

Discipleship Questions

What were Paul and Silas doing while they were in prison?

What caused the Philippian jailer to ask about salvation?

What were the Philippian jailer and his household taught concerning salvation?

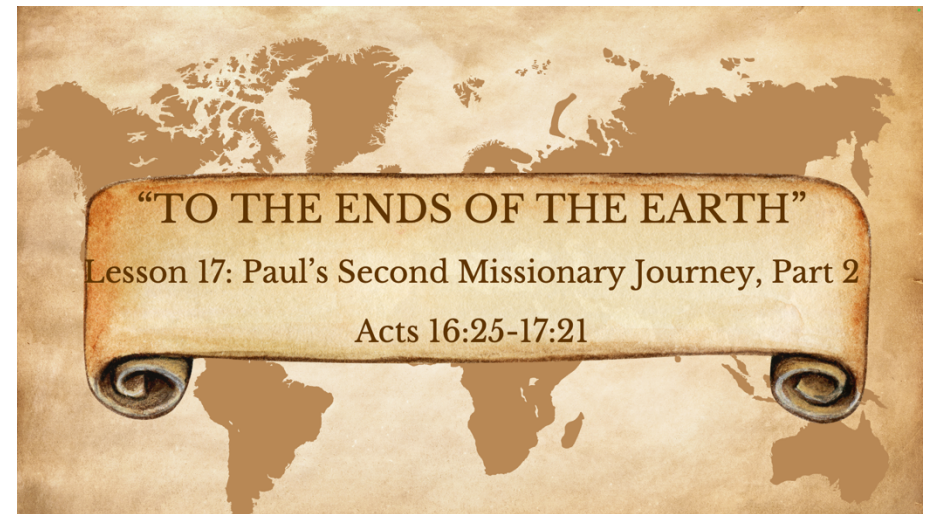
What transpired to bring about Paul and Silas's release from prison?

What kind of reception did the gospel experience in Thessalonica?

What was different about the Jews in Berea versus those in Thessalonica?

Where did Paul preach in Athens?

Why did some people in Athens want to hear what Paul had to say?



Paul and Silas had set off on a journey that included going back through the towns Paul had visited on his first preaching tour. During this journey, God called them to go to Macedonia and preach the gospel. In Philippi (in Macedonia), Paul and Silas preached and were also arrested.

The Philippian Jailer Is Converted (Acts 16:25-34)

16:25-28. About midnight, while Paul and Silas were in the inner prison (Acts 16:23-24), they were praying and singing praises to God (Hebrews 13:15)! The prisoners were listening. Suddenly, God sent an earthquake that caused the doors to open and the chains to fall off throughout the prison (Acts 5:18-21; 12:6-11). When the jailer woke up, he supposed the prisoners had escaped and started to kill himself (being responsible for the prisoners). However, Paul called out so he would not harm himself, assuring that they were all still in the prison!

16:29-34. The jailer called for lights, rushed into where Paul and Silas were, and fell trembling before them. He brought them out and asked them what he must do to be saved (indicating he knew they had the answer). They responded by saying he (and his household) would be saved if he (and they) would believe in the Lord Jesus. Notice the text demonstrates this saving belief involved obedience (vv. 32-34; Matthew 7:21-23; James 2:14-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Then, they spoke the word of the Lord to him and everyone in his house (which produces saving faith, Romans 10:13-18). After hearing the word, the jailer (now repentant) took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds (Acts 16:22-24). Right away, he and all his family were baptized for salvation (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:15-16). He then brought the prisoners to his house, fed them, and rejoiced because he had (upon his baptism) come to believe in God with his entire household and experienced the Lord's salvation (Acts 8:39)!

