FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

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Chapter 11: Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Part 2)

Ministry in Macedonia and Greece, extended ministry in Corinth, Paul's return to Syria via Ephesus

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 11 · UNIT 4 · DAY 4

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Part 2)

Ministry in Macedonia and Greece, extended ministry in Corinth, Paul's return to Syria via Ephesus

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Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 11)

Chapter purpose. This chapter covers the remainder of Paul's second missionary journey: his continuing missionary work in Macedonia, his missionary ministry in Greece, and his brief stop in Ephesus.

The last chapter discussed Paul's missionary ministry in Philippi, where the gospel first entered Europe. This chapter looks at the remainder of the same journey, in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus.

Bible reading: Acts 17:1-18:22

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 17:1-18:22. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage.

Learning Objectives

• Describe Paul and Silas' reception in Thessalonica and the kind of church that was planted there.

• Explain why Luke describes the Bereans as being of more noble character than the Thessalonians.

• Show how Paul's ministry in Athens is a good example of cross-cultural adaptation that never compromised the gospel message.

• Explain how Paul supported himself when he first arrived in Corinth and what changed when Silas and Timothy came.

• Describe how the Holy Spirit encouraged Paul in Corinth, and why Paul made only a brief stopover in Ephesus.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 17:1-18:22

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 17:1-9; read Acts 17:10-15; Acts 17:16-34; Acts 18:1-17; Acts 18:18-21.

The Big Idea

Paul resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified, and preached not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Introduction to the Rest of the Journey

• During Paul's second missionary journey, he and his missionary companions were led by the Spirit to preach the gospel in Europe.

• They began their European ministry in Macedonia on the northern shores of the Aegean Sea.

• This chapter covers his continuing missionary work in Macedonia, his missionary ministry in Greece, and his brief stop in Ephesus.

• As was his ministry in Philippi, Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus is filled with exciting stories of commitment and courage.

The Story: Thessalonica, Planting amid Persecution (Acts 17:1-9)

Leaving Luke at Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled westward to Thessalonica. For the next three Sabbaths Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with the local Jews and God-fearers. Using the Scriptures, he showed how Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He boldly declared, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

Many believed and joined the two missionaries, including some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks, and a few prominent women.

Some Jews became jealous, so they rounded up several troublemakers from the marketplace and incited a riot. They then led the mob to Jason's house, looking for the two missionaries. When they did not find them there, they accused Jason and dragged him and some other brothers before the council.

They shouted, "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here." They accused the missionaries of ignoring Caesar's decrees by claiming that Jesus was king. After hearing this, the council members were greatly troubled, so they made the missionaries post bond and released them.

Commentary on Acts 17:1-9

• Paul and Silas' reception in the city of Thessalonica was less than hospitable. Nevertheless, they were able to plant a strong Spirit-empowered missional church there.

• We discover this from reading Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. There he reminds the believers how he had preached the gospel to them "with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction", and how they had "welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit".

• As a result, the church in Thessalonica became "a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia", and from there "the Lord's message rang out... not only in Macedonia and Achaia", but their "faith in God [became] known everywhere" (1:5-8).

17:3 Explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead

• As he did in every place, in Thessalonica Paul faithfully proclaimed the message of Jesus' death and resurrection.

• The gospel alone contains the power to transform people's lives and bring them into a saving knowledge of Christ (compare Romans 1:16).

• Paul further informed the Jews in Thessalonica that "this Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ", their long-awaited Messiah.

17:7 Saying that there is another king, one called Jesus

• Jesus is, in truth, a king.

• He is the seed of David (Luke 1:32; Revelation 22:16), the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16).

The Story: Berea, The Message Is Received (Acts 17:10-15)

That night the brethren spirited Paul and Silas away to Berea. When they arrived in Berea, they went to the Jewish synagogue and began teaching and preaching about Christ.

Being of more noble character than the Thessalonians, the Bereans gladly received the word and eagerly examined the Scriptures to determine if Paul was teaching the truth. Many came to Christ, including some Jews, prominent women, and Greek men.

