

The Apostle Paul, Part 4 of 6: A Great Speech on Mars Hill

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The last time we talked about the apostle Paul and where he went and the adventures he had on his second missionary journey. But it was so long that I had to stop in the middle, didn't I? So let's very quickly review what had been happening so far, all right? Then we'll go on.

Remember, the very first time we talked about Paul, he was persecuting Christians, being mean to them. But then the Lord Jesus appeared to him and talked to him, and Paul then became a believer in Jesus and began telling others about Jesus. Then later Paul and Barnabas made what we call the first missionary journey. They told the people they met that Jesus had died for our sins and then had been alive again, and that they needed to trust Jesus to save them from their sins. Some believed but some didn't. After that they went back to the church in Antioch in Syria where they had started out. They then went down to Jerusalem to talk to the apostles and elders there, and it was decided that the Gentile believers did not have to follow the law of Moses.

Then Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch, and Silas went with them. Later Paul and Silas started out on what we call Paul's second missionary journey. They went overland, and Timothy and Luke joined them as they went along. Finally Paul had a vision asking him to go over to Macedonia and help the people there. So they sailed over to Macedonia and went to the city of Philippi. In Philippi is where they had the evil spirit go out of the slave girl. This was very good for the slave girl, but her masters were really mad at Paul, because now she couldn't earn money for them by telling fortunes. So the masters had Paul and Silas thrown into prison. But what had happened that night as they were singing praises to God; do you remember? That's right! There was an earthquake and the prison doors were opened and their chains fell off! Then the jailer asked how he could be saved and they told him just to believe on the Lord Jesus, and he did and so did his family. Then the judges asked Paul and Silas to leave Philippi, and that's where we stopped last time. So let's go on. This is still on Paul's second missionary journey, remember.

Well, Luke evidently stayed in Philippi, but Paul and Silas and Timothy then traveled down from Philippi to a city named Thes-sa-lo-ni-ca. There was a synagogue there in Thessalonica, and for three sabbath days, three Saturdays, he went to the synagogue and talked to the Jews there about Jesus, showing them how the scriptures (what we call the Old Testament), how the scriptures had lots of prophesies about Jesus Christ. He showed them from the Old Testament that the Messiah (Messiah and Christ are the same word in two different languages, remember), that the Christ had to suffer and then rise from the dead, that this had all been prophesied. He then showed them that the Messiah was Jesus, the One that he was telling them about. And some of the Jews believed what Paul told them, and they trusted Jesus to save them from their sins. And so did a whole lot of Gentiles, both men and women.

But the Jews there in Thessalonica who did not believe in Jesus got jealous of Paul and Silas. These bad men got some other bad men to come and tell lies about Paul and Silas. And they got a mob together and caused sort of a riot! And they came and attacked the house where Paul and

Silas had been staying! But they didn't find them there. So they grabbed some of the believers and took them before the Roman judges of the city of Thessalonica, and they shouted, "Those men who have been causing so much trouble have come to our city, and they stayed at this man's house! Why, they are doing things against the law of Caesar -- they say that is another king besides Caesar, someone named Jesus!"

Now that was a lie, wasn't it?! Paul wasn't saying that Jesus was the king instead of Caesar, was he? He was just telling people how to be saved from their sins. Yes, someday the Lord Jesus Christ will come back, and then He will be King of everyone, but now there are men who are kings.

Anyway, all of these lies bothered the people and the Roman judges of the city. But since they didn't have Paul and Silas themselves, they let the believers they had there go free.

And right away that night the other Christians in Thessalonica got Paul and Silas away from there. (We have in the New Testament two letters that Paul later wrote to the Thessalonian Christians.)

Then Paul and Silas and Timothy went to a city named Be-re-a. And there in Berea they went as usual to the Jewish synagogue and told about Jesus. And what do you think the Bereans thought of that? They liked it!! In fact, the Bible says that the Bereans were more noble, more honorable, than the Thessalonians had been, because they were quick to listen to Paul. But they didn't just take Paul's word for it when Paul told them that Jesus was the Messiah that was prophesied in the Old Testament. No. Every day the Bereans checked out in the Bible itself what Paul was telling them to make sure that what he said was true.

