

A panoramic view of the Roman Forum in Rome, Italy. The foreground is dominated by the ruins of the Forum, including several tall, weathered columns and a partially reconstructed structure. In the background, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica is visible, along with other buildings and the cityscape of Rome. The sky is clear and blue.

The CHURCH Series

Part 16 – ADAPTATION

Introduction

- Never GIVE UP!
- This is the summary and spirit contained within this chapter and journey of our heroes.
- We shall see that they keep bouncing back from rejection, opposition and persecution!
- As we read, let us reflect on our own lives and journeys, remembering the hardships we had to face and how we dealt with them by comparison.



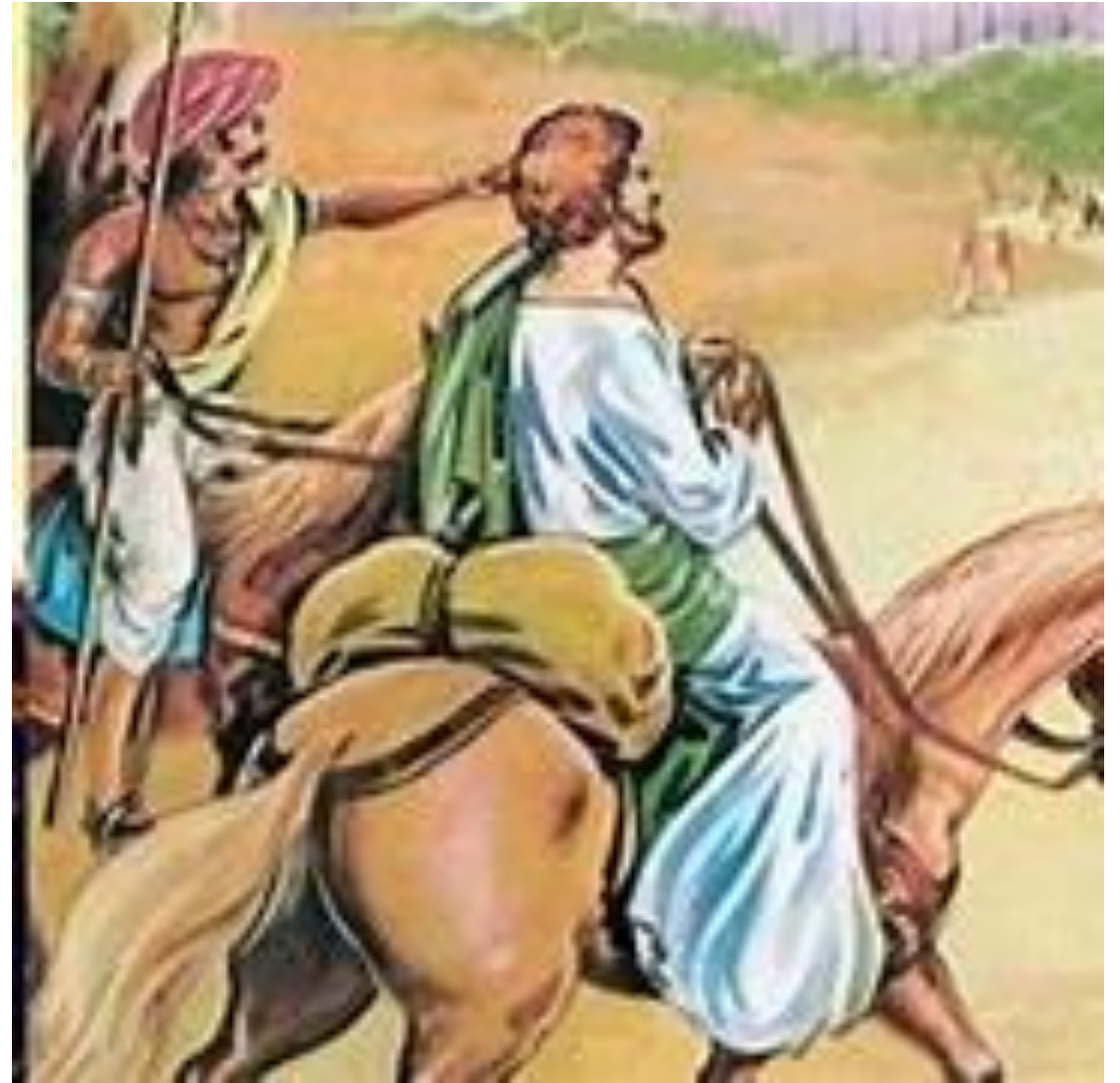
Passing Through...

