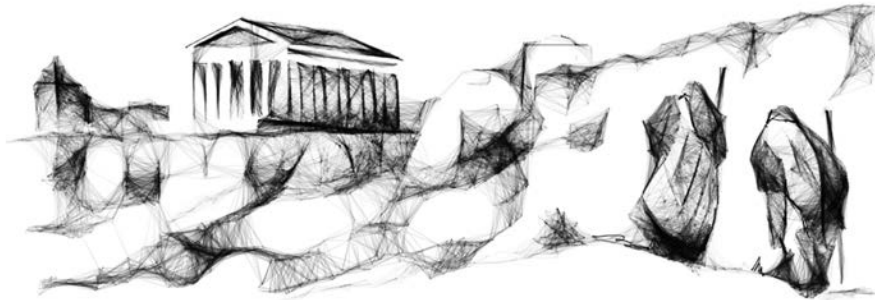


Paul's Second Trip to Share the Good News



SABBATH—AUGUST 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 16; Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16; Acts 17; 1 Corinthians 1:23; Acts 18:1–10.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Don't [do not] be afraid! Continue talking to people and don't be quiet! I am with you. No one will hurt you because many of my people are in this city' ” (Acts 18:9, 10, ICB).



Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia and made the churches there stronger.

PAUL AND BARNABAS helped grow the church in Antioch. They shared the Good News about Jesus everywhere. Maybe this time was the last time Paul and Barnabas worked together. Then they separated. Why did they separate? Because of John Mark, who was Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10). Paul invited Barnabas to go with him to the places where they shared the Good News on their first trip. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark too. But Paul did not want to invite John Mark because of what he did in the past (Acts 13:13).

God made something good happen from Paul and Barnabas's separation. Each man went a separate way. So, the two men visited a larger area than they planned at first. Barnabas took John Mark and went back to Cyprus, his home country (Acts 4:36). Paul invited Silas to go with him. Together, Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia and made their churches stronger. Paul stayed several years in Tarsus before going to Antioch for the first time (Acts 9:30; Acts 11:25, 26). Now Paul had the chance to visit again the churches he started there. Paul had no idea that God had big plans for him.

BACK IN LYSTRA (Acts 15:41)

Luke tells us that Paul traveled straight to Derbe and Lystra. Paul went to Syria and Cilicia, too, and made the churches there stronger (Acts 15:41).

Read Acts 16:1–13. What do these verses tell us about Paul’s deep love for telling people about the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin?

Timothy’s father was not Jewish. But Timothy’s mother, Eunice, was a Jewish Christian. Timothy knew Bible teachings well. He learned them when he was a child. His Bible knowledge shows us he was very religious. As a Christian, Timothy already earned the respect of all the believers in his church.

In the first century A.D., a person was Jewish because he or she had a Jewish father. But because only Timothy’s mother was Jewish, Timothy was not a Jew and never was circumcised. To be circumcised means the extra skin on the end of the male sex parts is cut off. Male babies were circumcised on the eighth day after birth to show that they belonged to God.

Paul wants Timothy to work with him in synagogues. Synagogues are Jewish “churches” or places of worship. But Paul knows that Timothy needs to be circumcised first before the Jews will let him enter synagogues. So, Paul asks Timothy to become circumcised. What will happen if Timothy does not become circumcised? Then the Jews will shut him out of the synagogues because they believe he is not showing respect to God. But Timothy’s becoming circumcised does not change Paul’s message that God saves us by faith instead of by any good thing we do.

Next, Paul decided to go to Ephesus. But then the Holy Spirit stopped him from going there. So, Paul went north. He tried to go to a country named Bithynia. But again, the Holy Spirit stopped him from going. So, Paul went to the town of Troas, near the sea. God told Paul in a night vision to sail across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia. Paul told his friends about the vision. They felt that God wanted them to go with Paul to share the Good News with the Macedonians.

Think about why Paul circumcised Timothy. What should this decision teach us about why we sometimes need to do things we might not think are important but that will help us do more work for God?



God told Paul in a night vision to sail across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia.

PHILIPPI (Acts 16:11–24)

Paul and his friends traveled from Macedonia to Philippi. There, they started the first Christian church in Europe.

Read in Acts 16:11–24 about the place where Paul and his friends go on the Sabbath. Why do they go there? What happens to them there?

