

VICTORIES AND VIOLENCE IN MISSIONARY WORK

Lesson Aim: We must stand firm against violence and trust the Lord for victory in His work.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson; then ask the following questions for class discussion.

Someone has said, "Wherever Paul went with the gospel, there was either a revival or a riot." Paul always seemed to be in the center of a storm, but he was faithful to the task that God had given him. He was bold as a lion and the Lord blessed him with many souls and he built many churches.

What victories did the Lord give to Paul and his team in Europe? Acts 17-18 (16)

In Philippi, Lydia and the Philippian jailer identified themselves with Jesus Christ plus their households (16:13-14, 30-34) and a faithful church was started with these and other converts. In Thessalonica, some Jews believed Paul's message when he spoke to them about Christ in their synagogue for three Sabbaths. Then he went to the Gentiles and many enthusiastically received Jesus as their Savior so that it became an effective evangelistic church (17:2-4; 1 Ths 1:8-10). In Berea, the Jews were more receptive to Paul than in Thessalonica when he opened to them the Scriptures about Jesus Christ. Therefore, many Jews believed along with many prominent Greek women and men (17:10-12). When Paul went to Athens, he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and devout persons and in the market place with those that met with him each day (17:17). Philosophers heard him speak about the resurrection and they invited him to speak to them at the Areopagus. He spoke to them about the unknown God that they ignorantly worshipped, but when they heard about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who would judge them, some mocked, others wanted to hear more about this, but a few received Christ as their Savior (17:31-34). Then Paul went to Corinth where he met Aquila and Priscilla, who became close Jewish friends with Paul as they made tents together. It is not known if they had received Jesus before they met Paul or after, but they were clear in their witness for Him in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome (18:2, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3). Paul reasoned with Jews and Greeks every Sabbath and made every effort to have them put their faith in Jesus Christ. Then he went to Justus' house next to the synagogue to present Jesus to the people. Crispus and his household believed along with many Corinthians and they were baptized. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and told him that many in Corinth would believe, so he stayed in that city for 18 months.

What violence did Paul encounter in Europe? Acts 17-18 (16)

Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison in Philippi for casting a demon out of a girl (16:18-24). Unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica hired wicked men to start a riot against Jason in an attempt to find Paul and his team in his house, but they were not there. The believers sent Paul, Silas and Timothy away by night to Berea (17:5-10). After a successful ministry in Berea, the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea and came to stir up the people against him. The believers took Paul to Athens, but left Silas and Timothy in Berea (17:13-15). In Athens Paul suffered the mocking of some philosophers about the resurrection of Jesus Christ who would return to be their Judge (17:31-32). He was opposed and blasphemed by unbelieving Jews in Corinth after he had reasoned with them for several Sabbaths, but suffered no further violence (18:6).

What was Paul's message to the Jews that many of them opposed? 17:3; 18:5

He preached that Jesus needed to suffer death (to pay for the offenses of all people) and be raised from the dead (to justify, that is, to declare believers to be righteous with no sin charged to their account) – Rom 4:25. He also preached to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah). God had promised the Jews that Messiah would sit on the throne of David and be the ruler of all nations (Ps 2:6-9). This was their hope, but Paul had to convince them that Jesus was their Messiah from the Scriptures. The unbelieving Jews were violently against him, but those that believed his message received Christ and were baptized to become members of His church in each city.

What did Paul tell the philosophers about God? (17:22-31)

Paul told them that God is omnipotent and infinite (unlimited) in v. 24. He is good (25); sovereign (26); omniscient (27), life (28-29), longsuffering (patient), holy (30) and righteous/just (31).

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