



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N2 January 8, 2023

NOT HOME YET "Meet The Thessalonians" 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Acts 17:1-9

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

Hebrews 1:1-4



How Are cities an important target for Gospel ministry?

We believe that Jesus Christ "died for sinners." We believe that all people are sinners, regardless of where they live. But where do most people live today? In cities. Aaron Renn writes "As recently as 1910, only 10 percent of the world's population lived in cities. Today it's over 50 percent urban, and that number may rise to 75 percent by midcentury. Paul Romer describes this radical change as human beings going from living in packs like wolves to living more like ants or termites. The shift is primarily happening in the developing world. Africa is now urbanizing faster than any other continent. According to the UN, half of global population growth by 2050, about 1.2 billion people, will be in Africa. By 2050, 21 percent of the world's population will live in African cities. China and India have also been urbanizing. Over 1 billion people around the world now live in urban slums, more than the combined population of the United States and Europe.

(thegospelcoalition.org/article/cities-mission/).

The Apostle Paul made ministry in cities a focus of his mission. As Paul made his way through the Mediterranean he primarily visited sizable cities. He started in Antioch. He visited Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome. After hearing his call (Acts 16:9), Paul ventured into the cities of Macedonia. His first stop was Philippi, a city of approximately 10,000. Philippi was considered a Roman colony and had many retired Roman veterans who made this their home. His next stop was Thessalonica, a city of an estimated 200,000 people, the largest city in Macedonia. These two cities would host churches that became examples for the rest of the empire. Paul chose to do ministry in these two cities, while not spending much time in others (Acts 17:1). Paul may have passed through cities like Amphipolis and Apollonia without much fanfare to get to other cities where he saw more opportunity. God may have had places he wanted Paul to reach and places he wanted other people to reach (Acts 16:6-7). God does not call everyone to everywhere. With limited time and resources, Paul may have fo-

cused on high density areas for maximum exposure of the Gospel to as many people as possible.

While population may have been a priority for Paul, he was not focused only on numbers for ministry. After Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea (Acts 17:10). The Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero referred to Berea as a town "off the beaten path" and suggested it was a smaller haven for those who could not stand the heat of Thessalonian criticism. The believers may have sent Paul to a smaller town like Berea to protect him from persecution. Paul ministered in the small town (Berea) as well as the big town (Thessalonica). In some large cities Paul did not have much success. Athens was large, but only a few were listed as trusting Christ (Acts 17:34).

Cities present challenges for Gospel ministry. Large crowds may yield much fruit, but may also supply much opposition. Ephesus saw many trust in Christ, but also had many Diana devotees who fought against Christianity. Corinth was populous and the church was large there. Yet there were many challenges in that church. The book of Romans lists a large number of believers who worked alongside Paul and yet the Roman emperors were often exterminating Christians there. Ministry in large cities is not a guaranteed success. But challenges to the Gospel should not signal Gospel surrender.

To reach the world, we must plan to reach cities. Cities provide much opportunity for Gospel ministry. But we must also prepare for the extra challenges that metropolitan ministry presents. Cities present challenges of sprawl, zoning restrictions, cultural barriers, poverty, crime, homelessness and many other problems. While presenting the Gospel might not save a city from ruin, a Gospel ministry in a city can reach and rescue many who might have little or no hope.

How can the Gospel make an impact in your city? If you were a like Paul and Silas, how would you plan to reach your city for Christ? What is your obligation to the next city down the highway? What concern does Jesus have for the city you have written off? To which city is God sending you?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

