



EPISODE 5: October 4/5

The Witness in Greece II: Thessalonica, Berea, Athens

Acts 17:1-34

Paul and Silas continue on their missionary journey.

- I. Paul and Silas in Thessalonica (17:1–9).
 - a. For three Sabbaths in a row, Paul preaches the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ in the Jewish synagogues (17:1–3).
 - b. Some Jews and many Gentile men and women are saved (17:4).
 - c. Mob and the missionaries (17:5–9).
 - i. A mob rushes into Jason’s house, where Paul and Silas are staying, in search of the missionaries (17:5).
 - ii. Unable to find Paul and Silas, the mob drags Jason before the city council (17:6a).
 - iii. *The accusations* (17:6b–9).
 1. Paul and Silas are charged with troublemaking, and Jason is charged with allowing them to stay in his home (17:6b–7a).
 2. Paul and Silas are charged with treason (17:7b–9): “They profess allegiance to another king, Jesus.”

- II. Paul and Silas in Berea (17:10–15).
 - a. Openness to God’s Word (17:10–12).
 - i. They listen eagerly to the teaching and research it and check the Scriptures (17:10–11).
 - ii. Many Jews believe, as do some of the Greek men and women (17:12).
 - b. Opposition to God’s Word (17:13–15).
 - i. *The demonstration against Paul* (17:13): Some Jews from Thessalonica hear about Paul, come to Berea and instigate another riot.
 - ii. *Paul escapes to Athens* (17:14–15).

- III. Paul in Athens (17:16–17).
 - a. Once the center of the Civilized World.
 - b. A city full of Idols.

- c. The Athenian Audience and Attitudes (17:18–21): Four Ways to Cope: These are sophisticated Philosophical doctrines- I am in danger of oversimplifying them.
 - i. The Jews in the Synagogue (*safety in tradition, comfort in routine*): Represent cynical conservatism.
 - ii. The Epicureans: (*This life is all there is, so live it up. Don't worry about sin or eternal consequences*).
 - 1. Represent coping through pleasure.
 - 2. Paul acknowledges this way of thinking: *1 Corinthians 15:32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*
 - iii. The Stoics (*grin and bear it*).
 - 1. Coping through *virtue*.
 - 2. "Don't let it get to you"- either pain or pleasure. Ultra-disciplined.
 - 3. Control emotions and Passion.
 - 1. Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor):
 - a. "When Forced, as it seems, by thine environment to be utterly disquieted, return with all speed into thyself, staying in discord no longer than thou must."
 - b. "There are many bitter pills, but we welcome them in hope of health."
 - c. "If it is good for the community, it cannot be evil for the individual."
 - 2. Endurance without hope.
 - ii. The Aereopagite Philosophers (*try anything*).
 - 1. Philosopher: A Lover of Wisdom.
 - 2. V. 21 (*All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.*)
- IV. Paul's Sermon (17:22–23): The Good news of the Unknown God.
- a. Paul does not use the "Pentecost" sermon style, preaching from the Jewish Scriptures. Instead he begins with the observation he has made about the city and its people.
 - b. The Athenians are "very religious," as evidenced by the presence of so many idols. The entire city is filled with shrines and temples (17:16–17).
 - c. **Paul says "I've got something New, (at least new to you) but it has been here all along. Better yet, I've got something real."**
 - d. The Answer is not in false idols: v.29 "*we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-- an image made by man's design and skill.*"
 - e. Unknown God- Right under your nose: v. 22-23 "*...Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.... I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.*"
 - f. He is a God you can't contain: v. 24 "*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.*"

- g. He is the one who has what you really need: v.25 “*because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*”
 - h. He wants to be in a relationship with you.
 - i. “v.27 *God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.*”
 - ii. “v.28 *'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*”
 - i. The time for ignorance is over- the time for salvation is at hand. God will someday judge the world through Jesus Christ, whom he raised from the dead (17:31).
- V. **The reaction to this sermon (17:32–34).**
- i. *Some mock (17:32a).*
 - ii. *Some delay (17:32b):* They want to hear more later.
 - iii. *Some believe (17:33–34).*