

Acts 17:1-10, Thessalonica
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Overview

We have case studies of virgin evangelism in eight cities. Similar patterns in all of them, though some are more or less full than others. Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth.

A. 1, Missing Stories

Amphipolis and Apollonias were two large cities; did he not minister there?

1. The verb occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Luke 8:1, where it is explicitly stated that the Lord preached and taught as he went.
2. Gen. 13:17, God's command to Abraham to go through the land in order to possess it.

We may be sure that Paul and Silas did the same, but the Lord was not pleased to establish any lasting work. Luke records the highlights; we don't see the long labor in places that didn't yield any fruit or don't have any lessons to teach us. Like the unspecified preaching in Derbe (14:21) and Perga (14:25).

B. 2-4, Preaching in the Synagogue

Like Antioch, Jewish audience; messages on more than one Sabbath before opposition mounts; we have some detail of the message.

1. 2, Paul's custom: to be in the Synagogue.

- a) Pragmatically, that was where to find Jews, and take advantage of the opening he had with them.
- b) But his motive is more than this. The possessive here is not the genitive, but the dative, indicating personal interest. Paul went into the Synagogue for his sake, not just for the sake of the Jews. He needed God's Word; he sought the fellowship of other believers.

Application: When you travel, search out other believers. You may be a blessing to them, and you need their fellowship.

2. 3, Paul's message

Two lines of argument: what the Scriptures say; how that relates to practical experience now. Interpretation and application; the same two arms of any sound exposition.

- a) Interpretation: "opening," that is, the Scriptures. The one spoken of in the OT as Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. Not just a triumphant savior, but also one who suffers. Aspects of the OT promise that were too easily overlooked.

Application: Human nature doesn't like bad news. There is much in the Bible to bless us, and we should enjoy those blessings, but we must not hide from the warnings and rebukes when they

fit.

b) Application: "alleging," lit. "laying side by side" the teaching of the Bible with the facts of life. The one thus described has actually come. Ties the text down to existential reality.

c) *Application*: Our ministry also must consist of "opening and comparing," interpreting the Scriptures soundly and applying them practically to daily life. Mustn't fail on either count.

3. 4, Paul's converts

Three groups. From most populous to least:

a) A "great multitude" of devout Greeks (converts to Judaism, or at least, God-fearers; cf. 1 Thess. 1:9, "turned to God from idols")

b) "Not a few" of the chief women (wives of the magistrates and leading citizens)

c) "Some" of the ethnic Jews in the Synagogue.

C. 5-9, The Jewish Opposition

1. Their Motive, 5.

As in Antioch (13:45), "moved with envy." Paul had greater influence over three sabbaths with the interested Gentiles, and brought out more sparse attenders among the Jews, than they could.

Application: Beware envy over the gifts of another; may cause us to lose the blessing ourselves.

Antioch and Philippi show envy (pride of life); Philippi and Ephesus show greed (lust of eyes).

2. Their Method, 5-8.

v.8 is a summary: focused on stirring people up (the very root used in the accusation against the apostles in Philippi, 16:20!)

a) First, get the people stirred up, 5a, 8. Mob rule is often a resort of those who can't make a rational case. Preacher who said, "You can tell which are my weak points--it's where I raise my voice."

Lesson: They don't have a rational case to make. In spite of the intellectualism often associated with opposition to religion, the conduct of the opponents often shows the fundamentally emotional level of their objections.

Application: Pure bookishness in Bible study is not right--but neither is pure emotion, which can so easily be led astray by demagogues, "cast to and fro and carried about."

b) Next, find the offenders (5b), and failing in that, find a scapegoat (6a).

Lesson: Their opposition is not to any one individual personally, but to God and his law. Thus it can be transferred easily.

Application: It costs something to be associated with God's people.

c) Finally, stir up the authorities (6b,7).

Lesson: Magistrates, while responsible to God (Rom. 13), are for the most part unsaved, and may be expected to side with the unbelievers.

3. Their Message, 6-7.

Same basic two points as Philippi: the apostles ...

- a) ... cause civil unrest (but in fact it is the Jews who are causing the unrest! The verb in v.9 is the same root as the one of which the apostles are accused in 16:20.)
- b) ... promote ideas contrary to the Roman law.
 - 1) In this case, the specific accusation is reminiscent of our Lord's trial.
 - 2) A complete distortion of the message ... but people only hear what they want to hear. In fact, Paul's teaching at Thess. had been heavily apocalyptic: 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:5. It was the collusion of Rome with nominal Christianity under Constantine that led to the weakening of eschatological teaching under Augustine.

4. The outcome, 9.

These magistrates, unlike those in Philippi, keep their heads. They take a deposit from Jason which will be forfeit if there is trouble--posting a bond. Has the effect of keeping Paul out of town, but not of squelching the local believers.