- Now 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. Act 17: 1-3



On Your Own...

- Remember that travel was hard and difficult in those days.
- These guys were NOT In a Jeep or 4x4 but either walking, on mules or traveling by sea.
- Anyone could rob you, mug you attack or even kill you.
- There was no health insurance, health and safety measures, security detail or protection.
- You were at the mercy of the elements, bad or good weather and human beings – good, bad or evil.
- These Guys had to TRUST God!



Strategy...

- ... when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica,
- They passed the smaller settlements and aimed for the bigger cities as a mission strategy.
- In the bigger Cities, they could find the Synagogue if one existed and start from familiar territory.
- Trade flowed in and out of the bigger cities to the neighbouring towns and villages
- The Gospel follows the movement of Human beings. People follow trading routes, pilgrimages and the flow of Human interaction.
- Thessalonica was a major port city and hence the natural choice along the Missionary route.



Thessalonica

- Then Paul, as his custom was...
- Paul starts from ministering to the Jews that existed in any City he visited first.
- In ancient times, there had to be at least 10 male men in a place to start a Synagogue.
- We see this strategy applied by the early Missionaries.



Thessalonica

- *and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*
- *³ explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead,*
- Paul had dialogue with the Jews and opened the Scriptures to them about Christ.
- The Scriptures here are the Old Testament as the NT had not yet been compiled.
- This demonstrates that the Old Testament is the New Testament 'Concealed' whilst the New Testament is the Old T Revealed!



Thessalonica...

- *4 And 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.*
- When you share the Gospel, those ordained for Eternal Life will respond.
- You do not need to struggle or force anything; the Gospel does the job without any gimmicks or additions!



Reaction...

- ⁵ But 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....
- Envy and jealousy are tools of the enemy.
- The devil whispers into Men's ears with their inherent insecurities and stirs up trouble to stop the TRUTH.
- Note the reaction...!!



Application...

- When you begin to bring the WORD of God into a church, a family or region; note the spiritual reaction.
- Violence
- Authorities push back
- Chaos
- Misunderstanding
- Fissures in relationships
- Gang ups
- Lies
- Misinformation



Discern...

- You have got to discern when an argument flares up that there may be more to it than meets the eye.
- You have been praying and fasting more. You have been preaching the Gospel.
- Suddenly you and your best friend have a horrible fight!
- You and your spouse, child, loved one or colleague get into a major blow out!
- Discerning of spirits.....



BEREA....

- *¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.*
- *When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*
- *¹¹ These 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.*
- *¹² Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men*



Berea...

- Note that Paul and company simply leave without argument.
- Sometimes, just leave the room quietly.
- Don't respond to the text!
- The other person wants to fight, - respond with peace
- They are huffing and puffing; send them some lovely expensive flowers!
- Move on...



BEREA...

- These Jews and Gentiles were more open to the Gospel.
- As you preach to different people, you will encounter the 'goats' but you will also be rewarded with willing 'sheep'.
- For every Thessalonica, there is a Berea!
- This would have been so rewarding for Paul and Silas



Berea...

- *with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*
- *If you have been in church long enough, you would have heard the term “Be like the Berean Christians...”*
- *It’s just that, these were NOT Christians...yet!*
- *They were Jews and Greeks that were hearing these things for the first time and checking to confirm what Paul and Silas were saying.*
- *They became Christians AFTER confirming that these were so!*



Application...

