

Bible Survey, part 13

The New Testament – 1 & 2 Thessalonians

“Suffering for the Gospel”

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“Now they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue.” Acts 17:1

Jewish population of Thessalonica:

1941 = 60,000

Today less than 1,000

“And according to Paul’s custom, he went to the Jewish people first, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures explaining and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you, **IS** the Messiah.” Acts 17:2-3

“And some of the Jewish people were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Gentiles, and a number of the city’s leading women.” Acts 17:4

“Then the [unbelieving] Jewish people became jealous and taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, they formed a mob and went to Jason’s house looking for Paul and Silas.” Acts 17:5

“And when they didn’t find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city authorities.” Acts 17:6

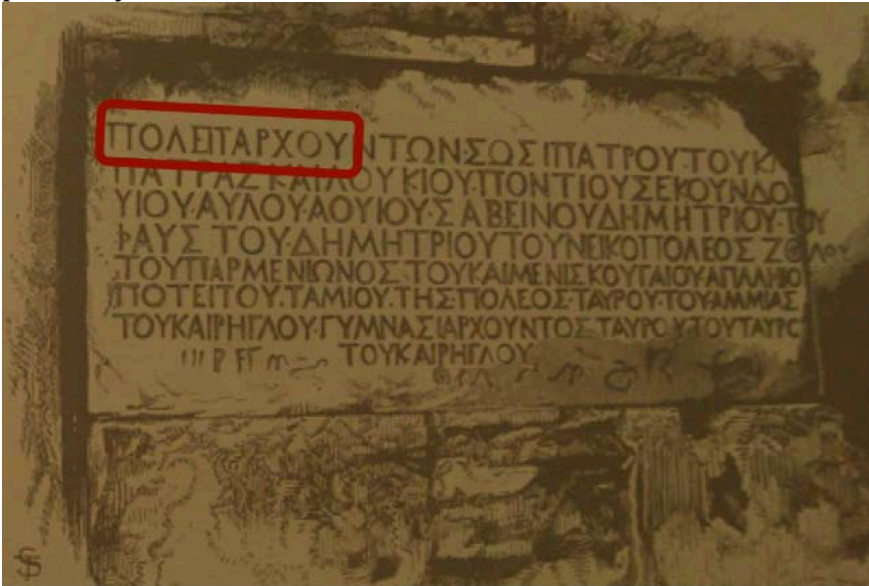
“City officials” = [Greek] “**Politarchs**”

Until 150 years ago, this word “**Politarchs**” had **never been found** outside the Bible.

Critics of the Bible used this to claim that the Bible is inaccurate and unreliable.

In the last 150 years, archaeologists have found 64 occurrences of the word “*Politarchs*” on inscriptions dug from the ground – confirming that, at the time of Paul, Thessalonica was ruled by five local magistrates who had the unique title: “*Politarchs*.”

Inscription from the city gate in Thessalonica found in 1876 – presently located in the British Museum, London.



“The more they dig out of the ground, the more the Bible proves to be right!”

“They dragged Jason and some other believers before the *Politarchs* shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have now come here too, and Jason has welcomed them into his home. And they are acting contrary to the laws of Caesar, saying that there is another king, named Jesus.”
Acts 17:6b-7

“And they stirred up the crowd and the *Politarchs*. And after Jason gave them a pledge, they released him. Then the brethren immediately sent Paul [for his own safety] and Silas away by night to Berea.”
Acts 17:8-10



“When Paul and Silas arrived in Berea, they went to the Jewish synagogue.” Acts 17:10b

Synagogue in Berea



“Now these Jewish people were more noble-minded than the Jews in Thessalonica, and they received the Word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see if what Paul was saying was true. Therefore, many of them believed . . .” Acts 17:11-12a

Any person who will examine the Scriptures with an open mind **will end up believing that Jesus is the Messiah** – it’s the only logical place that a person can end up!

