

“And so were the Churches Established in the Faith”

Acts 15-18, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

1. Start with this quote by Brigham Young: *“Do you read the scriptures, my brethren and sisters as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the man who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the Spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation.”* (BY, JoD 7:333)
2. In order to have this sort of closeness with the scriptures, background information is helpful
3. Background to this time period:
 - a. We are in Paul’s 2nd missionary journey here (2nd of 3)
 - b. He has been a faithful member of the church for over 13 years before his first mission.
 - c. He is a Roman citizen AND a Jew. This is a privileged pair in this time period for the church.
 - d. He is an intellectual, tutored under the great Gamaliel – one of the great mentors of that day.
 - e. Joseph Smith described Paul in this quote: *“He is about five feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man.”* (TPJS, p.180)
 - f. Paul will write letters (Epistles) to the people that he has served and left.
 - g. The letters are not meant to PREACH but to REGULATE the Church while he is not present
 - h. He is writing to people he has already baptized, confirmed and ordained. And the tone will be such.
 - i. There is very little talk of baptism and confirmation in the Epistles because they have already learned and accepted that.
 - j. The Epistles are arranged by LENGTH. Not chronologically, geographically, or alphabetically. They are arranged LONGEST to SHORTEST
 - k. With the exception of Hebrews, which some of the early Bible translators questioned if it was written by Paul
 - l. The Sunday School manual has us studying the Epistles chronologically – so it will seem as though we are skipping around
4. It was Paul’s custom to start his missionary efforts in each city by going to the synagogue (this is where he will make contact with the people, and a lot of faithful people)
5. Acts 16:12-13
 - a. He has just arrived in PHILIPPI
 - b. This city is populated my Roman soldiers and therefore does not have a synagogue – but there are Jews that live there.

- c. They meet by the river to pray rather than the synagogue
6. LYDIA: Acts 16:14-15
- a. A seller of purple = She is a dyer. Purple dye is made by crushing up sea shells (mollusks). It is very expensive and therefore only the wealthy could afford to wear purple, thus becoming known as “purple the color of royalty”
 - b. Lydia was a very successful business woman and has great influence among the people there.
 - c. She exerts her influence that she has built up over the years in this vital, imperative moment
 - d. = The Lord knows exactly where to put us as he is building His kingdom. Our behaviors in and out of the church building are critical to how people perceive whether or not they will follow us into the waters of baptism
7. Imprisoned: Acts 16:20-26
- a. Note the attitude of Paul and Silas when they are imprisoned (v 25)
 - b. Why will the jailer be impacted by this behavior?
 - c. What can we learn from this example?
8. Keeper of the Prison: Acts 16:27-34
- a. V. 27 – why do you think the jailer is going to kill himself?
 - b. Why is Paul still there?
 - c. Paul must have been constrained by the Spirit to stay. So he stays. His total faith is in the Lord and he knows who is truly in charge. He does not need to immediately flee the prison – he still has work to do there.
 - d. An unlikely or undesirable place to find a convert. How many missionaries have stories like these?
9. Magistrates (City officials) : Acts 16:35-39
- a. Paul is a Roman and he knows that he should not have been beaten publicly so he calls attention to this.
 - b. The city officials learn of this and want him released immediately
 - c. Paul will not allow them to let him go privately – why?
 - d. – they could spread rumors that they escaped
 - e. – He is thinking of the branch of the Church there (which is very strong) and of future missionaries and the reputation they will have
 - f. - He is thinking of the jailer. If the rumor spreads that they escaped, he will be killed.
 - g. What does this teach you about Paul?
 - h. How many unwritten stories of INTEGRITY and COURAGE are there about Paul? About the other Apostles and those with them? About our Apostles? About people in this room?
10. Athens: Acts 17:15-18
- a. Paul is walking around the market place talking and preaching
 - b. He is observing their religious practices and they are concerning to him
 - c. Athens is the cultural, intellectual center of the world – people flock there
 - d. Certain philosophers:

- e. Epicureans: believe that God is removed. The creation is a random act. Seek pleasure and happiness through the physical. Focused on the individual not society. Mostly poor followers, and slaves.
- f. Stoics: Opposite of Epicureans. Creation is organized. Happiness is achieved through knowledge and wisdom. Socrates greatly influenced them.

11. Mar's Hill: Acts 17:19-23

- a. Paul has the opportunity to speak to the city council known as the Areopagus at Mar's Hill
- b. This is a different sermon because it is a different audience
- c. Paul will show you why he is such a brilliant missionary and teacher
- d. V.21 Athenians were more interested in hearing something new or in talking than finding truth. Intellectualism was their vice not virtue.
- e. They had an altar for the "unknown God" just in case they missed a God or two and did not want to offend them
- f. Paul will use THEIR LANGUAGE to teach them about Christ. V.23: Christ is this unknown God.

12. Knowing your audience: Acts 17:24-34

- a. He knows of their focus on idolatry and he addresses this (24-25)
- b. Addresses the Epicureans belief that God is far away: (26-27)
- c. He quotes their poets! V. 28 he quotes Epineedes (600 b.c.)
- d. In verse 29 he is quoting another of their philosophers, Aradus (315 b.c)
- e. Paul knows his stuff!
- f. = Integrity, courage, and knowledge!
- g. V.31 He testifies of the resurrection = Greeks believed that the physical was less desirable and that you would discard it as you moved on to higher places
- h. Truth is truth regardless of your audience. The Spirit could trust Paul to say truth so the Spirit could then testify of it.
- i. Disciples. Must. Have. Courage.
- j. = trust in the Spirit = experience with Elder Bednar
- k. Result = 32-24

13. Thessalonica: Acts 17:1-5

- a. Paul has great results in preaching in Thessalonica however there is great persecution from the Jews there to the members Paul leaves behinds
- b. His teachings will stir up violent opposition so Paul leaves to spare the new converts further persecution

14. Thessalonians (page 1499)

- a. Written in 50 and 51 AD
- b. Written from Corinth
- c. Paul wanted to return to visit the saints there but he couldn't so he sends Timothy
- d. The first epistle was in response to Timothy's report after he returned from the visit

15. 1 Thes 1 = congrats on their faithfulness. They are under severe persecution and it would have meant a lot to hear this from Paul

16. What would it be like to go back in time and witness the reading of this letter to these faithful Saints?
17. Can you imagine how seriously Paul took writing these letters?
18. 1:5 = importance of the Holy Ghost
19. 3:10 = perfect that which is lacking in our faith
20. 4:4 = know how to possess our vessel in faithfulness and honor
21. 5:4-8= Children of the light. Not darkness. Watch and be ready.
22. 2:1-3 = scripture mastery