Read Acts 17:1-9

1 When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

5 But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, 7 and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." 8 When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. 9 Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle the city of consequence in Acts 17:1.
- Underline the phrase that shows the distinction of the third city in Acts 17:1.
- Place a box around the word that describes Paul's activity in Acts 17:2.
- Draw an arrow to the source of Paul's reasoning in Acts 17:2.
- Double underline the key words repeated in Acts 17:3.
- Place brackets around each people group that joined Paul in Acts 17:4.
- Place a number above each action that resulted from jealousy in Acts 17:5.
- Circle the words "city officials" in Acts 17:6-8.
- Number each accusation in Acts 17:6-7.
- Underline the words "post bond" in Acts 17:9.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Why do you think Paul spent extended time in ministry in Thessalonica and not in the other cities mentioned in Acts 17:1?
2. Describe the method of Paul's ministry as described in Acts 17:2-3.
3. What were the positive results of Paul's efforts in Thessalonica according to Acts 17:4?
4. Considering 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, what kind of people "joined" Paul in response to the Gospel?
5. What were the negative results of Paul's efforts in Thessalonica according to Acts 17:5?
6. Who were dragged before the "city officials" and why were they implicated in the riot (Acts 17:6)?
7. What were the accusations made against Paul and his supporters in Acts 17:6-7?
8. What was the result of the city officials' demands (see Acts 17:9-10)?
9. What did some Thessalonians do while Paul was in Berea (see Acts 17:13)?
10. What impact did a short-term mission trip to Thessalonica produce? How does this story impact your own considerations of missions and short-term mission trips?

Commentary On The Text

The Book of 1 Thessalonians is one of the earliest books written in the New Testament. After leaving Macedonia and Athens, Paul made his way to Corinth, and stayed there for a year and a half. “While we know that Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11), we do not know at what point in the eighteen months he appeared before the proconsul, nor at what stage of Gallio’s proconsulship this took place, nor whether Gallio may, exceptionally, have had a second year in office. The impression left from Acts 18:12–18 is that it was early in Gallio’s term of office, and towards the end (though not right at the end) of Paul’s eighteen months. If this is so, then Paul arrived in Corinth in the early part of 50, and 1 Thessalonians would have been written soon after, though in view of the uncertainties attaching to the question we can regard this date as approximate only. But it is clear that the letters to the Thessalonians are among the earliest of our New Testament documents. Galatians may have been written earlier, but no other of Paul’s letters. The Thessalonian letters must have been written within about twenty years of Jesus’ death” (Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 13. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 21).

Much of what is found in 1 Thessalonians relates to the people who trusted Christ under Paul’s brief ministry there. We first learn of this city and its new believers in Acts 17. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, after a tumultuous time in their first Macedonian city, Philippi, made their way west on the Egnatian Way to the capital of Macedonia and its largest city, Thessalonica. Paul, “as was his custom” (Acts 17:2), entered the synagogue there and began presenting the good news of Jesus. He spent three Sabbaths presenting the Gospel to the people of the Thessalonian synagogue. These were not necessarily successive Sabbaths. From 1 Thessalonians we learn that Paul was in the city long enough to support himself with some personal labor (1 Thes. 2:9). Whatever the length of his stay, his time in Thessalonica ended abruptly with civil turmoil.

Before his hasty departure, Paul did have success with many people “joining him” by believing in his message. Some Jewish people believed and even more Gentiles believed (“God-fearing Greeks”), a large number of whom were “prominent women” (Acts 17:4). We are supplied with an example of such a “prominent woman” from Philippi. Lydia (Acts 16:14–5,40) is described as a woman of industry who was successful enough to have a house large enough to host many guests, perhaps even the first church gatherings in Philippi. It is likely that women of similar standing believed in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4) and in Berea (Acts 17:12).

While the positive response to Paul’s proclamation was impressive, the negative response was overtly severe. A number of the synagogue became jealous of Paul’s success and incited a riot in the city inviting characters unlikely to attend the synagogue to stir up a loud

commotion (Acts 17:5). This disturbance caught the attention of the “city officials” called “*Politarchs*.”

“Archaeology has touched Thessalonica and the book of Acts in a significant way with the discovery of a number of inscriptions in Macedonia. A portion of a first-century arch was discovered at the west end of the *Odos Egnatia* (Egnatia Street); its inscription begins with the phrase ‘in the time of the *Politarchs*.’ The inscription, which is now in the British Museum, confirms not only the existence of the term *Politarch* in Macedonia in the first century but also its use for city officials. This silences critics who claimed that Acts 17:6 was mistaken in its use of this term to designate the city officials before whom Paul’s followers appeared in Thessalonica” (John R. McRay, “Thessalonica” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 1233).