And that's what we all need to do, too, isn't it? (You can do that when you get bigger, too.) Even if someone important says something about God or the Bible, that doesn't mean we shouldn't study it out for ourselves, too, does it? We should check things in the Bible when we hear something and find out what the Bible actually says. That way we can be like the Bereans. We, too, can be more noble than the Thessalonians who had believed what some liars had said, can't we?!

But back to Paul and Silas in Berea!

After hearing Paul and checking out in the Bible what he said and finding what he'd said was true, many of the Bereans, both Jews and Gentiles, then believed in Jesus, trusting Him to save them from their sins. Isn't that wonderful?!

Well, Paul and Silas were preaching and teaching about the Lord Jesus to the Bereans, and the Bereans were checking it all out in the Bible to make sure it was true, and many of the Bereans were believing and being saved. But the unbelieving Jews back in Thessalonica heard about this and didn't like it! So they went down to Berea and started trying to make trouble, for Paul especially. So right away the believers in Berea had Paul leave, and he got on a ship. But Silas and Timothy stayed there for a while longer in Berea.

Well, some of the Bereans went with Paul until they came to the city of A-thens, farther down in what we call Greece. Then Paul told the Bereans with him to go back and to have Silas and Timothy to hurry and come down to him in Athens. So the other men left and went back to Berea and told them that.

Well, while Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he began looking around him. And he got all upset -- and with good reason! Why? Why do you think Paul was upset? He was upset because the big, important city of Athens was just full of idols and altars to these idols!! The Athenians were supposed to be very wise and educated, but they were just a bunch of idolators! And that is not wise, is it? That's foolish! After all, only the Lord is God, isn't He?

Anyway, Paul reasoned with the people of Athens, not only with the Jews in their synagogues and with godly Gentiles but with all sorts of people. He'd meet them every day and talk to them about the Lord Jesus Christ. Then some of their supposedly great thinkers met Paul. Some of them said, "Let's see what this man has to say." Others said, "He seems to be talking about strange gods." They were saying this because Paul was telling them about Jesus and the resurrection. It even sort of sounds like they were very confused, that they might have been thinking that Jesus was one God and the resurrection was another god! But I'm not sure about that.

Anyway, they took Paul to a place called Mars Hill where there was like a big outdoor auditorium. The men of Athens used to gather there to make speeches and to hear other men make their speeches. And they loved hearing all sorts of new things. So they said to Paul, "Tell us about this new teaching that you are making. You are saying things that sound strange to us. We want to know what you mean."

Do you think Paul would want to talk to these Athenians? Yes, of course! Paul loved to tell everyone about Jesus! He wanted to tell everyone to trust in Jesus so they could be saved from their sins.

So Paul stood there at Mars Hill and started talking. The first thing he said to them was, "You men of Athens, I see that you are too religious."

He was talking about all of their idols, wasn't he?

Paul said, "As I walked about your city, I saw your many altars, and I found one altar that had written on it, 'To the Unknown God.'"

Now why would they have an altar like that? To an unknown god, a god they didn't know about?! The Athenians had altars to lots of false gods, and they put these false gods' names on the altars. But I wonder if they were worried that they might have skipped some god whose name they didn't know, and they wouldn't want that god to be mad at them, so they just built an altar to a god they didn't know, just in case! I don't know if that's the reason, though. The Bible doesn't tell us why they did it. But anyway Paul was going to use that. Let's go on and see how!

Paul said to the Athenians who were gathered there, "You worship this God that you don't know, this unknown God -- but I'm going to tell you about Him! This God you don't know made the whole world and everything in it. And He made you! He is the Lord of heaven and earth, and He doesn't live in temples that people make. And He doesn't need for people to do things for Him, because He Himself is the One who gives everything life and breath and all good things. And He is near all of us."

Now, who do you think Paul was talking about here? Yes, the Lord God, of course!! The Lord God that the Bible tells us about! The only God! Right?!

