

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

13. Christ's Use Of Paul To Overcome Slander In Discipling Through Godly Living

(Acts 17:1-10a; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-2:12)

I. Introduction

- A. Slander, relationally destructive lies about one's character, have a potent impact: Proverbs 18:8 ESV indicates it is like "delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body."
- B. Though being slandered is a big challenge to one who disciples since it counters the credibility of the truth of God he offers, it is overcome by a godly life as seen in Acts 17:1-10a and 1 Thessalonians 1:9-2:12:

II. Christ's Use Of Paul To Overcome Slander In Discipling Through Godly Living.

- A. Paul and his evangelistic team were badly slandered in their ministry at Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-9:
 - 1. In leaving Philippi, Paul, Silas and Timothy came to Thessalonica, and Paul began to minister in the synagogue there in line with his practice of giving the Gospel to the Jew first, Acts 17:1-2a; Rom. 1:16.
 - 2. As he reasoned with them from the Old Testament about Messiah's suffering, death and resurrection, he claimed Jesus whom Paul preached unto them was this Messiah, Acts 17:2b-3.
 - 3. Convinced by Paul's words, many Jews and Greeks, including chief women of the city, believed, 17:4.
 - 4. This huge conversion led the unbelieving Jews to be jealous, so they led evil men to create an uprising and assault the home of Jason where Paul's outreach team had been staying, Acts 17:5.
 - 5. Paul and his team was not then present, so the crowd captured Jason, brought him to the city rulers and claimed those who had turned the world upside down had arrived and deceived Jason into opposing Caesar's decrees with the claim they were to follow a competitive emperor, Jesus, Acts 17:6-7.
 - 6. This claim was slanderous, for it misused a truth to make Paul's team look like traitors of Rome: Jesus will invade the world and destroy the **revived** Roman Empire with its ruler, the antichrist at the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 19:11-21 with Daniel 2:40-44), but neither He (cf. John 18:33-37) nor His followers (cf. Romans 13:1-7) were to rebel against the old Roman Empire.
 - 7. Regardless, this slander troubled the rulers, so they had "Jason put up a bond, forfeitable if there were further trouble," and released him, Acts 17:9; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 17:9.
 - 8. To solve Jason's financial dilemma, the believers quickly sent Paul's team by night to Berea, 17:10a.
- B. We know from 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 that Paul was so concerned that his sudden departure and the slanderous charge against him might have caused the new Thessalonian converts to recant the faith, so he had later sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the new converts' spiritual welfare.
- C. To Paul's joy, Timothy reported back that they had retained a vibrant faith in Christ, 1 Thess. 3:6-8!
- D. Well, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 itemizes the quality life Paul and his missionary team had lived to overcome the slanderous charges leveled against them, making the Gospel that much more believable to onlookers:
 - 1. They had stayed bold in giving the truth regardless of having been beaten at Philippi for doing so, a fact apparently known by the Thessalonians at the time, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2. This proved to onlookers that Paul's team did not try to please men, but to please God even at the price of great suffering.
 - 2. They had not used flattery, but had been direct and thus honest in discipling, 1 Thessalonians 2:5a.
 - 3. They had not gone after dishonest gain from their hearers, 1 Thessalonians 2:5b, 9.
 - 4. They had demonstrated real, compassionate, gentle love as truly Spirit-led men of God versus giving only a false, artificial expression of kindness to their followers, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12.

Lesson: *Though badly slandered, Paul and his outreach team overcame it to be BELIEVABLE to onlookers, and that by (1) asserting the truth regardless of having suffered painfully for giving it, (2) by not flattering their hearers, but giving them even the unsavory truth, (3) by not pursuing dishonest gain and (4) by exhibiting a true, compassionate concern for others.*

Application: *(1) May we heed Paul's example to neutralize the tendency for slander to arise against us! (2) If we face slander, may we live so that the slander is countered by the Holy Spirit's power living through us like He did in the lives and ministries of Paul and his outreach team, Galatians 5:16-23.*