

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Paul's Second Missionary Journey - Part 2

### Acts 17-18

## Opening

Gathering: What different approaches are needed when witnessing to a dechurched Christian versus a Jew versus an atheist versus a Mormon versus a Muslim?

Today's Focus: Paul spread the gospel into Europe using methods tailored for this different audience.

Key Verses: *Bereans were of more noble character ... for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.* Acts 17:11

*What you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.* Acts 17:23

Opening Prayer

## Lesson

The First Journey (*Acts 13-14*)

Where did Paul and Barnabas go on their first missionary journey? = Mainly Galatia  
Acts 13:4-6a, 13-14; 14:1, 6-7 = Cyprus, Perga, P. Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe

Why was Paul's custom to go first to the synagogues in the towns where he traveled?  
Romans 1:16 = *Gospel...is for salvation...first for the Jew, then for the Gentile*

How were they received in these places?  
Acts 13:50; 14:5, 19 = Antioch - expelled, Iconium - plot to kill, Lystra - stoned

Did this opposition convince them to stop? = Filled with joy over those who were reached  
Acts 13:51-52; 14:6-7, 20-21a = No, they just moved to a new city and started over

Did the fierce opposition at least keep them out of those towns?  
Acts 14:21b-23 = No, they returned through the same towns fortifying the churches

After encouraging the new churches, did they head straight home and stop witnessing?  
Acts 14:24-26 = They headed straight home, but stopped and witnessed along the way

Beginning The Second Journey (*Acts 15:36-40*)

Did Paul and Barnabas have a specific itinerary for their second journey?  
Acts 15:36 = Only to check up on the churches they had planted

Why didn't they end up going together to check up on the churches they had planted?  
Acts 15:37-39a = They had an argument over Mark and never worked together again

How did God make good out of this human evil? = Both went to their home towns first  
Acts 15:39b-40 = The split resulted in two missionary teams going two directions

The Traveling Party Grows (*Acts 16:1-10*)

What path did Paul and Silas take on this journey to strengthen the churches?  
Acts 15:41-16:1a = Syria to Cilicia to Derbe to Lystra

Who joined Paul and Silas in Lystra and how did Paul prepare him for the work ahead?  
Acts 16:1b-3 = Young Timothy, Paul circumcised him so Jews wouldn't be irritated

After revisiting the towns in Galatia, did Paul have an itinerary of places to go?  
Acts 16:4-9 = If he did, he didn't get to use it - Holy Spirit led him to Greece

Who joined Paul, Silas and Timothy in Troas?  
Acts 16:10 = Luke ("we") - Paul maybe found this doctor to help his *thorn in the flesh*

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### A Spectrum in Philippi (Acts 16:11-24)

Where did they go to follow their call in Macedonia? = Samothrace - mountainous island landmark  
Acts 16:11-12 = 2 day sail across Aegean to Philippi - Neapolis was port for Philippi  
Who became the first new Christian in Europe? = Purple dye gathered by drop from shellfish  
Acts 16:13-15 = Lydia, a wealthy woman at riverside on Sabbath (no synagogue)

Were only wealthy people in Philippi reached by Paul's outreach?  
Acts 16:16-18 = A young slave girl was freed of a demon by the name of Jesus Christ  
How were Paul and Silas thanked for setting this girl free from the demon?  
Acts 16:19-24 = Owners rebelled, Paul and Silas flogged and imprisoned, legs spread painfully

### Suffering for the Gospel (Acts 16:25-26)

How did Paul and Silas respond to their mistreatment and pain?  
Acts 16:25 = Sang hymns of praise late into the night - dark, stuffy inner dungeon  
How could they praise God even when they were tortured and wrongfully abused?  
2 Timothy 1:11-12; 2:8-10 = Paul found it an honor to suffer for his work in the gospel  
How did God intervene? = An earthquake that opened doors and chains would cause a cave-in  
Acts 16:26 = God freed them by opening doors and releasing chains, quake was side product

