



---

**Lesson 12, November 23, 2025, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens- Acts 17:1-4,10-12,22-25, 28**

---

**BIBLE BASIS:** Acts 17:1-4,10-12,22-25, 28

**BIBLE TRUTH:** Paul preached the Gospel with strong conviction in spite of opposition.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (Acts 17:23)

**LESSON AIM: KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. 📖 *Truth Meets Resistance (Thessalonica)*

- Some believe, but others stir up opposition. Sharing truth may provoke resistance—but faithfulness matters more than popularity.

2. 🔍 *Noble Curiosity (Berea)*

- Spiritual maturity involves testing teachings against God’s Word. Curiosity + discernment = growth.

3. 🏛️ *Cultural Bridge-Building (Athens)*

- Effective witness begins with understanding others. We can build bridges without compromising truth.

4. 🌍 *God Is Near*

- True conversion is a work of God—and it leads to action. God is accessible. He invites all people to seek Him and find Him.

5. 🔔 *Call to Repentance*

- The gospel isn’t just interesting—it’s urgent. Knowing God leads to changed lives.

## Background

### 1. Timothy Joins the Team

- Paul meets *Timothy* in Lystra and invites him to join the mission.
- Timothy is circumcised to avoid offending Jewish audiences, showing Paul's strategic sensitivity. (Acts 16:1-5)

### 2. Divine Redirection

- The Holy Spirit prevents Paul from preaching in Asia.
- Paul receives a *vision of a man from Macedonia* asking for help—this leads them to Europe for the first time. (Acts 16:6-7)

### 3. Ministry in Philippi

- Philippi is a Roman colony in Macedonia.
- Paul and his team meet *Lydia*, a wealthy merchant of purple cloth. She becomes the first convert in Europe and hosts the missionaries. (Acts 16:8-1)

### 4. Deliverance and Conflict

- Paul casts out a spirit from a slave girl who was being exploited for fortune-telling.
- Her owners, angry at losing profit, stir up trouble. Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned. (Acts 16:-24)

### 5. Earthquake and Salvation

- While in jail, Paul and Silas sing hymns.
- A *miraculous earthquake* opens the prison doors.
- The *jailer*, fearing the prisoners escaped, is about to take his life—but Paul stops him.
- The jailer and his household believe and are baptized. (Acts 16:25-34)

### 6. Roman Citizenship Revealed

- Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, which shocks the officials who had beaten him.
- They are released and respectfully escorted out of the city. (Acts 15:35-40)

### The Lesson:

#### I. INITIAL RECEPTION (ACTS 17:1-4)

<sup>1</sup> Now after Paul and Silas had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup> And Paul entered the synagogue, as was his <sup>[a]</sup>custom, and for three Sabbaths he engaged in discussion *and* friendly debate with them from the Scriptures,

<sup>3</sup> explaining and pointing out [scriptural evidence] that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you, is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).”

<sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded *to believe* and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and many of the leading women.

#### What's Happening Here (Acts 17:1-4)

##### 1. Arrival in Thessalonica

- Paul and Silas travel through **Amphipolis and Apollonia**, two cities in Macedonia, on their way to **Thessalonica**, a major urban center with a Jewish synagogue.
- This journey follows their release from prison in Philippi (Acts 16), continuing their second missionary journey.

##### 2. Paul's Customary Approach

- Paul enters the synagogue, **as was his custom**, meaning he regularly began ministry by engaging Jewish communities through Scripture.
- For **three Sabbaths**, he teaches and debates, using the Hebrew Scriptures to explain that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.
- 3 Sabbaths = 3 Sunday's equaling 3 weeks

### ✝️ 3. Proclaiming Jesus as Messiah

- Paul presents **scriptural evidence** that Jesus fulfills the Messianic prophecies.
- He boldly declares: “This Jesus... is the Christ,” connecting the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to the long-awaited hope of Israel.

### 🌱 4. Mixed Response

- Some Jews are persuaded and believe.
- A **large number of God-fearing Greeks** (Gentiles who respected Jewish teachings) and **many prominent women** also join the movement.
- This shows the gospel’s **inclusive reach**—crossing ethnic, gender, and social boundaries.

### Reflection Question:

1. Why do you think Paul started in the synagogue?
2. What does it mean to “reason from the Scriptures?”
3. What scriptures might Paul have used to explain Jesus’ suffering and resurrection?
4. Why do you think different people responded in different ways?

### 📖 II. Inspiring Research (VS 10-12)

<sup>10</sup>The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they entered the Jewish synagogue.

<sup>11</sup>Now these people were more noble *and* open-minded than those in Thessalonica, so they received the message [of salvation through faith in the Christ] with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

<sup>12</sup>As a result many of them became believers, together with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

### 🤔 Let's Fill in the Gaps (vs. 5-9)

#### 😡 1. Jealousy Turns Violent

- Some **unbelieving Jews** become jealous of Paul and Silas's influence—especially among Gentiles and prominent women.
- They recruit **thugs from the marketplace** (likely idle troublemakers) to form a mob and stir up chaos.