Anytime Paul arrives in a city, he goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath. A synagogue is a Jewish “church” or place of worship. Paul goes there to witness to the Jews (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; Acts 17:1, 2; Acts 18:4). But when Paul gets to Philippi, he and his group go to a river to pray. Some women and some Jewish and non-Jewish believers join Paul and his group at the river. That tells us there is no synagogue in the city. That fact is important. It teaches us that Paul does not go to Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath only to witness. He also goes to synagogues on the Sabbath because he worships on the Sabbath.

Read the story in Acts 16:25–34 about the prison guard who becomes a Christian. What does the prison guard need to do to be saved?



When Paul gets to Philippi, he and his group go to a river to pray. Some women and other believers join Paul at the river.

Paul and Silas answer the prison guard’s question. Paul and Silas tell the prison guard the Good News that we are saved by faith in Jesus alone (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16). But we cannot read this story and say that we only need to believe in Jesus to be baptized. Every believer who wants to be baptized needs to learn Bible truth.

What do we know about the prison guard? Is he a Jew or someone who wants to join the Jewish religion? Either way, the prison guard must believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. What if the prison guard is a non-Jew who already knows and worships God the same as Cornelius, Lydia (Acts 16:14), and several other people in Acts? What if the prison guard already went to Paul’s meetings in the city and heard the Good News about Jesus? We do not know all the facts about the prison guard. So, no one should use his story as a reason or an excuse to baptize people right away before they learn Bible teachings first.

PAUL TRAVELS TO THESSALONICA AND BEREA (Acts 17:1–9)

Paul and Silas were let go from prison. Then they left Philippi (Acts 16:35–40) and went straight to Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia.

Read Acts 17:1–9. As these verses show us, how do the Thessalonian Jews act when they learn that Paul’s preaching among non-Jews is a big success?

Again, we see Paul looking for a Jewish place of worship where he can share the Good News about Jesus. Many Greeks who loved God deeply believe Paul’s message. Some of the leading women in the city believe too. These believers decide to join Paul and Silas to worship God (Acts 17:4). Their joining Paul and Silas seems to mean they start a new group for worship. They meet in someone’s house. That house may belong to a new believer named Jason.

The Jews of Thessalonica are filled with jealous anger because of the new group. They start a fight in the city. They want to bring Paul and Silas in front of the city’s leaders and blame them for a crime. But the Jews cannot find Paul and Silas anywhere. The Jews in the city take Jason and a few other new believers to the city leaders. The Jews blame Jason and the new believers for protecting troublemakers. The Jews say that Jason and the new believers want to hurt the city’s government.

Read about the Berean Jews in Acts 17:10–15. How do the Berean Jews act? Do they act the same as, or different from, the Jews in Thessalonica?

The Greek word “eugenes” (Acts 17:11) used to mean “someone of high birth.” But later, its meaning changed. It now means someone who has an “open mind.” Acts 17:10–15 uses the second meaning. The Jews from Berea are praised because they studied the Bible daily to see if Paul and his group taught the truth. It is easy to become excited about the Good News when we first learn about it. But if we do not study the Bible to understand the truth, then our experience in believing the truth will not grow.

When was the last time you studied the Bible the same way as the Bereans?



The Jews from Berea are praised because they studied the Bible daily to see if Paul and his group taught the truth.

PAUL IN ATHENS (Acts 17:22–31)

The city of Athens was the center of learning in Greece during New Testament times. The whole city was full of statues of false gods. Marble statues of persons and gods were everywhere. Many of these statues stood at the entrance to the agora. The agora was a public place in the middle of the city. Paul was very upset about all the statues everywhere. So, he changed what he always did when he first arrived in a city. He did not go first to the synagogue. A synagogue is a Jewish “church” or place of worship. This time, Paul did two things: he argued with the Jews and non-Jewish believers in the synagogue. Also, each day Paul argued in public with the Greeks in Athens. (Read Acts 17:15–22.)

The people of Athens in Paul’s time are always ready to hear something new. Some thinkers in the city like Paul’s teaching. They invite Paul to preach to the Areopagus. The Areopagus is the group that ruled Athens. In his sermon, Paul does not share verses from the Bible or tell the city’s leaders about the history of God’s goodness to Israel. Paul talks about these things anytime he preaches to a group of Jews (read also Acts 13:16–41). But preaching about these things now will not make much sense to a non-Jewish group. So, Paul shares with the Greeks some important Bible truths. Paul uses words in his sermon that the Greeks understand.



The city of Athens was full of statues of false gods. Paul was very upset about all the statues everywhere.

