it lay off the Egnatian Way. It is about forty miles west-southwest of Thessalonica, on a tributary of the Haliacmon at the foot of Mount Bermios." NICNT

- **Paul & Company Minister in Berea**
 - **Acts 17:11-15** – *“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers [and sisters] immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.”*
 - **These Jews were more noble** – In other words, the audience they were talking to, in this city were **desiring the things of God more** than the other group that led to all the trouble (clearly there were some of the Thessalonica synagogue that had turned Paul & Silas in to the Jewish authorities).
 - **They received the word with eagerness** – they desperately wanted to know the Truth and to know about their God and all that He had for them. This is **the best demeanor and one that we need to bring to church every weekend**.
 - **Examining the Scriptures DAILY for accuracy** – **they wanted to own the Truth that they were hearing**, and they couldn’t do that unless they discovered it for themselves. They were students of the Word of God. They dug in and saw what Paul saw. The term today, ‘Berean’ means one who studies to make sure it’s true. It carried around to modern-day. It’s a complement.
 - **When Bereans go bad** – unfortunately Bereans today tend to fall into a common error. **Bible study for life is good, Bible study for power is bad**. Too often groups who consider themselves watchdogs or Bereans turn quickly into persecutors, cynics, legalists and condemners. There is nothing wrong with searching scripture and holding someone or something accountable. The problem is when we are trying to use it to demonstrate that we have it right and they have it wrong so that we can feel good about ourselves and condemn them. We must be very, very careful not to be on the wrong side of God. I don’t particularly care for people who consider themselves watchdogs. Usually the spirit is off. Those who spend most of their time correcting other ministries usually have bad hearts.
 - **Many of them believed** – **they studied it, saw that it was true, and incorporated it into their systematic theology and hearts**.
 - **Not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men** – here we go again, highlighting the influential women before the men. Why is that? Because Paul knows that in this part of the world the **women were taking the lead in so many ways for the gospel and for Christianity. They were putting their money and resources where their mouths were**. It doesn’t mean the men weren’t passionate, but it seems that the influential part tended to be more the women than the men. Perhaps the influence the men had in the area kept them from desiring more from God.

- **The Jews from Thessalonica found out and came to stir things up** – these **troublemakers won't let it go**. They find out about it and come all the way down to mess with Paul and Silas again! They were 'agitating and stirring up the crowds'. They are really good at this.
 - **Legalistic Jews hunting them down** - **Things get ugly when we are driven by what we oppose**.
- **Paul sent away on a ship¹⁷** – Paul was sent away via the sea (a.k.a. a boat) to safety since **they were mainly looking for him as the provoker**. He was the main spokesman and did most of the interaction with Jewish leaders in the synagogue. The other guys could keep a lower profile.
 - **Silas, Timothy & Luke stayed** – they knew there was **more ministry to do¹⁸** and they needed to stay to get it done. This was a risk because they were guilty by association. But **with Paul gone perhaps** the Thessalonica Jewish influencers were go back home and they could do what they needed to do.
 - **Paul went to Athens** – This is where we leave this story and where we will pick it up next time.
 - **Paul sent word for the crew to join him soon** – The goal was not to remain split up as a team, but to remain together. This was about an emergency measure for safety. But, Paul was able to scout Athens quickly for ministry opportunity and seeing some he sent word for the other guys to join him.

Conclusion

- **The power of tenacity in ministry** – **we've got to keep going**. It's so tempting to quit.
- **Tenacity for the right thing** – **we must always check to make sure that what we are tenacious about is the right thing to pour our lives into**.

¹⁷ "Some of his Berean friends took him to the coast—to Methone or Dium—and put him on board a ship bound for Piraeus (the port of Athens). There is, however, another reading of the text (represented in KJV)²⁹ which implies that they made as though they were taking him to the coast, but actually, having thus thrown possible pursuers off their track, escorted him southward by road as far as Athens. One way or the other, he arrived at Athens..." NICNT

¹⁸ "Would such people's faith survive Paul's sudden departure (leaving them, as it might appear, in the lurch) and the pressure which was bound to be exerted on them to return to their former way of life? It is probably with regard to this situation that Paul told them, some weeks later, that he was eager to go back and see them, "but Satan hindered us" (1 Thess. 2:18). He might well discern satanic machinations behind the politarchs' decision, while they themselves would regard their decision as mild but effective. In the event, the newly planted church of Thessalonica was subjected to open persecution and more subtle forms of discouragement, yet it maintained its faith and witness in a manner that filled the hearts of Paul and his companions with unbounded joy when they learned of it." NICNT