Then Paul went on to tell these people about the only real God. Paul said to the Athenians, "Yes, I'm going to tell you about this God that you worship without knowing Him. God isn't like some idol that was made by men out of gold or silver or stone! And the real God wants you to know Him."

And Paul told them, "You should turn from your idols, because someday God is going to come and judge and rule the whole world. And the proof of this is that Jesus, though killed (on the cross) had been raised from the dead, has been resurrected."

The resurrection of Jesus proves to everyone that He is Who He says He is, doesn't it?

Well, the Athenians didn't know what to think of that. They hadn't heard of the resurrection of Jesus. Some of them made fun of Paul, and some others of them said, "Well, we'll hear him again about this."

So Paul left Mars Hill where he had been talking. But some of the people, both men and women, believed what Paul had said and stayed with him.

After this Paul left Athens and went just a little ways away to a big city named Co-rinth. And there he found a Jewish man named Aq-uila and his wife Pris-cil-la; they were believers. Aquila and Priscilla had been living in Italy where Rome is, but when the emperor Claudias had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome, they had left Italy and had come to Corinth, and Paul got to know them there.

Now, Aquila and Priscilla earned their living by making tents to sell. So Paul stayed with them, because he did the same kind of work that they did. Yes, even the great apostle Paul worked to support himself and didn't expect others to support him! So they all three made tents together to earn their livings. By the way, I read somewhere that every good Jewish father, no matter how rich he might be, made sure that his son learned how to make something so that he could earn his own living. That sounds like a good idea, doesn't it?

Anyway, every sabbath day Paul would go to the Jewish synagogue there in Corinth and reason with the people. And both Jews and Gentiles became believers in Jesus. Isn't that wonderful?!

Now, do you remember Silas and Timothy? They had stayed back in Thessalonica, hadn't they? And Paul had sent a message to them asking them to come join him. Well, by now they had gotten to where Paul was in Corinth.

Now, Paul was talking a lot about Jesus with the Jews in the synagogue, but they didn't like what he was saying. So finally he said to them, "I've done what I could to get you to believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved. If you aren't saved from your sins, it's your own fault, not mine. From now on I'm going to go to the Gentiles."

So he left the synagogue and went next door where a godly Gentile man lived and preached there. And many of the Corinthians heard him and believed on Jesus and were saved and then were baptized.

Now, the Bible doesn't say this, but I think sometimes Paul must have gotten a little discouraged, don't you? But the Bible does tell us that one night the Lord encouraged Paul by coming to him in a vision and saying to him, "Don't be afraid. Keep talking, because I am with you, and no one is going to hurt you here. I have many people here in this city of Corinth." Wasn't that kind of the Lord to tell Paul this?

So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God there.

Now, sometime during that year and a half, some bad Jews tried to cause trouble for Paul. They got hold of Paul and took him to the Roman ruler there saying, "This fellow is trying to get people to worship God in a way that is against the law!"

But what do you think the Roman ruler did? Do you think he put Paul in jail? No! Why, before Paul could even say what he was really doing, the ruler just said, "Oh, if this were some matter about something evil, I'd listen to you. But since it's just about what he's saying and your own Jewish rules, you take care of it! I'm not going to be a judge about it!" And he had them all chased away!

Well, some of the Gentiles then grabbed one of the Jewish leaders who was causing the trouble and beat him right there -- and the Roman ruler didn't even care! And Paul just kept on staying in Corinth and teaching about Jesus.

Now, I keep talking about Jews who tried to do bad things to Paul. But not all of the Jews did. In fact, many of the Jews were believers in Jesus. And Jesus was a Jew, and all of the apostles including Paul were Jews. The Jews were the special nation that the Lord had chosen to make Himself known to the world. You see, the Bible was written by Jews! But many of the Jews didn't believe in Jesus, and some of these would be jealous of Jesus, just wanting to keep to the rules they had. And some of the Jewish leaders were afraid that they wouldn't be leaders anymore if the people started believing in Jesus. So that is why they caused all of this trouble for Paul.

