

Title: WORD SPREADS, ACTS 17 – 18
(Chatham, NJ; 05/15/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: The word spreads during Paul's second missionary journey, and Timothy plays a major role in the work.

Purpose: To examine Timothy's role and to exhort us with some of the things taught by the many letters generated out of this particular journey.

Introduction:

1. This finishes Paul's second missionary journey.
2. Five of his thirteen or fourteen letters (depending on Hebrews) were written to churches established on this journey: Philippians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and 1 & 2 Corinthians.
3. *More than* one third of his letters were generated as a result of this mission trip.
4. This journey also had resulted in Timothy's recruitment, 16:1-5.
5. As we go through this narrative, we'll take a look at his role along with some of what Paul writes to these churches.

I. Thessalonica, 17:1-9

A. Characteristics of the church

1. Three Sabbath days of teaching resulted in a number of conversions, 2-4
2. The message: Jesus is the messiah, 3
3. Responding to the Gospel were: some Jews, many of the "devout Greeks," and "not a few of the leading women," 4
4. Yet the Jews "were jealous," 5
5. They hired "wicked men of the rabble," a.k.a. thugs, to do their dirty work
6. They accused Paul of sedition: true, Jesus is another king, but not in the way they expect the authorities to understand it – note the twist
7. Paul is sent away.

B. Letters sent to the Thessalonians

1. They were a church born and raised under the threat of persecution
2. They became an example of faithfulness to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, 1 Thess. 1:8
3. They held firm because they accepted the Gospel as the Word of God that it truly was and is, 1 Thessalonians 2:13

C. Timothy in Thessalonica

1. Sent back to them, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5, out of Paul's fear for their well-being
2. It could be that Timothy may have gone back with some fear of reprisal: the community was hostile to the Gospel
3. Yet when he returns to Paul and reports their well-being, Paul is comforted and filled with joy, 3:6

II. Berea, 17:10-15

A. Characteristics of the Church

1. More noble than those Jews in Thessalonica, 11: they examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying fit with the Prophecies
2. Not a criticism of the church in Thessalonica
3. As we have already seen, the Thessalonians had become models of faith
4. A criticism of the Jews in Thessalonica most of whom had proven themselves to be jealous, faithless troublemakers
5. They came to Berea and stirred up the crowds there, 13

B. Letter to the Bereans

1. Obviously we have no letter
2. Perhaps they didn't need much correcting of doctrine since they had proven themselves to be ardent students of the Word
3. In Acts 20:4 we read of "Sopater of Berea" who was among 7+ people who accompanied Paul at that time

C. Timothy in Berea

1. He and Silas stay behind, 13
2. It seems that Paul is the flashpoint for bad publicity
3. Timothy and Silas can perhaps quietly continue the work
4. They stay for a while with instructions to catch up to Paul later

III. Athens and Corinth: Confronting the Worldly Wise, Converting the Worldly

A. The Characteristics of Each

1. Athens results in scoffing from the Gentile elite, 17:32
2. Some joined Paul, 17:34
3. He moves on to Corinth, chapter 18
4. The Jews reviled him, so he went to the Gentiles, 18:6-8
5. He gets a vision from God and spends a year and a half there, 18:11
6. Corinth: not the wise, powerful, or noble, 1 Corinthians 1:26
7. Sinners who repented, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, much like the prostitutes and tax-collectors Jesus encountered

B. What Paul says to the Corinthians

1. God's wisdom is different from all others, Jews and Gentiles alike, 1:18-25
2. The Resurrection is real, chapter 15: contra the mockery of the Athenians
3. They need several letters of guidance and rebuke

C. Timothy's role

1. He and Silas catch up to Paul here, 18:6
2. He plays a supporting, but not less important, role
3. He is with Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:1

Conclusions:

1. During the time in Corinth, Jewish persecution takes an interesting turn.
2. In Acts 18:12-17 their concerted attack against Paul backfires.
3. Paul continues to minister to the churches.
4. Timothy continues to serve as well.
5. The continuity to another generation is important, 2 Timothy 2:2.
6. We should be making the same effort to train others for leadership.