

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 31: "And So Were the Churches Established in the Faith" (Acts 15:36-18:22; 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

- Paul, Silas, and Timothy preach throughout Macedonia and Greece.
- Paul preaches on Mars' Hill to the Athenian philosophers.
- Paul writes letters of counsel to the Saints in Thessalonica.

A study of this lesson will help us learn from Paul's teachings about how to share the gospel and how to live as Saints.

Introduction

Bryant S. Hinckley: *While living with the Heywood family in Salt Lake City during the late 1800s, John Morgan dreamed one night that he was traveling down a road in Georgia. He recognized the road because he had used it often as a soldier in the United States Civil War. He came to a fork in the road and saw Brigham Young standing there. Although the right fork led to the next town, President Young told him to take the left fork.*

Mr. Morgan, who was not a member of the Church at the time, told Sister Heywood about his dream and asked what she thought of it. She told him she believed he would join the Church and serve a mission in the southern states, and that one day he would find himself on the road he had seen in his dream. When that happened, he should remember Brigham Young's counsel and take the left fork.

Many years later, after John Morgan had been baptized and called as a missionary to the southern states, he came to the fork in the road that he had seen in his dream. He remembered the counsel to take the left fork, so he did. An hour later, he found himself at the edge of Heywood Valley—a beautiful place with the same name as the family with whom he had been staying when he had the dream years earlier.

As he traveled throughout the valley preaching, he found that the people were well prepared to hear the gospel. After hearing him teach, several families mentioned that a stranger had come through the valley ten days before, asking permission to mark their Bibles. The stranger had told them that another messenger would come and explain the marked passages to them. John Morgan had explained these marked passages as he taught the gospel. During the following weeks, Elder Morgan taught and baptized all but three of the twenty-three families in the valley. (The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers [1956], 242-44.)

This lesson is about the Apostle Paul, who, like John Morgan, listened to the Spirit and was a successful missionary. On his second missionary journey, Paul suffered many persecutions but also found many people who were prepared to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.



NEXT WEEK:
#32 "Live in the Spirit" (Acts 18:23-20:38; Galatians)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy preach throughout Macedonia and Greece. (Acts 15:36-41; 16:17:1-15; 18:1-22)

The book of Acts was written by Luke. He apparently traveled with Paul on some missionary journeys, because he often uses “we” when referring to the actions of Paul and his missionary companions.

During his second missionary journey, Paul preached in many Macedonian and Greek cities, including Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Athens. (Find these cities on your Bible maps.)

Acts 16:6-10; Acts 18:9-11 The Spirit directed Paul and his companions during the journey. As you have served the Lord, you may well remember times when the Spirit has directed your efforts.

Acts 16:14-15 The scriptures record that Lydia heard and believed Paul’s words because the Lord had opened her heart.

Mosiah 2:9; D&C 64:34 An “open heart” is necessary for converts to understand the gospel.

Acts 16:16-24 Paul and his companions were imprisoned in Thyatira because they cast out a spirit that was in a soothsayer—thereby causing her masters to lose money. Then they were falsely accused.

Acts 16:25-26 They were freed by an earthquake that shook the prison foundations.

Acts 16:27-34 They used this experience as a missionary opportunity with the keeper of the prison and those of his household. Often, our Church history shows that good has come out of persecution.

Acts 17:1-3 Paul taught the Thessalonians about Jesus in the synagogue for three Sabbaths.

Acts 17:4-10 Results of Paul’s teachings were that some believed, but others—unbelieving Jews—were envious and created an uproar with false accusations. The Apostles then left for Berea.

Acts 17:10-12 The people in the synagogue in Berea received Paul’s teachings with “all readiness of mind”, being a more noble and honorable group who searched the scriptures daily. Think about how you can develop a “readiness of mind” for learning the gospel.

Paul preaches on Mars’ Hill to the Athenian philosophers. (Acts 17:16-34)



After Paul left Berea, he came to Athens, which was then a center of world culture. Philosophers there viewed God as an abstract being or

power, rather than as the literal Father of our spirits. They worshiped God’s creations rather than God himself. They replaced revelation with reason and debate, valuing the wisdom of men more than the truths of God.

Acts 17:21 The philosophers in Athens “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing”. This tendency to always seeking “some new thing” is evident today.

Acts 17:22-31 (see also the Joseph Smith Translation of Acts 17:27 in footnote 27b.) Paul taught the Athenians about God and our relationship to Him. It is important to know that “we are [God’s] offspring” (Acts 17:28) because an understanding of God’s true nature and his role as our Father helps us love and worship him.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 10-13 Paul countered the philosophers’ reason and logic with a sincere witness of God, our Father. In teaching the gospel, a sincere testimony is more convincing than logic and reason because the Spirit will bear witness to our audience as we bear our testimonies of the gospel.