When certain Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they came there and poisoned the people against Paul. Paul was again whisked away by the brothers and taken down to the coast. From there he was escorted to Athens, about one hundred sixty kilometers south in Achaia.

Silas and Timothy, however, remained in Berea. When Paul arrived in Athens, he sent word for Silas and Timothy to join him there as soon as possible.

Commentary on Acts 17:10-15

• In Berea Paul and Silas found Jews of more noble character than those in Thessalonica. They were more open to the things of the Lord and eager to know the truth.

• Many received the message and came to Christ.

• However, because of the agitation of Jewish troublemakers from Thessalonica, Paul had to leave for Athens.

17:12 Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men

• The gospel is inclusive.

• Anyone can be saved and follow Christ, as is demonstrated by the response in Berea where Jews, Gentiles, men, and women believed and followed Christ.

17:13 Preaching the word of God

• Again, we see Paul and his colleagues remaining true to the mission of Christ: they preached the gospel.

• The phrase "word of God" is used eleven times in Acts (Acts 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14;

11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11), and it is often used synonymously with the gospel, for example in 11:1.

The Story: Athens, A Few Believe (Acts 17:16-34)

In Athens Paul was deeply troubled by the city's obvious idolatry. Day by day he taught in the synagogue and in the marketplace, teaching the people about the gospel and the resurrection of Jesus. One day he entered into a debate with some Greek philosophers. These philosophers were always wanting to hear about some new idea, so they took him to the Areopagus (Mars Hill) and asked him to explain his new teaching more fully.

Taking this opportunity, Paul stood and declared the gospel to them. He began by noting how religious the Athenians were and how he had seen their many objects of worship throughout the city. "I even found an altar with this inscription: 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD,'" he said. "I am going to tell you who this God is." He then launched into his message.

He told them that the one true God, who created everything in heaven and on earth, does not live in manmade temples. Neither does He need people to take care of Him, since He is the One who gives life and breath, and everything else, to all people. This God has created from one blood all nations of people, and He has determined their times and the places where they should live. He did this so that they could seek Him, and perhaps find Him, although He is not far from anyone, for, Paul explained, "In Him we live and move and have our being." It is as some of their own poets had stated, "We are God's offspring."

And if we are His offspring, then how could God be an image made of gold or silver or stone, no matter how beautiful it is? In times past, God overlooked such conduct, but no more. He now commands everyone everywhere to repent. Those who do not repent will one day be judged by the Man He has appointed, that is, Christ. This is the very Man He raised from the dead.

When the people heard Paul talk about the resurrection of the dead, they began to mock. Some, however, said, "We want to hear about this again." A few people believed Paul and became his followers, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris. A few others also believed and

followed Paul.

Commentary on Acts 17:16-34

• Paul's ministry in Athens has been cited as a good example of cross-cultural adaptation in preaching the gospel.

• In his message on Mars Hill, Paul called attention to the worship of the Athenians, noting that they were very religious people. He also referred to their monument to an unknown god and quoted their pagan poets.

• He did these things to identify more closely with the culture of Athens.

• At the same time, however, he remained true to his mission and never compromised the gospel message.

17:16 Athens

• Athens was the capital of Greece (Achaia) and the center of Greek culture, art, philosophy, and architecture.

• About 250 thousand people lived in Athens in the first century A.D.

17:16 He was greatly distressed

• Rather than being impressed by the Athenian architectural wonders and the city's classical works of art, Paul was distressed in his spirit, realizing that they were symbols of the people's idolatry and lostness (compare 1 Corinthians 10:18-21).

• While we rejoice in the cultural achievements of mankind, we are not blinded to man's desperate need of Christ.

17:17 He reasoned in the synagogue... as well as in the marketplace

• Paul did not limit his preaching and teaching to the church. He rather took the gospel into the marketplace where the lost people were.

• We should never limit our preaching to the church building; we must take the message of Christ to the streets.

• We must proclaim Christ both "publicly and from house to house" (20:20).

17:18 Preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection

• As always, Paul centers his preaching on the gospel of Christ, including His death and resurrection.

17:26 From one man he made every nation of men

• Although there are cultural differences between nations and peoples, there is only one race of people on the earth, the human race.

