

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

ACTS 17

Acts 17

Before we journey to Thessalonica in Acts 17, I want to take one more look at Acts 16. This is such a pivotal chapter in the book of Acts. Paul and Silas make their way back to some of the places that Paul and Barnabas had journeyed to in their first missionary journey, but this time they go farther than they had been before in many ways.

Acts 16:5 says, **"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."** The Spirit of God forbade the group from going north and east and rather led them to the ancient city of Troy, called Troas, in Acts 16:8. There, many things changed. First, Doctor Luke joined the group and never left. He became the personal physician of the Apostle Paul for all the remaining days of his life, and more than likely became his personal amanuensis, or penman, for writing the epistles of Paul. Acts 16:10 is where Luke becomes a formal part of the group, which is witnessed by him changing the personal pronouns from **"they"** to **"we."**

Second, you may observe that God led them west, and in doing so, they crossed into another continent, the continent of Europe. They came to Neapolis and from there to the Roman Colony of Philippi. It was in the plains near Philippi that Brutus and Cassius, who murdered Julius Caesar, were defeated by Octavian, the grand nephew of Julius Caesar, who, upon Caesar's death, became his adopted son. He was accompanied by Mark Antony. These two men played a critical role in the preparation for later events leading up to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. It was on the continent of Europe at Philippi, where Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira, was saved after God opened her heart to the gospel. Philippi is where Paul, Silas, and the cohort were arrested, and the "Philippian Jailer" was saved, along with his entire household. It was also at Philippi that

Paul used his citizenship as a Roman to demand proper apologies for the way he was treated. It will not be the last.

Acts 17 is a continuation of the journey. After leaving Philippi, they made their way to Thessalonica, a port city and a critical city of trade and commerce in the Greco-Roman period of the mid-first century. Paul always went to the Jewish synagogue if there was one in the city where he journeyed, then to the greater agora or marketplace afterward. Everywhere Paul and his cohort went, there was either a riot, arrest, a great awakening, or all of the above.

After leaving Thessalonica, they went to Berea, and the people there were better students than those at Thessalonica, as they searched the Scriptures daily to see if the Apostle was accurately teaching the Old Testament, which is the only Bible that they used. The New Testament was being written during these journeys, at least the epistles. Chapter 17 ends with Paul in the ancient city of Athens, where Greek culture, philosophy, and the great academies were centered. Paul was alone for a time and became restless and went to Mars Hill to preach. There he disputed and shared a philosophical message related to the worship of the Athenians. He had no success with that type of evangelism, and in the next chapter, we will see that Athens changed the emphasis of the Apostle Paul's preaching. Paul baptized no one at Athens. Baptism is the cardinal way of one giving witness of saving faith in the New Testament. A profession without an open testimony of baptism was recognized by the Apostles. This is not teaching Baptismal Regeneration, but rather placing the proper emphasis on the critical ordinance of Baptism.

Prayer and Action Steps

Thank you, Lord, for teaching all of us all the days of our lives. If the Apostle Paul learned things on an ongoing basis all of his life, we should follow the pattern he left for us. May we be students of God's Word and sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit all our days. Amen