Acts 17:18-21 The philosophers listened to Paul because his doctrine was strange and new to them. **Acts 17:32-33** This motive affected their response to Paul’s message. By cultivating faith and a sincere desire to hear the truth, we can prepare ourselves to hear and understand the words of Church leaders.

Paul writes letters of counsel to the Saints in Thessalonica. (Acts 13-14)

1 Thes. 2:17-18; 1 Thes. 3:1-2, 5-7 Paul was concerned about the Saints in Thessalonica but was unable to return to visit them, so he sent Timothy. After Timothy's return, Paul wrote two letters giving counsel and encouragement to the Thessalonian Saints. We learn from Paul's efforts in behalf of new members of the Church that we need to support them with love, fellowship, and teaching.

1 Thes. 1:5; 1 Thes. 2:2-12 Paul teaches in these verses that we must teach the gospel to others with the Spirit and with truth. Think about how following these principles has helped you teach the gospel.

1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Thes. 5:1-3 The Thessalonian Saints' concerns about their deceased loved ones and the timing of the Second Coming are reflected in Paul's explanations of the Second Coming.

2 Thes. 2:1-4 Paul told the Thessalonians that an apostasy would occur before the Second Coming.

D&C 1:15-16; D&C 112:23; Joseph Smith-History 1:19 These verses demonstrate how this prophecy of an apostasy was fulfilled.

1 Thes. 5:4-8 Paul told the Thessalonian Saints they should be sober and watchful, faithful and loving, and hopeful for salvation to prepare for the Second Coming. Of course, we should do the same.



1 Thes. 4:9-12; 1 Thes. 5:11-22 Paul gave counsel to the Thessalonians about living as Saints, encouraging them to love and care for one another as brothers, working hard with their own hands, studying to be quiet, minding their own business, and being honest that all might have their needs met.

Conclusion

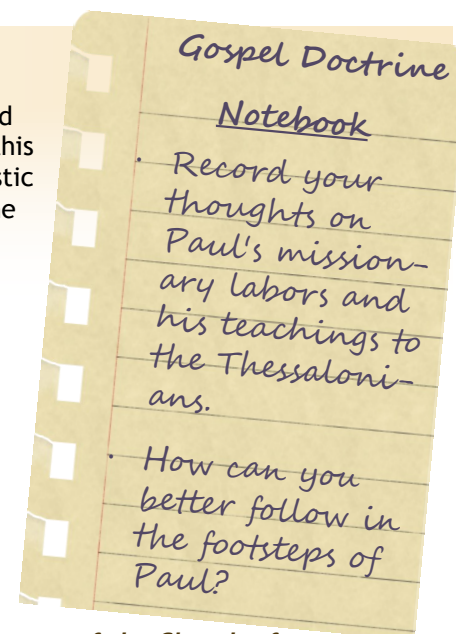
We are blessed and privileged to live in the latter days and partake of the restored gospel.. We know that the Second Coming is drawing near. What will we do with this knowledge that we possess? When Paul learned the truth, he became an enthusiastic missionary. If we truly love the Lord and his gospel, we will endeavor to spread the truth and support the missionary effort, even when we sometimes grow weary.

Additional Teachings

Teaching the gospel with the right attitude

1 Thes 2:2-3 Paul said the gospel should be taught with boldness and without deceit or trickery. **Elder James E. Talmage** added that we should boldly teach the truth without criticizing or attacking other people's beliefs. When he was a student, Elder Talmage was once approached by a man offering to sell him an excellent oil lamp. Elder Talmage already had a lamp he felt was satisfactory, but he allowed the lamp seller to come up to his room to demonstrate. *"We entered my room, and I put a match to my well-trimmed lamp. My visitor was high in his praise. It was the best lamp of its kind, he said, and he had never seen a*

lamp in better trim. He turned the wick up and down, and pronounced the judgment perfect. 'Now,' he said, 'with your permission I'll light my lamp,' taking it from his satchel. ... Its light made bright the remotest corner of my room. Its brilliant blaze made the flame in my lamp weak and pale. Until that moment of convincing demonstration I had never known the dim obscurity in which I had lived and labored, studied and struggled. Elder Talmage bought the new lamp, and he later suggested what we can learn from the lamp seller as we teach the gospel: "The man who would sell a lamp did not disparage mine. He placed his greater light alongside my feebler flame, and I hastened to obtain it. The missionary serv-



ants of the Church of Jesus Christ today are sent forth, not to assail nor ridicule the beliefs of men, but to set before the world a superior light, by which the smoky dimness of the flickering flames of man-made creeds shall be apparent. The work of the Church is constructive, not destructive" (in Albert L. Zobell Jr., Story Gems [1953], 45-48; see also The Parables of James E. Talmage, comp. Albert L. Zobell Jr. [1973], 1-6)