• All are descendents of Adam and Eve and are equally precious before God who created them.

• All fell through Adam's transgression, all were redeemed by Christ on the cross, and all must hear and believe the message of the gospel.

17:27 God did this so that men would... find him

• God has providentially placed all peoples, tribes, and nations in their appointed locations on earth. He has also determined the times of their visitation.

• He has done all of this so that they might seek and find Him.

• It is our responsibility to follow the leading of His Spirit and take the gospel to them wherever they may be.

17:30 Now he commands all people everywhere to repent

• To be saved, all people must turn to God, repent of their sins, and put their faith in Christ.

• There is no other means of salvation (compare 4:12).

The Story: Corinth, An Extended Stay (Acts 18:1-17)

Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth, where he met Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They had recently fled from Italy to Corinth because the emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Since they were tentmakers like Paul, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath, however, Paul went to the synagogue and tried to persuade the Jews and Greeks there to turn to Christ.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was able to devote himself exclusively to preaching the gospel. In time, however, when the Jews became hardened in their opposition against the gospel, Paul turned from them saying, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Paul then left the synagogue and began to teach in the house of Titius Justus, a

Jewish proselyte. Soon after that, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, turned to the Lord, along with his entire family. Hearing about this, many Corinthians believed the gospel and were baptized.

One night the Lord came to Paul in a vision and told him not to be afraid but to "keep on speaking, [to] not be silent." The Lord told Paul that He was with him, and no one would harm him. The Lord further assured him, "I have many people in this city." As a result, Paul was greatly encouraged and remained in Corinth for a year and a half teaching the word of God.

In time, when Gallio became the governor of Achaia, the Jews united against Paul and brought charges against him, accusing him of persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to Roman law. Gallio, however, dismissed their charges since he was not interested in matters of Jewish law and customs. In retaliation the mob seized Sosthenes, the new leader of the synagogue, and beat him outside the courtroom. Here, too, Gallio showed no interest in the matter.

Commentary on Acts 18:1-17

• When Paul arrived in Corinth, he came with a new plan. In Athens he had tried to convince the people to turn to Christ by using superior wisdom and philosophy, yet with few results.

• In Corinth, however, he had a new strategy. He resolved to know nothing while he was with them "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

• When Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church, he recounted his ministry among them: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (vv. 4-5).

18:1 Corinth

• Corinth was the capital and commercial center of Greece and the seat of the Roman proconsul (Acts 18:12).

• The city was notorious for its immorality.

• It had about half a million residents when Paul visited the city.

18:4 Trying to persuade Jews and Greeks

• When Paul preached, he did not simply tell the story of Jesus. He tried to persuade people to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. He called for a decisive response from his hearers.

• Our job is not simply to tell people about Jesus; we must seek to persuade them to turn to Him in faith and repentance.

• This can be done best by being full of the Spirit and by faithfully and clearly proclaiming the gospel.

18:5 Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching

• When Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth, Paul could quit his tent-making and devote himself entirely to preaching the gospel.

• As missionaries and pastors, it should always be our goal to devote ourselves exclusively to the proclamation and teaching of the gospel.

18:8 Many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized

• As a result of Paul's missionary work in Corinth, many came to know the Lord.

• A large Spirit-empowered church was founded.

18:9 The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision

• Paul is again guided by a vision. In the vision the Lord spoke to him telling him not to be afraid.

• The Spirit not only directs us in our work for God, He also comes to us to comfort and encourage us in our times of discouragement.

• On this occasion the Spirit gave Paul a vision of Christ. What an encouragement that must have been to the burdened apostle.

The Story: Ephesus, A Brief Stopover (Acts 18:18-21)

After remaining in Corinth for some time, Paul left with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for Syria. He had his hair cut off to fulfill a vow he had made.

On his journey to Antioch, he and his companions passed through Ephesus. While there, Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. They asked him to spend more time with them; however, he declined, promising to return to them

if God willed.

Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, he set sail to Caesarea, where he greeted the church. He then went northward to Antioch in Syria.

Commentary on Acts 18:18-21

• While in Corinth, Paul decided to return to Antioch, where he had begun his journey.