As was the case in Philippi, Paul and this team found hospitality in the home of believers in Thessalonica. Jason (Acts 17:7) offered refuge to Paul and his hospitality was public enough to get Jason himself in trouble with the city officials. Jason’s house was forcibly searched but Paul was not found. Jason was charged a “bond,” mostly likely promising peace in the city with Paul’s departure. If Paul were to return, Jason most likely would lose this bond and face further charges. Paul left the city in the dark of night (Acts 17:10), retreating to the smaller city of Berea forty miles west and south of Thessalonica. Even there, Paul could not escape the anger of the Thessalonian synagogue as they sent representatives to harass Paul causing him to leave there as well. (Acts 17:13–14).

Even though Paul’s initial time in Thessalonica was short and his experience was life-threatening, his love for the believers of Thessalonica was deep and profound. Paul spoke highly of the Thessalonians’ faith (1 Thes. 1:6–10). He also expressed his intense longing to see these believers again (1 Thes. 2:17–20). So great was the urgency of Paul’s concern that he sent Timothy back to the newly founded congregation to make sure they were safe and flourishing (1 Thes. 3:1–5). It is likely that both 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written by Paul while on his first stay in Corinth. Paul would later boast of the faith of the Thessalonians to other churches (2 Thes. 1:4), and it is possible that he had the Thessalonians as well as the Philippians and Bereans in mind as he relied upon and commended the generosity of “Macedonian” believers. These were believers who gave out of their poverty (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:1–5; 11:9) and served as examples of generosity for all the other churches Paul founded. Though Paul experienced great difficulty in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5), he did reconnect with believers in this region before his return to Jerusalem on his third missionary journey (1 Cor. 16:5; 2 Cor. 1:16; 2:13). Paul’s ministry was impactful in Macedonia and rewarding in Thessalonica specifically. The books of First and Second Thessalonians reveal to us the heart of an apostle and the faith of believers who thrived in adversity.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Thessalonica* “The city in Greece, now called Thessaloniki, but long known as Salonica, was founded c. 315 BC by Cassander, perhaps on the site of the ancient Thermae, and called after his wife, Thessalonica (step-sister of Alexander the Great). Under the Romans it became the virtual capital of the province of Macedonia and an important centre of trade. In the first Civil War it was the headquarters of Pompey and the Senate. Its rulers were known as ‘politarchs’ (cf. Acts 17:6). In AD 50 or 51 St Paul visited the city, preached on three ‘Sabbaths’ in the synagogue, and founded the second Christian community in Europe, chiefly from the Greeks and proselytes (Acts 17), which was renowned for its orthodoxy and steadfastness in the succeeding period. Their early martyrs included St Agape, with her sisters Chionia and Irene, St Agathopus, and St Demetrius” (F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1620).

v. 1 *synagogue* “By following the Egnatian Way to the west and the south, they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, apparently without making a long stay in either. The comment that in Thessalonica there was a synagogue implies that there was none in these towns (no evidence of any has ever been found). The two towns may only be mentioned, therefore, as their overnight stopping places, and if we make the further assumption that each of these stages of about thirty miles was completed in one day, then we must conclude that they made the journey on horseback” (David J. Williams, *Acts, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series*, 293).

v. 2 *three Sabbaths* “Luke gives the impression that the missionaries were only in Thessalonica for three Sabbaths, but it is clear from Paul’s letters that they were there for much longer – long enough for a church to be established with its own leaders (1 Thess. 5:12) and for outlying areas to be reached with the gospel (1 Thess. 1:7); long enough to warrant Paul’s working “day and night” so as not to be a burden on the church (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8)” (Williams, 293).

v. 3 *explaining* “Luke employs formal rhetorical language to describe Paul’s preaching. For example, the word *dielexato*, translated in the NRSV as ‘argued’ (v. 2), does not mean preach but refers rather to the presenting of arguments using Scripture as a basis or the engaging in dialogue and debate over the meaning of scriptural texts. Further, the participles *dianoigōn* and *paratithemenos*, translated by the NRSV, respectively, as ‘explaining’ and ‘proving’ (v. 3), indicate the process of opening the mind and understanding of the hearers followed by the putting forward of proper proofs in good rhetorical form” (J. Bradley Chance, *Acts, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*, 300).

