

THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S NT SURVEY
Thessalonica and Philippi

A. Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey

1. Turn to Acts 16. After the Jerusalem Council, Paul wants to revisit the churches planted on the 1st missionary journey. He and Barnabas part ways, Barnabas and Mark go back to Cyprus and Paul picks Silas and heads back North and West. He revisits all the towns delivering the decision reached by the counsel. Adds Timothy to his party. Let's pick up the story in v.6-10. What is different about v.10? Luke joins the party. The next part of Acts is written in the first person. Look at the map of Paul's missionary journeys in the back of your Bibles. God is drawing Paul westward. He knows where He wants the gospel preached next.
2. Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke cross the Aegean to Philippi and preach there "for many days" (v. 18). Most of us know the story, Lydia is converted; a demon possessed slave girl is healed; a mob forms and Paul and Silas are jailed; but then convert the jailer and his household. After apologizing, the city officials ask them to leave town. Luke stays behind; perhaps as the evangelist for the new church. The letter to the Philippian church was not written until many years later. We will skip over that for now and come back to it.
3. Paul and Silas head to Thessalonica where Paul again preaches and converts people. However, another mob is stirred up and Paul and Silas leave town under cover of darkness. In Berea, another familiar passage, they meet a better reception, but their opponents from Thessalonica follow them and stir up the crowds again. Paul leaves for Athens, but Silas and Timothy stay behind. In I Thessalonians 3:1-2, we learn Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica to check on the church there.
4. Preaching in Athens produces a more limited response, so Paul moves on to Corinth in Chapter 18 and joins up with Aquila and Priscilla. [Claudius decree is also mentioned by the Roman historian Suetonius – who says the reason for the degree is because of "continuous disturbances among the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus" – apparently preaching about Christ is also causing riots among the Jews in Rome.] Let's read v. 5. At this point, hearing news about Thessalonica from Timothy, Paul writes the letter the church a letter: 1 Thessalonians. Much of what we just covered in Acts is mentioned in the letter. 1:1 the letter is from Paul, Silas and Timothy; 2:1-2 Paul refers to his poor treatment in Philippi and his visit to Thessalonica; 3:1 refers to being alone in Athens; 3:6 Timothy rejoins him – which we know from Acts was when Paul was in Corinth. So often we read the Bible out of context, but I think you can get more out of it if you see how it fits together and understand what was happening when the letter was written. That's what we are going to do. Read the account of the founding of the Thessalonian church and then look at what Paul wrote

to them only a few months later. My hope is this will make the words come alive more.

B. I & II Thessalonians

1. Back up to 17:1-1-4. [read] The following verses tell of the riot that caused Paul to leave town. So how long was Paul in Thessalonica? 3 weeks. How much can you accomplish in 3 weeks? His preaching converted some of the Jews and a “large number” of God-fearing Greeks. The gospel had great impact even in a short time. Especially upon the Gentiles who were already attracted to Judaism, the only religion of the day offering a morally uplifting message. We learn more about the impact the gospel had by reading I Thess. Let’s turn there.
2. As I mentioned, based on what Acts tells us, the letter must have been written only a few months after Paul left Thessalonica. II Thess was probably written not long after. These words were written while the events were still fresh in Paul’s mind. [Pick people to read] I Thess 1:5-10; 2:13-14. The gospel had great impact in a short period of time. Do we still believe the gospel can have this kind of impact on people? Harold made the point a few weeks ago that perhaps it is harder to convert people today than in the 1st Century because they have to unlearn so much false doctrine. Even so, the gospel can have great impact on people. People still need the good news and will respond to it. We need to believe this again and become active again in sharing our faith with people. The Holy Spirit will move with power as we speak with great conviction. People will welcome the message even in the face of opposition. People will turn from false or shallow religion, or other gods in their lives, to serve the living and true God. We can reach great numbers of people. Even religious god-fearing people like the ones Paul reached here in Thessalonica. The gospel can have great impact.
3. What did Paul teach them in 3 weeks? [ask for volunteers to read] 2:1-2. The gospel. The good news about Jesus. Back in Acts 17 it says he preached that Jesus was the Christ, his death and resurrection. Grace, repentance and baptism just like Peter in Acts 2 and probably “many other words” like Harold talked about a few weeks ago. Paul tells us some of these many words. What did he teach them? 1 Thess 4:1-2. How to live in order to please God. II Thess 3:10 He taught them about responsibility and diligence; not being idle. What else? I Thess 5:1-2 the Day of the Lord - the end of time – the Last Judgment. These are not advanced topics; this is what Paul taught people still wet from their baptism. Look back at 4:13 - more on the same topic – pretty deep stuff about the 2nd Coming of Jesus – Paul is teaching it to folks who have been disciples only a few months. :18 this is not just intellectual stuff – we should use this to encourage each other – Jesus is coming back; our discipleship matters! Now Paul will really blow our minds. II Thess 2:1-4 – what is