## 2. Attack on Jason's House

- Jason, a local believer who hosted Paul and Silas, becomes a target.
- The mob searches for Paul and Silas but can't find them, so they drag Jason and other believers before the authorities.

## 3. Accusation: "Turning the World Upside Down"

- The mob accuses Paul and Silas of **disrupting the status quo** and **defying Caesar** by proclaiming Jesus as King.
- This is both a spiritual and political charge—claiming allegiance to Jesus challenges Roman authority.

## 4. Bail and Release

- Jason and the others are forced to pay **security (bail)** to be released.
- This shows how early Christians often paid a personal price for their hospitality and faith.

## What's Happening here (Acts 17:10-12)

### 1. Secret Escape to Berea

- After intense opposition in Thessalonica, the believers send Paul and Silas away **by night** to protect them.
- This shows the urgency and danger surrounding their mission—but also the support of the early church.

### 2. Ministry Begins in the Synagogue

- True to their pattern, Paul and Silas begin by engaging the **Jewish synagogue** in Berea.
- They continue teaching about Jesus as the Messiah, using Scripture as their foundation.

### 3. Berean Response: Noble and Open-Minded

- The Bereans are described as **more noble** than the Thessalonians—not because of status, but because of their attitude.
- They receive the message with **eagerness** and **examine the Scriptures daily** to verify what Paul says.
- This posture reflects humility, curiosity, and discernment.

### 4. Fruitful Belief

- Many Bereans believe, including **prominent Greek women and men**—again showing the gospel's reach across cultural and social lines.
- Their belief is rooted not in emotion or pressure, but in **Scriptural confirmation**

### Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think truth sometimes makes people angry?
2. How can jealousy distort our view of others?
3. What does it mean to stand with someone who's being targeted for their faith?
4. Why would the gospel feel threatening by some people?
5. When is it wise to stay and speak, and when is it wise to leave?

### III. Provoking Reflection (vs. 22-25, 28)

<sup>22</sup>So Paul, standing in the center of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I observe [with every turn I make throughout the city] that you are very religious *and* devout in all respects.

<sup>23</sup>Now as I was going along and carefully looking at your objects of worship, I came to an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN <sup>[d]</sup>UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you already worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup>The God who created the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

<sup>25</sup> nor is He [e]served by human hands, as though He needed anything, because it is He who gives to all [people] life and breath and all things.

## Let's Fill in the Gaps (vs. 13-15)

### 1. Opposition Spreads from Thessalonica

- “The Jews of Thessalonica... came there too, agitating and disturbing the crowds.”
- The same group that opposed Paul in Thessalonica now travels to **Berea** to disrupt his ministry there.
- This shows how deeply threatened they were by the spread of the gospel—even willing to travel and stir up unrest.

### 2. Urgent Protection

- “The brothers immediately sent Paul away...”
- The believers in Berea act quickly to protect Paul, sending him toward the sea—likely en route to **Athens**.
- This reflects the early church’s **solidarity and strategic care** for its leaders.

### 3. Silas and Timothy Stay Behind

- “Silas and Timothy remained there...”
- Paul’s companions stay in Berea to continue the work and support the new believers.
- This shows **teamwork and trust**—

### 4. Paul Arrives in Athens

- “Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens...”
- Paul arrives in **Athens**, a city full of idols and philosophical debate.
- He sends word for Silas and Timothy to join him soon, preparing for the next phase of ministry.

### III. Provoking Reflection: What's happening here vs. 22-25,28

#### 1. Paul Stands in the Areopagus

- The Areopagus (Mars Hill) was a prestigious place where philosophers gathered to discuss ideas.
- Paul is invited to speak after being noticed for preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.

#### 2. Observing Their Devotion

- “I observe... you are very religious...”
- Paul begins by affirming the Athenians’ spiritual interest.
- He’s respectful, not confrontational—building a bridge rather than burning one.

#### 3. The Altar to an “Unknown God”

- “What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you...”
- Paul uses their altar as a launch point to introduce the God they don’t yet know.
- This is a brilliant example of **contextual evangelism**—starting where people are.

#### 4. God as Creator and Sustainer

- “The God who made the world... gives life and breath...”
- Paul contrasts the living God with idols made by human hands.
- He emphasizes that God is **self-sufficient**, not dependent on temples or rituals

#### 5. One Humanity, One Purpose

- “From one man He made every nation...”
- Paul affirms human unity and divine sovereignty.
- God has placed people in specific times and places so they might **seek Him**.

#### 6. God Is Near

- “He is not far from each one of us...”
- Paul shifts from philosophical to deeply personal.

- God is **accessible**, not distant or unknowable.

## 7. Quoting Their Poets

- “For we also are His children...”
- Paul quotes Greek poets to connect with his audience.
- He shows that **truth can be found even in unexpected places**—and points it back to God.

### Reflection Questions:

1. What did Paul notice about the people of Athens?
2. Why do you think he started his message by talking about their altar to an “unknown god”?
3. How does Paul describe God in this passage?
4. What are some things he says God *doesn't* need from us?
5. What does Paul say about where God lives and how close He is to us?
6. How is that different from what the Athenians believed