Read Paul’s sermon to the Areopagus in Acts 17:22–31. What important truths about God, being saved, history, and people does Paul preach to the Greeks?

Paul’s words seemed silly to this group who worshiped false gods. Their ideas about God were twisted and wrong. We do not know how Paul planned to end his message. He may have been cut off as soon as he said that God will judge the people on the earth (Acts 17:31). This teaching did not match two Greek beliefs: (1) the Greek belief that God had nothing to do at all with the happenings on this earth. And (2) the Greek belief that anyone who dies cannot wake up from the dead. These two beliefs help explain why the Greeks said the Good News about Jesus was silly (1 Corinthians 1:23). So, not many people in Athens became Christians. But a few of the leading people believed, including Dionysius and Damaris (Acts 17:34).

PAUL IN CORINTH (Acts 18:4–17)

Acts 18:1–11 tells us about Paul’s experience in Corinth. He stayed there for one and a half years. There, he met Aquila and Priscilla. They became Paul’s friends for the rest of his life (Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19). The story shows us that Aquila and Priscilla already were Christians before they came to Corinth. Many Jews were sent there from Rome by Claudius, the ruler of the Roman Kingdom. The Roman writer Suetonius hints in a book he wrote that the Jews were sent away from Rome because of problems happening in the Jewish community in Rome (*Claudius* 25.4). The problem was happening because Jewish Christians preached the Good News about Jesus to the Jews in Rome. Maybe Aquila and Priscilla took part in preaching the Good News in Rome. Anyway, Paul and Aquila and Priscilla shared the same faith. All three of them were Jews and tentmakers too.

Read about Paul’s work for God in Acts 18:4–17. What happens because of the work Paul does for God in Corinth?

Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia. They brought some money to help support the churches there (2 Corinthians 11:8, 9). This money helped Paul. Now he did not need work to earn money at the same time that he preached. Paul wanted to pay for his own bed and food when he preached the Good News in new places. But he also taught that “those [workers] who preach the Good News should get their living [money] from those [people] who hear it” (1 Corinthians 9:14, NLV).

Many Jews did not like Paul’s message. But some Jews and some non-Jewish worshipers of God believed it. Crispus was one of the new believers. Crispus was the leader of the synagogue. A synagogue is a Jewish “church” or place of worship. Everyone who lived and worked in Crispus’s house also believed the Good News about Jesus. Many Corinthians also believed and were baptized. That upset the Jews in Corinth (Acts 18:12–17). Paul may have planned to leave Corinth. But then God gave Paul a night vision. In the vision, God told Paul to stay (Acts 18:9–11).

Paul felt hopeless about his chance to share the Good News with the Jews in Corinth. Paul needed the Lord to support him. How do the Lord’s words to Paul, in Acts 18:10, give us hope, too, when we need it most?



Paul and his friends Aquila and Priscilla shared the same faith. All three of them were also tentmakers.



“The truth for this time will test us. The people who hear this truth must behave the same as the Bereans. The Bereans read the Bible daily. They wanted to make sure the messages they heard were true.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 232, adapted.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Do not lose hope when you teach truths that people do not like. Sometimes you may meet no one who accepts them. People who say they are Christians may turn away from these truths too. The same thing happened to Paul and his friends. Some of the people they shared the truth with did not accept it. Workers for Jesus must always keep their eyes open. They must pray. These things help God’s workers to stay safe. God’s workers must keep going. They must have faith and stay brave. They must work always in the name of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 230, adapted.

“The history of this earth will end soon. The truth for this time will test us. The people who hear this truth must behave the same as the Bereans. The Bereans read the Bible daily. They wanted to make sure the messages they heard were true. What if we will do the same thing today? Then many more people will be loyal to God’s law. But we see only a small number of people today who are loyal. . . .

“God will judge each person by the truth he or she learned. The Lord gives His workers the message about being saved. He gives it to them to share with other people. Will these people accept the message, or turn away from it? God holds these people responsible for their choices. People who want the truth will carefully study the Bible teachings God gave them. They will make sure these teachings match the Bible first before they accept them.”—Page 232, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① “People need to study Bible teachings more deeply before they are baptized. There are teachings and important rules about how to live a Christian life. These teachings and important rules should be made clear to believers who are new in the faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [special messages] for the Church*, volume 6, pages 91, 92. What does Ellen G. White mean?

② How can we, together as a church, show the same understanding that Paul had of different ways that people live? Why must we be willing to meet people where they are? At the same time, how do we do that and continue to stay loyal to God and our beliefs?