

Acts 16:35–17:15

Three Things That Genuinely Spirit-Planted Churches Have in Common

Saturday, December 17, 2022 • Read Acts 16:35–17:15

Questions from the Scripture text: Who sent whom in the morning to do what (v35)? To whom does the jailer relay the news (v36)? What does the jailer want Paul to do? But what does Paul say they have done (v37)? And what new information does he add? What does he want them to do? To whom do the officers repeat this (v38)? And what frightens the magistrates? What do they come do (v39)? How do they ask? Where do Paul and company go (v40)? What do they do at Lydia's? Through where do they go to where (17:1)? What was there that hadn't been at Philippi? What does v2 note about Paul going to synagogue? How many Sabbaths does he go there now? From what does he reason? What does he explain and demonstrate (v3)? Whom does he preach as the resurrected Christ? What happens to some of the Jews (v4)? How many god-fearing Greeks join Paul and Silas? And not a few of whom else? What group become envious (v5)? Whom do they enlist? What do they gather? What do they do to the city? Where do they attack? In order to do what to Paul and Silas? Why does this fail (v6)? Whom do they drag instead? To whom? With what sort of voice do they address the rulers of the city? Of what do they accuse Paul and Silas? And of what do they accuse Jason (v7)? What do they claim that "these are all" doing? How? What effect does this have upon the crowd and the rulers of the city (v8)? What two things do they do to them in v9? What do the brethren do as soon as Jason is returned (v10)? To where? Where do Paul and Silas go when they arrive? What does v11 note about the Jews in Berea? How did they receive the Word? What else did they do? How often? In order to find out what? What result did this have on them (v12)? And upon whom else? Who find out what in v13? Where do they go? What do they do? What do the brethren immediately do with whom in v14? Who remain in Berea? Where do Paul's guides bring him (v15)? What command does he give them before they depart?

What can we note about the spread of the gospel through Macedonia? Acts 16:35–17:15 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty-one verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the spread of the gospel through Macedonia was characterized by several common features.**

Several features of the work in Philippi continue to characterize the spread of the gospel in other cities in Macedonia.

Paul continued to start with the Jews. Philippi hadn't had a synagogue, but he still went where Sabbath prayer was made (cf. 16:13). It was his custom to start in the synagogue of the Jews, which he did at Thessalonica (17:1–2) and Berea (v10).

The Spirit continued to gather in especially Gentiles. Lydia had been a God-fearer, which implies a Gentile (16:14). In Thessalonica, God saves a multitude of them (v4), and in Berea "not a few of them" (v12).

The Spirit continues to give special attention to saving women. His had been the case in Philippi, with Lydia (cf. 16:13:14), and "not a few of the leading women" in Thessalonica join Paul and Silas (v4). Prominent women in Berea are specifically mentioned as believing (v12).

Opposition continues to come by stirring the populace into a tumult. This had been the case in Philippi (cf. 16:20–22) to the detriment of the magistrates (v35–39). The technique is repeated by the envious Jews in Thessalonica (v5), who even accuse the missionaries of doing that very thing (v6). Then, when the Berean synagogue lacks such opponents, those from Thessalonica pinch hit over there as well (v13).

There are various ways this plays out. In Philippi, where Roman citizenship is highly valued, it is a means by which they are spared (v37–39). In Thessalonica, Paul and Silas are successfully hidden, but the hostility of the opponents is such that they attack even the missionaries' host (v6–7) apparently taking from him guarantee money (v9) that they would lose if they did not send the missionaries away (v10).

In the context of such similarity, the difference of the Bereans is plainer by contrast. The text plainly calls them more noble (v11a). This was seen first in how they received the Word ("with all readiness," v11b), then in how they followed up (searching the Scriptures daily to see that these things are so, v11c).

The Lord's work, then, can clearly follow a general pattern. But His work in each congregation and each individual is still unique. Whatever happens in the work, we may be sure that just as it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise again from the dead (v3), so it is necessary that gospel go to all for whom He suffered and died. However the Lord brings that about, even if through much opposition and suffering, we are to persist in the faith and in evangelism.

