

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 53

### I. Exposition of Chapter Sixteen (continued).

#### A. Verses 35-40 – The Magistrates beg Paul to leave town.

1. **Verses 35-36** – “And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, ‘Let those men go. So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, ‘The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.’” – It’s not certain why these men had a change of heart. It could be they just wanted to hold them overnight as examples to others or it could be the earthquake influenced them in some way. The word “**officers**” is literally “**rod-bearers**” and were those used in official discipline.<sup>1</sup> These likely were some of the very ones who had previously beaten them with rods.
2. **Verses 37-39** – **Paul reveals that he and Silas are Roman citizens which causes a bit of a panic. Why Paul didn’t mention this before is unknown. It’s possible that he tried but wasn’t heard.**  
Dr. Constable writes:

“The Roman government guaranteed its citizens a public trial and freedom from degrading punishment such as beatings. Paul was now able to use his (and Silas’) citizenship to their advantage. He may have tried unsuccessfully to communicate their citizenship earlier during his arrest, or he may have waited for the right moment to do so.

Apparently the magistrates did not challenge Paul’s claim. People who made a false claim to having Roman citizenship suffered death. Paul’s claim here, resulted not only in his own protection from mistreatment, but in the authorities looking on his fellow believers as well with favor, rather than abusing them. Paul undoubtedly demanded what he did for the progress of the gospel, not for personal glory or revenge (cf. Phil. 1:18). Roman officials charged with mistreating Roman citizens faced the danger of discipline by their superiors.”<sup>2</sup>

3. **Verse 40** – “So they went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.” – Before leaving they first went to Lydia’s house where they had been staying. (cf. 16:13-15). Remember Lydia was amongst the first in Philippi to come to Christ.

### II. Exposition of Chapter Seventeen.

#### A. Verses 1-9 – Paul’s Ministry in Thessalonica.

1. **Verse 1** – “...they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.” – As has been stated before, whenever there was a synagogue in a city, Paul would start by going there to preach.
2. **Verse 2** – “...for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...” – Using the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul “**reasoned**” with the Jews. The idea of “**reasoned**” is that he presented a logical and intelligent argument. Grant Osborne states:

“They spend the first three Sabbaths there ministering in the synagogue. Luke says Paul ‘reasoned,’ or ‘dialogued’ (*dielexato*), with them, meaning he not only taught the people but also argued logically, proving that the Scriptures pointed to Jesus as Messiah and Savior (as we see in v. 3). This includes both synagogue preaching and wide-ranging debates on evidence from prophecy.”<sup>3</sup>

3. **Verse 3** – “...explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’” – So Paul was “**explaining**” which means; “**to explain something which has been previously hidden or obscure**”<sup>4</sup> and “**demonstrating**” which means; “**to establish evidence to show that something is true**”<sup>5</sup>
4. **Verse 4** – “And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.” – Dr. Stanley Horton asserts:

“Paul’s reasoning with them was effective. Some of the Jews were ‘persuaded’ (believed in Jesus and obeyed the gospel; thus they were baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit) and decided to join Paul and

<sup>1</sup>Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 197.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 339-340.

<sup>3</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 309-310.

<sup>4</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 404.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 672.

Silas. So did a large crowd of God-fearing Greeks, including a number of ‘prominent women,’ some filling high positions in the city, others the wives of the chief men of the city. Thus the Gentile converts far outnumbered the Jewish believers.”<sup>6</sup>

5. Verse 5 – “But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”

a. Unbelieving Jews stirred up a mob again due to envy. Robert Utley writes:

“Jewish unbelief is sad to me (cf. 14:2), but jealousy (cf. 5:17) is tragic! These were not motivated by religious zeal like Saul’s, but jealousy! The number of converts (cf. 13:45), not the content of the preaching, is what bothered them.”<sup>7</sup>

b. Regarding “...some of the evil men from the marketplace...” Utley adds: “This term describes one who hangs around the marketplace without working, a lazy good-for-nothing.”<sup>8</sup>

c. “...attacked the house of Jason...” – Not much is known about Jason but apparently he was host to Paul and his team. He likely is the same Jason mentioned in **Romans 16:21**.

6. Verse 6 – “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’” Paul and his team were not present so they dragged out Jason and some others. This was a very serious situation. Grant Osborne writes:

“...so they grab Jason and a few believers and drag them before the city council...and loudly accuse them of having ‘caused trouble all over the world.’ This is not really hyperbole, for riots had ensued almost everywhere Paul had been, though we don’t know how much of that they knew. Just the year before (AD 49) the emperor Claudius had expelled Christians from Rome due to the riots of many Jews against them. We will soon meet Priscilla and Aquila, two Christian leaders who moved to Corinth due to that event (18:2). So the Thessalonian officials would naturally be on edge regarding such charges. Their accusation of Jason’s opening his home to such dangerous agitators would have carried weight. He could be accused of sedition, which would carry the death sentence.”<sup>9</sup>

7. Verse 7 – “Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.” – This was inferring that Paul, and everyone involved, was inciting an insurrection against Caesar and were going to try to install another King.

8. Verses 8-9 – It seems that the magistrates didn’t take the accusations seriously. Stanley Horton states: “Apparently the city officials did not take the charges seriously, but to satisfy the crowd they ‘made Jason and the others post bond’ (Gk. *hikanon*, “security”). This probably means Jason and his friends provided bail as a guarantee that Paul and Silas would leave the city and not come back lest there be further disturbance.”<sup>10</sup>

B. Verses 10-14 - Paul’s Ministry at Berea. Again, Paul goes into the local synagogue to preach the Gospel.

This time he finds that the Bereans are more “fair-minded” than the Thessalonians in that they received the Word with “readiness” which means; “eagerness to engage in some activity or event”<sup>11</sup> They also didn’t just swallow everything they heard but, in their eagerness to learn, “...searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” The Amplified Bible of verse 11 reads:

“Now these [Jews] were better disposed *and* more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they were entirely ready *and* accepted *and* welcomed the message [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God] with inclination of mind *and* eagerness, searching *and* examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

<sup>6</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 291-292.

<sup>7</sup>Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 204.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 311.

<sup>10</sup>Horton, 293-294.

<sup>11</sup>Louw and Nida, 296.