Anyway, Paul kept preaching about Jesus. He wanted people to be saved from their sins and to be able to go be with God when they died. But after a while Paul said goodbye to the believers there in Corinth. Later on his third missionary journey (which we'll talk about next time) he would visit them again. Also, later he would write two letters to the Corinthian church, and we have those two letters in the New Testament, too. Anyway, Paul took Aquila and Priscilla with him, and they all got on a ship and sailed away from Corinth back over that part of the Mediterranean Sea to a big city there named E-phe-sus.

And Paul went into the synagogue in Ephesus and discussed about Jesus with the people there. They asked him to stay longer, but he said, "No, I want very much to be in Jerusalem in time for the feast there."

(I don't know which special Jewish holiday this was, whether Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles or just which one.)

Then Paul said, "But if God is willing, I'll come back and see you again."

(On his third missionary journey he does go back to Ephesus, and something very exciting happens then! We'll talk about that next time!)

Anyway, Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus. But Paul got on a ship and sailed the rest of the way across the Mediterranean Sea to the seaport of Cae-sa-ri-a in Israel. (By the way, Caesaria was an important city that was named after the Roman emperor Caesar -- Caesar-ia.) After Paul got to Caesaria, he went to Jerusalem as he had planned. He spent a while there in Jerusalem then went back to Antioch in Syria, the city from which he had started out on his journey. And that was the end of Paul's second missionary journey. And that's where we're going to stop talking about his adventures for today.

By the way, we've mentioned Timothy several times, Timothy the young man who was often with Paul. Well, later Timothy became important in at least one group of believers, one church, and Paul wrote him two letters, letters which we now have in the New Testament. These two letters tell how churches should be run and other things.

So let's review now about Paul's second missionary journey. Remember, we had to stop in the middle of it last time, so let's quickly look at the whole second journey now.

Okay. Paul and Barnabas wanted to go visit the believers in other places where they had been and also to tell more people about the Lord Jesus. But since Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark with them and Paul didn't, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to the island of Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and went overland visiting the various churches there. Timothy joined them, and they headed over to the far seacoast to Troas where Luke joined them. Then Paul had a vision of a man across the water who asked him to come over to Macedonia and help them, so they all set sail and went over to Macedonia. They went to the main city of Philippi where Paul had the evil spirit come out of the slave girl. She couldn't tell fortunes then and earn money for her masters, so

they got mad and had Paul and Silas thrown into prison. That night there was the earthquake that opened the prison, and then Paul told the jailer how to be saved by just believing on Jesus. The next day the judges took Paul and Silas out and asked them to leave the city.

Luke stayed there in Philippi, but Paul and Silas and Timothy all went to the city of Thessalonica and stayed for about three weeks where they preached. And some Jews and lots of Gentiles in Thessalonica believed on Jesus. But unbelieving Jews from Philippi came down and caused trouble, so Paul and the others went to Berea where many believed, but again unbelieving Jews tried to cause trouble for them. So Paul left by himself by ship and went to Athens, farther down the coast.

In Athens there were all sorts of altars to false gods and another altar to The Unknown God in case they had missed one. And Paul made his famous speech at Mars Hill, explaining about the Unknown God, the only real God. Then Paul went just a little way over to Corinth where Silas and Timothy joined him. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth and stayed with them, making tents with them. And Paul stayed a long time in Corinth, a year and a half. After that Paul went by ship with Silas (and probably Timothy) and Aquila and Priscilla across to Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there in Ephesus. But Paul wanted to leave right away, as he wanted to get to Jerusalem in time for one of the big Jewish feast times. So he got on a ship and left. After being in Jerusalem a while, he went back to Antioch in Syria. And this ended his second missionary journey. He had probably been gone about 3 years.

Well, Paul had had an exciting time, hadn't he?! But the best part is that through his preaching and teaching, many people, both Jews and Gentiles, learned about the Lord Jesus, how He had died for our sins and then had risen from the dead to save us from their sins, and then they believed on Jesus, trusted Him to save them. And they were saved!

Well, the next time I'll tell you about Paul's third and last missionary journey, and he will have more exciting adventures then!