“But when the [unbelieving] Jewish people in Thessalonica found out that the Word of God was being preached in Berea, they came there and began agitating and stirring up the crowds.” Acts 17:13

“Then immediately [again for safety] the brethren sent Paul to Athens by way of the sea, while Silas and Timothy remained in Berea.” Acts 17:14



“Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth . . .” Acts 18:5a

Timothy told Paul that the believers in Thessalonica were suffering **terrible persecution** for their faith.

So Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica **to make sure the faith of these young believers wasn't faltering** in the face of such heavy persecution.

"So I sent Timothy back to you, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, that none of you should be shaken by these sufferings . . . For indeed when I was there with you, I told you in advance that we were going to suffer persecution, just as has happened, as you well know." 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4

"Thus, I sent to find out about your faith; for I was afraid that the Tempter might have tempted you [i.e., to abandon the faith] and thus our labor among you might have been in vain." 1 Thessalonians 3:5

"But now, Timothy has returned and brought us the good news about your faith . . . and so even in our suffering, we were encouraged, for we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8

Paul wrote both letters to the Thessalonians to **commend** them for their perseverance and to **encourage** them to **keep standing firm in the Lord!**

"We thank God for you . . . and boast among God's churches about your perseverance and faith, in spite of the persecutions and trials you are enduring." 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

"Therefore, **stand firm** and **hold to the truths** you were taught by us, whether in person or by letter." 2 Thessalonians 2:15

"For the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you . . ." 2 Thessalonians 3:3

SO WHAT?

"After we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know we were **still** bold to speak the Word of God to you **amid strong opposition** . . ." 1 Thessalonians 2:2

". . . for your own countrymen **drove us out** [of Thessalonica] . . . and tried to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved . . ." 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

"For, in fact, when we were with you [in Thessalonica], we kept telling you that we would be **persecuted**, just as it has happened to you, as you well know." 1 Thessalonians 3:4

"For it has been granted to us on Christ's behalf, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer** for His sake." Philippians 1:29

"Remember what I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master. If they **persecuted** Me, they will **persecute** you [if you stand up for Me!] . . . And these things they will do to you for My sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.'" John 15:20-21

If we stand up for Christ, we are going to be **persecuted!** Paul says: "We need to **know this going in** and we need to **expect nothing different!**

First missionary journey:

- Abused in **Psidion Antioch**
- Life threatened in **Iconium**
- Stoned and left for dead in **Lystra**

Second missionary journey:

- Beaten and imprisoned in **Philippi**
- Run out of town in **Thessalonica** and **Berea**
- Ridiculed by the philosophers in **Athens**

“... I have been beaten times without number, frequently in prison, often in danger of death. Five times from the Jews I received thirty-nine lashes.” 2 Corinthians 11:23-24

“Three times I was beaten with rods [Acts 16 in Philippi]; once I was stoned [Acts 14 in Lystra]; three times I was shipwrecked [Acts 27]; a night and a day I have spent in the deep.” 2 Corinthians 11:25

Question: “Why did Paul keep going?”

Answer: “Because Paul believed something!”

Paul believed that apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ – no one will ever have eternal life or see the shores of heaven.

“Whoever believes in the Son [Jesus Christ] has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see eternal life . . .” John 3:36

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life – **no one** comes to the Father [eternal life/heaven] except through Me.” John 14:6

“And this is the record – that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son [Jesus Christ]. He who has the Son has eternal life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have eternal life.”
1 John 5:11-12

“Salvation is found in **no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven [except Jesus’] . . . **by which** we can be saved.” Acts 4:12

The only way we are going to **live like Paul lived** – is if we **believe what Paul believed!**

In over 40 years of serving the Lord, I’ve learned that it takes three things in order for a believer to be a bold witness for Christ.

#1 – The absolute belief that Jesus is the **ONLY** way to get to heaven

#2 – Being more in love with Jesus than with ourselves

#3 – Training believers how to share their faith