• On the way there he made a brief stopover in Ephesus, where he evidently planted a small body of believers.

• He left Priscilla and Aquila there to care for them, while he journeyed on to Antioch.

18:19 Went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews

• Some of these Jews evidently believed in Christ, since verse 27 speaks of "the brethren" in Ephesus who wrote to the disciples in Corinth concerning Apollos.

18:21 I will come back if it is God's will

• Paul intended to return to Ephesus and make it his base of missionary operation to reach all of Asia Minor.

• This he will do during his third missionary journey.

Conclusion

• Paul returned to his home base in Antioch, thus completing his second missionary journey.

• During this journey, he and Silas had planted churches in the European provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

• They had also begun a small work in Ephesus.

• In his third missionary journey Paul will return to Ephesus to conduct his most successful campaign of all, the Ephesian campaign.

Important Terms

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church filled with the Spirit whose witness

reaches out beyond itself into the region around it.

God-fearer. A Gentile who has accepted God and the teachings of Judaism but who has not been circumcised.

Cross-cultural adaptation. Adjusting the way you present the gospel so that it makes sense inside another people's culture, without changing the message.

Areopagus (Mars Hill). The place in Athens where the philosophers took Paul and asked him to explain his new teaching more fully.

Word of God. A phrase Luke often uses in Acts to mean the gospel itself.

Proselyte. A Gentile convert who had committed himself to the teachings of the Jewish faith, underwent circumcision, and worshiped in the Jewish temple or synagogue.

Tentmaker. Paul's trade, which he worked at with Aquila and Priscilla to support himself in Corinth.

Key People

• Paul: Preaches Christ in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, then returns to Antioch.

• Silas and Timothy: Traveled with Paul from Philippi, remained in Berea, and later joined him in Corinth from Macedonia.

• Jason: The Thessalonian whose house the mob attacked. He and some other brothers were dragged before the council.

• Dionysius: A member of the Areopagus who believed Paul and became his follower.

• Damaris: A woman in Athens who believed Paul and became his follower.

• Aquila and Priscilla: Tentmakers who had recently fled from Italy because Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Paul stayed and worked with them, and later left them in Ephesus.

• Titius Justus: A Jewish proselyte in whose house Paul taught after leaving the Corinthian synagogue.

• Crispus: The ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, who turned to the Lord along

with his entire family.

• Gallio: The governor of Achaia, who dismissed the charges the Jews brought against Paul.

• Sosthenes: The new leader of the synagogue, seized and beaten by the mob outside the courtroom.

Key Places

• Thessalonica: Where Paul reasoned in the synagogue for three Sabbaths and planted a strong Spirit-empowered missional church amid persecution.

• Berea: Where the people were of more noble character and eagerly examined the Scriptures.

• Athens: The capital of Greece (Achaia) and the center of Greek culture, art, philosophy, and architecture, with about 250 thousand people in the first century A.D.

• Corinth: The capital and commercial center of Greece and the seat of the Roman proconsul, notorious for its immorality, with about half a million residents.

• Ephesus: A brief stopover on the way home, where Paul evidently planted a small body of believers and left Priscilla and Aquila.

• Caesarea and Antioch in Syria: Paul sailed to Caesarea, greeted the church, then went northward to Antioch, completing the journey.

Key Event

One night the Lord comes to Paul in a vision at Corinth, tells him not to be afraid but to keep on speaking, and assures him, "I have many people in this city."

Paul is again guided by a vision. The Spirit not only directs us in our work for God, He also comes to us to comfort and encourage us in our times of discouragement. Paul was greatly encouraged and remained in Corinth for a year and a half teaching the word of God.

Key Verse

"This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

Acts 17:3

Remember This

• Sometimes we are called upon to witness for Christ in the midst of opposition, and even hostility.

• Paul did not limit his preaching and teaching to the church. He took the gospel into the marketplace.

• Our job is not simply to tell people about Jesus; we must seek to persuade them to turn to Him.

• We must "make the most of every opportunity" to preach Christ.

Life Application: Witnessing Amid Opposition

• Sometimes we are called upon to witness for Christ in the midst of opposition, and even hostility.