What features of God's work in these three places have you seen in His work in other places and times?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for giving Christ to die and rise again for us. And thank You for causing Your gospel to come to us for whom He died. And thank You for working faith in us. Grant that we would be noble and receptive and studious and diligent. And grant us to keep persisting in the work of the gospel, for we ask it in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP46 "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength" or TPH417 "Jesus Shall Reign, Where'er the Sun"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Act 16, beginning in verse 35 and going through verse 15. Of chapter 17. These are God's words. And when it was day, the magistrate sent the officer saying let those men go So the keeper of the prison reported, these words to paul saying the magistrates of central, let you go.

Now, therefore, depart and go in peace. Paul said to them, they have beaten us, openly uncondemned romans, and a throat us into prison. And now, do they put us out secretly? No indeed. Let them come themselves and get us out. And the officers told these words to the magistrates and they were afraid when they heard that they were romance.

Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out and asked them to depart from the city. So, they went out of the prison and entered the house of lydia. And when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged then and departed. Now, when they had passed through empyphilis and syphilis to and a pollinia, they came to Thessalonica Where there was a synagogue of the jews.

Then paul is his custom laws went into them and for three, sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. And saying just jesus whom i preach to you is the christ.

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. But the Jews who are 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 the house of jason and sought to bring them out to the people.

But when they did not find, Then they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city crying out. Those who have these who have turned the world upside down. Have come here, too. Jason has harbored them. These are all acting contrary to the decrees of caesar. Saying there is another king jesus.

And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, They let them go. Then the brethren immediately sent to Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica and that they received the word with alacrity. And search the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed. And also not a few of the Greeks prominent women, as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul and Silas.

That came there. Also in stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away to go to the sea. But both Paul, but both Silas and Timothy remained there. So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens, and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed.

Departed. So far the reading of God's inspired. And inherent word. Uh, we have something in the narrative and the Uh, telling of the history of what happened here, that is very similar to what we have in some places. Uh, for instance, in Second Kings. And even First Kings. Uh, where you have?

Several events and incidents. Uh, presented rapid fire. There's the close, of course of the In at the ministry in Philippians. And then there is Very brief account of the missed ministry, and Thessalonica and an even briefer account of the ministry at Berea. And what happens is as in other places where the Bible does this, where the Holy Spirit does this by the hand, Of the human writer.

Is he allows us to in very kind of short compass, see some things that Several different Kings. And and those other cases. Um, or in this case, several different evangelistic ministries or Missionary. Church, plants have in common. And the first thing that they all have in common, of course.

Is the preaching. Of Jesus Christ. Paul had preached. Jesus Christ in Philippi, he's A very plainly preaches. Uh, Christ from the word in Thessalonica. We see that in verses two and three, and it is the word that he preaches. And, of course, we know by now from the book of Acts that preaching, the word means preaching Christ from the word, we've seen that several times and you see that in In verse 11.

And verse 13. Where verse 13 tells us that the word of God was preached and verse 11, talks about how the word was being received. So, the first thing is, Wherever you go, if you are, wherever the church goes, wherever the ministers of Christ. Goes for the planting of churches for evangelizing of the lost.

They use words, they use the Bible's words and they preach Christ from the Bible's words. That's it. That's what evangelism is, that's what church planting is. That's what mission work is. From the Bible, that's what's done in all contexts. We'll see it in a very different context that is Not quite the same as this kind of rapid fire.

Three accounts. Um, that we have. Before us now but we'll see it in a different context. Um, In Athens next next week, Lord willing. Uh so you have the preaching of Christ and then one of the things that you have in common is actually something that it seems like they don't have in common which is that the response is different in each place.

But the thing that has in common is that the response is different based upon whether or not God gives to those who hear receptivity to the word. And so in Philippi, it was like, holding teeth. Only Lydia at first, was receptive to the word, there was almost no one else receptive to the word and then suddenly in that midnight when Paul and Silas were praying and singing him to God, what happened, the prisoners were listening to them.

God gave receptivity. Well, there's not very much receptivity in Thessalonica. Some of them were persuaded. Some of the Jews were persuaded, um, Uh, but a multitude of the Greeks and many, not a few of the leading, women are persuaded but there are lots of Jews who are not persuaded.

