

Putting Things Together

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Bible Study is one of the most delightful and rewarding responsibilities of a gospel preacher. (2 Tim. 2:15) It is the time when things begin to come together, a time when new thoughts are generated that can either empty or fill one's FFFR (File For Future Reference). Although I've always had one it was not labeled until I met Dee Bowman many years ago. This file is kept in the student's mind and is easily accessed at any time during the day or night. It is a storage bin where questions about God, Christ, Holy Spirit or just any Bible verse not understood is located, where bits of information seemingly disconnected from other information mills and churns continuously. Through the years that file has been full of information looking for the right slot to fill and make sense of things not understood. After studying for tomorrow's services I thought I would begin to share some of the things from that file with you on these pages under the caption above. So this is the first and I hope many more might follow.

Acts 17:1-14 is Luke's account of Paul and Silas leaving Philippi and beginning a new work in Thessalonica. Paul's company at this time includes Silas, Timothy and Luke. Paul and Silas started from Antioch in Syria when Barnabas disagreed with Paul concerning taking John Mark (Acts 15:36ff). They picked up Timothy in Lystra after he was circumcised. We learn here that although new converts are not required to be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15) they are not prohibited from being circumcised for other reasons. Timothy being the son of a Jewish woman but of a Gentile father had not been circumcised. That would become an obstacle to reaching the Jews with the gospel of Christ on Timothy's part and the wisdom of Paul quietly eliminated that hindrance. Luke joined their company in Troas and accompanied them to Philippi. The pronouns Luke uses to refer to Paul and his company changes from the third person: "them" and "they" to the first person: "we" and "us" in verse 10 of Acts chapter 16. When Paul and Silas leave Philippi to journey to Thessalonica Luke uses the third person pronoun "they" indicating that he had not left Philippi with them and as "they" in Acts 17:1 refers to Paul and Silas we know too that Timothy stayed behind as well. They were needed in Philippi and we learn in other verses (Phil. 1:1) that the church in Philippi was scripturally organized with saints, bishops and deacons and probably through the efforts of these two gospel preachers, Luke and Timothy, as Paul and Silas continue through Macedonia to Thessalonica. The church in Philippi consisted at Paul's departure of Lydia and the ladies in her household together with the Jailor and his household and probably of other new converts as well. The false charges that resulted in Paul and Silas being beaten and imprisoned would not follow Paul and Silas to Thessalonica because Paul demanded his lawful rights as a Roman citizen and was exonerated of all charges.

Thessalonica is about 100 miles to the west of Philippi. Paul and Silas would have traveled the Egnatian Way, the Roman highway that connected the Sea of Marmara and the Adriatic Sea. Paul and Silas passed through Amphipolis (30 miles from Philippi) and Apollonia (35 miles from Amphipolis) on the way to

Thessalonica because there was a Synagogue in Thessalonica but little to no Jewish population in the other two cities. The gateway for the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles was the synagogue in as much as you would find devout people seeking the Messiah of the Old Testament in this place. How rich a community is where such a group of people assemble weekly and how poverty stricken a community that does not have such a weekly assembly. The two messengers of Heaven to earth bypass the two and head straight to the third where they know people will be assembled to hear the message of Salvation. Do you meet weekly in such an assembly to heard the words of life?

Your

Paul reasoned out of the Old Testament Scripture in their Synagogue three Sabbath days. The Sabbath was on the seventh day of the Week as we learn from Ex. 20:8-11 and was the day the Jews assembled therefore Paul assembled on the seventh day with them to preach the gospel of salvation and although its not mentioned within this context he would have met the next day, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) for divine services and kept the memorial feast, the Lord's supper, with the other Saints available. That the Sabbatarians will use this verse to teach Sabbath keeping in the Christian age reveals how desperate they are for Bible arguments to prop up their false doctrine.

Notice the results of Paul's preaching in verse 4: **some** Jews believed, a **great multitude** of Greeks and of the Chief women, **not a few**. It is interesting to compare the results of Paul's gospel preaching in Berea, verse 12, the next town about 65 miles SW of Thessalonica: **Many** of the Jews believed, also of the Greek Women and men, **not a few**.

There is a fundamental reason for this difference. The Bereans are described as being more noble than the Thessalonians. Noble in the Greek, "eugenes", is the word we get the name Eugene from. It signifies one who is well born, high in rank, noble and it identifies one who is willing to receive and examine the evidence as well as ready to embrace it when it passes the test of diligent examination. These searched the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. They are not close minded but are ready to hear and prove by examination the things they hear. They did so daily, how many of us measure this test of nobility when it comes to God's word?

Nevertheless, the church established in Thessalonica was a strong and growing work for years after. We notice the remarks made by Paul in his epistle to them and realized how strong they became: 1Thess. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. 1 Thess 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard

of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

The close minded Jews that believe not in Thessalonica assaulted the house of Jason looking for Paul but failing this took Jason before the rulers of the city from whom security of Jason & of other brethren was taken making the return of Paul to their city a dangerous thing for the brethren. Was this the hindrance of Satan spoken of in 1 Thess 2:18? Paul couldn't return for fear of injuring the brethren, how sad that the Apostle of Christ could not return to further bless them.