### Winning the Middle Class (Acts 16:27-34)

Faced with receiving the punishment of escaped prisoners, what did the guard do?  
Acts 16:27 = He started to kill himself – a noble response for Romans  
How was the jailer's fate changed?  
Acts 16:28-29 = The prisoners had not escaped and saved him from suicide  
How was the jailer's fate changed even more importantly? = Saved his life eternally  
Acts 16:30-32 = He and his family became Christians  
What outward indication do we have that this middle class man had been changed?  
Acts 16:33-34 = He washed their wounds, was washed of his wounds, shared meal

### An Official Embarrassment (Acts 16:35-40)

How long were Paul and Silas to spend in jail for disturbing the peace?  
Acts 16:35-36 = A public flogging and one night in jail was their punishment  
How did Paul use his punishment to build respect for him and the new church in Philippi?  
Acts 16:37 = Said he was Roman citizen; illegal to punish citizens without Roman trial  
How did the local magistrates respond to this news that could get them into a lot of trouble?  
Acts 16:38-39 = They apologized and asked Paul and Silas to leave quietly  
  
Did Paul and Silas take the upper hand or did they leave as requested? = ~2 months in Philippi  
Acts 16:40 = They left after first meeting with and encouraging the church  
Where did they go? = Philippi to Amphipolis - 33 mi; Am to Apollonia - 27 mi; Ap to Thess - 40 mi  
Acts 17:1 = Down the Egnatian Way - 100 miles despite pain from flogging and stocks  
*Via Egnatia* - Great Roman road from Adriatic Sea to Aegean Sea = 3 long days of walking

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### Thessalonica (Acts 17:2-9)

- Thessalonica* - Capital of Macedonia, Main Street was part of Egnatian Way  
Strategically located, Linked agricultural interior with sea routes to the east  
Business center rivaled only by Corinth, Diverse population around 200,000
- What was Paul's first approach in Thessalonica and why? = *as his custom was*  
Acts 17:2-4 = Reasoned, explained and proved gospel in synagogue 3 weeks
- Did Paul witness day and night or only on the Sabbath? = Tent maker  
1 Thessalonians 2:9 = Apparently worked full-time, witnessed when he could
- Did Paul get any financial help from anywhere to help him maximize his time sharing the gospel?  
Philippians 4:15-16 = Yes, new Christians in Philippi sent help
- Why did he stop teaching in the synagogue every Sabbath after 3 weeks?  
Acts 17:5-7 = Jews started riot & charged treason; RSV: *have turned the world upside down*
- What did the politarchs (name for magistrates in Macedonia) decide to do?  
Acts 17:8-9 = Made Jason post a bond guaranteeing Paul and Silas would stop
- Was Paul happy to leave this city that rejected him? = Written while in Corinth 6 months later  
1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 = No, he wanted to go back but couldn't because of decree
- Had three weeks been long enough to have much of an effect?  
1 Thessalonians 1:7-9 = Yes, within a half year their faith became famous

### Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

- Where did Paul and Silas go after being forced out of Thessalonica, and how were they received?  
Acts 17:10-12 = Berea, 50 mi SW of Thessalonica, large population, historically insignificant
- Did Paul stay longer with these people of *more noble character* who received the gospel eagerly?  
Acts 17:13-15 = No, Jews from Thessalonica agitated the crowds, Paul sailed to Athens
- What did Paul do soon after Timothy and Silas met up with him in Athens?  
1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 = Sent Timothy to check up on Thessalonica, Silas to Philippi
- What prompted Paul to write his first letter to the Thessalonians?  
1 Thessalonians 3:6 = Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5) with report and issues

### Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

- What did Paul think about the great sights he saw during his first trip to Athens?  
Acts 17:16-17 = He was distressed by lots of idols – Greeks had gods for everything
- Were people in Athens as upset by Paul's teachings as in the other cities? = philosophers  
Acts 17:18-21 = No, they were very open to hearing all sorts of wacky ideas  
*Epicureans* - All is by chance, gods are remote and don't care, death is end, life is for pleasure  
*Stoics* - Everything happens by God's will; Man to be logical, disciplined, self-sufficient  
*Areopagus* - Exclusive court that dealt with homicides and public morals
- How did Paul attempt to explain the gospel in terms the Athenians would understand?  
Acts 17:22-23 = Let me tell you about the unknown god that you worship
- Did he then explain how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament or did he explain God as a Greek god?  
Acts 17:24-31 = Neither, he taught truth about God from Greek perspective  
v28 - Paul quoted from Cretan poet Epimenides and Cilician poet Aratus
- Did the Council have any problem with anything he said? = a few Athenians became believers  
Acts 17:32-34 = The resurrection was an issue to some, others wanted him to return
- Without the fierce opposition of other cities, did Paul spend a long time in Athens?  
Acts 18:1 = No, those who accept anything will keep nothing, left to make a difference

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Corinth (Acts 18:1-5)

*Corinth* - Capital of Achaia, 4th largest city in Roman empire (after Rome, Alexandria and Antioch)  
On main trade route from Rome to east, Cargo and small ships carried across 5 mi. isthmus  
Very immoral - *A renowned and voluptuous city, where the vices of East and West met.*

Pagan altars - Poseidon, Artemis, Apollo, Hermes, Zeus, Heracles

*Temple of Aphrodite* - Contained over 1000 prostitutes

Did Paul take a working missionary approach as he had in Thessalonica?

Acts 18:2-4 = Yes; Found, converted and stayed with tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla

Was he ever able to devote himself full-time to preaching the gospel?

Acts 18:5 = Full-time when Timothy and Silas returned from Thessalonica and Philippi

Corinthian Jews Revolt (Acts 18:6-17)

Did the Jews in Corinth become abusive as they had in other cities?

Acts 18:6-8 = Yes, so he shook their dust out of his clothes and went to Gentiles

Did the Corinthian Jews rise up strong enough that Paul had to leave?

Acts 18:9-11 = No, God protected him and told him so; he stayed 1-1/2 years

Does this mean that the Jews left him alone and didn't try to silence him?

Acts 18:12-13 = No, they even took legal action against him

How did God protect Paul as He had promised to do?

Acts 18:14-16 = Gallio, the proconsul (governor), threw the case out on no basis

What did the Greeks who witnessed this think about these trouble-making Jews?

Acts 18:17 = They beat the new synagogue ruler as he left the court

Did this experience permanently turn Sosthenes against Christianity?

1 Corinthians 1:1 = No, he was with Paul in Ephesus when Paul wrote his first letter

Homeward Bound (Acts 18:18-22)

How did Paul specially dedicate himself to the Lord while he worked in Corinth?

Acts 18:18 = Took a Nazirite vow - no haircut, no wine...for specific time (Numbers 6)

How did God use Aquila and Priscilla to help spread His gospel? = Paul in Ephesus very short time

Acts 18:19-21 = They left Corinth with Paul and became missionaries to Ephesus

Did Paul go straight to Antioch from Ephesus to complete his second journey?

Acts 18:22 = No, he went to Jerusalem first, then to Antioch

Closing Prayer

**Response** - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How customary is it for me to spend at least a few hours each week with the Body of Christ?  
(Acts 17:2; 2:42-47; Luke 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 33-34; 16:19; Hebrews 3:13; 10:23-25)
2. Would I be considered to be a noble Berean or a jealous Thessalonian?  
(Acts 17:5, 11-13; Matthew 22:29; John 5:39; 20:9, 30-31; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 3:15-16)
3. What everyday occurrences of my life can I use to lead others to Christ?  
(Acts 17:22-34; Psalm 8; Matthew 22:15-22; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:15-17)
4. How well do I trust in God's protection?  
(Acts 18:9-11; Psalm 37:28; John 17:15-16; Philippians 1:19-26; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)
5. What special commitments have I made to God out of devotion to Him?  
(Acts 18:18; 20:32; Genesis 14:17-24; Numbers 6; Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28-29; 1 Peter 4:12-19)