

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-32 Ministry in Thessalonica and Berea

Have you ever tried to teach a group of children? When the teacher gives a direction, most children will respond favorably. A few may not respond at all and some may react negatively. This happens with older students and adults too. Some people will agree with what a leader says. Others will not agree and may even fight back. In today's lesson Paul and his team met with both acceptance and opposition to their teaching.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his missionary team traveled westward 160 kilometers (100 miles) to Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia. For the next three Sabbaths, he went to the local Jewish synagogue and discussed the Scriptures with them. He showed them how the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. Paul kept telling them, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ" (Acts 17:3).

Some of the Jews believed, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks, both men and prominent women. This caused some Jews to become jealous. So they went to the marketplace, rounded up some local thugs, and formed a mob. Together they started a riot.

Then, some of them went to Jason's house where they heard the apostles were staying. They wanted to seize Paul and Silas and publicly humiliate them. When they did not find them there, they grabbed Jason and some others and dragged them out. They then shouted to the crowd, "These men have caused trouble all over the world. Now, here they are in our city doing the same thing. And this Jason fellow has welcomed them into his home. They profess allegiance to a king other than Caesar, a man by the name of Jesus. This is nothing less than treason!"

When the mob heard this, mayhem broke out. Everyone, including the city officials, was thrown into a state of frenzy. Eventually, after things died down, they allowed Jason and the brothers to post bond and let them go. When darkness came, some of the new Christian brothers met Paul and Silas. They led them to the edge of the city and sent them on their way to Berea.

When Paul and Silas arrived in Berea, they went to the synagogue. They found that the Bereans eagerly received the good news about Jesus. Every day they gathered to examine the Scriptures to see if Paul's words were true. Because of this, many Jewish men believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

However, when word got back to the Jews of Thessalonica of what was happening in Berea, some Jewish ruffians went to Berea too. They began stirring up the crowds there, just as they had done in Thessalonica. Because Paul was their primary target, the believers whisked him off to the coast where he set sail for Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea (Acts 17:1-15).

Let's look at three powerful ministry lessons we can learn from this story of Paul's missionary work. First, we learn how important it is for us to systematically teach the Scriptures to the people. Paul's ministry in Macedonia was marked by a thorough and organized approach to teaching. The Bible tells us that in Thessalonica he went repeatedly into the synagogue. He

“reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead” (Acts 17:2-3). Then, when Paul arrived in Berea, he met with the people there “and examined the Scriptures every day.” Like Paul, we too, should commit ourselves to regularly teaching Scripture in our churches. As we do, we should keep one fact in mind: Jesus is the central message and true fulfillment of all Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Secondly, from this story of Paul’s missionary work, we learn that our teaching, just like our preaching, should be anointed by the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote a follow-up letter (known as First Thessalonians) to the Christians in Thessalonica. In it he reminded them how he had taught them the word of God, “with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” He further reminded them how they had “welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” As a result of this Spirit-anointed teaching, the church in Thessalonica became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Then from there, the Lord’s message rang out to the surrounding regions (1Thess 1:5-8). The same is true today. If we want to have powerful, Spirit-anointed churches, we must systematically teach God’s word with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The third lesson we learn is that we can expect the truth of the gospel to prevail even in the face of strong opposition. In both Thessalonica and Berea, certain elements of the population opposed Paul’s ministry. However, in both places, people accepted the Lord and strong churches were planted. We can expect the same thing to occur when we go to new places to preach the gospel and plant churches. Paul once wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). We can have the same faith in the gospel message. While some will oppose it, we must faithfully preach and teach the good news about Jesus, and remain full of the Holy Spirit. If we do, some will receive the message with joy and strong churches will be planted.

This lesson is **important** because in it we learn that we can expect both opposition and success when we go out to preach the gospel and plant new churches. We further learn how we can strengthen the churches we plant.

The **main truths** we learn from this lesson are that we should systematically teach the Word of God in the churches. In teaching the Word, we must remain focused on Jesus and full of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. Based on this and the previous lesson, what three cities did Paul and his missionary team visit while in Macedonia?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that they visited Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, you are correct.
2. From this story, what two lessons did we learn about how we should teach Scripture in our churches?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that we should systematically teach the Scriptures in our churches and that our teaching should be anointed by the Holy Spirit, you are right.

3. Based on this lesson, what two responses can we expect from people when we go into new areas to preach the gospel and plant churches?

A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “We can expect some to oppose the message, and we can expect others to receive it with joy and be saved,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson several times until you can tell the story of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica and Berea to others. You should also be able to teach the three lessons learned from this story. After you share these lessons with a group of believers, ask them to talk about opposition they have faced as they have witnessed for Christ. Then lead in prayer, asking God to anoint the teaching they are sharing.