Verse 5. And so, They? They're going to make trouble for. For Paul and Silas, and the believers in Testament will come. Back to that in a moment. But you see the difference then between Them, and the ones in Berea. Um, That when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

We know from verse 2 that this was by habit by intent. And this, this was especially not on the first day sabbaths. Which are the Lord's day. The first day of the week first day sabbath the same phrase in Greek, but these are on the sabbaths. They go into the synagogue of the Jews and these are more.

Uh, fair-minded. Noble minded. They are given better minds by God. For the hearing of the word. And so they receive the word with all readiness. And so you compare verse 12 With verse 4 and you see in verse 4, some of them were persuaded and Thessalonica. But the difference between the sum in verse 4 and the therefore, many of them believed in verse 12 was the mind that God had given them.

Paul as far as we know, and it's implied here is with the same skill and with the same eloquence and the same sort of ministry preaching in both places. And the difference in the fruit belongs to God. Belongs to God who prepares some hearts and doesn't prepare others, and none of us deserve to have a heart's prepared.

In fact, all of us deserve to have our hearts hardened. But that is a, hopefully a help when we are praying for evangelistic ministries when we pray for our own church, when we pray for church plants or mission work.

Which means that there are a couple things that we should do. The first is We should always be praying. To the Lords, to open the hearts of those who will hear the second is that we should always be ministering in humility.

Understanding that we are not going to make the difference in these people's lives. And that is actually a privilege to get to be the one who announces Jesus to them. And the third being That we would not be discouraged. If the response is not what we would have wanted, the Lord has chosen whom he is going to say.

And he has, Uh, he has given his son who has accomplished their salvation, and every single one of them is going to be saved. And so Christ does not going to lose. Any of his saving glory at all. By any of the lack of fruit. That we may. Or may not see in our ministries.

And so, Invested in the glory of Christ and humble about ourselves. We need not be discouraged. About. Our ministry. If the fruit that we perceive is small in fact when Paul comes to write about his ministry and Thessalonica in First Thessalonians 1, he is overflowing with thanksgiving to God, why?

Because those to whom he is writing were unable by the holy spirit to receive the word as it really is the word of god, and their faith and hope, and love that produced, diligence and labor. And one of the results, one of the results that You know, they were a great many greeks and not a few of the leading women.

And some of the jews was that they got afflicted by the rest of the Jews and the city that the Jews had stirred up against them, and they're affliction was something in which they had fellowship with the apostle. And their affliction that they had fellowship with the apostle in was something that they both had fellowship in with jesus.

And so there was no reason for discouragement at all but great thanksgiving to god who showed their election. Uh to use language from first Thessalonians 1 showed their election by the response that he had given some of them. And so, yes we come and comparatively we look at the three in a row.

Boom boom. And Philip. Hi. Looks like a miserable start and even by the time we leave, it's lydia's household. The jailer's household and probably some prisoners who we don't know when they're going to get out. And be able to be gathering regularly for the church. You know, who knows?

Maybe they had. Lord's day worship at the jail instead of Going down by the river on. On jewish sabbaths. After that in philippi but philip i, how does that end up? One of the most commendable churches in the entire new testament, That loves doing missionary work. That supports paul.

Thessalonica by comparison to Berea. It seems poorer here. And yet, paul rejoices over them and talks about how they become one of the great missionary churches. In the whole world at the time that the gospel goes forth from them into both akaia and Macedonia. And that the way they conduct themselves under affliction becomes an example to the churches that they plant by the word that goes out from among them.

And so there is this thing that is seen in the difference between the churches and the difference is because the same the the Of the thing that is true about all the churches that god is the one who prepares the heart, who produces the fruit. And god is the one who gave the bereans to be receptive.

These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with alreadyness. And we can quibble we would be right to quibble with the translation weather in the second half of the verse In the context, it's obviously not a weather but that They received the word with alreadyness and searched the scriptures daily to find that these things were so, Uh, to to turn, you know, the supposed berean spirit and to kind of a critical reserving judgment until we have seen it for ourselves.