- You will come in contact with open minded people who will check out what you are sharing.
- They are already on a journey of faith and open to the things of God.
- Your life therefore must **CONFIRM** what you are preaching.
- Sometimes the Bereans in your life are **CHECKING YOU** to confirm that what you say is what you live!



Monitoring spirits...

- *13 But 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.*
- *14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.*
- The devil does not relent!
- As you reach out to people, watch for any entry point for satan to stir up trouble!
- Paul did NOT stay there to 'bind' satan. He moved on!
- Many times the wise thing to do is move on to the next thing.



Athens....

- ¹⁵ So 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.
- ¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them at **Athens**, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.



Athens

- This European city was very dark spiritually.
- There are places you step into and you can feel the oppressive prevailing spirits
- The Bible says;
his spirit was greatly angered when he saw that the city was full of idols
- Your spirit linked with the Holy Spirit is provoked or triggered by the darkness!



Athens...

- *17 So he had discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place day after day with any who happened to be there.*
- Paul counters the oppressive spiritual atmosphere by:
- Preaching indoors to the Jews
- Preaching outdoors to the gentiles.
- So we see a strategy at play here – release the WORD of God in response to the darkness.
- Preaching outdoors is a Spiritual response to darkness



Athens...

- Paul observes the spiritual landscape of Athens, filled with idols, and he feels distressed.
- Instead of turning away, he engages with the people, reasoning with both Jews in the synagogue and Gentiles in the marketplace.
- We are called to engage with the culture around us, identifying its spiritual needs and offering Christ as the answer.



Areopagus

- Paul is invited to the Areopagus to explain his teachings.
- He uses this opportunity to speak to a diverse audience, including Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.
- He does not turn down the invitation even when he knows their likely response.
- Tailor your message to your audience, building bridges rather than creating barriers





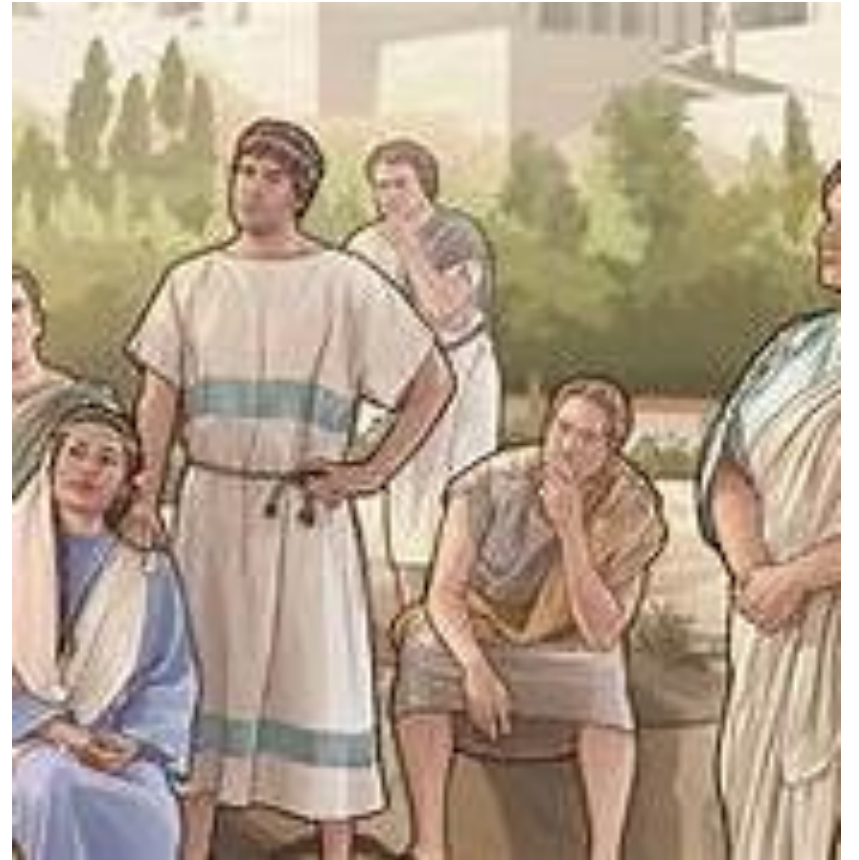
Areopagus...