Paul And Silas Are Released (Acts 16:35-40)

16:35-40. The chief magistrates in Philippi sent officers in the morning to order Paul and Silas to be released (no reason is given). The jailer reported this to Paul and encouraged him to go on his way in peace. However, Paul would not let the public injustices against them be dismissed so privately (1 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul and Silas had rights as Roman citizens that had been violated by being beaten and jailed without a trial. Paul said if the magistrates wanted to make things right, they needed to escort them out of prison rather than sending them away secretly. The magistrates heard this and were afraid (having violated their rights as Romans) and appeased them by escorting them out and urging them to leave town. After being released, they went to Lydia's house, visited and encouraged the disciples, and then left Philippi.

Preaching In Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

17:1-4. Paul, Silas, and (perhaps) Timothy (Acts 17:14) traveled southwesterly (likely via the highway known as the Egnatian Way), apparently stopping at Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way (a total trip of about 100 miles) before arriving in Thessalonica (a major and capital seaport city within Macedonia). There was a Jewish synagogue in the city, where Paul spent three Sabbaths reasoning from the Old Testament Scriptures. He was attempting to explain and prove that the Messiah needed to suffer and rise from the dead, demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah (Isaiah 53; Psalm 16:10). Some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas (were converted). This included some Jews, a large number of God-fearing Greeks (Gentiles, perhaps proselytes), and leading women (either prominent themselves or married to prominent men).

17:5-10. The Jews in Thessalonica became jealous (Acts 13:45; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). They brought some wicked men together (perhaps paying some wicked men who loitered in the marketplace) to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked Jason's house (evidently where Paul and Silas were staying), looking for Paul and Silas with the desire to bring them out to the public assembly (evidently to put them on trial). But, they did not find them. So, the mob dragged Jason and some of the disciples out before the city officials, painting Paul and Silas as trouble-makers who had turned the world upside down (perhaps referencing their trouble in Philippi, Acts 16:16-24). Then, they accused Jason of harboring these men. They accused Paul and Silas of acting contrary to Caesar's decrees (which was a lie, Romans 13:1-7) and proclaiming another King – Jesus (which was a misrepresentation of the truth, John 18:36; Luke 23:1-2). The crowd and city officials were upset after hearing these things. But, they took some form of security bond from Jason (perhaps to hold him responsible for any trouble Paul and Silas would cause or to assure they would leave town), and released them.

Preaching In Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

17:10-15. Upon nightfall, the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica had to hasten Paul and Silas's departure (1 Thessalonians 2:17) to Berea (about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica). When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These Jews were more fair and noble-minded than those in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). These Jews received the teaching of God's word with eagerness, though not blindly. They searched/examined the Scriptures every day to see whether Paul and Silas were teaching accurately. As a result, many of the Jews believed, including prominent Greek women and men. However, the jealous Jews from Thessalonica heard about the success of the gospel in Berea and came there to stir up trouble. The disciples in Berea then sent Paul away to the coast, while Silas and Timothy stayed behind. Paul was escorted to Athens (about 195 miles south, in the province of Achaia). Paul told the escorts to have Silas and Timothy come to him as quickly as possible.

Preaching In Athens (Acts 17:16-21)

17:16-21. While Paul was alone in Athens, he was deeply troubled by the city's allegiance to idols. Paul worked to reason with the Jews and others who worshiped God (e.g. Gentiles) in the synagogue. He also tried to reason with people every day in the marketplace. In particular, Paul debated with two of the most popular philosophical schools of thought of that day (Epicureans and Stoics). Paul was accused by some as being a "seed-picker" (like birds picking up seeds; a derogatory term for people who picked up and passed on various ideas). Others said he was a preacher of foreign gods/deities since he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. They took Paul to the hill overlooking the marketplace in Athens (known as the Areopagus, or Mars Hill), saying they wanted to learn about Paul's "new teaching" that sounded strange to their ears. The people of Athens and foreigners in the city spent their time learning about new things (i.e. new philosophies), and wanted to know Paul's teaching.

Conclusion

Paul and his traveling companions had now preached the gospel in Macedonia. The gospel experienced both successes and challenges. Now, Paul was in Athens and taking advantage of opportunities to preach the gospel there, preparing to speak at the Areopagus.

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