• In such cases we should ensure that we remain full of the Spirit and faithful in proclaiming the message of the gospel. We can do this by staying in close communion with Christ through prayer.

• If we will remain faithful to God's mission, He will use us to advance His kingdom and establish a strong work for Him.

• We should strive to plant churches like the one Paul planted in Thessalonica, churches full of joy and the Holy Spirit. These churches can become models for other churches in the area, and from them the message of Christ can ring out to other places.

• Such churches can only come into being if the missionaries and church planters take intentional steps to ensure that they do. These steps include the establishing of clear goals and focused teaching on the mission of the church.

• The new disciples in these churches must be instructed about how they too can be filled with the Spirit and become active participants in Christ's mission.

Life Application: Preach to All Classes of People

• We should be faithful to preach the message of Christ wherever we go.

• And we should preach it to all classes of people, expecting a harvest of souls.

• Some will oppose the gospel; however, we must not be discouraged, for some will be "more noble" and will gladly accept Christ as Savior.

Life Application: Know Your Message, Know Their Culture

• We must know our message. It is the message of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). The center of this message is His death, burial, and resurrection (15:1-6).

• We must consistently call men to faith in Him. They must repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and follow Him.

• While doing this, we must be sensitive to the people's customs and culture, and, when possible, use our knowledge of their culture to more effectively present the gospel to them.

• All along, we must understand that God is at work through His providence and His Spirit to prepare people to receive Christ. He empowers His church to proclaim the message of Christ to them.

• We must, therefore, be faithful to take the message to all peoples, whether in the next village or in distant lands.

Life Application: Comfort and Encouragement in Hard Times

• When we go out to preach the gospel, we should go in the power of the Spirit, and we should focus our preaching and teaching on "Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

• When difficult times come, if we will follow the Spirit's leading, we can expect the Lord to come to us with words of comfort and encouragement.

• Sometimes He may appear in a vision. Most of the time, however, He will speak to us directly by His Spirit to our spirits.

• Such times of encouragement most often come when we are seeking the Lord's face in prayer.

Life Application: Use Every Opportunity

• We should use every opportunity to preach Christ, even when we are en route from one place of ministry to another.

• If we will remain focused on the mission of God and sensitive to the voice of the

Spirit, He will direct us as to what we must do.

• As Paul wrote, we must "make the most of every opportunity" to preach Christ (Ephesians 5:16).

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Describe Paul and Silas' reception in the city of Thessalonica. What was the result of their work there?

• 2. How did Paul support himself when he first arrived in Corinth? With whom did he work? What changed when Silas and Timothy arrived?

• 3. How did the Holy Spirit encourage Paul in Corinth (18:9-10)?

• 4. Was Paul's goal of giving full time in ministry realistic in his pioneering efforts? Are gospel ministers ever justified in working full time while they pastor a church? Justify your answer.

Quick Review

1. How many Sabbaths did Paul reason in the synagogue at Thessalonica?

Answer: Three.

2. Why does Luke say the Bereans were of more noble character?

Answer: They gladly received the word and eagerly examined the Scriptures to determine if Paul was teaching the truth.

3. Who believed in Athens?

Answer: A few people, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris.

4. How long did Paul remain in Corinth after the Lord appeared to him in a vision?

Answer: A year and a half, teaching the word of God.

5. Whom did Paul leave behind in Ephesus?

Answer: Priscilla and Aquila.

Chapter Summary

Paul planted Spirit-empowered missional churches in Macedonia and Achaia by

preaching Christ crucified and risen with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

• In Thessalonica Paul met opposition but planted a church that became "a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia".

• In Athens Paul adapted to the culture on Mars Hill, quoting their poets, yet never compromised the gospel message.

• In Corinth Paul worked as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla, then preached full time, and after the Lord's vision stayed a year and a half.

Preach Christ and him crucified in the power of the Spirit, persuade people to turn to Him, and make the most of every opportunity, even while passing through.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

From Thessalonica to Ephesus, Paul kept preaching Christ and him crucified, adapting to each culture without compromising the gospel, and the Lord encouraged him with a vision when the work was hard.