- Paul begins his address by acknowledging their religiosity and referring to their altar
- "to an unknown god." He uses this as a starting point to introduce the true God.
- Find points of connection with others to introduce spiritual truths, using their context and experiences as a foundation.
- The principle is applicable anywhere – the world around any culture or people provides the material for your sermon or witnessing.
- Use everything...!

Key Points...

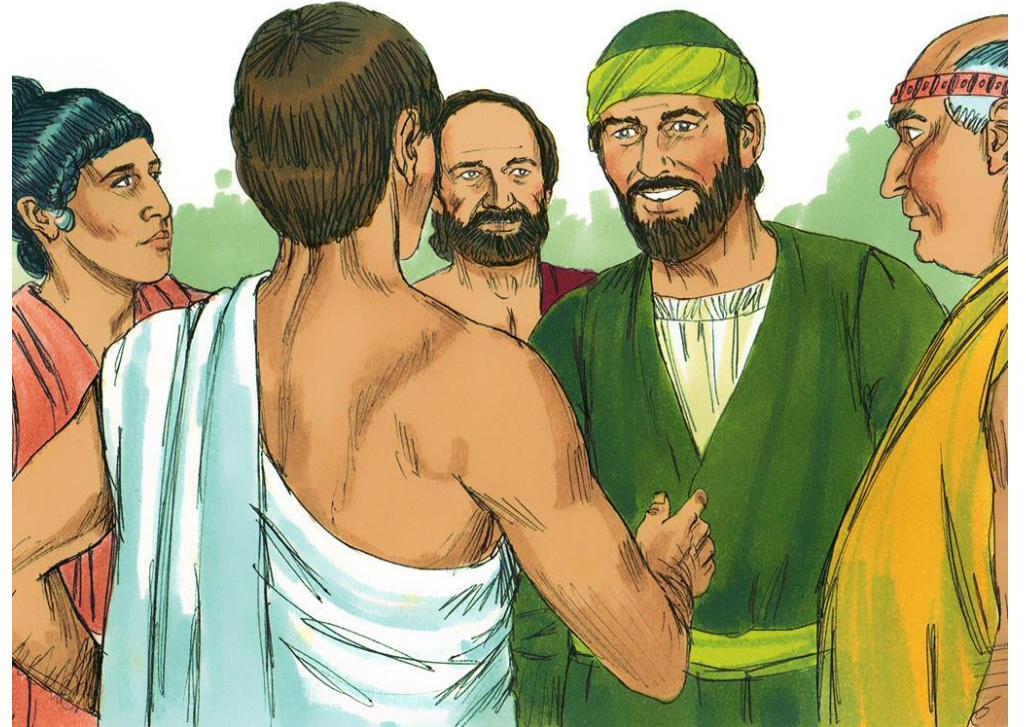
- God is the Creator of the universe (v. 24).
- God does not dwell in man-made temples (v. 24–25).
- God gives life and sustains all things (v. 25).
- God made all nations from one man (v. 26).
- God is near to everyone and wants to be known (v. 27–28)
- We are God's offspring and should not reduce Him to idols (v. 29)

- These points can be presented to a none religious and rational mind



Fruit from Athens...

- *32 Now when they heard [the term] resurrection from the dead,*
- *some mocked and sneered; but others said, “We will hear from you again about this matter.”*
- *33 So Paul left them. 34 But some men joined him and believed;*
- *among them were Dionysius, [a judge] of the Council of Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*



Athens....

- The Areopagus symbolizes a place of dialogue and the meeting of worldviews.
- Paul's speech there highlights:
- The need for Christians to understand and respect different cultural and philosophical backgrounds.
- The importance of presenting the gospel in ways that connect with people's existing beliefs and values
- In short, the Areopagus was both a literal and symbolic stage for engaging with diverse worldviews about life, truth, and the Gospel.

