

THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH

--ACTS 17:1-10--

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we will begin a new sermon series on the books of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. This morning by way of introduction I want to tell you a bit about the city of Thessalonica and how it came about that Paul wrote two letters to the church there.

The apostle Paul is the author of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians and identifies himself in both letters. It is possible that 1st Thessalonians was the first of Paul's epistles written near the end of his second missionary journey with 2nd Thessalonians possibly written just a few months later. Both were written while Paul was in Corinth in about 51 A.D., and both show his concern for the Thessalonian believers.

This morning I want to walk you through most of Paul's second missionary journey to find out why he wrote these two letters to the church in Thessalonica.

I. BACKGROUND (Acts 15:36-16:40)

- a. Paul's second _____ journey begins in the end of Acts 15.
- b. While in Troas Paul had a _____ of a man in Macedonia asking Paul to come over and help them.
- c. As they were staying in Philippi, teaching the believers, and sharing the Gospel, a young _____ began to follow them.
- d. About midnight Paul and Silas were _____ and singing hymns of praise and the other prisoners were listening.
- e. The next morning the city authorities sent a _____ that these men were to be released.

II. ON TO THESSALONICA (Acts 17:1)

- a. In what must have been an excruciatingly painful _____, the two battered missionaries and their young companion made the one-hundred-mile trip to Thessalonica.
- b. I mentioned in my introduction that Thessalonica was a _____ city in the Roman Empire.
- c. This _____ structure in Thessalonica had a couple of different levels.

- d. These city authorities not only governed the city as political authorities, they also had another very important _____ in the city.
- e. Not only was Thessalonica a political and commercial hub, but also a _____ hub.
- f. The city authorities of Thessalonica wanted to protect the rule of _____.

III. THE GOSPEL COMES TO THESSALONICA (Acts 17:2-3)

- a. Paul and his companions arrived in Thessalonica and learned that there was a Jewish _____ in the city.
- b. This was Paul's custom, when given the opportunity to speak, he would remind his fellow Jews about the promises that God had given to their forefathers about the coming _____.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE GOSPEL IN THESSALONICA (Acts 17:4-10)

- a. After Paul reasoned with them, we read that some _____ were persuaded and joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy.
- b. There was a second result while Paul remained in Thessalonica, he boldly proclaimed the Gospel, and more numbers were _____ to the church.
- c. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was challenging the very _____ of that city, the worship of Caesar, its love of money, and its love of freedom.
- d. The city authorities could not ignore this, and they forced Jason and the others brought with him to post _____.
- e. Luke then tells us that the Christians in Thessalonica, this new _____, sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy away by night.
- f. This is the situation that Paul found himself in when he had to leave Thessalonica, and this prompted him to _____ 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

CONCLUSION:

This event in history tells us what Christians faced in Thessalonica, but this is also what followers of Christ face today. This battle has

not disappeared, and it will not go away. It is a constant battle that must be faced by all Christians.

This type of conflict has been with the church since the beginning. The claims of Jesus have withstood the power and threats of the Roman Empire, Muslim armies, the rise of Communism, and a number of other claims to power. In our time we have a slightly different challenge, a challenge called secularism. Many in North America, both citizens and politicians, believe that a Christian's faith should be kept out of the public square. Faith is considered a private matter, and it should not play a role in public interaction. This is as much a challenge to our faith as was the challenge in Thessalonica.

The truth is: if we are Christians, our faith cannot be private. We cannot just be a Christian on Sunday or in the privacy of our homes. We must follow Jesus publicly. Whether we are at church, at work, at home, or in any public place, we are ambassadors for King Jesus. This is the call Christ has placed on each and every one of us. We cannot think that as long as we are reading our Bibles and praying, and attending church, we are doing enough. We cannot give in to a secular mindset. Our faith must speak in the public square.

The message Paul brings to us through these books and this situation in Thessalonica is that we cannot live that way. We cannot accept it when others in our culture say they will tolerate the church as long as we keep everything private. To be the kind of Christians Christ has called us to be, we must be salt and light. If we live that way, Jesus gives us a promise: as we acknowledge Him before men, He will acknowledge us before His Heavenly Father (Matthew 10:32). Let us openly acknowledge our King!