

Paul and his companions though leaving Philippi having recently been arrested did not leave defeated but triumphant on their own terms. They said good-bye to a stunning new church that contained, among others, Lydia and her family, the Philippian jailer and his household, and the former demon possessed clairvoyant.

What a daring portrait they painted as they continued on passing **“through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica.”** All in all it would’ve been about a three days journey covering about 65 miles.

Amphipolis: An ancient city of Macedonia located along the Via Egnatia 50 miles E, situated on hill on the bank of the Strymon River.

Apollonia: Would be where they would’ve stayed the second night.

Thessalonica: Was and still is the main city of Macedonia, founded in 315 B.C., on the site of Therme, by Cassander, who named it after his wife, a half sister of Alexander the Great. The importance of the city made it a strategic target.

When they arrived they would’ve found a thriving city of about 200,000. Unlike Philippi there was a synagogue.

1. **A thumbnail sketch of their activities. Vv. 1b – 4.** As was their custom where there was a synagogue Paul visited three Sabbath days.
 - a. **Why minister in the Synagogues.** Three possible reasons:
 - i. **Logical.** It provided a strong contact point with people who knew both the storyline and the receiver culture. In successful it was a powerfully effective way to go about it.
 - ii. **Theological.** Theologically there was the recognition of the special redemptive historical role of the Jews. **Cf. Ro. 1:16-17, 3:1-4.**

- iii. **Emotionally.** Paul carried an incredible burden for his people. **Cf. Ro. 9:1-5.**

- b. **The actual approach taken. Vv. 2b-3.** Paul’s evangelistic methodology centered on establishing communities that were gathered to Christ through the Scripture. Note the terms describing his public ministry.

- i. **Reasoned. diele,xato** The word is the root for our English word dialogue. There was exchange, questions and answers.

- ii. **Explained. dianoi,gwn** literally ‘to open’ it comes to mean to explain, interpret, to ‘open up’ a thing.

- iii. **Proved. paratige,menoj** this lit. means to ‘place beside’ or ‘set before.’ It has the idea of offering evidence on behalf of something.

It was all aimed at challenging their Messianic assumptions in light of Jesus.

- c. **The results obtained. V. 4.** Two things claim our attention:
 - i. **The way he ministered.** While only God can save Paul’s methods are commendable. He treated them with dignity and respect and pointed them to the Scriptures. **Cf. 1Thess. 2:9-12.** He ministered in a self- effacing, self-sacrificing manner. **Cf. 1Thess. 2:8-9.**
 - ii. **The fruit he bore.** His approach bore fruit. Note the description of the people accurately reflects ministry in the Hellenistic context.

2. **A thumbnail sketch of the opposition they encountered.** **Vv. 5-9.** On one level it is just standard satanic opposition to the gospel. **Cf. 1Thess. 2:18.** On another level it is extremely interesting for the similarity it bears to the persecution Jesus encountered in Jerusalem.

a. **Motivated by jealousy.** **V. 5.** Unbelieving Jews rally derelicts¹, agitate a crowd and stir up the city and move to assault the missionaries. The word ‘*dēmos*’ is behind what is rendered ‘*crowd*.’ An assembly responsible for judicial matters may be in view.²

b. **The offense sited.** **Vv. 6-7.** Unable to harm the missionaries they vent on Jason the hosts. Dragging them before the city authorities³ they level two charges against the church that follows her through the ages.⁴

i. **Civil disturbance.**

avnastatw, santej lit. ‘To subvert.’

In one sense the charge is false. The actual cause of the unrest is the world’s unwillingness to listen to truth.⁵ It either: **(1)** democracies violation of its own premises or **(2)** totalitarian society’s brutal suppression of the truth. But, on the other hand the world is upside down and we are seeking to turn it.

1. Why? Believers live right side up in a upside down world.

2. The love of the world is rooted out of the heart.

3. The ways and values of the world are challenged and flatly contradicted.

ii. **Sedition.** Sedition is “rebellious against the authority of the state.” The charge coming from a Jew was:

1. Ironic and hypocritical in the extreme. They hated Caesar.

2. It was patently false. They knew that there was nothing inherently tending to dethrone princes in Christianity. In fact it was a major part of why Christ was rejected. He wouldn’t overthrow Rome.

3. Christians, in submitting to a higher authority submit more fully to human authorities. **Cf. Ro. 13.**

c. **The backlash engendered.** **Vv. 8-9.** The charges trouble the leaders so they secure an agreement to take a security⁶ from Jason. They may not give in to the mob but they insure that the missionaries leave the area. **Cf. 1Thess. 2:17.**

Three great lessons:

- We continue to see that the main strategy was church planting.
- We see that the biblical method involves patient exposure to the truth with detailed painstaking explanation. Six verbs summarize the gospel efforts: Paul “reasoned,” “explained,” “proved,” and “proclaimed.” The response was that some were “persuaded” and “joined.”⁷

¹ They are described as wicked men who hang around the market place- probably looking to commit crimes and cause trouble- men perhaps prone to violence.

² Bruce notes that it was a ‘free’ city, the civic assembly handled legislative and judicial functions. It was usually private citizens that set it in motion.

³ The magistrates in Thessalonica were called “politarchs” a title known from many of the inscriptions that have come down to us. cf. Bruce, 324.

⁴ Charges of disloyalty to state are always serious charges: it was to the Greeks & Romans and is and always will be in every society.

⁵ At this stage the main source of conflict was Judaism. This was pitched enough to catch Gentile attention everywhere. **Cf. 18:2; 21:21; 28:17-22.**

⁶ Hikanos, refers to taking of ‘legal security’ or ‘bail’, something to guarantee that the missionary group would not break Roman law.

⁷ Bock, Acts.

- The gospel will always separate and divide.