D. 10, Departure and Follow-Up

1. For the sake of Jason's bond, Paul leaves town, and later, though he wants desperately to return, does not (1 Thess. 2). He will risk his own life and limb for the sake of the gospel, but will not endanger his associates. More generally, we cannot make sacrifices for one another. Each must offer his own.
2. Note that Timothy remains behind! Common pattern, which we saw in Philippi as well: a member of the team remains with the new church to establish them.

Summary

Note similarity with Antioch.

1. Both are mainly Jewish audiences (unlike Lystra or two of the three people in Philippi), and have local Jewish opposition (unlike Lystra or Philippi)
2. We have some detail of the message

3. Multiple sabbath messages before the Jewish opposition mounts.
4. Reference to divine sovereignty in salvation of the believers
5. Motive of the objectors is in both cases "envy."

Point: In spite of the favorable reception by the Jewish women in Philippi, we ought not to think that the Jews of Europe will be a pushover for the gospel. On the whole, they react just like the Jews of Asia.

Hymn: "Who is this in yonder stall"

Analysis

1-9, Thess.

1. setting: compound p
 - a) circumstance: 1 Diodeu/santes de\ th\n)Amfi/polin kai\ th\n)Apollwni/an
 - b) text: h)^lqon ei)s Qessaloni/khn,
 - c) comment <Qessalonikhn>: o(/pou h)^n sunagwgh\ tw^n)Ioudai/wn.

2. 2-4, sequence p: preaching in the synagogue
 - a) 2 kata\ de\ to\ ei)wqo\s tw^| Pau/lw| ei)sh^lqen pro\s au)tou\s
Dative of personal interest, ATR p. 537
 - b) amplification p
 - 1) text: kai\ e)pi\ sa/bbata tri/a diele/cato au)toi^s a)po\ tw^n grafw^n,
 - 2) ampl: quote p
 - a> quote f: 3 dianoi/gwn kai\ paratige/menos o(/ti ... kai\ o(/ti
 - b> quote:
 - 1> to\n Xristo\n e)/dei paqei^n kai\ a)nasth^nai e)k nekrw^n,
 - 2> ou(^to/s e)stin o(Xristo/s, [o(])Ihsou^s, a: comment <Ihsous>: o(\n e)gw\ katagge/llw u(mi^n.
 - c) 4 kai/ tines e)c au)tw^n e)pei/sqhsan kai\ proseklhrw/qhsan tw^| Pau/lw| kai\ tw^| Sila^|, tw^n te sebome/nwn (Ellh/nwn plh^qos polu\ gunaikw^n te tw^n prw/twn ou)k o)li/gai.

 3. 5-9, The plot of the adversaries
 - a) First, get the people stirred up.
 - 1) motive: 5 Zhlw/santes de\ oi()Ioudai^oi
 - 2) manner: kai\ proslabo/menoi tw^n a)gorai/wn a)/ndras tina\s ponhrou\s
 - 3) manner: kai\ o)xlopoi/santes
 - 4) text: e)qoru/boun th\n po/lin,
 - b) Next, find the offenders.
 - 1) kai\ e)pista/ntes th^| oi)ki/a|)Ia/sonos
 - 2) e)zh/toun au)tou\s proagagei^n ei)s to\n dh^mon.
 - c) Failing in that, find a scapegoat.
 - 1) reason: 6 mh\ eu(ro/ntes de\ au)tou\s
 - 2) text: e)/suron)Ia/sona kai/ tinas a)delfou\s e)pi\ tou\s polita/rxas,
 - 3) acc. circumstance: quote p
 - a> quote f: bow^ntes o(/ti

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b> quote:
1> Oi( th\n oi)koume/nhn a)nastatw/santes ou(^toi kai\
e)nqa/de pa/reisin,
2> 7 ou(\s u(pode/dektai )Ia/swn:
3> specification p
a: text: kai\ ou(^toi pa/ntes a)pe/nanti tw^n
dogma/twn Kai/saros pra/ssousi,
b: specification: basile/a e(/teron le/gontes ei)^nai
)Ihsou^n.
d) summary: Stir up everybody.
1) 8 e)ta/racan de\ to\n o)/xlon kai\ tou\s polita/rxas
a)kou/ontas tau^ta,
e) 9 kai\ labo/ntes to\ i(kano\n para\ tou^ )Ia/sonos kai\ tw^n
loipw^n a)pe/lusan au)tu/s.

4. 10, Departure
10 Oi( de\ a)delfoi\ eu)qe/ws dia\ nukto\s e)ce/pemyan to/n te
Pau^lon kai\ to\n Sila^ni ei)s Be/roian,

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