Paul talking about? The man of lawlessness – the Antichrist – have we ever taught this to people we are studying with or newly baptized disciples – how many of us in the room have ever studied this out ourselves? Now here's the amazing part :5-6. He already taught them this! He is just reminding them! Paul taught them a whole bunch of stuff. He sums it all up in II Thess 2:15. Remember, he taught them all of this in only 3 weeks and then supplemented his teaching with his two letters. Alan challenged the men Thursday before last to dig deep into the Bible. We don't have to be as smart as Douglas Jacoby to do this. Paul taught this stuff to the whole church. We need to raise our expectations. Both about what we learn, but also what we teach. Don't be afraid to go deeper in the Scriptures with each other. If ordinary folks in Thessalonica can do it in the first few months of their Christian life, so can we!

4. What kind of relationship did Paul form with these folks in 3 weeks? [Pick people to read] 1:2-3; 2:6b-9; 2:17-20; 3:6-10. Aren't these verses amazing? Paul formed strong and deep spiritual relationships in a very short time. We need relationships like this! We need high expectations for how quickly and deeply we can form relationships with each other. How has Harold's 30 day challenge been going? Have you been calling? Did you start and then tail off? Have you been getting deep into each other's lives? Talking about spiritual things; teaching each other from the Bible. It doesn't take long for relationships to get deep and strong. We can build great bonds with each other and it doesn't take years. Let's raise our standards for the kind of relationships we can build with each other and with the lost. It's amazing what God accomplished through Paul in just 3 weeks. We serve the same God today!

C. Philippians

1. Now let's look at back at the first church Paul planted on his 2nd Missionary Journey, the church in Philippi. Turn to Phil 4. This letter was not written a few months later like Thessalonians; instead Philippians was written approximately 10 years later when Paul was in prison in Rome. (In 1:12-13, he mentions being in chains and the Praetorian guard and in 4:22 Caesar's household.) From the letters I&II Thess we see what the kind of relationship Paul had at the beginning with people he preached the gospel to. From Philippians, we can see what this relationship looked like years later.
2. Paul had a strong relationship with the Philippians from the beginning. 4:15-16. Back to the early days when he first preached to them – he is referring to the events we covered in Acts; they sent him support again and again when he was in Thessalonica and even beyond when he left Macedonia (and went to Athens & Corinth). The only church to do so. The relationship started off as a very special one; perhaps even closer than Paul's relationship with Thessalonica. Is this just a fond memory or do they still feel that way? :18 They sent Paul gifts again recently through

Epaphroditus to Paul in prison in Rome. :10 they renewed their concern when they had the opportunity. They had the same concern for Paul's welfare in 60 AD that they had years before in 50 AD. How does Paul feel about them?

3. 1:3-8 Even after years, the bond between Paul and the Philippians remains strong. He gives thanks for them, prays for them, holds them in his heart and longs for them with affection. He writes things very similar to what he wrote the Thessalonians years before. 1:26 & 2:24 wants to see them again. 2:19 plans to send Timothy to hear more news. 4:1-3 they were his joy and crown just like he told the Thessalonians. Paul is still in touch with what is going on between people in the church. Paul's relationship with the Philippians is very similar to the one described in Thessalonians. Basically as strong 10 years later as it was at the beginning. It hasn't faded. They haven't "grown apart" as people sometimes say [one sister told my wife once]. How are our long term relationships in Christ going? Have we let them fade or become stale? Or are they still full of affection and service to each other? Let's renew our relationships; bring them back to life!

D. Conclusion

1. Your homework is to continue building those 30 day buddy relationships. Make sure they are spiritual and encouraging; teach each other things from the Bible. Also pick an old relationship to renew; perhaps one you have neglected. Rekindle something you had before. We need relationships like Paul had with the churches of Thessalonica and Philippi.
2. Next week Harold will talk about the founding of the church at Corinth and the 3 letters Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. The following week we will be in Athens and then in family groups the Sunday after Thanksgiving. On Dec 3 I will be back to talk about the founding of the church at Ephesus and the 3 letters written to the Ephesian church or its evangelist; all of which are in the Bible (Eph, I Tim and Rev 2). Because of week we had with North River and the week we will have with Athens, we are extending the class into January for two additional weeks.
3. Let's close with a prayer.