From the bible spirit is to turn the The truth of Verse verse 11 on its head, which is that they weren't reserving judgment. They had open hearts to receive it all. Loved the truth that they heard and they searched the scriptures to feed themselves more upon it. Not to play.

Um, discerning spirit people against the preacher. And so, The thing that they had, One of the things that was the same in, all three places was the lord produced. Uh, the fruit that he wanted. He is, saving everyone. Whom he has chosen and for whom. Christ has died. The third thing that is the same in every place.

This persecution And it's persecution by losers. I mean, they're all losers. And i don't mean that in kind of the The snarky childish way of calling names. The magistrates are losers. They've been afraid the whole time. They've been easily manipulated the whole time and again, what happens in this passage?

They're afraid again. Because i find out that paul has this roman citizenship. And that's one of the points of the text. Paul says, and they beaten us, openly uncondemned romans. Now, do they put us out secretly? No, indeed, let them come themselves and get us out the officers. Tell these words, the magistrates and they were afraid when they heard that they were Owens and they came and pleaded with them and brought them out.

They're losers, who are the ones? Who persecute and Thessalonica or Thessalonica to pronounce it more correctly, the jews who are not persuaded and who were envious. Their losers. They haven't been able to have any effect in. In the city and now the lord, converts a bunch of people, and they come and And they can't find paul, but they do find.

Um, They do find jason the guy who is acting as host for paul and silas and Timothy. And they say these who have turned the world upside down. Have come here too. Well, lots of people. Wants to make much of verse six and say see the the gospel had already turned to the world upside down.

Well in a sense yes. I mean jesus said turned the world upside down when he crushed the serpent's head on the cross. When he took his seat on the throne of glory and satan has cast down. And now it does the age of the gospel, the age of the spirit and everyone for whom the lord, jesus died.

Must be brought to faith and And, Uh yet as far as the actual difference in a place like Philippi or a place like this of Anika and actually hadn't made them much of a difference. But these were You know, the the jewish Political local politics equivalent of. You know, one of those, you know, south american or european soccer players.

Who is always flopping all around and trying to make Make things. That either aren't at all or were in a tiny bit. Look like they're huge. And so the the jews come and they make this great big exaggerated. Uh presentation. And they too want to use the easily manipulated rulers of the city and the crowd by praying upon their both their, roman identity and allegiance on the one hand and their fear.

Of rome. If There's perceived disorderliness or Or. Lack of honor for Roam and sees are on the other hand, they say these are all acting contrary to the decrees of caesar saying there's another king, jesus. And they traveled the Jews trouble, the crown, the rulers, the city. Um, And the rulers of the city.

They basically take a deposit from Uh, from jason and it seems to be Because of the interaction between verse 9 and verse 10 that the deposit was Uh, The. Money that he paid. Either that there would be no more. Disturbance from him. Or. For the expelling of paul silas and Timothy evidence towards the latter has given by the fact that the brethren immediately send paul and silos away by night.

To Berea. So, that jason can get. His deposit back. He could take it. He can get his Uh, security back. Um, But the jews in Thessalonica were such losers. That when they hear that people in berea are getting converted and there aren't enough people. Who are opposed to the gospel in berea to raise up a persecution.

The Jews from desolnica, come down and do it for them. When the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of god was preached by paulit maria. They came there also and stirred up the crowds. And immediately the brethren sent paul. Away. He's obviously. The one who triggers them the most to use.

A rather recent way of speaking. And silos and Timothy who aren't so much of a trigger they remain. And yet, Paul, Um, Paul, when he gets to Athens sends for silos and Timothy to come to him at once so that he can continue. Uh, his ministry with them. In Athens.

But that's the third thing. There's opposition and if there is an opposition where you are, there's opposition that will come from somewhere else. This is still spiritual war. And there's, you know, Satan may be cast down from the ability to bring accusation. Against the brethren from heaven. Now he who who is our advocate who's wounds testify to our atonement sits on the throne of heaven and Satan is cast down as the Lord Jesus said he was and would be.

