

Embracing a Reasonable Faith

1. The journey:

- a. Why did Paul and Silas pass quickly through Amphipolis and Apollonia? v. 1
- b. What did they do soon after their arrival in Thessalonica? v. 2

2. “Reasoning”:

- a. Explain the basic gospel on the sheet handed you. This should include three or four main points, with optional Scriptural references.
- b. Demonstrate through fulfilled prophecy that Jesus is the Christ. Use Old Testament references, if known, or just the prophecy.
- c. Demonstrate through archaeological finds that the Scriptures are reliable.
- d. Demonstrate through the human condition that the Scriptures are believable.
- e. Name some studied and reputable authors who you would recommend for those seeking answers to the above questions.

3. Results:

- a. Read verse 4. What was a result of Paul’s studied reasoning? What people groups were converted?
- b. Read verse 12. What was another result? Who?

4. Are you noble and fair-minded?

- a. What is the first characteristic of a noble person? Explain what this might mean. v. 11
- b. What is the next? Give an example of what this means. Honestly assess your current habit of doing or neglecting this.

5. In verses 5-7 and 13, what resistance did Paul and Silas encounter when sharing the gospel? Can we expect similar?

6. What are some practical and positive things we can do to “turn the world upside down” in the name of Christ?

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” ⁴And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

⁵But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. ⁶But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. ⁷Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.” ⁸And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. ⁹So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

¹⁰Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. ¹²Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. ¹⁴Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Read: Acts 17:13-34

Monday

v. 13-16 — At this point in the narrative we find Paul, having escaped from the crowds at Berea, taken by sea to Athens. Athens was a city with a thousand years of history and even though the glory of ancient Greece had reached its zenith in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, Athens was still a vital cultural center. Athens held the greatest university in the world. Democracy was founded at Athens. Athens was home to the great philosophers Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides, Plato and Socrates, and it was considered the center of philosophy, literature, science and art. Paul, having been educated in the prestigious university center of Tarsus, must have been excited about this opportunity to visit Athens. In verse 16, how did Paul see Athens? Was he awed by the culture? Did he allow that culture to change his views? What did Paul know about idolatry (I Corinthians 10:19,20[1])? Note: It was said that there were so many idols in ancient Athens that it was easier to find a man than a certain idol in the city.

Tuesday

v. 16,17 — In verse 16, we find Paul waiting for his companions in Athens. He had some time to "look over" the city. The late Noel O. Lyons of the Greater Europe Mission said, "Europe is looked over by millions of visitors and is overlooked by millions of Christians." Was Paul's time alone a European vacation? What did he do (v.17)? Have you ever been spiritually "provoked within" by the idolatry of our culture? If not, why not? If so, what have you done about it?

Wednesday

v. 18-21 — The Epicureans were materialists (denied the existence or importance of anything spiritual or even moral) whose philosophy revolved around self and the pursuit of pleasure, also known as Hedonism (I Corinthians 15:32[1]). The Stoics were rationalists (reason is the highest authority, denying anything miraculous or "unnatural") whose philosophy was based on self-sufficiency and dogged endurance. The Stoics were pantheistic and denied the existence of true evil. Both groups denied physical resurrection as a possibility for the afterlife. Do you see any intellectual and philosophical similarities to our own secular culture? Do you think these philosophers were honestly seeking to know God Almighty?

Thursday

v. 22,23 — The Areopagus (Mars Hill) was an ancient court of great prestige. Legend says the Areopagate was formed to try cases of murder, yet over time it became the highest court in Athens. By the time Paul arrived on the scene their authority was mostly over religious or philosophical matters. They remind me of Jesus teaching in Luke 6:39: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" These men were in place to help people understand spiritual or religious matters but their calling had degenerated into nothing more than empty religion and worthless learning (v. 21). Religion should lead people to worship the one true God, but it is often used to turn people away from the living God to idols. How can we avoid the pitfalls that lead to idolatry?

Friday

v. 24-29 — The apostle Paul told the Athenians that God is the Creator and Lord (v. 24), He is Provider (v. 25) and He is Sovereign (v. 26). Why are these such important truths? What are the practical implications of disbelief? Read Romans 1:18-32 for further reference.

Saturday

v. 30-34 — The Areopagus was the "ancient court of great prestige" the highest court in Athens, yet Paul proclaimed to them a higher authority: the living God. What did Paul mean when he said God overlooked the times of man's ignorance (v. 30)? What does God now command of all men? The gospel message must include the truth that all people are sinners. How did the Athenians respond to Paul's message? The gospel message will be rejected by some and laughed at by some, but some will hear, God will open their hearts and they will accept the free salvation found only in Jesus Christ. Be encouraged God is not as concerned about our effectiveness as He is about our obedience.
