

Readings

Scripture

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." ⁸ And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. ⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

- Acts 17:1-15 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

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

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit...

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

The Creative Effects of the Gospel
Acts 17:1-15

The Acts of the Apostles
Stephen Baldwin

What does the Holy Spirit create when the gospel continues to go into the "wilderness"?

When the gospel goes into the wilderness...

The Holy Spirit creates churches... (Acts 17:1-9)

- The message is received
 - The message is opposed
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The Holy Spirit creates gospel movement... (Acts 17:10-15)

- Faith goes deeply
 - Faith goes outwardly
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Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Given the fact that Paul had just been stoned in Lystra, and then beaten and imprisoned in Philippi before preaching the gospel at Thessalonica, reflect upon 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6.
- How does Paul address them in the opening verse of the letter? Does this surprise you considering that it may have been written only a few months later (while he was in Athens)?
- When you consider what was created by the Spirit in Thessalonica and Berea by the preaching and ministry of Paul and Silas, how does that compare with your concept of church in 21st Century America?
- Compare the different responses among the Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica and Berea. What do you observe?
- What is notable among the responses of the Gentiles?
- What reasons can you supply for the way the scripture seems to highlight the response of the Greek women in both cities? Can you find a basis in scripture for your reasons?