By by his end ministry. Uh, but yet Satan rages on the earth. And and just because many of those who are unbelievers, don't aren't conscientiously aware. That they are being used by the devil to oppose Christianity, doesn't make them any less used by the devil to oppose Christianity. And there are many who are aware that they oppose Christianity but aren't aware that, it's because of the devil and there are some even who are opposed to Christianity and are aware That they are servants of Satan and our unashamedly.

So, But this world is full of those who oppose who hate the kingship of Jesus and the proclamation of his gospel and the salvation, the redemption of those for him, he died. The heat, the faith that the Holy Spirit gives To people to save them from sin. Just like a miserable person in a much smaller example of the envy, you know, when people are miserable, they won't everybody else to be miserable.

The hate to hear about good news. Coming to anyone or good things happen to anyone. Well, there's no better news or any better thing to happen to someone than them coming to faith in Jesus Christ. And so we shouldn't be surprised. When there's genuine persecution. Genuine opposition. To the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the church in Jesus Christ.

And a church that receives no persecution at all. Not even from, you know, maybe they have been given by God a fruitful effective ministry locally, but they don't receive any persecution from outsiders. That church should wonder whether or not it's a true church. If a believer receives, no opposition at all.

He should wonder whether or not he's a believer, perhaps just, he's not walking faithfully as a believer. Because this apostle, Who goes through these things. It doesn't just chalk it up to A, an ongoing streak of nastiness. He takes it as a universal principle. He reminds Timothy when he writes to him.

As he's urging Timothy to fulfill his ministry and to be a faithful minister, he says everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ, Jesus will be persecuted. And so those are the three things that all true gospel ministry to churches. True church planting true mission work. True evangelism have in common.

First of all, that it is done by preaching the word and preaching Jesus from the word, second that it is entirely dependent upon God's to give receptivity heart, receptivity to those who he has chosen. And for whom Jesus has died, which is the entire reason he's called people to preach to them because faith comes by hearing and that's God's appointed means.

But is the second thing that come, that these things have in common is that it's God who must step in the heart and the third thing. Is that there is persecution opposition resistance to all true ministry. True evangelism. True church planting transmission work It should not be a goal.

For a church plant that they will be beloved in the community. Should be a goal that Jesus would be beloved in the community. And yet we are. Uh, quite aware. That, that only happens. As in case number two, Or factor number two, that they all have in common. Jesus is only beloved when the Lord opens people's hearts.

To love him. And we should only want to be beloved by those who love him. How dreadful would it be? To be far enough from Christ and distinct enough. From. Uh, his mind his ways. That people who hate him, could love us. That would be sat indeed. Praise God.

He Even praise God for the wisdom in which He gives us rapid fire accounts like this to call our attention. To the similarities and learn from the three accounts taken together. Let's pray. Our father in heaven, we pray that you would give us great thanksgiving and humility and joy that the Faith that we have the salvation that we have.

It's all from you. You have loved us. You have chosen. You have said, you have given faith. We bless your name for it. Oh, Lord, we deserve to be the envious ones. I hateful ones, the persecuting ones, the fearful ones, the earthly, and spiritual losers, who are in the grip of the devil.

That's what we deserve. Lord. But here we are. Fumbling as it were still in a great deal of weakness. Fumbling through worship, but worshipping. And worshipping through Christ and loving you and resting in him and being helped by your Spirit. Seeing him in your word. So he blessed your name for this mercy to us.

We pray, Lord. That the Uh, the factors the characteristics that faithful churches and gospel works have in common that you would give these to us. And particularly Lord if we don't have the fruit that we wanted or we have more persecution, Then we would be comfortable with make us to remember, That, this is occasion for joy because it is you Who give the fruit and the affliction is even A fellowship with all who are faithful?

In particularly with Christ. How we thank you. For giving us fellowship with Christ. So that even the mechanism by which we are forgiven is itself. Uh, the greatest blessing there can be Union and communion with your son. Our Lord Jesus. And that what he has won for us then.

By that forgiveness, is more of the same fellowship with you. Our father, And with your Holy Spirit, And so we bless your name and we ask that, you'd make us to live out of that fellowship today. In Jesus's name. Amen.