v. 3 *Messiah* “Paul discusses three facts: the Christ had to suffer, he had to rise from the dead, and he is Jesus proclaimed by Paul. The Jews objected to the teaching that Christ died on a cross, because to them a criminal hanging on a tree (cross) was under God’s curse (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). The doctrine of the resurrection is the recurring theme the apostles proclaim wherever they speak (see 2:24, 32; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31). And identifying Jesus with the Messiah is Paul’s personal objective ever since his conversion on the Damascus road. For that reason, Paul uses the personal pronoun I, ‘whom I am proclaiming to you’” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*. Vol. 17. *New Testament Commentary*, 614).

v. 4 *women* “His converts included some of the Jews together with a considerable number of the Gentile adherents of the synagogue, and women. The latter are described as leading women, which may mean that they belonged to the upper class in the town; alternatively the phrase can mean ‘wives of the leading men’, a sense made explicit in some early textual witnesses. Either way, this would not be surprising, since we know that Jewish women were to be found in upper-class society, and even Nero’s mistress and wife, Poppaea, was reputed to have Jewish sympathies (Jos., Ant. 20:195)” (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 5. *Tyndale NT Commentaries*, 294).

v. 5 *bad characters* “‘ruffians’ (*agoraiōn*) is a cognate of the word for ‘market place.’ Loafers and malcontents who had nothing better to do than hang about the city market came to be called ‘market people.’ The term was pejorative and not merely descriptive in Luke’s world. Jealous Jews and urban hoods join together to ‘create a crowd’ (*ochlopoiēsantes*) and incite a riot” (Chance, 301).

v. 5 *Jason* “It is not said whether he was Jew or Gentile (the Greek name in itself is not decisive on the point), but he was evidently a man of some substance, with a house large enough to provide such hospitality and where the brothers could meet. The implication is that those who had been persuaded and joined the missionaries had been baptized forthwith and formed one or more house churches” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 228).

v. 7 *Caesar’s decrees* “The opponents hurl political charges again (see 16:21), claiming that the Christians ‘have caused trouble throughout the world’ and that all of them are violating the decrees of Caesar by saying there is another king, (called) Jesus (17:7). ... That the Thessalonian officials would have been particularly sensitive to disruptive political dissent seems clear not only from the recently issued expulsion of Jews from Rome ‘because of a certain Chrestus [Christus?]’ in AD 48/49, but also from what the authorial audience may have known of the imperial cult in Thessalonica” (Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts, Paideia Commentaries on The New Testament*, 237).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.
Be ready for the positive and negative results of such proclamation.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Happy New Year! The first week of 2023 is in full swing and it seems there's a ridiculous amount of possibility ahead. We've turned the page in the calendar and resolved to eat better, work out more, spend less, not yell at our kids and practice joy. These are all fabulous personal goals, but what are you doing to grow spiritually this year? In 2022, the Children's Ministry team committed to read the Bible in a year. What a journey! Toward the end, I found myself getting excited, not because we were going to be finished, but because I couldn't wait to start again. We found that as we read the Bible chronologically, pieces of God's puzzle began to fall into place. We were amazed at God's sovereignty and in awe of His magnificence! (I'd love for you to join me in reading the Bible chronologically in 2023. Email stephanie@wearecentral.org for a link.) Maybe this is the year you've made a commitment to go on a mission trip. Perhaps God is asking you to give more sacrificially in 2023. Are you serving? Central Bible Church always has needs for volunteers from baby rockers to security detail. This could be the year to commit to regular church attendance or weekly discipling your kids with The Scrolls. I'm not sure what God has in store for you in 2023, but whatever it is, we're here to walk alongside your family as you grow spiritually. We are praying your desire for the Lord will increase as you grow in His Word. We're praying blessing upon blessing as you discover Jesus in a whole new way.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 17:1-9 & 1 Thes. 1:1

1. What did Paul do when he arrived in Thessalonica?
2. What did Paul use to reason with the people?
3. How did the two different groups of people respond to Paul's message?

What Do You Think?

What is the difference between grace and peace?

What Do You Do?

Paul offers grace and peace to the readers of his letter. This week, instead of saying, "hello," greet people by saying, "Grace and peace!" How do people respond to this greeting?

CORE COMPETENCY: Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is fully God/perfectly man and died for my sins.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
 _____ I memorized this week's verse
 _____ I brought my Bible to church
 _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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